Nights of the Crusades

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Credits

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Special thanks to the Accursed Knowledge Gaming Society.

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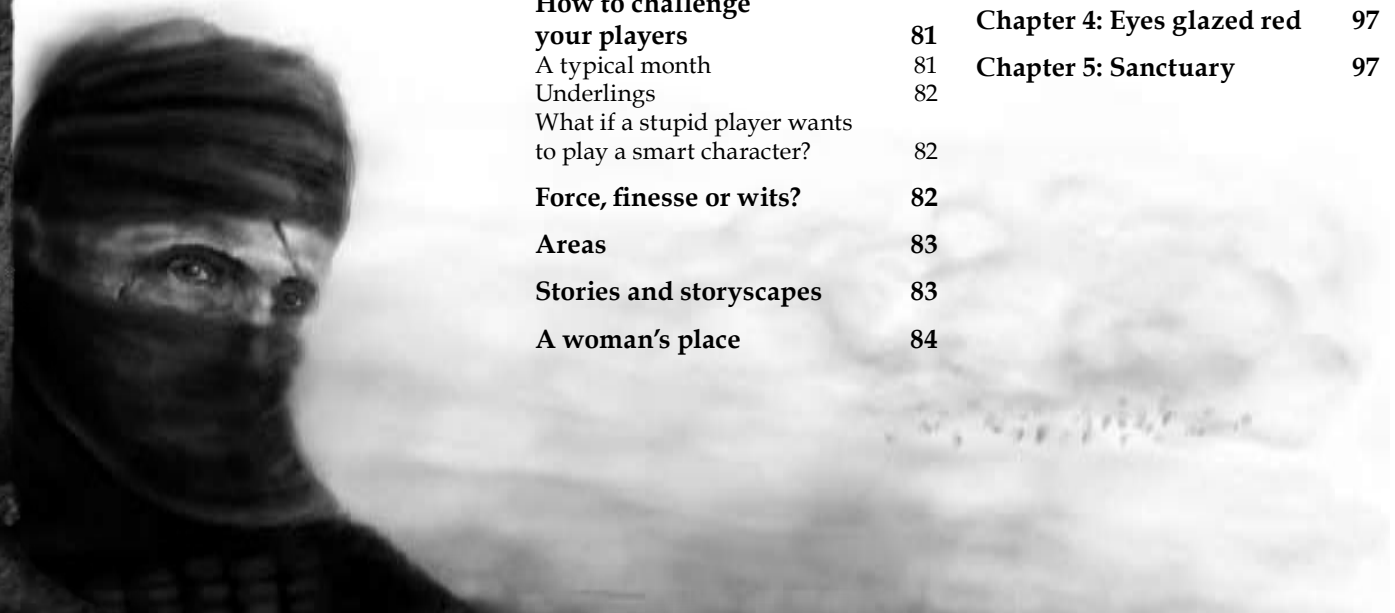


Introduction

As the wind and dust howled over the barren ground, the traitors walked. Their leader thought only of increasing the distance between him and the ravaged hell of Antioch, and forgetting the past. The rain that often cloaked the city reached far into the surrounding lands, and dark clouds approached that threatened to obscure the morning sun.

The walls were assaulted two days ago, and that was when these shuffling exiles left their city to the men of the western countries. Their thoughts were as much a burden as their possessions. No mounts allowed them to ease their blistered feet, as horses were priceless to the invaders and not one could be spared. Their bones ached from the hard ground where they slept last night. They sweated, their clothes sticking to their moist skin. They needed shelter.

As they descended from a barren mountain range, the stones of a ruined wall came into view, looking like the spine of a disfigured serpent. As the refugees edged closer they saw it coiled around the corpse of a small city. Behind the wall were orchards of skeletal fruit trees, and a great slum of houses and stables. A spire loomed over the city and a thin bridge joined it to the wall of a palace that perched upon a jutting section of the mountain range. As they approached they weren't greeted with the usual sounds of a large town, it was empty of life – though it would do for shelter until they decided where to go.

The previous dwellers of the village would have sought safety within Antioch's walls after hearing of the arrival of the vast army from the west. The besiegers of Antioch, in their hunt for food and plunder, would have then laid waste to their town and whatever else was left behind. Antioch would have no protection for them now. After the once-proud city was stormed, its inhabitants would have received only death or slavery. They would now rightly condemn Firuz, the leader of the traitors, for what was left of their lives.

What & Why

Nights of the Crusades is a roleplaying game set in a land and time that is familiar on the surface, but within its cracks lie tales of sorcery, madness and violence. It is a world that could have happened and then been lost to barbarity and time. Players take on characters that can explore the places involved in the Crusades, from Egypt, through to Damascus and Jerusalem. The Tale-Weaver is their guide, allowing them to unearth the horrors of war and fanaticism as they pursue their goals. As the main characters come across storytellers in their travels, they will take part in a new story within the story of their main narrative. Magic, djinn and foul beasts lurk within the minds of the storytellers, yet many secrets and shards of knowledge can be found within these tales.

However, the real world is not free of horror. The land is rife with dark cults, creatures that dwell in unseen places and bloodthirsty warriors. This is a time when anyone's thoughts, from king to slave, are enough to condemn them to death and hell, and many are they that will line up to cheer the execution.

Nights of the Crusades is a mixture of the Arabian Nights, the history surrounding the Crusades and both modern and ancient tales of terror. The rules hope to reflect mature and gritty issues that are not catered to in many popular RPGs, such as the psychological impacts of combat and killing. The gameplay also allows for tension in every form of conflict, whether verbal or physical. A group of companions made up of an artist, diplomat and physician will be as enjoyable to play as one made up of a warrior, archer and thief.

To play Nights of the Crusades you will need a group of at least three – one Tale-Weaver and two players. The only other things necessary are the rules that follow, a pen/pencil and paper and enough ten-sided dice (D10's or D100's) to go around.

Overview of Chapters

The Mythos

A description of the world your characters will enter. It gives a historical overview of the Crusades; along with tales that are whispered among those that have seen the secrets of the dark.

Conjuring a Character

This describes the process of creating a character. Each player will have at least two characters; one in the main storyline, and one that waits for a storyteller's breath.

Marketplace

Equipment and weapons are described here, along with the details of managing Wealth.

Gameplay

Here you will find rules for challenges, Negotiation and Combat.

Character Advancement

Characters will evolve throughout their time in Nights of the Crusades. This section describes how they will gain experience and the Abilities that they will gain as they progress.

Creating a Night

This is mainly a guide for the Tale-Weaver. It delves into the possible themes of a tale and the how to challenge your players and enhance their experience.

Appendix One: Sample Characters

Character details for beasts, adversaries and hirelings that can be used in a Tale.

Appendix Two: Sample Adventure

Over Dark Seas

An adventure that will launch you into the world of Nights of the Crusades.

A note on rounding

There will be occasions when a fraction of a number is required. If a case arises that does not result in a full number, round the value mathematically; ie, if you need to halve 5, the result would be 3.

Glossary

Player: You or the other people in the real world that are playing Nights of the Crusades.

Tale: The all-encompassing adventure that envelopes all NPCs, PCs and PSCs.

Tale-Weaver: The person that creates the tale and acts as the guide and adjudicator for the other players.

Main Storyline: The story that involves the player's main characters.

Storyteller: A type of NPC that tells a story within the main storyline. Life is given to PSCs as the storyteller imparts his tale.

PC: Any character that a Player controls.

NPC: Any character that the Tale-Weaver controls.

MC: A player's Main Character. This is a Player's character that dwells within the main storyline.

SC: A player Story Character. A type of PC that only exists within stories. These characters will be witnesses to a world of fantasy that includes magic and supernatural creatures.

The Mythos

The thud of hooves approached. The bandits dismounted at the base of the minaret. Gruff voices of men ascended to where the traitors lay in hiding. Firuz imagined them passing through the spire's threshold. They were confident, swaggering, obviously assuming the area was abandoned. He took a careful look around the wall. The bandits' mouths gaped as they approached the arch into the palace, wondering at the treasures within.

The cry of child echoed through the air behind him.

The bandits almost panicked, but quickly regained their composure. They readied their weapons. Firuz could not risk being seen now. He put his back to the wall, relying on his hearing. An arrow streaked through the archway and tumbled into the dusty ground. Another ricocheted off the palace's marble wall. More children began to cry. His stomach coiled like an agitated snake.

The fighting would soon begin. The whispered voice of a bandit was followed by another's menacing laugh. The stink of wine reached Firuz's nostrils. The bandits were just on the opposite side of the wall.

Peering out from behind a wide column, one of the women cried through her veil, "Please brothers, show mercy to us."

"Ha, God allowed mercy to flee this land many days ago. Are there only little boys to defend you?" The sound of a sword being sheathed rang through the tense atmosphere. "Put away your bow, Omar. They will be worth more without scratches."

A slurred voice said, "Do not be shy, my flowers, you may show your faces to your new men. We have come to cure your loneliness in these troubled times." He finished with a chuckle.

Firuz felt his body burn hot. He nodded to the man across from him.

Nights Of The Crusades combines the lands and history of the Crusades during the Middle Ages (roughly 1095 to 1295) with tales from the 1001 Arabian Nights, and darkens the mixture with themes of insanity of horror.

What were The Crusades?

The Crusades can be roughly divided into three eras…

Dawn of the Crusades

Flames of war are burning the lands from west to east. The Iberian battles against the Moors, the Reconquista, are a forge for Christian clerics to construct their theories of a just and holy war; and their faithful are marching. However, the Muslim princes between the Crusaders and Jerusalem have their hands devoted to the schemes amongst themselves. They do not realise the true threat of the Franj until Jerusalem smoulders in ash, along with its Muslim, Orthodox and Jewish citizens.

After the brutality of the First Crusade there is an eerie period of quiet between the warring factions. Merchants and the nobility from both sides rub shoulders, as Christian pilgrims from the west arrive to see the birthplace of their faith.

This is only the eye of the whirlwind. The debauched monarchs of the Muslim cities are losing their followers to more pious war leaders, as the faith of Islam is used to unite the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean under threat from the west. The first of the new Crusader states begin to fall back into the hands of the Saracens. The battlelines are drawn between the soldiers of the Sunni Caliphate and the followers of the Roman Pope – Jihad versus Crusade. The Orthodox Christians, Jews and Shi'ites conspire between the two warring factions, trying to keep their heads above the rising sea of blood that quenches the scorched land.

Dusk of the Crusades

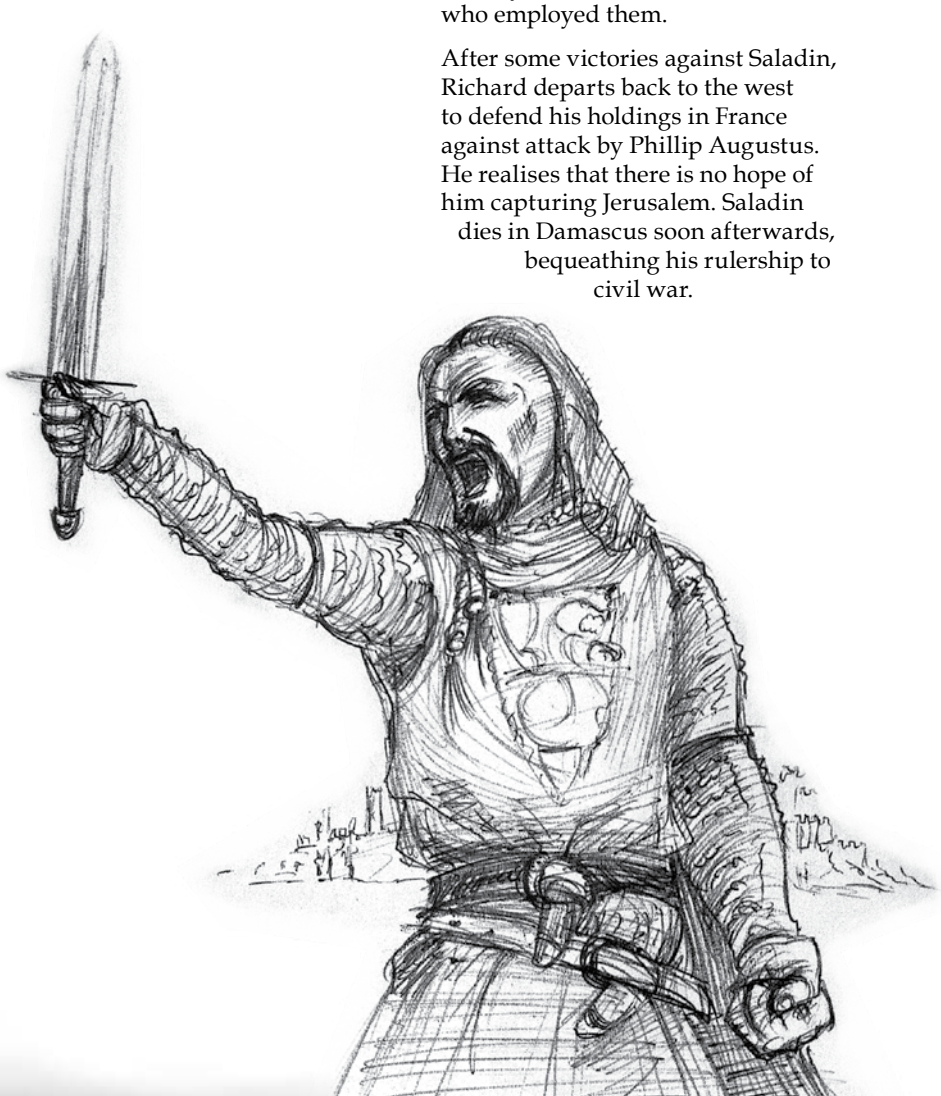
Phillip Augustus - King of France - and Richard the Lionheart clash against Saladin. The knightly order of the Hospitallers grows from an armed escort for Christian pilgrims to a battle-hardened force. The Knights Templar construct fortifications along the coast and stoke the fires of battle. The Nizari assassins scheme between each, as they work towards their master plan of a Shi'ite dominated empire.

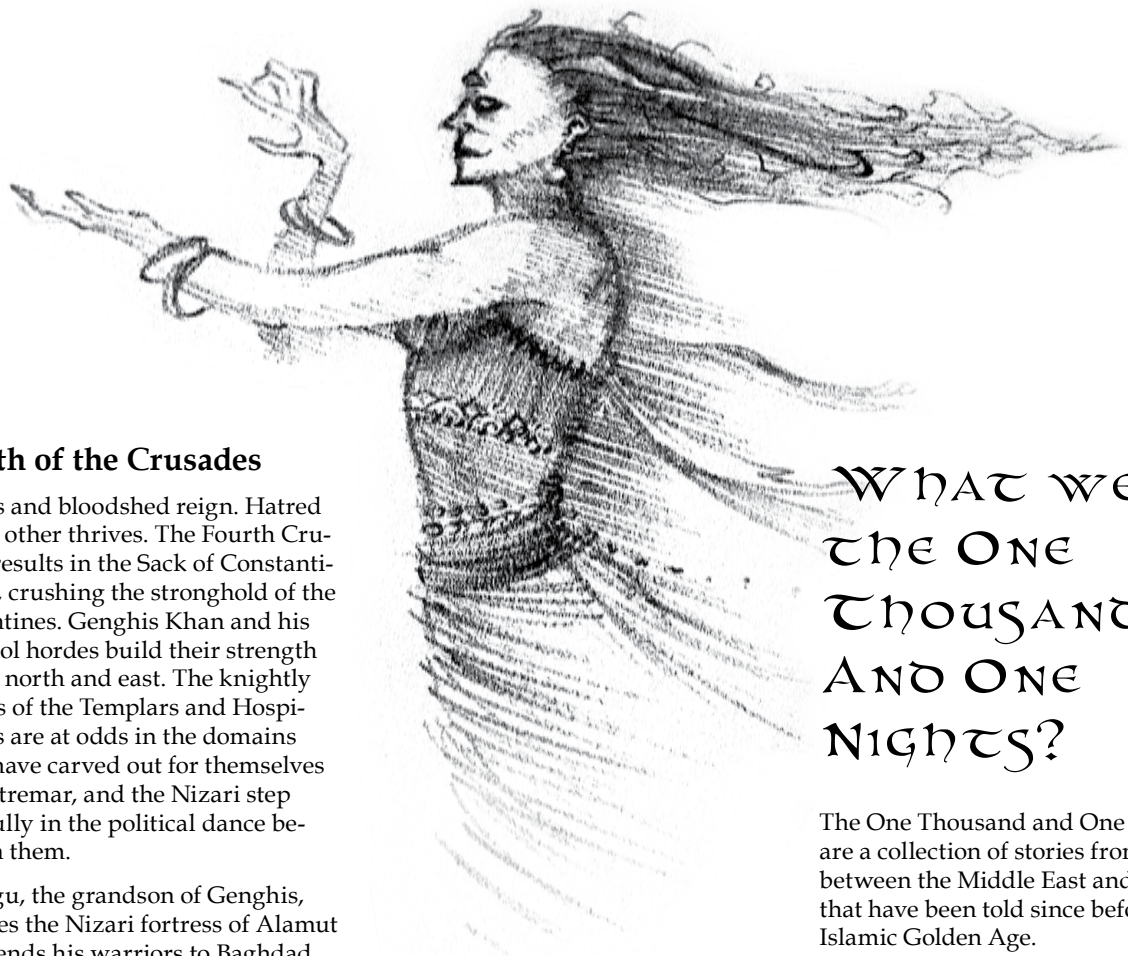
Saladin's desire to retake Jerusalem from the Crusaders can only be accomplished by uniting all the Muslim lands in its defence. The Shi'ites of Egypt had betrayed him. After storming the once-land of the pharaohs and becoming its Sultan, he turns his thoughts to the Nizaris, besieging their nine fortresses. The assassins are now the last power base of the Shi'ites in the lands of Syria. However, Saladin retreats hurriedly, drawing whispers of what may have caused him to withdraw his forces. Perhaps it was the knife by his pillow, laid by the Old Man of the Mountain himself, which changed his mind.

Richard the Lionheart joins the third crusade after Saladin takes Jerusalem and destroys the forces of the Knights Templar. Sick from scurvy, he nevertheless joins in the assault on the walls of Acre. As Saladin's forces arrive to besiege the now besieged, negotiations begin between the great Kings. They break down, and in the aftermath, Richard orders the beheading of the almost three thousand Muslim inhabitants of Acre within sight of Saladin's camp. Saladin's heart is hardened. No Frankish soldier will leave his hands alive from now on.

Schemes are brewing against both Kings. Conrad of Montferrat, the ruler of the impregnable city of Tyre, offers an alliance with Saladin against the "foreigners" led by Richard. Richard suspects this, and also revolts at the prospect of Conrad becoming king of Jerusalem – should the Christians be able to conquer it once again. After Conrad visits a Turkish bath, a blade pierces his body and he falls to the stones of his city. His murderers are caught after their slaying of Conrad. Under torture, the torn bodies of the captured men reveal that they of the Nizari, and cry that it was Richard himself who employed them.

After some victories against Saladin, Richard departs back to the west to defend his holdings in France against attack by Phillip Augustus. He realises that there is no hope of him capturing Jerusalem. Saladin dies in Damascus soon afterwards, bequeathing his rulership to civil war.





Death of the Crusades

Chaos and bloodshed reign. Hatred of the other thrives. The Fourth Crusade results in the Sack of Constantinople, crushing the stronghold of the Byzantines. Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes build their strength in the north and east. The knightly orders of the Templars and Hospitallers are at odds in the domains they have carved out for themselves in Outremar, and the Nizari step carefully in the political dance between them.

Hulagu, the grandson of Genghis, ravages the Nizari fortress of Alamut and sends his warriors to Baghdad. The great libraries of these Houses of Wisdom are lost to the flames, and so are the people who defy Hulagu. The greatest knowledge of the time becomes ash and is scattered to the winds. With the Nizari surrendering to the Mongols, the path is open for them to sweep into holy lands of the Abrahamic faiths.

A strange slave-dynasty has risen in Egypt. Mamluks, the soldier-slaves of the Muslim armies, have assumed power and placed a woman, Shajar al-Durr, on the throne as Sultana. Baibars, the true leader of the Mamluks, reunites Egypt and Syria into a powerful state. However, he is caught between the fortresses of the remaining Crusaders, and the army of the Mongols. Baibars compromises with neither. He has been hardened by the violence surrounding him, and focuses it on his enemies.

The Battle of Ayn-Jalut is the first major defeat of the Mongols, and it is at the hands of Baibars. His forces decimate the invaders from the steppe, with hand cannons and his unflinching will. The tide of the Mongols recedes, but remains a threatening force.

Alliances are made and broken between the Mongols and the last Crusaders; the Mongols themselves are split between the religions of Christianity, Islam and Shamanism. However, every campaign the Crusader's wage against Baibars is repelled. The Christians of Antioch are cut off from their Mongol allies, and Baibars ruthlessly purges it. He mocks its ruler, Bohemond IV –excommunicated by the church for his dealings with the Mongols – as the last remaining Crusader strongholds are swept away by Baibars and his successors. Every massacre is claimed to be revenge for the events of a hundred years past.

Qalawan, once a slave bought for 1,000 dinars, leads the warriors of Egypt for a time, destroying the fortress of the Hospitallers. His son, Al-Ashraf Khalil, is the leader of the Islamic forces when Acre is finally retaken – ending the last bastion of Frankish power in the east.

What were the One Thousand and One Nights?

The One Thousand and One Nights are a collection of stories from lands between the Middle East and China that have been told since before the Islamic Golden Age.

The initial tale involves the king, Shahryar, and his new wife, Scheherazade, who marries him to save the women of her city. As punishment to all women for his adulterous former wife, the King takes a new woman every night – and then slays her in the morning. Scheherazade begins telling him stories that beget more stories, while always leaving a tale half finished at sunrise. The king spares her life, but only to hear how a story ends.

The Crusader

God wills it! That is the cry that strengthens the spirit. The fires of justice have swept aside any opposition to our righteous cause. We march on to the Holy Land.

In all the battles I have fought, this will be the first where I will arrive to the field without my stout horse, Bellator. He was but bones wrapped in skin when his time came. In hunger lies the devil; that is a phrase where the truth resides. I had thought of Bellator as a dear friend, yet my brothers could not contain their yearning for meat. I was admonished for the tear I shed by Father Johan, for had not Saint Augustine declared that, "refraining from the killing of animals is the height of superstition." I could not argue against the word of God, so it was with a trembling hand that I sacrificed my friend on the altar of hunger.

And worse still, as our bodies were shriveled and blasted by the harsh desert sands, a plague swept through our ranks. Mounted scouts of accursed infidels would harry us, and any arrows that avoided our armour caused a black infection. Boils and sores began to burst from our skin. It was God's punishment, cried the Father. As a penance, we sent the woman who had served our needs into the desert, and swore an oath of chastity until Jerusalem was ours. By this time my eyes and mouth were a hive of blisters. I could barely see. I had to use a rag to keep the weeping fluids from obscuring my sight.

Then we happened upon a number of heathen villages. God's fury was ignited in our souls, and we set upon him like the prophets of old, "And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain. Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took."

I saw some of my brothers, so maddened from hunger, eating from the bodies of the slain.

And so now, at the walls of the holiest of cities we march and sing and pray. The flagellants have finished their wailing and we have retired to rest under these foreign stars. When the sun rises, so too will our banners over Jerusalem.

The Physician

Oh, how I covet the past! I would entertain and be entertained by the stories of travelers from far lands. I would hear of Chinese silk, so beautiful that it would almost radiate light, the great behemoths that shake the lands of the south and the power of those blades of shining Damascus steel. My patients would receive a handsome style to their beard or the pulling of a deviant tooth, but alas, my services are no longer needed. Thick-skinned lemons have replaced the exotic fruits I once tasted, and there is no more sweetness in my life.

My brothers were too content; too idle in their good lives that even those whose calling was of battle could not stand against the barbaric storm from the west. As we contemplated the twirling of the stars and the sorcery of numerals, they were bathing in the blood of their defeated foes.

I am a beggar now, baptized by fire and rising in dust. My fine robes of honour were stolen or despoiled, so now I am no different to the street dwellers that surround me.

I have tried different paths though. In the early days of Frankish rule, I was sought after by a man desperate to heal his wife. So I sent to him one of my Jewish students who came from the land of the Byzantines. His recollections shocked me, for it was then that I wept for our civilisation should it succumb to that of the Franj.

The woman sat very still as her stomach was wracked with pain, her only sound being the occasional soft moan. My student asked her of her lifestyle and prescribed a change in diet. If I recall correctly, he asked her to desist in her overconsumption of salted meats and, instead, eat more vegetables and drink clean water. He then joined them in conversation, as he knew a little of their language. But a Frankish physician burst into the room and interrupted his farewell. The Frank was insulted that he was not sought after because his initial remedies failed. He proclaimed that my student knew only witchcraft and could not care for those faithful to Isa. The Frankish physician began examining the woman, looking under her eyelids, holding his cross against parts of her body and cursing the couple for allowing a heretic, such as my student, into their homes. Suddenly he exclaimed, "I have found the demon that dwells within her! It is behind her eyes. Her head must be shorn to expel it." So her head was shaved and she continued to eat her diet that caused her stomach to clench in agony.

I asked about her when I passed through that district a few days later. A smith told me that her spasms had worsened, so the husband asked for the Frankish physician again. When he saw her, the physician said, "The devil has crept into her skull!" He took a blade and carved the sign of the cross into her forehead, then lifting the skin away until the bone was exposed, rubbed salt into it. The woman died instantly! Because of

this, and many other hurtful events, I gave up my practice and turned to the streets.

In the nights, as the hungry dogs howl, my dreams turn to times of the siege. I am haunted by the guffaws of the knights as they catapulted the heads of the slain into the city. The dogs were well fed then. However, sometimes the terrors of my nightly visions fade into the brightness of my old life. I dream of feasts with benevolent Princes and retreating from the warm sun to my concubines. So it is with sadness that I awake. Hunger drives me to deeds I should shun, but my hand is halted from stealing from the Franj by thoughts of the punishments that could be visited upon me.

I have seen men and woman burned alive, their screams turning silent only when their throat blackens and their organs spill into the flames. Any man accused can fight his accuser, as their interpretation of a just God is one who grants favour in battle. The blood soaked victor leaves the arena, whilst the defeated has his eyes put out or a noose slung around his neck. Or he is dunked in water, sinking only if his weight of sins is heavy. I have heard of men thrown over bridges in sacks, weighted with iron, and filled with dogs or cats to maul the guilty as they all succumb to the cold of the deep; Allah's curse be upon them!

But there may be hope and perhaps I will regain my position of honour. Already there is talk among some of my street-dwelling brethren. They plot a just re-acquisition of our property from some of the noble Franj. With our lost treasures we will then flee to Damascus, or another city of believers, to escape from their wrath. But I will have to be cautious…

The Assassin

The smoke from those dark nights still burns in my nostrils. Morning has never come for me. I hide now, in plain sight, counting the seconds before the man before me is dead.

I have travelled far from Damascus, where I once made my home, tracking one of the cruel leaders of the massacre that butchered more than 5000 of my Isma'ili brethren. Sowing rumours and diverting blame from his cruel masters is the trade of the preacher that now stands not 10 feet away. It was him that led the Sunni fanatics to our quarter. They had been fed lies about how we were aiding the Franj to capture Damascus, and in return we were to be granted the port city of Tyre. I know not the basis of these accusations, but nor did I care as I cradled my wife's corpse.

Those who could escape fled into the wilderness, but we were found. Not by those thirsting for our blood, but by a shadowy savior. He claimed he was a Nizari, a follower of Sinan, The Old Man of the Mountain. They were protectors of true Islam and its adherents – the Shi'ites generally and the Ismai'ili specifically. We followed him to cliffs.

For many months we trained our bodies and souls to fight the apostates and unbelievers, those who would seek to annihilate the only untainted followers of God.

With my head shaved and bearing only a dagger beneath my ragged robe, I hunted my quarry across the plains and deserts. My exterior is the manner of the calm Sufi, but inside I am the vengeance of God. For days he has passed me, as I sit by the path in dust, with his retinue. His guard is down for I am a common site to them. The flash of my dagger is not!

Blood spurts as the blade bites deep inside the throat of the false preacher. Knowing that not even a djinni from the flames of hell could survive such a blow, I leap away, evading my blood-soaked pursuers. Adrenaline floods my veins as I quicken my pace, for the alarm has been raised. Heavy footsteps are closing the distance.

Should I survive, that is all good and well, however I do not care so much. My mission is complete, and my eternity in paradise is assured.

The Merchant

A close friend of mine, Dionysius Theodoros, had asked me to visit him in Acre so we could make some business arrangements. However, it was during the holy month and I never felt well travelling during the fast. As soon as Eid passed, however, I summoned my men and we set sail.

The short journey was made even shorter, as I fascinated my crew with the stories of the sea to ease their toil. One of my favourites is that of a fellow merchant who was trying to deliver much needed supplies to a town besieged by the Franj. Their ships circled the harbour like hungry sharks, waiting for a moment's weakness to begin a frenzied assault. Oh see how this merchant outsmarted them! He shaved his beard and those of his crew and dressed in the manner of the infidel. He even placed unclean swine on the decks – but God will wash away the dirt on his hands, for this merchant's cause was just. The Franj, thinking he was one of them, let him pass. The cheers of the besieged Muslims met his crew as they were allowed into the city!

We soon reached Acre. I allowed my men to visit this wondrous city, as, though the Franj controlled it, there were many sights to see. I told them to be careful though, even the Christians amongst my crew. It is well known that one of the largest slave markets in the world is in Acre, and many are those slaves that were free men a week before they appeared at auction. I have heard that only a conversion to the Catholic religion of the Franj will save you from the chains of a slave-master. But I know that this law is broken as many times as enforced, as it rests on any infidel to determine the truth or falsehood of the pleas of the shackled. Of course, I

asked my crew to tell me should they see any strong men that could ease their workload on the journey home, for I am not immune to the plight of a sailor.

There are, however, some Franj that have become civilized, as they have dwelt in the lands of the Muslims for many years. They are less prone to acts of barbarity than their newly arrived brethren but it can be hard to find them. My friend, Dionysius, bade that I meet with one.

We came to the estate of a knight who was old, having been involved in the earlier wars against the Muslims, but now living peaceably. I was surprised that his slaves prepared a great banquet for us, with clean food and local spices, but I had never eaten at the table of a barbarian before. As he saw my hesitation, the knight bellowed, "Eat friend, be merry in my home! I have not eaten the food of my old countrymen for many years, and have an Egyptian cook who ensures that the flesh of pigs does not enter my home." I was pleased with what he said and we left on good terms, him knowing a little Arabic and Dionysius filling in the gaps of our understanding.

After discussing business, I left to collect my men and ensure they had acted with caution throughout their day. As I walked through the market place, a Frankish woman grabbed at me. I attempted to brush her away, yet she clung tightly and began screaming in the brash sounds of her language. A great crowd of Franj began to surround me, and I saw my doom in their eyes.

But then the old knight, seemingly come from the aether, saw me and spoke harshly to the woman. He said, "Why do you impede this Muslim's business?" She spoke back to him through tears, "This is he who slew my brother. He was killed at the walls of Jerusalem!"

The Christian knight dismissed her, saying, "This Muslim is a merchant who has never raised a sword or fought for their armies." He then ordered the crowd to disband, which they did on account of his high standing amongst them. Although I had often imagined my demise to be at the hands of one of these bellicose giants, I had never thought that one would come to my rescue.

We then said a heartfelt farewell and I headed home without further incident. Truly this is a tale the wise among you will heed.

Bazaar Tales

"I know what you are thinking. You think we are all cunning and untrustworthy. But, let me tell you! That is only because no honest Muslim would have dealings with the Franj, ha ha! Except for me of course. Now let me mind that fine horse of yours..." Marid of Shayzar.

The Wavering Flame

Ah! Yes, these are very fine wares you see before you.

Has this book caught your eye? You bear the look of a foreigner, so let me explain.

I found it in my travels through the deep desert and have often thought of keeping it for myself, such is its beauty. It is bound in a sort of hardened fabric, not leather like the many others in my collection. This inscription here, on the inside page, it says, "The chained mind knows not whether its body is free or slave". A curious saying, no? The chapters cover a variety of subjects too. It is like a number of studies have been combined into this one book. It is a soup of knowledge! Look at these chapters… "How the shadows upon distant obelisks prove the spheracy of the world", "The grasshopper's tale and its implications on the artificial nations of mankind" and "The hunt for the creatures who's bones inhabit the deep mines of Baalbek."

And see this? There are some portraits of the authors. Do you think this one really had two heads? And this girl with the gills, Jullanar, could that be possible?

… I have asked many questions about this book. A merchant from the order of the White Quills gave me his opinion, so you should take it as truth.

He told me that, before the soldiers of the west first came to these lands, there was a great poet – Al Ma'arri. He was a great blasphemer, but he managed to survive persecution because he was so popular among the people. He cared for the beasts of the world and did not eat meat, or drink honey or milk. He was blind and spoke against bringing children into such a world of horror. He claimed that all religions were created by men and that they are only useful to those seeking power over the masses. This White Quill seemed to respect him and went on about how Al-Ma'arri's thoughts were not burdened by his culture or times, and how powerful his poetry and philosophy was. All I will say is that a man like that now would spend more time running than doing his poetry, ha ha!

So, he died a long time ago, but in between his death and the fall of Ma'arra, there sprang a conclave of scholars, artisans and poets, who looked to Al Ma'arri as inspiration. They tried to keep their locations secret, but not their message that the inhabitants of this world cannot progress without the freedom to imagine and the freedom to question. They were rumoured to have many scribes who were busy harvesting the knowledge of the globe and placing it into books. They took in the rejected and despised, and created a vast underground network. They called themselves the Wavering Flame.

When the Crusaders came to Ma'arra, they ravaged their base and their members were scattered throughout the desert. They tried to cling to their books, but over time, many were lost.

But not this one! For a very reasonable fee, it is yours my friend.

The Cursed Knight and the Sage

You are right to be curious about this. It not just any shard of metal on a necklace. This story is a curious one, you may need to sit down, as your legs look tired. Here, take this stool… only 3 dinars… Ha ha! Why the frown, of course I joke.

2 dinars.

… Ha ha ha! That was another joke that we use around these parts. It is fine to laugh, why are you so serious. Hey, that stool is mine and is not for free use!

Now listen, this is the tale of the one who calls himself... The Saviour of Souls.

When the Crusaders took Jerusalem, the Jews took refuge in their great synagogue. It was set to fire and, as the poor souls inside began to burn and choke, two men were seen to escape. One of these men had a dark past, and the other was a man who had planned to build a powerful Golem to protect the city. His hopes were lost to the flames.

One of the crusaders, he who had hurled the first torch upon the synagogue, had met these men before and gave chase with his retinue. The story of this knight has passed into legend. It is said he was cursed with leprosy and left the western lands to seek favour with God and find a cure. When he arrived in the holy lands he set about slaying all who would not bow to his cross, hoping each infidel sent to Hell would count toward the blessings he would receive from Heaven. He captured one man, the Sage of Durban. He was a healer and a philosopher and managed to do what no one had done before – bargain with the cursed knight for his life. He was given a number of days to brew a potion that would cure the leprosy.

The cursed knight had gathered a number of followers that flayed the skin from their own backs and shrieked and clamoured to burn any infidel. The Sage of Durban approached the knight's throne of skulls, through rows of his impaled victims and the curses of his followers, and knelt before him. He presented a cloth, damp and reeking of herbs. The Sage of Durban said that the knight was to wrap the cloth

around the handle of his executioner's blade, and when he was to sweat, the medicine would enter his body and alleviate his curse.

The cursed knight did this throughout his day of beheadings and the next day he believed he was cured. The Sage of Durban, thinking he would be freed, was brought to the knight. The knight spoke to him and thanked God for delivering the sage to him after he had been unflinching in his work. However, the knight had an adviser whose heart was hardened towards the Muslims. He convinced the knight that if the sage was the only one who could cure him, then he was also the only one who could kill him, as no man on the battlefield had been able to do so. This man, with the tongue of a serpent, convinced the knight. The knight drew his great sword. The Sage of Durban tried to reason with him, but failed. Knowing that he was going to be put to death the sage took the cord from his neck that contained a locket in the shape of a book.
He told the knight that if he was beheaded, and his head placed on a silver tray, he would translate some of the secret language that the book was written in, and so the knight would be able to translate the rest. The knight immediately ordered a silver tray to be bought.

The Sage of Durban prayed as the knight dipped his blade into holy water. Before the blade fell, the sage told the knight that he must place his head facing the knight before he opened the locket and read from the tiny book. This he did. The Sage of Durban 's head was placed on the tray and the knight opened the locket. The pages were covered in dust, and so the knight blew on the pages, sending the dust away and into the air. The Sage of Durban's head smiled and the knight began to read from the book. The sage's head gargled a response. The knight became angry, but the Sage of Durban had died before he could react. He was furious, but was coughing from the all the dust.

The next day, his leprosy had returned.

And so, that was his past before he reached Jerusalem and started the chase through the burning streets. His dark helmet and mail covered his rotting flesh, but his death from his cursed disease was close. He sought to slay as many non-believers as he could to increase his rewards before he met his judgment. During the chase between the men, the Jew's guard drew his blade and their swords clashed. Although the cursed knight's broad blade was made from heavy iron, the defender wielded a sword made of Damascus steel. It bit into the cursed knight's weapon and shards of it scattered through the dust and ash.

And one of those pieces is this one, hanging upon this necklace. What happened to the men you ask? Well, no one knows how the Jew and his guard ended up, but the cursed knight is still seen, more than one hundred years since that day. In the greatest battles, where soldiers wade through blood, he has been sighted. It is said he has given up on all sides. It is said that he believes that for those that he kills, the just will go to Heaven and join the ranks of the armies of God, while those who are evil will burn in Hell. He wanders with his flock and seeks only to slay for his Lord.

The Enchanted Queen

No, it is not from a donkey's mane! Are you as stupid as my dim-witted porter? It is a lock of hair, fashioned into a bracelet, and it comes from a great queen. This is an heirloom, passed down along an ancient family line, and it came to me after the death of one of its members. I will tell you a story of it.

Many centuries ago, a king built a great walled city that hugged the mountains in a valley now forgotten. His daughter became queen of his subjects when he passed, because he had no male heirs and no living wife. She joined her people into one and they swore an unshakable loyalty to her and her blood, as she had ended the chaos of their lives and given them a sole focus – to obey her every word for peace.

A great alchemist came to her city one day, and beseeched her to grant him an audience. He wooed her with his tales from faraway lands and of mystical rites. When he offered her marriage so that her line could continue, she accepted.

Every day he would lecture the people about the necessities of order and their luck that they were born in a kingdom with such a gracious queen. He spoke of the horrors of the world outside and the insane philosophies that were destroying it.

One man in the crowd listened and felt wonder, not terror, at the thought of the freedoms beyond the walls. He escaped.

The queen was furious. Nothing like this had ever happened to her before. She would lie awake at night, her thoughts turning to how she would staunch this loss to her kingdom. Then, on a dark night, she realised that her king was missing. Looking out of her grand windows, she saw him as he made his way to the mountains that lined the valley, and into a crack that she had never noticed before. She strapped on her falchion and followed.

The hewn tunnels of the mountain were winding and dark, but she continued on until she heard voices. It was her king speaking to a woman. The talk was of usurping her rule and enslaving her people. Enraged, the queen leapt upon the other woman and struck a deep blow with

her blade. She was captured before she could raise the sword to her king.

So, the people of the kingdom were enslaved and led down into the bowels of the mountains where they toiled for their new masters. They were fractured into the religions of their ancestors and made to compete with one another in the hope that their burdens would be lessened. The usurping woman was not killed by the blow from the queen, though her spine was damaged. She could not walk and became a huge mass of flesh that was carried on a great palanquin. Her only joy was to see the queen suffering.

The queen was bound to a throne, a mockery of her title. The king, the alchemist, melded her feet to stone. Her people would die rather than take orders from another, so she was kept and beaten into giving them the tasks that the usurper planned for them. The queen was pregnant with the alchemist's child, and he hoped to keep her only until she gave birth to a more malleable heir.

That child was born, and he fathered a daughter that I knew. She told me that story because it was a story her father told her – it was her first memory. She was then placed into a sack and mounted on a steed because she was in danger, like the rest of the kingdom she was meant to inherit. It carried her far from her city to the great steppe – the land of the Khans. She never knew what happened to her father or grandmother. She called her the Enchanted Queen.

I met her when I travelled along the Silk Road. She told me her story and gave me this bracelet before she died. I promised her that I would find her lost city, and place her son on the throne. That is him, here, he is my porter for the time being.

Perhaps you are better to be entrusted with that quest than me. And if you find the city, you may have this hair bracelet, plus Amin, for a very, very low price.

The Ghouls of Ma'arra

What? You mean this rusted blade? I did not think that anyone would be interested in that. I will give it to you, my friend, after I tell you how I came to have it. I would be happy to be rid of it.

…No, I'm fine. It is just that some of this insufferable dust has gotten into my eyes…

You may be surprised to know that there is an interesting story behind this blade. Not too long ago, a man stumbled into the bazaar, causing a great commotion. He collapsed near my stall, just a bit behind where you stand now. He was clothed in tattered rags and dust and blood. When he fell he had knocked the stump where his arm used to be and blood began weeping into his bandages. That knife you now hold, it was in his one hand before he crumpled to the ground.

He was raving about a horror in the mountains, and I pushed my way through the crowd to hear what he was saying. It was a tale of blood and darkness.

Some mothers will tell their ill-disciplined children a story about the ghouls of the desert to scare them into behaving. I had never thought the tales were true, but there was a time when there were men who ate the flesh of men in the lands ravaged by war. It was many years ago, when the crusaders were marching towards Jerusalem and were not used to the country they had come to occupy. Many fell from disease and hunger and so were savage in their dealings with those they conquered. During the siege of Ma'arra, some were driven to eating those they captured. When the army moved on, some soldiers stayed behind. It is said that their minds had fallen into a dark insanity, brought on by realising that their deeds would never be redeemed before God, the sole purpose for them to take up the cross and join the crusade. As they continued to believe that they were destined for Hell, they became more beast than man. The desolate mountains were where they lived, preying on travelers and reveling in the pain and horror of their victims - for they had given their souls to Satan and his djinn.

So these tales were more than just scary stories to be told to the young - the man that stumbled into the market confirmed it.

Through his bloody beard he told of how his caravan thought to travel through the mountains, rather than take a longer path around them. Creatures that bore the shape of men, but were faster than any human he had ever encountered before, attacked them. They had skin like leather and eyes of red and black, and their teeth were all pointed.

They could have killed them all, but they wanted them alive.

The armless man's voice wavered into a shriek when he began telling of how they were brought to a village in the mountains and kept underground in rock-hewn dungeons. Some women were trapped in gibbets, the metal bars not even allowing them room to turn. They were to give birth to mewling infants that were taken from them to be locked away, fattened, then eaten while their flesh was still tender. Their captors viewed them with an uncaring eye, and if a guard took out his frustrations upon them, they were encouraged or ignored by their inbred brothers. Tongues were cut if prisoners spoke, and fed back to them, along with any bones and gristle from a slaughter. When it came time for the killing to begin, the captives were bound and hung upside down so that their throats could be cut, yet many were still alive when the dismemberment began.

The man was shaking by this point of his tale, and began thrashing upon the ground. He had suffered many wounds and they were obviously infected. The crowd did not hear of how he escaped before he died.

The worst thing he said was that these ghouls not only used his friend's meat for themselves, but that he saw them trade human flesh to merchants bound for the cities of the East and West.

So keep that knife. Whenever I see it, I think of the despair in that poor man's eyes. He had seen that Hell is right here, existing beside us, and that there is no need for devils while humans inhabit the lands.

The Apostles of Sobek

You truly have a discerning eye. The bearers of a torch such as this should not be spoken of, but you have gained my trust. Only because you ask of it will I tell you how I came across this; but! I implore you to keep your knowledge away from the ears of the pious – for your own safety.

Many years ago, I was leading a caravan from Damascus to Antioch. Not too far into our journey, a great sandstorm led us astray. It was dark when we came across some great and ancient ruins. A scholar travelling with us noted that they could have been built by the old Romans and we had probably reached the outskirts of Baalbek. We set up camp under the crumbling idols as the wind screeched through the night.

It was hard to sleep, with the skittish animals making noises and the dust managing to find its way into my nostrils, but I soon drifted into a light slumber. I awoke to find the very earth shaking! Then I was falling. I landed heavily, followed by sand that I had to dig myself out of in the moonless dark. I could hear screams from my companions and the sound of the frightened donkeys. I tried to edge my way towards them, but became lost. I could feel jagged rock beneath my hands and feet, and decided I must be in some underground cavern or tunnel. When the noise became more distant I began to panic! I could not even see my hand in front of my face and I felt I would be lost and left to starve in the choking depths of the earth. I was overcome and knelt to the ground, hoping I was going to wake up from this horrible dream.

The sounds of my companions suddenly became screams, and stopped with the abrupt clanging of metal upon stone. I tried to remain still and shrink into the darkness. Footsteps, crunching across the cavern floor, were approaching. A flickering of light appeared, distant, but approaching quickly. I could now make out that I was in a boulder strewn cavern, the walls reaching to a roof that disappeared into the shadows. I shuffled and hid among these boulders, hoping to conceal myself from whoever – or whatever – was approaching.

Then I saw them! Slumped figures in the rags of pilgrims, led by a stout priest of a religion I have never seen. As they passed I saw he carried a staff that rattled with the bones and teeth of giant creatures. In his other hand I saw a sack, overflowing with the possessions of my friends – may God punish him! I could not see his face, though. His head was covered in a pointed hood and a wrapping of rusted mail lay under it. The followers carried stumps of hacked flesh - man and animal alike. My heart throbbed in anger and sadness. I resolved to follow them, and avenge my friends.

The tunnels twisted, but I managed to stay close because they held the only source of light. As the time crawled on, I noticed the air becoming warm and damp. A hewn archway opened into a hall blazing with torches. I kept behind the arch, watching and waiting for my moment to strike. There were many worshippers in the cavern, and they parted like a wave before their priest. He strode to an altar, a creation in the form of a nightmare. A great cauldron bubbled at the top of a ziggurat, and this was where he was headed. Rising over the cauldron, towering over the ragged worshippers, were bones assembled into the head of a monstrous crocodile. My eyes were drawn to the cavern walls. As the light flickered across them, the shadows would be chased away to reveal what could only be the skeletons of terrible beasts. These creatures swam within the rock, frozen in the states of their deaths. It was wondrous, yet this vision shook my mind with its terrible reality.

A low chanting bubbled from the worshippers, as the flesh carried by the attackers of our caravan was thrown into the cauldron. Vapours escaped, rising up into the mouth and nostrils of their blasphemous idol.

I realised that I would not be able to avenge my friends at that time. With one of their torches, I fled through the tunnels, taking the route that seemed to lead upwards. But I was followed. As I crested the threshold to daylight I extinguished my torch in the sand, then crouched above the entry to those dark passages. A hooded figure emerged, but he could not bring himself to stand in the sunlight.

After many more adventures, I found my way back to the civilised places of the world. And this torch is a reminder of the darkness that waits among the savages and infidels far from here. I feel much better with sharing my tale with you. I feel you are honest and, for your patience, I will take one dinar off this torch if you choose to buy it now.

Further Reading

Internet links

The Crusades – wikipedia.org/wiki/The_crusades: Just from reading this and clicking on any links that seem interesting, a reader can gain an excellent insight into the crusades and the empires and peoples that were involved in them.

The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night – wikisource.org/wiki/The_Book_of_the_Thousand_Nights_and_a_Night/Volume_1: This is an internet resource for Richard Burton's translation.

The Hammer of Witches, or the Malleus Maleficarum – www.malleusmaleficarum.org: The actual document that Inquisitors used to hunt witches. A bit past the time of our setting, but informative nevertheless. Click on the link to First Part Index and follow the questions and answers to everything a Christian witch hunter would ever need to know.

The Skeptics Annotated Bible – skepticsannotatedbible.com: The Bible on the internet with a number of quick links to sections such as violence, injustice and cruelty and intolerance. Should a character decide to justify a good deed with scripture, there's even a small section for that too.

The Skeptics Annotated Qu'ran – skepticsannotatedbible.com/quran/index.htm: The same, easy to navigate interface used for the Bible, but for Islam's holy book.

Books

By Sword & Fire by Sean McGlynn: This book explains why the history of the Middle Ages is drenched in blood and the wails of the condemned. The author goes so far as to claim that the age of chivalry is a myth – and makes an excellent argument. The sections where the author reveals his dark, dry humour is another reason why this book is worth reading.

The Crusades Through Arab Eyes by Amin Maalouf: Follows the internal machinations and history of the Islamic empires that fought against the crusaders. It offers a fascinating insight that is often missed because the wealth of information about Europe's empires often overshadows it.

On Killing by Dave Grossman: An insight into the mind of a soldier from ancient through to modern times. It explains how most humans have an aversion to killing, and how only intensive training, distance and the dehumanisation of enemies can overcome it. The well-researched parts and stories are fascinating, such as when soldiers cannot kill and the psychological harm it can bring.

The Assassins by D.B. Bartlett: An in-depth look at the Nizari sect, who, for such a small group, struck a great fear into the hearts of the Franks, Muslima and Mongols alike.

The Thousand and One Nights Vol 1 & 2 by Husain Haddawy: One of the best translations of the Arabian Nights around, by a fluent speaker of English and Arabic. It is much easier for the modern reader to digest than Richard Burton's tome.

H. P. Lovecraft Omnibus III – The Haunter Of The Dark: The uncaring terror of the beings that slumber in darkness and outside of reality, waiting to be called upon by insidious cults, is a theme that the mythos of H. P. Lovecraft shares with The Nights of The Crusades. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Lovecraft was fascinated with the One Thousand and One Nights during his childhood.

The Book of Saladin by Tariq Ali: The second in a series of novels set in the lands of the Muslims during the Middle Ages. It is fascinating in its depiction of courtly and everyday life and the breaking of taboos. It covers a wide range of characters, from warlords and slaves, to noblewomen and scribes.

Atmosphere

The following albums could be a starting point for the soundtrack to your tale, as they are infused with Middle Eastern darkness and fantasy. However, as music is generally a question of taste, it is entirely up to you as to what creates the best ambience for your Tale.

Saurian Exorcisms: Karl Sanders

Kingdom of Heaven: Soundtrack

Conan the Barbarian: Soundtrack

Hilal: Arkan

Salam: Arkan

Those Whom the Gods Detest: Nile

The Epigenesis: Melechesh

Mother Tree: Eulen

Conjuring a Character

Rolling laughter wafted over the walls after the disastrous battle, followed by the heads of Ridwan's soldiers. Firuz lent against his tower as silence gripped the city. Like the sound of dropped melons, the heads cracked over the stone paths. Firuz saw fear in the eyes peering from their windows, as well as something else. It was despair. Contrary to what they had been led to believe, the Franj were stronger than them.

Rain started to pour, and it continued for many days.

The situation worsened. In the Tower of the Two Sisters, Firuz received a man covered in filth and gasping for breath. Tears washed the grime from his cheeks as he slumped against two of Firuz's soldiers.

When the sagging figure saw Firuz he blurted, "They found one of us. Yusuf was roasted right in front of my eyes. I could not watch as they laughed and threatened all of those from our lands. Aziz told me later that a starving fanatic ate him. I will never return to that hell!" The man pointed a crooked finger towards Firuz, "For many months I have been with them, trying to please the Emir so I could return to my family. I am returning to them now, Captain, I do not care how I am punished."

Firuz's men looked to him for an order. He felt for the informer. In peaceful times, only the zealots could not get along. However, in times of war, if the enemy of the moment were Christians, then the followers of the Messiah in these lands were thought of as sympathising with them. The enemy forces would also treat the Arab and Turkish Christians with wariness, as they believed their loyalty would be to their countrymen. Firuz wondered how the Christians could live like that; never feeling that they belonged in the only place they called home.

The Book of Names

English

Male	Female
John	Emma
William	Moude
Lambert	Rois
Ricard	Agneta
Henry	Isabele
Gilbert	Johanna
Rauf	Sabine
Edmund	Aweline
Matheu	Alice
Clement	Cecilia

German

Male	Female
Heinric	Gertrude
Wilhelm	Elisabeth
Dideric	Methilda
Rudeger	Hedewig
Gerhard	Heidi
Sifrid	Agnes
Theodore	Berta
Johann	Helga
Ludewig	Hildeburg
Albert	Judith

Ancient European

Male	Female
Drustan	Latharna
Meadoc	Morag
Oengus	Eamhhair
Cathal	Slainte
Eogan	Kalliope
Uallas	Xanthia
Yorgos	Eydis
Auslag	Gudrun
Sichar	Steina
Valdis	Rakel

French

Male	Female
Arnaud	Adeline
Eustache	Ava
Gaidon	Emersende
Dreu	Clarisse
Gris	Gaude
Malgar	Jehanne
Guichard	Marie
Hughes	Loyse
Rabel	Martine
Bernier	Juliote

Byzantine

Male	Female
Leo	Augustina
Dulcitius	Clementina
Martyrius	Leontia
Maximinus	Patricia
Regino	Vigilantia
Viator	Sidonia
Francio	Iustina
Innocentius	Helena
Ignatius	Aetheria
Cyril	Alexandria

Jewish

Male	Female
Aaron	Esther
Shlomo	Saris
Sulam	Chana
Baruch	Beila
Ya'qub	Yeintil
Ezekiel	Rashida
Elijah	Sara
Isaac	Layla
Sahl	Dhahab
Yekuthiel	Faras

Turkish

Male	Female
Togrul	Chichek
Alp	Khatun
Malik	Serakh
Kilij	Gulbahar
Kerbogha	Selime
Duqaq	Zuhal
Yaghi	Yenge
Otemish	Zeliha
Mawdud	Kutlu
Zahir	Saljan

North African

Male	Female
Hisham	Baraka
Al-Qasim	Idlal
Hakim	Rashida
Bilal	Aziza
Rashid	Mahjuna
Tariq	Mayya
Wadih	Zahra
Jalid	Gislan
Siraj	Kanza
Zurar	Nuzha

Arabic

Male	Female
Muhammad	Aisha
Ahmad	Jamila
Ibrahim	Hafsah
Umar	Sajah
Ishaq	Rahil
Isa	Zubaydah
Ja'far	Marajil
Yusuf	Qabul
Sulayman	Safwah
Da'ud	Nuwwar

Persian

Male	Female
Ali	Mahisti
Abdullah	Mihri
Nasir	Nihani
Hassan	Bija
Nizar	Jamali
Ismail	Khadija
Jalal	Zaynab
Imad	Bidili
Rostam	Khanzada
Shahrbaraz	Tajlu

Ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian

Male	Female
Arnuwandas	Pudukhepa
Mutallu	Ahassunu
Sapalulme	Ishtar-rabi-at
Enlil-bani	Shiptu
Nur-shamash	Mkhait
Ur-gula	Odjit
Ishtup-sin	Nanu
Buhazum	Irisi
Akhom	Akana
Shushu	Sekhmet

Step 1 Background

Describe your recent life before your time in the Tale. As a guideline, a new character is assumed to be in their late teens or early twenties.

Questions to round out your character:

Whyare you here? Do you hate a particular group and wish them destroyed? Or do you simply seek knowledge?

How did you get here? Have you travelled far and endured hardship? If so this would affect you in subtle ways.

Where were you raised and where do you call home now? A child's early life affects them greatly, and you are no different. What are some of your memories of growing up?

What do you want to accomplish? Answering this question will give the Tale-Weaver a direction and character arc for you.

Al begins his character. He wants to create a pilgrim-soldier, Aldric, that has travelled from England to the Holy Land for fortune and to seek penance for a dark secret. He was born to toil in the mud and recently his wife and child have died during a difficult childbirth. He blames his lack of piety for bringing God's wrath to his loved ones. Aldric has believed what he has heard from the pulpit - that only joining the war against the infidels can erase his sins and grant him passage to Paradise!

Step 2 Attributes

Start with 20 in each Attribute. Add 10 to two of your character's Attributes. Your character also gains another 10 points to spread across any Attributes you wish.

A character that has below 10 in a score is pretty much bed ridden.

Bulk: (B) is how stout you are, and will be a combination of muscle, fat and equipment. It helps protect yourself against damage, but slows you down. If your Bulk is over three times your muscle, you cannot move without help.

Muscle: (M) describes how strong you are and how well you can move your Bulk.

Awareness: (A) is a measure of how quickly you notice shifts in your environment as well as being able to find something you're looking for. It is mainly a combination of the senses of sight and hearing, but could also include smell, touch and taste.

Health: (H) is an indicator of how strong you are internally. It is used to test things like your immune system, endurance and ability to recover from damage.

Intelligence: (I) measures how easily you grasp new information and skills, as well as being able to recall details from your memory.

Passion: (P) describes how strong your emotions are, whether as tools for empathy or weapons of hate. It also describes your strength to follow through on your beliefs. You may believe you are invincible in combat or will not sway from the terrors that dwell within a dark cavern after you have decided to journey through it; however your Passion will decide how much you can take before giving up.

A Bonus (B) is worked out by dividing the Attribute/Discipline/Trait by 10.

Experienced characters

At the Tale-Weaver's discretion, you may conjure a more advanced character. Simply add as many points as is deemed appropriate into your Attributes and Disciplines. This may be more appropriate for Story Characters.

Al adds 20 to each of Aldric's Attributes. As Al plans on Aldric being a formidable fighter, he adds 10 to Aldric's Muscle and Health. He then adds an additional 5 to his Muscle and 5 to his Passion.

Step 3 Allegiances

Each character begins with 1 Faction, 1 Religion, 1 or 2 Classes and 0 to 1 Organisations.

Signifiers

You will have behaviours and items that reveal your Allegiances to onlookers. These are a part of character creation, and more may be gained as you progress.

Faction

Your Faction is an indicator of which side you are on, as well as your general appearance, language and customs.

The details display an array of starting languages, as well as some historical heroes and villains from the Factions for further research.

You start with a maximum of 2 languages. You are fluent in your first language, and speak with an accent for any others. Some languages will always be accented, and these are displayed in brackets in the entries.

For instance; a character born to a French knight in the Kingdom of Jerusalem may know the languages of French (Arabic), whilst his father may have possessed French (English). The major religion of the Faction is also detailed, because characters belonging to a Faction and not sharing the majority religion will inevitably suffer from some form of discrimination.

The Signifiers for a Faction are both accent and look – whether through fashion, accent or physical features.

The Franj

'Franj' or 'Frank' is the name given to the crusaders by the peoples of the Middle East. In fact, they knew Western Europe as Franjistan. The term encompasses the cultures from the Kingdoms of England and France, as well as the Holy Roman Empire.

Languages: English, French, German, Latin, (Greek)

Renowned figures: Richard the Lionheart, Phillip Augustus, Conrad of Montferrat, Frederick I Barbarossa

Major religion: Roman Catholic

The Rum or Byzantines

Known as the Rum by the Muslim empires and the Byzantines by the Western Europeans, their Empire lay as a barrier between the two major forces of The Crusades. Although part of an alliance with the Franj for the majority of the period, the difference of religion between the Factions made it a fickle one.

Starting languages: Greek, Latin, Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac.

Renowned figures: Niketas Choniates, John II Komnenos, Alexios V Doukas

Major religion: Greek Orthodox

The Saracens

Originally a term used to describe peoples living in the deserts near the Roman province of Arabia, it soon encompassed all Arabs. By the time of The Crusades "Saracen" meant "Muslim" in European chronicles.

Starting language: Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Aramaic, Armenian, Hebrew, Kurdish.

Renowned figures: Salih Al-Din, Kilij Arlan I, Zengi, Baibars, Fakhr al-Mulk Radwan

Major religion: Sunni Islam

Religion

This is the major philosophy you hold that will sometimes transcend your place of birth, though it is more often than not something you will be born into. The following are the major religions that dominated the area, but there were many others during the time of the Crusades. If you want to be a Cathar, Nestorian, Sufi or any other minority religion that existed at the time, it is best to apply that to your Organisation.

You can choose to hold one of the following religious Signifiers: Religious Icon, Religious Speech.

You can only have 1 Religion.

Roman Catholicism: The religion of the crusaders and most of Europe. It was based in Rome and had the Pope as the spiritual head. Priests are one type of Roman Catholic cleric. Roman Catholics of the time included Hugues de Payens and Peter Bartholomew.

Orthodox Christianity: The religion of the Byzantines and many Christians of the East. There is a leader for each national line. Priests are one type of Orthodox cleric. Orthodox Christians of the time included John Camaterus and Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger.

Sunni Islam: The main religion of the Islamic Empire in the Holy Lands. Mullahs are a common type of Sunni cleric. Sunni Muslims of the time included Ibn al-Nafis and Usama ibn Munqidh.

Shi'ite Islam: The numerous minority of the Islamic Empire, based in Egypt until Salih Al-Din conquered it. Imams are one type of Shi'ite cleric. Shi'ite Muslims of the time included Hassan-i Sabbah and Nasir al-Din al-Tus.

Judaism: Jews were split among the lands of Europe, Byzantium and Islam. Like every other religion, there were also internal schisms, most notably between the Rabbinites and the Karaites. Rabbis are a common type of cleric in Judaism. Jews of the time included Da'ud Abu al-Fadl and Maimonides. A Jewish character has the option of choosing Hebrew in addition to her Faction's languages.

Paganism: This is a blanket term that covers a wide variety of religions and belief systems, yet they will be lumped together as Pagans (or idolators, infidels or witches) by the majority of cultures in the Holy Land. If relations between the three religions that all share a common prophet is difficult at best, the chances of a Pagan being welcomed by them is next

to nothing. Pagan numbers are small in the Holy Land, but could include Slavs, some Mongols, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists. They may also include ancient Babylonian and Mesopotamian cults that worship old gods. Regardless, they will need to hide their affiliations in the daylight, as they will be deemed as immoral blasphemers by most authorities. A Pagan has the option of choosing an ancient language of the player's choosing (such as Gaelic, Sumerian or Akkadian) in addition to her Faction's languages.

Class

Within Nights Of The Crusades, the term 'Class' is viewed in the political sense. It is the rank and peer-group that you hold within a society as defined by your social or economic status. A merchant will often share more things in common with a foreign merchant than a neighbouring cleric, and so characters from the same class will have, at times, camaraderie beyond their cultures and religions. An example is the practicality of 'chivalry', which was often little more than a gentleman's agreement between noble-born knights (which spanned countries and empires) to ransom noble lives when taken prisoner, rather than to slay them like they would the foot-soldiers and crossbowmen of the peasantry.

You can begin with up to 2 classes assigned to you. For example, a crusading squire could be a Warrior/Noble. You can then be given up to three Signifiers chosen from your Classes. You can spread an additional 10 points between any Disciplines linked to your Classes.

Warrior

You fight, and you are good at it, whether you consider yourself a defender of the weak or a bandit who simply takes what you can through force of arms.

Signifiers: Charm, Rough Features, Bladed Weapon or Blunt Weapon or Bow, Shield.

Linked Disciplines: Melee, Projectile

Outcast: If you don't quite fit into the accepted mould of society you are an Outcast. Beggars, thieves and followers of un-orthodox religions are all in this brotherhood at the edge of civil life.

Signifiers: Field Garments, Charm, Hood or Mask or Scarf, Hidden Pouches, Dagger, Rope, Hook, Torch, Uncouth, Rough Features, D5 portions of Alcohol or Hash.

Linked Disciplines: Projectile, Subterfuge

Cleric

Positions of power and authority within a religion are where you reside. Considered by your flock to have a greater insight into the works of your god(s), you have a high position in religious societies.

Signifiers: Religious Icon, Clerical Robes, Classical Religious Language (Catholic=(Latin), Muslim=(Arabic), Orthodox=(Greek), Jew=(Hebrew)).

Linked Disciplines: Communication, Command

Noble

Generally a class that is born into, you may one day lead warriors into battle or take a position in the decision making of your realm. You enjoy all the fineries that your nation has available to it. However, the beauty of all the fine art and food is balanced by the deadly political games that must be played to ensure your position of power.

Signifiers: Fancy Apparel, Horse, Fine Manners, House Slave (no initial Cost).

Linked disciplines: Any two.

Peasant

You are a caretaker of the countryside and the animals within it. Your simple lifestyle is threatened by war and the moods of your rulers, as both have an impact on the land you rely on to survive.

Signifiers: Field Garments, Farm Tool (Long Improvised Weapon), Rough Features, Uncouth.

Linked Disciplines: Projectile, Communication

Merchant

You are the owner of a trading caravan, or a market stall at the bazaar. Wealth drives you and, if you are successful, this will lead to a path of power and influence.

Signifiers: Fancy Apparel, Abacus and Scales, Cart, Field or House Slave (no initial Cost), Donkey (no initial Cost), Chest.

Linked Disciplines: Mercantile, Communication

Labourer

You craft the objects you sell. Blacksmiths, butchers, fletchers, carpenters and builders are all types of Labourer.

Signifiers: Trade Tools (Short Improvised Weapon), Leather Apron, Rough Features.

Linked Disciplines: Knowledge, Mercantile

Artist

Expressing your thoughts through mediums such as dance, poetry, calligraphy or illuminating manuscripts is your specialty.

Signifiers: Entertainer's Outfit, Hood, Veil, Mask or Scarf, Charm, Musical Instrument, Uncouth, Fine Manners, Writing Kit.

Linked Disciplines: Subterfuge, Communication

Scholar

The quest for knowledge in a particular field of study could be your aim. Or you may choose to learn about the world and its cultures, becoming a fine diplomat. Physicians, scientists, emissaries and architects are other examples of scholars.

Signifiers: Writing Kit, Language Mastery, Candles, Scholar's Garb, Mortar and Pestle, D5 Healing Herbs.

Linked Disciplines: Knowledge, Communication

Organisation

An Organisation is a small, usually insular, group that shares a goal and can include members of many different cultures, religions and classes. It is not compulsory for you to be a member of an Organisation. Types of Organisations are many and varied and include the following types.

Guilds, gangs and orders: Most members share a common class. Examples include the White Quills, the various Knightly Orders, the People's Front of Judea and the Wavering Flame.

Sects: All members share an unorthodox strain of a common religion, and hold it very strongly. An example is the Nizari (or Assassins) sect of Shi'ite Islam.

Clans and houses: All members come from the same extended family and can trace their roots back to common ancestors. Examples include the Marid Ibn'Iblis clan of Ghouls.

Signifiers: Secret Symbol, Common Features, Uniform.

Aldric is from England originally, so Al selects Franj for his Factional Allegiance. He also decides that Aldric should be aligned to the Roman Catholic religion and gives him two classes: Warrior/Peasant. He distributes his class points into Melee and Communication (5 to Mel, 5 to Comm). Aldric has no Allegiances to any Organisations. Al decides that his languages will be English (French), and he carries rosary beads to denote his religion. He also is uncouth, has rough features and a sword from his classes.

Step 3 Disciplines

Add 5 to each Discipline. Then spread another 5 points among any Disciplines of your choosing.

Al adds 5 to all of Aldric's Disciplines. As well as a warrior, Al plans on Aldric rousing a following once he reaches the Holy Land. He grants Aldric an additional 3 points in Melee and 2 points in Command.

Communication: (Com) describes how well you can get a point across to another character or a group of people. It involves knowledge of the subtleties of body language and etiquette.

Knowledge: (Know) is the accumulated information you have picked up from your travels. A knowledgeable character may not gain much glory, but your contributions will help friends and confound enemies.

Command: (Cmd) is the power you hold over others. Whether you use fear, love, promises or respect to gain followers, you will have the ability to understand how groups think and how to use popular opinion to increase your standing, whilst marginalising the followers of your enemies.

Mercantile: (Merc) describes how easily you can gain and hold onto wealth. Having the right contacts, knowing how different markets and bazaars work, as well as cultural sensitivities to various goods are all necessities of a good merchant.

Melee: (Mel) is how easily you can attack your enemies and defend yourself in close combat. Physical control, weapons training and coordination are some of the minor skills of this discipline.

Ranged: (Rng) is the ability to launch an object to hit a distant target. Knowledge of trajectories and predicting a quarry's movement, whether subconscious or not, count to how well you perform at this Discipline.

Subterfuge: (Subt) measures your proficiency in getting something you want from another character that does not want you to have it. There are many minor skills involved in the process, but they all involve misdirection and cunning.

A Bonus (B) is worked out by dividing the Discipline by 10.

Story characters

To conjure a character for use within a story, follow the above steps but you may add Magic as one of your Disciplines. Magic is an exception to the normal Disciplines, in that a starting character will begin with 0 Mag rather than 5.

Magic: (Mag) is how well you can manipulate the supernatural forces that make up the aether of stories.

Step 4 Abilities

For each 10 in a Discipline you may gain an Ability from that Discipline.

Al sees that Aldric has a Melee value of 13 and a Communication value of 10. He grants Aldric the Sure Strike and Joke Abilities.

Step 5 Traits

Now that you know your character Attributes and Disciplines you can fill out your character's Traits.

Agility

(Ag) is how fast you can move.
Agility = M – B

Fatigue

(Ftg) is how many rounds you can undergo stress to your body without tiring. Fatigue = HB

Action points

(AP) allow you to perform Actions in a Combat. Action points = (Ag<0) = 1; (Ag=1-30) = 2; (Ag=31-60) = 3; (Ag=61-100) = 4; (Ag>100) = 5.

Reflexes

(Ref) describe how quickly you can react to danger. Reflexes = (A + Ag) / 2

Melee Proficiency

(MP) is how adept you are at hitting and wounding an enemy in close combat.
Melee Proficiency = Ref + Mel

Melee Defence

(MD) is a measure of how easily you can avoid injury during close combat.
Melee Defence = Ref + Mel

Ranged Proficiency

(RP) is how adept you are at hitting and wounding an enemy from a distance.
Ranged Proficiency = Rng

Ranged Defence

(RD) is a measure of how easily you can avoid injury when being a shot at.
Ranged Defence = Ref + Blocker Protection

Damage Threshold

(DT) is how wounded you need to be before you will consider retreating from a fight.
Damage Threshold = (B x 3) + Protection

Argument Power

(AP) is how easily you can persuade others. Argument Power = Com

Opposition

(Opp) describes how staunch your beliefs are. Opposition = P x 3

Wealth

(Wlth) is how much disposable treasure and coin you have access to.
Wealth = Merc

Step 7 Dispositions

By referencing your Passion value you can fill out your Dispositions.

Your Dispositions represents the emotional bonds shared between you and groupings of people, and whether you are inclined to protect or harm them. You can add groups and by increasing or decreasing their values, you will be able to better deal with them.

At least two groups need to be described at all times and these can be drawn from any Factions, Religions, Classes or Organisations. The value of the favour (positive value) or hate (negative value) is an indicator of how much you seek to protect or harm the group. A number of points, equal to your Passion score, must be spent on the groups at character creation, and 1 point of Passion equals one point of favour or hate. If you gain or lose Passion, the values of your Dispositions may be modified by the same amount when you are next assigning experience.

Disposition

Your Disposition towards any individual can be worked out by looking at the values that apply to all of their Allegiances that you have knowledge of. Disposition starts at 0 and your favour towards the other character's Allegiances raises your Disposition while hated Allegiances will lower it. Whatever the result, positive or negative, is your total Disposition towards the character.

Aldric's Passion is 20 so Al sets about defining his loves and hates. He assigns 5 Favour to the Peasant Class, 5 Favour to the Franj and 10 Hate to the Noble Class. So if he comes across a Templar Knight (who he knows has Allegiances of Franj, Catholic, Warrior, Noble, Knights Templar). Aldric's will be at Disposition -5 towards him.

Step 8 Equipment

Add an amount of equipment that is double your Wealth.

As Aldric's Wealth is 5, Al grants him a buckler at a Cost of 10.

Step 9 Characteristics

You may choose to give your character 1 more Characteristic.

Religious speech

You throw phrases from scripture into everyday conversations. This characteristic may taken multiple time, each time choose a Religion. Your Appeals will be Easy (5) against Clerics and serious believers (ie, characters with Disposition (+30) or over) of the same Religion.

Signifier for: Religion

Rough features

You look like you have gotten into a lot of fights or have been exposed to harsh environments. Your Appeals will be Easy (5) against characters that also have Rough features.

Signifier for: Warrior, Labourer, Peasant, Outcast

Uncouth

Manners are not your strong point. You often laugh loudly, swear, and care little about offending those that think of themselves as regal or of a higher station than you. If you are dealing with a character that is also Uncouth and you have a positive Disposition towards her, your Disposition is doubled. If you are dealing with a Noble or a character with Fine Manners and their Disposition towards you is negative, then their Disposition is doubled.

Signifier for: Labourer, Peasant, Outcast

Classical religious language

This is almost like a secret code amongst scholars of religions, as the classical languages are very different to those spoken in everyday conversation.

Signifier for: Choose one: Catholic=(Classical Latin), Muslim=(Classical Arabic), Orthodox= (Classical Greek), Jew= (Ancient Hebrew).

Fine manners

You have an interest in the etiquette of royalty. Mastery of the secret rules of royal courts is a long and arduous path, but you know enough to get by without offence. If you are dealing with a character that also has Fine Manners and you have a positive Disposition towards him, your Disposition is doubled. If you are dealing with a Peasant, Outcast or a character who is Uncouth and their Disposition towards you is negative, then their Disposition is doubled.

Signifier for: Noble

Language mastery

You have trained hard to master a second language, and speak it fluently.

Signifier for: Scholar, Merchant or Noble

Secret symbol

You may have your skin marked with the signs of your affiliations or perhaps you know a secret greeting or bear a piece of jewellery with the mark of your Organisation. Appeals with others that share your Secret Symbol are Easy (5).

Signifier for: Organisation.

Common features

You share a striking resemblance to one of your relatives, who is better known or more notorious than you. Describe your relative to the Tale-Weaver, as occasionally you may be confused with this character. Your relative's Allegiances will be used instead of yours when a character that knows your relative is getting an Impression of you.

Signifier for: Organisation (House or Clan)

Al thinks that Aldric has all the Characteristics he needs, so doesn't apply any extras.

Step 10 Review

For the conjuring to be complete, ensure that the details on paper match the background you have created for your character. Go back through steps 2-9 until it does.

Character Sheets

Name:	**Languages:**
Faction:	
Religion:	**Characteristics:**
Classes:	
Organisation(s):	**Dispositions:**

Attribute	Value	Abilities
B		
M		
A		
H		
I		
P		

Discipline	Value	Abilities (Path in brackets)
Comm		
Know		
Cmd		
Merc		
Mel		
Rng		
Subt		
Mag		

Traits		Value
Ag	*M-B*	
Ftg	*HB*	
APs	*Refer to pg 22*	
Ref	*(Ag + A) / 2*	
MP	*Ref + Mel*	
MD	*Ref + Mel*	
RP	*Rng*	
RD	*Ref + Blocker Protection*	
DT	*B x 3*	
AP	*Comm*	
Opp	*P x 3*	
Wlth	*Merc*	

Injuries and Traumas:	Equipment

Name:	**Languages:**
Faction:	
Religion:	**Characteristics:**
Classes:	
Organisation(s):	**Dispositions:**

Attribute	Value	Abilities
B		
M		
A		
H		
I		
P		

Discipline	Value	Abilities (Path in brackets)
Comm		
Know		
Cmd		
Merc		
Mel		
Rng		
Subt		
Mag		

Traits		Value
Ag	*M-B*	
Ftg	*HB*	
APs	*Refer to pg 22*	
Ref	*(Ag + A) / 2*	
MP	*Ref + Mel*	
MD	*Ref + Mel*	
RP	*Rng*	
RD	*Ref + Blocker Protection*	
DT	*B x 3*	
AP	*Comm*	
Opp	*P x 3*	
Wlth	*Merc*	

Injuries and Traumas:	Equipment

The Marketplace

Firuz navigated the moonlit streets to the small stable where he would meet with Marid. His back ached from the weight of the steel he carried, and his slow progress only compounded it. Men from the city patrols lay slumped, snoring, by the fronts of deserted market stalls, some reeking of forbidden drinks. Firuz wondered at their discipline when he saw one lying in the middle of his path. He forgave this soldier though, when he saw the crushed skull and torn clothing. It was a corpse catapulted from the Franj's camp. He moved on, quickening his pace, keeping to the shadows, and not wanting his severed head to perch over the battlements should he be caught with the stolen weapons from the Emir's armoury.

He edged his way into the stable, being careful not to disturb the horses. It was the third stall along where Marid waited. Moonlight carved deep shadows along Marid's scarred face, but struggled to reach the two men behind him. Firuz squinted to see, but knew the deal would be conducted in darkness. Marid would not risk any curious guards seeing a flicker of flame and deciding to investigate.

"Is this all of it?"

Firuz nodded. He kept hold of his large sack however. "Do you have what I need?"

Marid motioned with his gloved hand. The two men – scarves obscuring their faces – slithered into the light. Marid said, "Let us relieve you of your burden, Captain. My friends here will ensure the deal concludes honourably."

The situation was tense because of the danger both parties had put themselves in. They had to go through with it now though. Firuz would never have power over these men again. He carefully placed the sack on the dirty floor, though clinking the steel was unavoidable. Marid winced as it pierced the silence.

Wealth

At the beginning of every month, your Wealth is reset to your Mercantile value. Purchasing items, being robbed, bribing someone and selling goods are just some ways in how Wealth may be modified throughout the month.

Item Rarity

Merchants will have a number of common goods available to sell and these are defined by the Tale-Weaver. If you are looking for an uncommon item, you will need to find it or wait for it to be delivered. This involves passing a Mercantile or Communication test, taking into account the item's Rarity. If the test is passed then a merchant selling the item can be found. You can only search for an item once a day and it will take a few hours. The difficulty is variable depending on where you are looking. The following table gives a general guideline for the Tale-Weaver.

Location	Difficulty modifier
Port city	Easy (20)
City	0
Town	Hard (10)
Rural village	Hard (30)
Desert	Hard (50)

Once a seller is found, it is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide whether the merchant is established in the area and receives a reliable supply of the item. If so, you may always approach the merchant for the item; if not you will have to search for it again. As a general rule, if the Rarity of an item is over Hard (10), it is particularly uncommon and will not be readily available to buy.

If you buy an item then the Cost (after any Haggling) is deducted from your Wealth. Characters within the group can combine Wealth between themselves to create a pool from which to purchase goods. They will lose whatever they contribute to the purchased item until the beginning of the next month, just as if they had bought it themselves.

High-Quality

Some items are defined as High-Quality. The specifics of High-Quality items are described in their entries.

Selling

If you want to sell something, you must find a buyer. It will be more difficult to sell common second hand goods than to find a buyer of used rare items. To find a buyer the selling character needs to pass a Mercantile test taking into account the item's Rarity. However, the Rarity of the item is reversed, so an item with a Rarity of Hard (20) becomes Easy (20) when looking for a buyer. The item's selling price is equal to half of its Cost. You may only make this test once a day, and only if you come across other characters that are open to trading with you.

The plight of the poor

The short life of the poor and destitute is one of toil and starvation. If your Wealth ever falls below 5, you will fall into poverty. The morning after your Wealth was reduced to below 5, roll a D10 on the following table an amount of times equal to the difference between your current Wealth and 5, to determine the Misfortunes that beset you. The Misfortunes are cumulative (ie; if you roll Bad Food twice, your Ag will be reduced by 10) and apply until your Wealth is raised above 5, unless the entry says it is permanent. If your Wealth drops further, you will have to repeat the process as the next day breaks.

Another character can grant you charity to raise your Wealth. Each point of Wealth bestowed upon you will raise yours by one.

You will not have to roll on this table if you have already rolled on the Profits of the Prosperous table this month.

D10	Result
1	**Bad food:** You have been forced to scrounge through garbage to find something to eat, and the rotten food has given you food poisoning. Ag reduced by 5.
2	**Criminal:** You have turned to thievery to survive. Make an A test whenever you enter a crowded area of a town or city. If it is failed then you attract the attention of the authorities, and are set upon by the two guards that have been hunting you.
3	**Bad Sleep:** You have been forced to sleep in street gutters or places where wild creatures roam. The fear of being set upon in the dark reduces your time to sleep. Your Ref is reduced by 5.
4	**Stinky:** Your lack of access to a bathhouse has made your clothes stink and given your skin a crust of dirt. Dispositions towards you are reduced by 5.
5	**Depressed:** Your plight begins to weigh upon your shoulders, will you ever have enough to survive? P reduced by 5.
6	**Blame:** You are disgusted or envious of the fanciful lives led by some, who would only need to share some of their wealth to alleviate the wretched lives of you and your fellow gutter rats. Permanently add D10 Hate to Merchants or Nobles.
7	**Compassion:** You have been exposed to the poor and marginalised people of area you dwell in, and they have welcomed you. Permanently add D10 Favour to a minority Allegiance in the area.
8	**Sick:** Your immune system has been run low by lack of good food and hygiene. H reduced by 5. Also, your group mates must pass an H test or they will contract your illness and lose 5 H until the end of the month.
9	**Wrong Crowd:** You have involved yourself with a gang of criminals and take part in a robbery. Make an A test. On a success gain D5 Wealth, on a fail roll immediately on the Injury table.
10	**Addiction:** To drown your sorrows you must take one Portion of Alcohol or Hash at the beginning of every day. If you do not have access to it at the beginning of a day, apply the effects of Wrong Crowd.

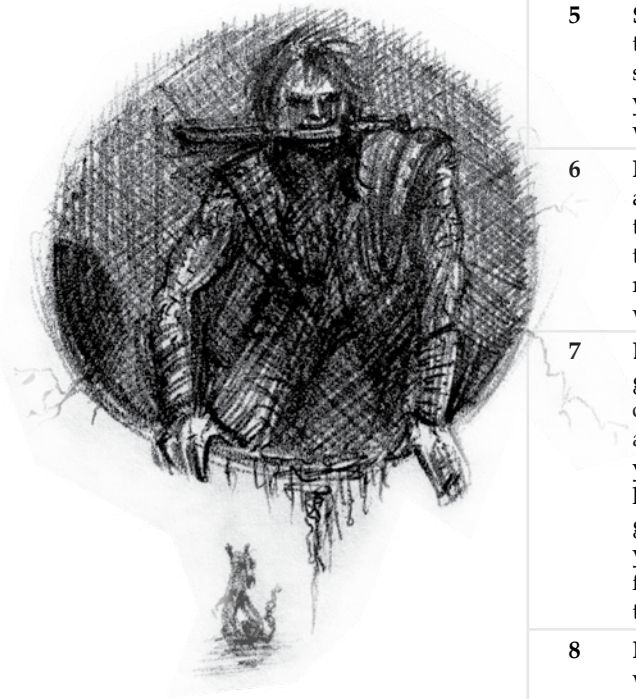
The profits of the prosperous

At the beginning of every month, your Wealth is reset to your Mercantile value. There may be times when your Wealth is above your Mercantile, and so you will lose points from your Wealth at the turn of the month. If this happens, your coin purse has become bloated and you can roll a D10 on the following table for each 10 points of Wealth you lose.

D10	Result
1	**Banquet:** You throw a grand banquet and invite everyone you know, increasing the favour of those close to you. However, you spend your remaining riches on the feast and so you cannot make any further rolls on the table for this month. Choose an Allegiance; anyone from the city where the banquet is held that holds this Allegiance will be at Disposition (+20) towards you for the rest of the month. All characters in your party permanently add 1 point of Favour to each of your Allegiances for every 10 points spent on the banquet. Eg; Sahib (Allegiances of Saracen, Sunni, Merchant, Warrior) has 39 Wealth at the end of the month, yet his Mercantile value is only 15; a difference of 24. He rolls on the table and scores a 1 – Banquet! So the other characters in his party gain 2 points of Favour to each of Sahib's Allegiances, but he loses his next roll on the table.
2	**Robbed:** Thieves have tried to take advantage of your new riches, but have been repelled. For the next month, if you are attacked by any Outcasts in an urban area where you have spent most of this month, there is a 50% chance that 2 Guards will come to your aid.
3	**Rubbing the right shoulders:** You have involved yourself with the elite of your area and are invited to some of their events. Make an Awareness or Communication test. It is Easy (20) if you share the same Faction or Religion as the area's majority, or if you are of the Noble class. On a success you manage to fit in well, and your status within the area is increased for a while. All Appeals within the area are Easy (10) for the next month.
4	**Opulent accommodation:** You have treated yourself to some of the best food and bedding money can buy. You are very well rested. Your A is increased by 5 for the next month.
5	**Money Begets Money:** Your wealth has enabled you to spend time furthering your business endeavours. For every 10 points of Wealth you have left, increase your Merc by 1. You will not have any further rolls on the table.
6	**Arrogance of wealth:** You begin to feel entitled to your money, believing it to be deserved because of your faith, martial prowess or cleverness. Your P is increased by 5 for the next month.
7	**Disdain:** You begin to look down upon the wretched lives of the beggars that infest the streets. If only they did some honest work and prayed harder – like you! Permanently add 5 Hate to Outcasts or Peasants.
8	**Opulent friends:** You have been exposed to the rich and powerful of the area you dwell in, and they have welcomed you. Permanently add 5 Favour to a majority Allegiance in the area.
9	**Excellent diet:** Your immune system is at its best from all of the good food and hygiene you've been exposed to over the last month. H increased by D10 for next month. B and M increased by 1 permanently.
10	**Royal Physician:** You have managed to find yourself in the company of a Royal Physician, or someone who knows him. You are granted a consultation and his advice allows you to take steps to prevent hurting yourself. You may ignore the next D5 Injuries you receive over the next month.

Dwellings

The place that you call home is dependant on your Mercantile Bonus. At the beginning of each month consult the following table. This will be your dwelling until the end of the month. You may combine your MercB with others in your group so that you can all live in better accommodation. If this is done, then the character with the highest Merc is ultimately responsible for the dwelling and the decisions made about it. You must decide the whereabouts of your dwelling, such as the city it is closest to. It would be worth taking into consideration the setting of the Tale before you make a decision on this location.



MercB	Dwelling
1	**Hovel:** You either live in a poorly made shanty in the wilderness or a peasant village, or have found an abandoned spot to live in close to the city, such as under a bridge. You will find it hard to sleep easily, as the rats, and worse, will often come for you at night.
2	**Dirty Inn:** You live in a small room that contains a filthy mattress and a wooden stool in a very poor part of a city, outside of any defensive walls (if the city has them). You are also very close to either stables or the privy and so there isn't much fresh air in your room.
3	**Fair Inn:** You live in an area of the city that has a rounded mix of ruffians, but also labourers and travellers (who the ruffians prey upon). Your room is small, but clean enough, and an important bonus is that the innkeeper appears trustworthy and the lock on your door is secure.
4	**Quality Inn:** You are a neighbour to well-heeled travellers and merchants, and the tavern below your room is one of the finest in the city. The guards or watchmen make frequent visits to the inn, so any brawling is kept to a minimum. A mirror, set of drawers and, more importantly, a chest with a heavy lock that can only be opened by a key you hold, accompanies your large bed.
5	**Small House:** You have your own suite in a large building in one of the working class quarters of the city. Although you may not be able to sleep in past the time of the rooster crowing or the call of the muezzin, your room is spacious enough for the double-bed, chest, mirror and wardrobe that it contains.
6	**Medium House:** You have a house that offers more privacy than an apartment, as it only shares one wall with your neighbour who is likely to be an artisan or merchant that can afford such accommodation. Your two rooms or levels give you space to hold your large bed, chest, wardrobe and mirror as well as a study or workshop where you can sell your wares straight onto the street or quietly practice your craft.
7	**Large House:** You have a freestanding house with three rooms and a garden. The neighbourhood contains some of the most successful merchants of the city. Along with the master bedroom and study described above, you will have an extra room filled with artwork or artifacts from your adventures. Your steward tends the garden and the areas of your home you allow him access to, then resides in a small shanty by the garden during the nights. It is worth producing a character sheet for your relatively inexperienced steward, as it is likely he will be with you for a long time and grow into his role. However, he is ultimately under the control of the Tale-Weaver unless your Command value is above 50.
8	**Fief:** Due to the acknowledgement of the lord of the city for your help with his floundering economy, you have been granted land and become a vassal for him. Your land is a short distance from the city and may border either a river or a field fit for crops or orchards. All the luxuries of your large house, including your steward, are brought to your estate, along with another three rooms (a kitchen, armoury and stewards quarters) and a great hall for entertaining. The borders, cottagers or slaves that fish or sow your fields dwell in a small village that borders the place where they toil throughout the day.
9	**Fortified Manor:** You add a high, stone wall around your fief and divert water or dig out the earth into a moat to add a further layer of protection. A bridge, manned by the men of your garrison, is the only entry point into your estate. Within the walls you build a tower and barracks for the garrison that guards your manor. The tower rises above your walls and contains a dungeon should you need it. Although your garrison appears loyal, they are ultimately devoted to the lord of the city rather than to you, unless your Cmd is above 75.
10	**Ship:** Rather than hire boats for sea voyages, you buy your own. This is a galley, bought from the Byzantines and powered by oars and sails. Its crew of around 70 has you to look to for their orders. Should you wish to send your ship on a merchant voyage and not accompany it, decide how many months it will be away. At the beginning of the next month after its return add D10, multiplied by the amount of months of the voyage, to your Wealth.

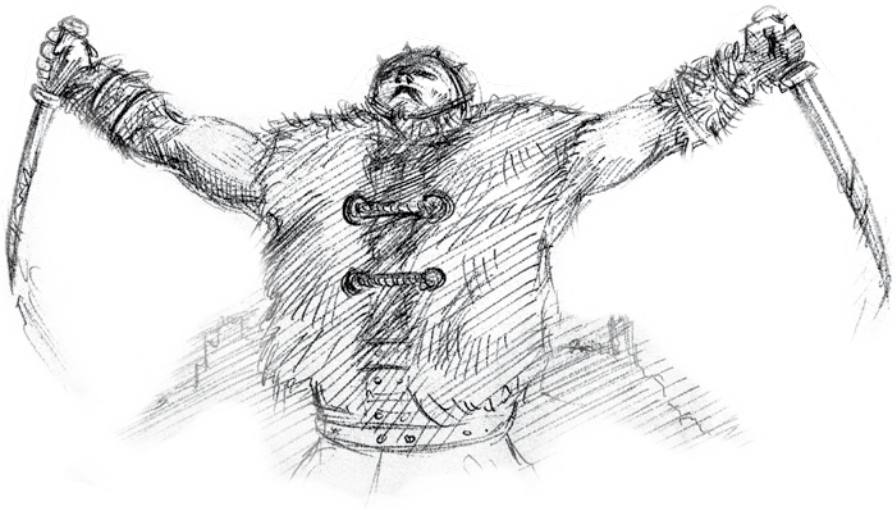
Weapons

A weapon with Reach 1 can only be wielded in one hand. If the weapon is Reach 2 or 3 you may choose to use one or both hands when wielding it. A Reach 4 weapon is always Long.

Reach describes how close an enemy needs to be in metres for you to Melee Strike them.

Range describes the minimum and maximum metres away an enemy needs to be for you to Ranged Strike them.

'Signifier for' describes what Allegiances are associated with the weapon and Special rules are any bonuses applied while wielding it.



Short weapons

Includes short swords, daggers, hatchets and other weapons around 30cm long or under.

Rarity: Easy (50)
Cost: 2
Reach: 1
Range: 2-15
Signifier for: Outcast
Special rules: Concealment

Improvised weapons

Includes clubs, staffs and anything else that could be made from wooden junk and converted to a weapon.

Rarity: Automatic in an area of wood or other refuse (ie; at the Tale-Weaver's discretion).

Cost: 0
Reach: 2 for a small club or 3 for large staff
Range: 4–15
Signifier for: Outcast, Peasant
Special rules: Unwieldy, Crude

Bladed weapon

Includes swords, scimitars, axes and other weapons that have a metal edge. They can be wielded in one or two hands and are around a metre in length.

Rarity: Easy (20)
Cost: 10
Reach: 3
Range: 4-10
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Slice

Blunt weapon

Includes hammers, maces, morning stars and other weapons that are used for bludgeoning an opponent. They can be wielded in one or two hands and are around a metre in length.

Rarity: Easy (20)
Cost: 8
Cost: 10
Reach: 2
Range: 3-10
Signifier for: Warrior, Labourer or Cleric
Special rules: Concussion

Great weapons

Includes executioner's swords, great axes, giant hammers and other metal weapons that can only be wielded in two hands and are well over a metre in length.

Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 15
Reach: 4
Range: 5-10
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Unwieldy, Heavy, Long

Pole-arm

Includes spears, tridents, halberds and other thrusting weapons that can only be wielded in two hands and are well over a metre in length.

Rarity: Easy (0)
Cost: 7
Reach: 4
Range: 5-20
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Long

Long Bow

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 10
Reach: 1
Range: 5-100
Signifier for: Warrior, Peasant or Outcast
Special rules: Reload (1), Unwieldy, Training (Rng50).

Bow

Rarity: Easy (10)
Cost: 6
Reach: 1
Range: 5-75
Signifier for: Warrior, Peasant or Outcast
Special rules: Reload (1), Unwieldy, Training (Rng30).

Cross Bow

Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 15
Reach: 1
Range: 5-150
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Reload (5), Unwieldy.

High-Quality weapons

A High-Quality weapon makes every Strike Easy (10). Its Rarity has an added Hard (30) and its Cost is doubled.

Signifier for: Noble, Warrior or Merchant

Special rules

Concealment: Any test to try to hide this weapon from another character is Easy (20)

Unwieldy: All Melee Strikes are Hard (10)

Crude: This type of weapon can never be High-Quality

Slice: When rolling for injuries, if this weapon has hit an area of only one layer of light armour or no armour, add 1 to the result. This is ignored if the target is wearing more than one layer of armour on the area hit.

Crushing: When rolling for injuries, if this weapon has hit an area of only one layer of heavy armour or no armour, add 1 to the result. This is ignored if the target is wearing more than one layer of armour on the area hit.

Heavy: When rolling for injuries, add 3 to the result if it has hit an area of no armour, 2 for one layer of light armour and 1 for one layer of heavy armour. This is ignored if the target is wearing more than one layer of armour on the area hit.

Long: This weapon cannot be used on opponents within a range of 1 metre and needs two hands to wield.

Reload (X): This weapon needs to be prepared after each Ranged Strike. This uses an amount of Action Points equal to the Reload value and uses up 1 Fatigue point.

Training (Discipline X): This weapon requires training before it can be used effectively. If you are below the value of the Discipline described in the brackets, all Strikes with the weapon will be Hard (20).

Armour

Heaviness is the amount added to your Bulk. Protection is the amount added to your DT.

Body armour

Gambeson

A Gambeson or padded jack is a quilted jacket, worn as armour separately, or combined with mail. Usually constructed of linen or wool, the stuffing varies, and can even be scrap cloth or horsehair.

Type: Light on chest, abdomen and arms
Rarity: Easy (10)
Cost: 20
Heaviness: 5
Protection: 12
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Underlay (brigandine, hauberk, scale or lamellar cuirass)

Brigandine

A brigandine is a cloth vest, generally canvas or leather, lined with small oblong steel plates riveted to the fabric. It could be decorated with heraldry and patterns, or simply left plain.

Type: Light on chest and abdomen
Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 30
Heaviness: 8
Protection: 24
Signifier for: Warrior or Outcast

Leather vambraces

Since the Roman Empire, forearm protection has been used in the form of tubular coverings, from archers to foot soldiers.

Type: Light on arms
Rarity: Easy (30)
Cost: 10
Heaviness: 2
Protection: 6
Signifier for: Warrior or Labourer

Leather gloves

Used to protect the wearers hands.

Type: Light on hands
Rarity: Easy (30)
Cost: 6
Heaviness: 2
Protection: 5
Signifier for: Outcast or Labourer

Padded chausses

These were similar in construction to a gambeson, but designed to protect the legs.

Type: Light on legs
Rarity: Easy (20)
Cost: 20
Heaviness: 5
Protection: 12
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Underlay (mail chausses)

Hauberk

This is a shirt of mail armour. Construction is time consuming and the materials used were expensive, so common soldiers are rarely equipped with a hauberk.

Type: Heavy on chest, abdomen and arms
Rarity: Hard (30)
Cost: 60
Heaviness: 20
Protection: 50
Signifier for: Warrior or Noble
Special rules: Underlay (Brigandine, laminar bands)

Scale or lamellar cuirass

Scale and lamellar armour consists of small metal scales or plates (lames) that are laced together in rows. Lamellar armour differs from Scale by not needing a backing for the scales and is slightly more flexible. Both were very common from Byzantium to the Far East.

Type: Heavy on chest and abdomen
Rarity: Hard (25)
Cost: 50
Heaviness: 16
Protection: 44
Signifier for: Warrior

Laminar band

These are strips of metal placed over the vulnerable areas of the torso. When a laminar band is purchased, decide whether it will be fitted to cover the chest or abdomen. Another piece must be bought to protect the other region.

Type: Heavy on chest or abdomen
Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 16
Heaviness: 4
Protection: 10
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Attachment (Brigandine, Hauberk)

Mail gauntlets

Sometime coming attached to a hauberk, mail gauntlets add protection to the hand.

Type: Heavy on hands
Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 20
Heaviness: 4
Protection: 10
Signifier for: Warrior

Splinted vambraces

A leather forearm guard, reinforced with lengths of metal.

Type: Heavy on arms
Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 20
Heaviness: 4
Protection: 10
Signifier for: Warrior

Mail chausses or skirt

Mail leg protection offers a flexible defence against attackers, though the expense is too much for all but the wealthiest of knights.

Type: Heavy on legs
Rarity: Hard (30)
Cost: 60
Heaviness: 20
Protection: 50
Signifier for: Warrior or Noble

Mail coif

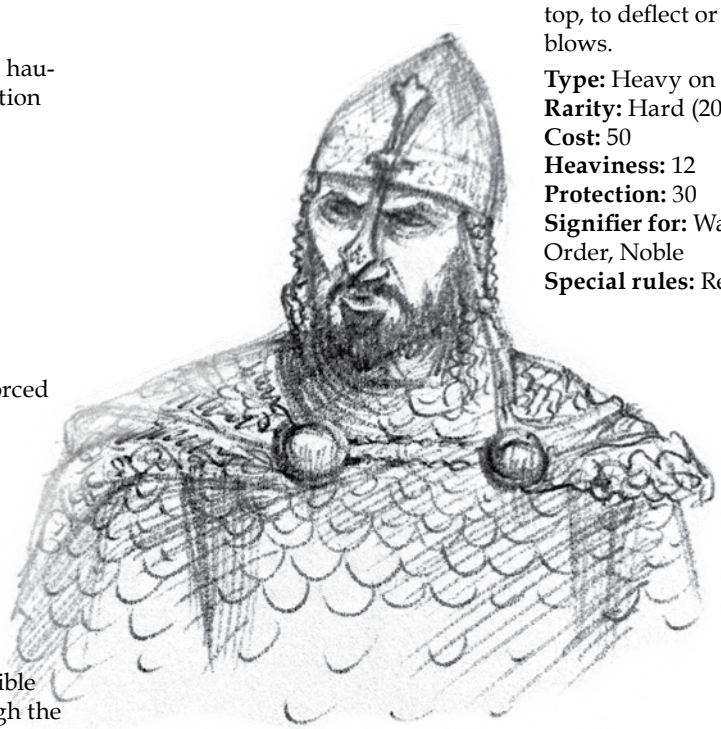
This covers the head and neck and leaves a full field of vision to the wearer.

Type: Heavy on head and neck
Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 30
Heaviness: 6
Protection: 20
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Underlay (aventail, helmet)

Aventail

An aventail is a flexible curtain of mail on a helmet that extends to cover the neck and shoulders. The mail could be attached to the helm by threading a leather cord through brass rings at its bottom edge.

Type: Heavy on neck
Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 16
Heaviness: 2
Protection: 6
Signifier for: Warrior
Special rules: Attachment (helmet)



Leather coif

A coif is a cap that covers the entire head, but the face. Leather coifs offer some protection against attacks to the skull.

Type: Light on head
Rarity: Easy (30)
Cost: 4
Heaviness: 2
Protection: 4
Signifier for: Outcast, peasant or Labourer
Special rules: Underlay (any helmet)

Helmets

Cervelliere

A metal cap or pot.

Type: Heavy on head
Rarity: Easy (10)
Cost: 20
Heaviness: 5
Protection: 10
Signifier for: Warrior

Great helm

In its simplest form, a great helm is a flat-topped cylinder of steel that completely covers the head and has only very small openings for the eyes and mouth. Later designs have a more curved design, particularly on the top, to deflect or lessen the impact of blows.

Type: Heavy on head
Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 50
Heaviness: 12
Protection: 30
Signifier for: Warrior, Knightly Order, Noble
Special rules: Restrictive

Nasal helmet

A nasal helmet has a domed or raised centre, usually formed around a basic skull-cap design, with a single protruding strip that extends down over the nose to provide additional facial protection.

Type: Heavy on head
Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 24
Heaviness: 8
Protection: 20
Signifier for: Warrior

Kettle hat

This is a type of helmet made of steel in the shape of a wide-brimmed hat. There are many design variations, but the only common element is that the brim can keep the sun out of the wearer's eyes.

Type: Heavy on head
Rarity: Easy (0)
Cost: 20
Heaviness: 7
Protection: 16
Signifier for: Warrior

Blockers

Shield

A shield is meant to intercept attacks, either by stopping projectiles such as arrows or redirecting a blow from a sword, mace or axe to the side of the shield-bearer.

Type: Heavy on hand and arm that wields it, as well as head, neck, chest and abdomen.

Rarity: Easy (10)
Cost: 20
Heaviness: 10
Protection: 30
Signifier for: Warrior
Special: Cumbersome

Buckler

The buckler is a simple yet effective defence against attack, often combined with a short sword, falchion, or rapier.

Type: Heavy on hand that wields it
Rarity: Easy (0)
Cost: 10
Heaviness: 4
Protection: 10
Signifier for: Warrior

High-Quality armour

High-Quality armour doubles Protection and halves Heaviness. Its Rarity has an added Hard (20) and its Cost is doubled.

Signifier for: Noble

Special rules

Underlay (X): This armour can worn under the types detailed in the Underlay value. Characters can only wear up to two layers of body armour.

Attachment (X): This type of armour can only be worn over the top of, or attached to the armours detailed in the Attachment value. Characters can only ever wear up to two layers of body armour.

Cumbersome: Agility and Reflex tests are Hard (10) and movement rates are reduced by 1 metre.

Restrictive: This type of armour impairs a character's senses in some way. Awareness is reduced by 10 while wearing it.

Attire

Attire may be worn under armour.

High-Quality attire

Only attire that has a High-Quality alternative can be purchased or found as High-Quality. A High-Quality item's Rarity has an added Hard (20) and its Cost is doubled.

Fancy Apparel (choose Faction)

This may include the heraldry and colours of a noble family or merchant guild. Made from exotic fabrics like silk and gilded in silver or gold, with extravagant jewellery and scents, wearing this will make you stand above the brown, drab masses of the lower classes. High-Quality Fancy Apparel makes any Cmd tests Easy (10).

Rarity: Hard (40)
Cost: 40
Special rules: Disposition (+10) for Merchants, Nobles and Faction members during Negotiations.
Signifier for: Noble or Merchant and Faction

Clerical Robes (choose Religion)

A common sight amongst monasteries and mosques and often made of simple fabrics. However, a High-Quality Clerical Robe doubles as Fancy Apparel.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 30
Special rules: Disposition (+5) for followers of the religion during Negotiations.
Signifier for: Cleric and Religion

Scholar's Garb

Often a robe of simple fabrics, Scholars Garb is comfortable to travel and study in, and fashion is not part of its design. High-Quality Scholar's Garb does take fashion into consideration and so grants you Disposition (+10) towards Nobles.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 10
Special rules: Disposition (+5) for Scholars during Negotiations.
Signifier for: Scholar

Field Garments

These are basic, drab and practical pieces of clothing that will not get in the way of hard work. High-Quality Field Garments may include furs or patterned cloaks and grant you an extra Disposition (+5) for Peasants and Outcasts.

Rarity: Easy (50)
Cost: 1
Special rules: Disposition (+5) for Peasants and Outcasts during Negotiations.
Signifier for: Labourer, Peasant or Outcast

Religious icon

These may take the form of crosses, rosary beads or a crescent moon and star stitched onto your cloak. A High-Quality Religious Icon grants you an extra Focus (Reflection5).

Rarity: Easy (20)
Cost: 2
Special rules: Focus (Reflection5)
Signifier for: Cleric and Religion

Charm

These are necklaces that can hold anything you consider lucky, from rabbits' feet to the symbol of a saint to the ears of slain enemies. There is no such thing as a High-Quality Charm.

Rarity: Easy (50)
Cost: 1
Special rules: Easy (D10) to one roll per day (may be selected after the initial roll is taken).
Signifier for: Warrior, Artist, Labourer, Peasant or Outcast

Leather Apron

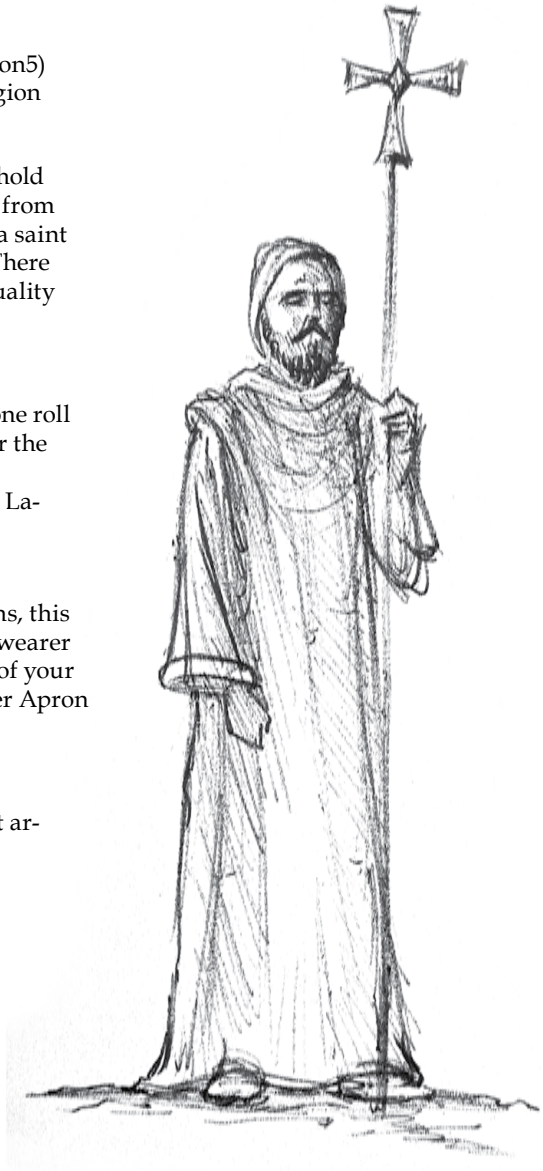
Generally used by blacksmiths, this leather garment protects the wearer from the harsh environment of your trade. A High-Quality Leather Apron grants 5 Protection.

Rarity: Easy (10)
Cost: 10
Special rules: Counts as light armour on chest and abdomen.
Signifier for: Labourer

Uniform (choose Organisation)

Many orders, sects and guilds unite their members through use of a uniform. This can take the form of patches over clothing, such as the red cross over the brigandines of the Knights Templar, or a simple item worn proudly, like the white feather of the White Quills. A High-Quality Uniform grants an extra Disposition (+5) to members of the Organisation.

Rarity: Hard (50)
Cost: 5
Special: Forbidden (members of Organisation, unless you are a member of the Organisation), Disposition (+5) for members of the organization during Negotiations.
Signifier for: Organisation



Hood, veil, mask or scarf

When you need to conceal your identity, you need to cover your face. A High-Quality piece will grant you an extra Disposition (+5) for Outcasts. These may be used to Conceal your Identity.

Rarity: Easy (50)
Cost: 1
Special: Disposition (+5) for Outcasts during Negotiations, Concealment (10).
Signifier for: Outcast

Hidden pouches

Built into your clothing, a hidden pouch can produce an item at a moment's notice. These may be used to Conceal Short Weapons and smaller items.

Rarity: Easy (10)
Cost: 1
Special: Concealment (20).
Signifier for: Outcast

Entertainer's Outfit

Whether a gaudy jester suit or a macabre carnival costume, an Entertainer's Outfit will make you stand out from the crowd. A High-Quality Entertainer's Outfit will allow you to gain an extra D5 Wealth whenever you succeed at acquiring money from a performance.

Rarity: Hard (30)
Cost: 15
Special: Anytime you test to earn Wealth or favour from a performance, you may roll twice and choose the better result.
Signifier for: Artist

Possessions

High-Quality possessions

Only possessions that describe a High-Quality alternative can be purchased or found as High-Quality. A High-Quality item's Rarity has an added Hard (20) and its Cost is doubled.

Torch

A wooden haft with fabric that is easily lit by fire, a torch also doubles as a Short Improvised Weapon.

Rarity: Easy (50)
Cost: 1
Special rules: Light (20)

Rope

Has a length of 50 metres.

Rarity: Easy (50)
Cost: 1

Hook

Can be attached to a length of rope and is useful for scaling walls.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 2
Special: Makes climbing a wall or other tall object Easy (10).
Signifier for: Outcast

Slave

Readily available from most city and port markets, slaves are often used for hard labour or house servants.

Special: See the entry for Slave in Appendix 1 for details.
Signifier for: Noble or Merchant

Abacus and scales

These are tools for measuring weight and making calculations easier to perform.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 10
Special: Focus (Mercantile and Knowledge skills 5)
Signifier for: Merchant or Scholar

Cart

Made of a wooden carriage supported by two wheels, a cart is used for transporting goods. However, you will have to buy a horse or donkey to pull the cart.

Rarity: Easy (20)
Cost: 50
Special: Mount (6), Carry (600), Unstable (20), Out-Of-Reach (20)
Signifier for: Labourer, Peasant or Merchant

Chest

A heavy wooden box with a hinged lid. Locks may be attached to it.

Rarity: Easy (20)
Cost: 10
Special: Carry (20)
Signifier for: Merchant

Locks

A lock can make the difference between keeping your valuables and losing them. They vary in strength depending on how much you want to pay for one.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: Varies
Special: For each point of Wealth spent on the cost of a lock (which can then be Haggled over), Lockpick attempts will be made Hard (the cost of the lock).
Signifier for: Locks costing over 25 are Signifiers for Merchants and Nobles.

Musical Instrument (voice also counts, the Cost is for the training involved)

These include harps, fiddles, flutes, tambourines, lutes, ouds, zithers and singing. A High-Quality Musical Instrument grants the characters trying to Rally an Easy (10) bonus to their P test.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 10
Special: Focus (Socialiser Abilities 5), Rally
Signifier for: Artist

Labourer's Tools

These include instruments such as tongs, hammers and an anvil. High-Quality Labourer's Tools grant an extra Focus (Metallurgist Abilities 5).

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 3
Special: Focus (Metallurgist Abilities 5)
Signifier for: Labourer

Mortar, Pestle and Distiller

These are a great help in mixing substances. A High-Quality Mortar and Pestle grant an extra Focus (Physician and Alchemist Abilities 5).

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 3
Special: Focus (Physician and Alchemist Abilities 5)
Signifier for: Scholar

Forge (hiring for one day)

A forge can be found anywhere that has a permanent blacksmith, which are the majority of towns and cities.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 1
Signifier for: Labourer

Writing Kit

This includes a wooden box that contains parchment, scroll cases, quills and ink. A High-Quality Writing Kit grants an extra Focus (Mercantile and Knowledge Abilities 5).

Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 20
Special: Focus (Mercantile and Knowledge Abilities 5)
Signifier for: Scholar or Merchant

Special rules

Unstable (X): Striking from this is Hard + the Unstable value

Out-Of-Reach (X): Melee strikes against a character on this possession are Hard + the Out-Of-Reach value. Weapons that are Reach 4 ignore this rule.

Mount (X): A human character can ride on top of this possession and counts as Mounted when she is. It can carry a number of humans equal to its Mount value.

Light (X): A source of light that illuminates the area around it at a radius equal to its Light value.

Carry (X): Holds an amount of Bulk equal to its Carry value.

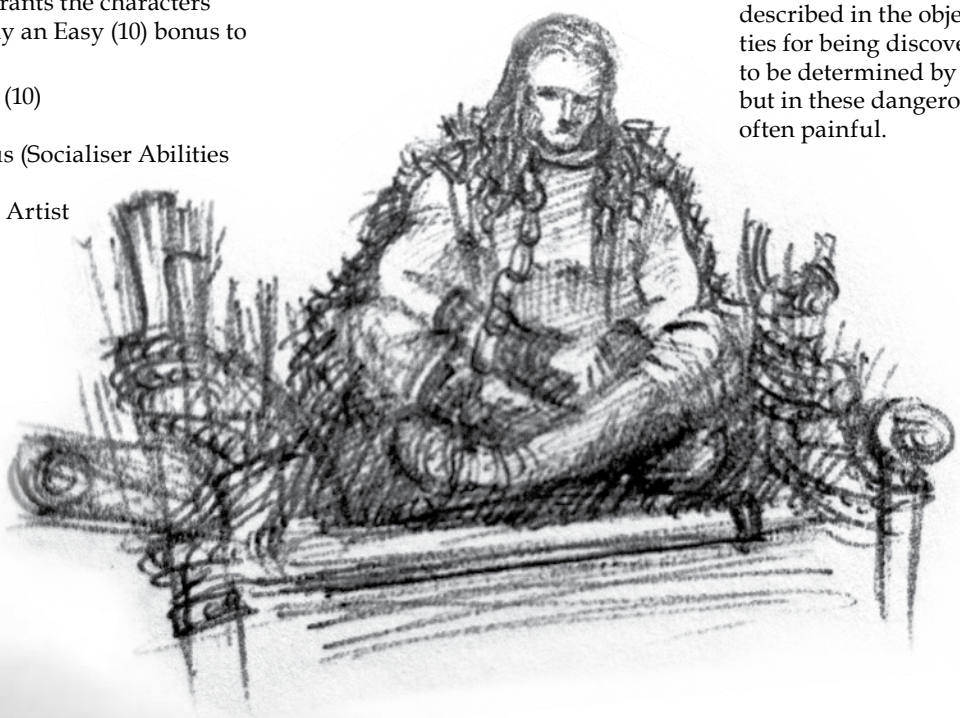
Protected (X): This item has a Damage Threshold equal to its Protected value. Once that is surpassed it is destroyed.

Rally: This item can be raised during battle to regroup comrades. An action can be spent by the character bearing it to attempt to Rally her party. All friendly characters within hearing distance that are Cowering may attempt to immediately recover by passing a Passion test. This may only be attempted once per Combat.

Focus (X): This gives a character a bonus to the activity described in its entry.

Concealment (X): This makes hiding the objects described in the entry Easy + the Concealment value.

Forbidden: Carrying this item is frowned upon or against the law in areas that hold the Allegiances described in the object's value. Penalties for being discovered with it are to be determined by the Tale-Weaver, but in these dangerous times, it is often painful.



Books

There are many types of books throughout the empires, and they are all extremely rare and expensive. A vast amount of hours are spent illuminating and crafting each tome. The following details apply to all of them, and a few examples are given below.

Rarity: Hard (50 + 5D10)

Cost: 50 + 10D10. Roll separately for each book being sought at the beginning of every month.

Signifier for: Scholar

Special: You must be Literate to gain a book's reward. It takes 30 days to read a book and only one book may be read at a time. It is considered that you will read the book in your spare time, so you do not need to allocate any time to reading. The reward is gained on the 31st day after acquiring a book. The following Ability, Literate, is gained when you reach 10 in Knowledge, 20 in Communicate, 30 in Mercantile or gain the Book Wyrm Ability.

Literate

You can understand writing.

Type: Persistent

You can read and write in each language you speak. It will take you 30 days to read a book. After you have read it you will gain its bonuses as long as you have it in your possession.

The Book of the Dead

Also known as the *Necromicon*, this is a compilation of spells used by ancient Egyptian priests to allow souls to pass into the afterlife.

Author: Various
Language: Ancient Egyptian
Date of creation: Various but ancient
Bonus: Necromantic Spells are Easy (20). You may also communicate with ghosts and lost souls. The Apostles of Sobek will hold you at Disposition (+25).

Mappae clavicula

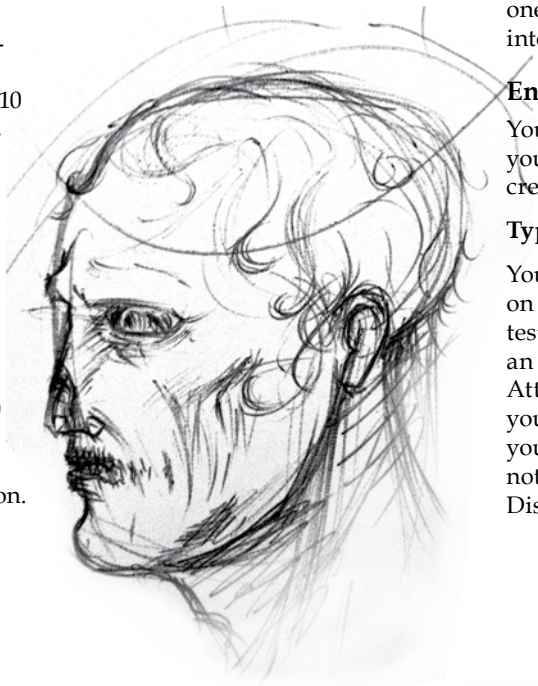
This is a compilation of recipes for a number of different crafts including metalworking, dying and painting.

Author: Various
Language: Latin
Date of creation: 7th Century
Bonus: Labourers and Artists will gain an extra 5D10 gold a month because of how they apply the knowledge contained within this tome.

The Books of Al-Jahiz

This contains Al-Jahiz's five most important works including; *Kitab al-Hwayn* (the Book of Animals), *Kitab al-Bukhala* (the Book of Misers) and *Mufakharat al-Sudan 'ala al-Bidan* (Treatise on the Zanj). His writings contain strong themes of shunning the greedy and acknowledging that the looks of peoples and animals are because of their environments and not the punishments of God.

Author: Al-Jahiz
Language: Arabic
Date of creation: 9th Century
Bonus: Your Intelligence is doubled whenever you take a Fortify Action during a Negotiation.



The Canon of Medicine

This is a great feat in that it compiled most of the medical knowledge of the times into a single bound tome.

Author: Ibn Sina (Avicenna)
Language: Arabic
Date of creation: 11th Century
Bonus: Your Physician Rank is doubled.

Kitab Al-Karaj

Translated as the *Book of Finance*, this is a treatise on the various financial issues facing the Empire of the great Caliph, Harun al-Rashid.

Author: Abu Yusuf
Language: Arabic
Date of creation: 8th Century
Bonus: Whenever you make any money, it will be doubled.

Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya

Translated as the *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, this describes a number of automated devices and contains diagrams on how to produce them.

Author: Al-Jazari
Language: Arabic
Date of creation: 1206
Bonus: You are granted the Create Greater Automaton Alchemist Ability, and the Enhance Automaton Metallurgist Ability.

Create Greater Automaton

Special: This is the same as Create Lesser Automaton, except that you can give life to a humanoid construct that will have the power of speech and some artificial intelligence. Spark of Life for a Greater Automaton expands its Disciplines to every one available, though it cannot enter into a Negotiation.

Enhance Automaton

Your expertise in metal craft allows you to strengthen your alchemical creations.

Type: Extended

You may spend a full day working on an automaton and take a Know test. If you pass then you may add an amount of points to one of its Attributes or Disciplines equal to your Alchemist Rank. If you fail then your day is wasted. Automatons may not exceed 100 in an Attribute or Discipline.

Kitab al-Ahjar

Meaning the *Book of Stones*, it is a text on alchemy that will baffle all but the most pious.

Author: Jabir ibn-Hayyan (Geber)
Language: Arabic
Date of creation: 8th Century
Bonus: If you have Disposition (+50) for a Religion, your Alchemist value will be doubled.

Ten Treatises on Ophthalmology

This is an in-depth study of the human eye.

Author: Hunayn ibn Ishaq
Language: Arabic
Date of creation: 9th Century
Bonus: The Surgery Ability can now cure blindness in one eye the same way as curing a broken bone. Also, Preventative Care will now allow you add experience to a companion's Awareness.

Tabsirat arbab al-albab fi kayfiyat al-najah fi al-hurub min al-anwa' wa-nashr a'lam al-a'lam fi al-'udad wa-al-alat al-mu'inah 'ala liqa' al-a'da

Roughly translated as *Information for the intelligent on how to escape injury in combat; and the unfurling of the banners of instruction on equipment and engines which assist in encounters with enemies*. This was a military manual produced for Saladin.

Author: Mardi ibn Ali al-Tarsusi
Language: Arabic
Date of creation: 1187
Bonus: Your Strikes are Easy (10). Also, one of your Ranks from either the Melee or Ranged Disciplines is doubled.

Intoxicants

Intoxicants are often liquids, but can also be gases or solids. They need to enter your blood stream to take effect, and this may be through consuming the potion, breathing it in, or having it make contact with the blood from a wound.

The Cost is for each Portion of the intoxicant. Aroma is the modifier to your Awareness test to detect the intoxicant in the air or in food or drink. For every Portion ingested apply the effects, and take a base Bulk test. If the B test fails then you will suffer from the Effects along with the Overdose. The Dosage describes how many times you may use the Intoxicant to get an Effect from it per day; after it is reached you will only suffer from the consequences of an Overdose. Any Effects and Overdoses will last for an hour per Portion taken and they are both cumulative.

Healing Herbs

A range of remedies exist that can staunch blood flow and keep wounds from festering.

Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 5 (for 2D5)
Aroma: Easy (10)
Portion: Hand full applied to wound
Effects: Tend wound tests performed on the injury are Easy (20)
Dosage: 1 per wound
Overdose: Nothing apart from more smearing of the smelly concoction over the victim.
Signifier for: Scholar

Alcohol

Wine is the most common form, but mead and ales can also be found in places occupied by the Franj. A High-Quality bottle of Alcohol will put you in good stead with Nobles and Merchants. It will give you Disposition (+5) during Negotiations if you share it with them.

Rarity: Hard (5)
Cost: 1
Aroma: Easy (20)
Portion: Glass of ale, mead or wine
Effects: -1 to health, +D10 P, +D10 Comm
Dosage: Base BB
Overdose: –D10 to Ref, Ag and Ftg and no Abilities may be used.
Signifier for: Outcast

Hash

A weed used to relax the muscles and the mind.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 5
Aroma: Easy (20)
Portion: Enough to fill the end of a pipe
Effects: -1 to Awareness, +D10 Comm
Dosage: Base BB
Overdose: Disposition (+10) to every character and no Abilities may be used.
Signifier for: Outcast

Arsenic

A common poison used by the wealthy.

Rarity: Hard (30)
Cost: 20
Aroma: Hard (75)
Portion: Small vial
Effects: -D10 to Awareness
Dosage: 1
Overdose: -D10 to Health and no Abilities may be used.
Signifier for: Outcast or Noble

Berserkers' brew

This potion increases the imbiber's muscles and strength. Although drinking the brew is one way to activate its effects, barbarians will often slice open their flesh and pour the liquid straight into their bloodstream as a show of strength.

Rarity: Hard (50)
Cost: 10
Aroma: Easy (10)
Portion: Small vial
Effects: D10 to Mel and P
Dosage: Half base BB
Overdose: -D10 to H and a high-pitched voice for male or facial hair for female (translating to -D10 to Cmd).
Signifier for: Warrior

Kahvee

Usually mixed with milk and a bit of water, this draught will speed the drinker's reflexes and keep them awake.

Rarity: Hard (5)
Cost: 3
Aroma: Easy (20)
Portion: Cup
Dosage: Base BB
Effects: D10 to A
Overdose: Will not sleep for another 6 hours

Bears' nectar

This is basically a selection of dense, fatty foods refined into a dense, fatty liquid for easy consumption.

Rarity: Hard (10)
Cost: 5
Aroma: Easy (20)
Portion: Jug
Effects: D10 to B
Dosage: Half base BB
Overdose: Flatulence and diarrhoea (-D10 to Cmd, Subt and Comm - roll separately)

Djinns' purge

This is a dangerous concoction that will make you very sick if you drink it. It will rapidly flush the strength from your body until there is little left.

Rarity: Hard (20)
Cost: 10
Aroma: Easy (20)
Portion: Cup
Effects: -D10 to H
Dosage: 1
Overdose: Flatulence and diarrhoea (-D10 to Cmd, Subt and Comm), -D10 to H, M and B (roll separately). Half of the loss to Bulk will permanent.

Angels' breath

This wholesome draught will open up your lungs and give you a freshness of breath.

Rarity: Hard (5)
Cost: 5
Aroma: Easy (20)
Portion: Small vial
Effects: Appeals become Easy (10), +D5 to H
Dosage: Base BB
Overdose: Flatulence (any bonuses to Appeals are negated).

Sorcerous Items

What follows are some examples of magical objects that a Tale-Weaver may like to place into a Story. Sorcerous items do not have a Rarity or Cost, as these are beyond scarce and are considered priceless.

Magic Carpet

A Magic Carpet is the work of a great artisan and powerful wizard. Some claim that a Magic Carpet is a creature unto itself, a once inanimate object given life and the ability to fly. Others say that a sorcerous weaving binds djinn into the fabric, ensnaring them and using their powers for a human master.

Special rules: Flying (can move vertically as well as horizontally) Fast, Unstable (20), Out-Of-Reach (40), Mount (3), Carry (150).

Lesser djinni vessel

This summons a djinni to act as your servant. This djinni does not have as many powers as the greater djinns, but can still be a useful servant or formidable opponent.

Special rules: Summons a djinni for an hour that is under the command of the character holding the vessel. When the hour is up the djinni will return to the vessel and can only return after a crescent moon has risen.

Martyr's shard

Forged at the shrine made of the bones of a thousand dead martyrs and quenched with the blood of their enemies, the Martyr's Shard is a dagger of glorious power. Converting the pain of its wielder into the suffering of her foes is the power of the Martyr's Shard. The Martyr's Shard is like a High-Quality dagger with the following special rule.

Special rules: If you wield the Shard and hit an opponent, you may elect to call on the powers within it. You must roll a D10 on the injury table (*not a D100*) for yourself, adding 40 if using your left hand, or 50 if using your right hand. The opponent hit must also immediately roll on the Injury table, but their's will be the normal D100.

Sandstorm Staff

This staff of gnarled ash wood commands the desert winds.

Special rules: A character wielding the Sandstorm Staff can create a giant dust storm once a day and it lasts for D10 hours, following the bearer of the staff. If this is called during a Combat then everyone involved counts as fighting in Low Visibility. The powers of the staff have no effect indoors.

Ifrit's blade

This is a flaming scimitar from the depths of Hell. Its bearer is at once recognised as a powerful warrior, as well as a converser with djinn. This weapon is like a High-Quality sword with the added special rule.

Special rules: Your weapon strikes fear into the hearts of Clerics, and all their rolls are Hard (10) while you are in sight. It also allows you to add or deduct 3 from Injury Table results for any foe wounded by the sword.

Cursed potion

There are tales of alchemists that create all manner of diabolical and sorcerous potions.

Special rules: Intoxicant

Aroma: Easy (20)
Portion: Small vial
Effects: Either gain a spell, or become the target of one. This is decided when the potion is created.
Dosage: 1
Overdose: -D10 to H

Gameplay

Firuz was awakened. The rasping of the worm's body always signaled its movement. Firuz saw its long, fleshy feelers search close by and fall on the prisoner next to him. It was a very light touch, but the captive in the cocoon must have felt it. The prisoner began a savage spasm, thrusting from within the webbing. Firuz began to see a glint of metal under the bonds. The worm was slow, and by the time it reached the prisoner a hand holding a blade had freed itself. The dagger began to gain momentum. It twirled and slashed at the webs. Bits of the translucent stuff flew from the cocoon. A feverish rasping came from the creature's direction. A vicious growl replied to it, as the man ripped apart his prison.

He panted, his pale eyes following the creature's movement. Firuz gasped at him for help. The wiry man ignored him. A slurping noise preceded two jets of slime that gushed from the worm's mouth. With nimbleness that Firuz would have thought beyond human, the man managed to dodge each one. During the twirling acrobatics, his blade flashed at the creature's feelers, severing one. The worm recoiled in a frenzied retreat. Firuz lost sight of it, but could tell it was above him, somewhere, as thick blood began to drip upon him.

The free man hefted his blade, held his long hair from his face, and assessed his surroundings. Firuz tried to gain his attention. "Please, you must help me." Groans from other prisoners tried to speak too, but Firuz voice was stronger and more alive.

The man took his time in answering Firuz. They observed each other. "And why should I?"

A sound of approaching footsteps reached their ears.

Firuz thought it a valid question, but would have to be quick to answer. He would have to be careful too; he wasn't sure if he could trust this obvious killer.

"You will need my help also. I am Captain Firuz al-Zarad Ibn Sahib, a warrior from Antioch, and I have led men in many battles. A soldier like myself could help you with the coming guards. Free me, brother, and I will defend you with my life."

Results

Chance in Nights of the Crusades revolves around the rolling of D100s and D10s. When a D100 is called for, roll two ten sided dice, and note which will be the tens and which will be the ones for the final number. If both dice end up on 0, then the result is 100. For every roll of the dice there will be a target number that the player needs to roll over or under – this is the Apex of the test. To pass the test, a player needs to roll under the Apex. A result of 1 always passes, a 100 always fails.

Difficulty

In some instances, or at the Tale-Weaver's discretion, the difficulty of a test can become easier or harder by modifying the Apex. All difficulty modifiers are cumulative. A task performed under better-than-usual conditions could be Easy (10), which means that 10 is added to the Apex. Alternatively, a task in very harsh conditions, perhaps Hard (50), using an object that makes it easier – Easy (10) – will have 40 deducted from the Apex.

Occasionally a difficulty modifier needs to be applied that is a variable based on something like an Attribute. Examples include Easy (Ag) or Hard (B). Each value within the brackets refers to a value from your Attributes, Disciplines or Traits, so refer to your details to see the number needed.

Disposition

Disposition modifiers, such as Easy (Disposition), are treated differently. In the case of Easy (Disposition) your Disposition towards your opponent is added to the Apex (so it will be deducted if the Disposition is negative). This means that the test is easier if you favour your opponent's Allegiances. On the other hand, Hard (Disposition) means that positive Dispositions are deducted from the Apex and negative Dispositions are added to it, so this makes a test against an opponent you hate easier.

Tests

If you need to make a test against an Attribute, Discipline or Trait, your value becomes the Apex.

There are times when you may need to engages in a Verses Test. Deduct your opponent's specified value from your value and then add the result to 50 (ie; Apex = 50 + (your value - opponent's value)).

Massoud and Baldrick come to a tall wooden wall that blocks their progress. Darkness is descending and they do not want to be caught in these ghoul-haunted ruins during the night. Baldrick decides to climb the fence. The Tale-Weaver says that he must pass an Easy (20) Ag test, but he will only have 3 chances before the sun sets. Baldrick's Agility is 18 and so the Apex is 38 (18 + Easy (20)) and he passes on his second attempt. Massoud, weighed down by his armour, knows there is little chance of him climbing the fence without leaving behind his newly acquired mail hauberk, so he decides to hack his way through. Baldrick cautions against it, as this may arouse the attentions of guards, but Massoud knows it's his only chance of getting to the other side of the fence before the ghouls come out of their caves. The Tale-Weaver says that if Massoud or Baldrick can pass an A or Know test they will be able to find a weak spot in the fence, giving Massoud a better chance at hewing through a section. They both take the test on their highest value, A for Baldrick and Know for Massoud. Unfortunately for them, they fail. Massoud readies his axe. The Tale-Weaver says that he can cut his way through the wall after 3 successful M tests. However, the scrabbling of the ghouls is getting closer and will likely be upon him after his tenth swing. With Massoud's Muscle value of 43 (which is the Apex), he starts striking at the wood. His ninth roll is his third success and he shoves himself through the gap he has made.

A slavering ghoul reaches through the hole with its crooked teeth. Baldrick has his back to the fence, looking the other way to see if the chopping had caused anyone to investigate, so the Tale-Weaver makes Baldrick take a Reflexes Verses test to avoid it. The ghoul's Ref is 20 and Baldrick's is 38. The Apex for Baldrick is 68 (50 + (38-20)) and he passes, leaping out of the way. In the ghoul's struggle to get back into the safety of the ruins it tears a long gash in its own arm, leaving blood and flesh on the splinters of the wall.

Baldrick pulls at Massoud's sleeve and motions towards the path they are on. A figure is running their way. It is one of Lady Hedewig's guards, coming to see what the commotion is. He stops and views the scene. "What is going on here?" he asks in German. Unfortunately, neither Baldrick or Massoud know that language, however they both know French as a second language and it soon becomes apparent that the guard does also. However his disposition towards them is now less than favourable, as what could men who are not from the Baroness's entourage or home village be doing on her private estate.

Baldrick comes up with a plan to trick the guard. He explains to the Tale-Weaver that he will tell the guard that as they passed, this ghoul tried to break into the Baroness's estate, and his quick-thinking friend scared the creature away before it could cause any further mischief. The Tale-Weaver says that this will have to be a Negotiation, with the guard's goal being to wait for his comrades to arrive to further assess the situation and Baldrick's goal being to convince the guard to let them be on their way.

Challenges

All rolls of the dice are challenges of some description. However, some, like Negotiations and Combat, need to be more formalised than others and are described later in the rules. For all other challenges, the Tale-Weaver needs to decide the best way to test your character's chances of passing. However some will be more common than others and are described below.

Common challenges

Impression: You scan another character to discern their Allegiances. This can be done just before a Negotiation begins, and is combined as a free action with your first turn in Combat. Make an A test. If it is failed you will only detect the Allegiance the character holds most strongly. This is the Allegiance that the character favours the highest and carries the most Signifiers for. If it is passed you detect the character's other Allegiances that she bears Signifiers for. You will not see hidden Allegiances (ie; Allegiances that the character doesn't have any obvious Signifiers for) unless you Scrutinise the character.

Scrutinise: You spend some time observing another character to see if they are hiding anything. To reveal a single hidden Allegiance takes one turn in a Negotiation or one Action in Combat that can be combined with a Movement. Make an A/Subt v Subt test. A successful Scrutiny also removes any Bluffs that your opponent has made.

Concealment: You try to hide something, whether it is an object or your identity. The likelihood of this must be sensibly taken into account, for example you may hide yourself behind a large curtain, but not behind a mug of ale. If you are hiding from another character the test is your Subt vs Subt/A, if you are searching for another character the test is Subt/A vs Subt.

Reflection: Through prayer or meditation, you can centre yourself to face an upcoming challenge. This cannot be performed during a Negotiation or Combat, takes around 10 minutes and may only be used once a day. Make a P test. If it is successful then your next roll is Easy (PB).

Bluff: Sometimes it may benefit you to trick another into believing that your Allegiances are not those on your character sheet. When Impressions are being made, you may take a Subt vs A instead of your opponent making an A test. If you are successful then your opponent will believe that you hold a number of Allegiances equal to your SubtB that you display through your Signifiers. The test will be Hard (10) if you Hate any of the Allegiances that you are trying to portray yourself as.

Understanding a gibbering fool: After to listening to the fool for 10 seconds, you may take an I/A/Comm vs Comm test.

Looking for a thief in a crowd: A or Subt vs Subt test

Pushing away three goats that want to get at the grain you guard: You need to pass 3 M+B vs M+B tests (ie; 1 for each goat). Then you need to pass a P vs P test to see if you give up before the goats. If you fail, then repeat the process for a number of rounds equal to your Ftg.

Running away/after a character: Ag vs Ag test for a number of rounds equal to the lowest Ftg of the competing characters. At the end of the rounds, if you succeeded more times than you failed, then you win.

Negotiation

A Negotiation, whether it is a Haggle, a Dispute or a Judgement, revolves around speakers with different goals trying to reduce their target's Opposition to 0.

Step 1 First impression

The characters get their first impressions of each other through appearance, demeanour, small talk and the nature of their greeting. The following steps are involved:

a) If the characters haven't already met then they must get an Impression of the others involved.

b) The characters decide what language is to be used for the Negotiation. There are no drawbacks if all characters involved are fluent in the language used. Appeals are Hard (10) if you are speaking a second language. If you do not speak the language that the Negotiation is being held in, then the only actions that you may take are Appeals, and they will be Hard (20).

c) This is also the time for a discussion with the Tale-Weaver about your and your opponents' goals that will be awarded to the winner of the Negotiation.

Step 2 The Argument Apex

Your Argument Apex starts at 50. The number that results from your opponent's Argument Power (AP) being deducted from your AP is then added. The final number is the Argument Apex.

Alric has an AP of 30 and he makes an Appeal against Massoud with an AP of 45. His Argument Apex is 35 (Apex = 50 + (30-45)).

The following table gives a quick reference for a number of results.

Difference in AP	Argument Apex
-5	45
0	50
5	55

Step 4 Use Negotiation actions

Once each character has a chance to use a Negotiation Action a round is used. The goal is to reduce your foe's Opposition to 0. A character's Opposition is replenished after each Negotiation. There are three main types of Negotiations – Haggles, Disputes and Judgements. Read the entry below for the process on resolving them.

Step 5 Consequences

After the Negotiation has been resolved the Tale-Weaver describes how the winning character's goals affects the Tale.

Basic Negotiation actions

Each character involved in a Negotiation can make one of the following actions per round. You should describe what you're saying before rolling for an action. The Tale-Weaver may make your roll Easy (1) if you make a valid argument, and if you make the table nod in agreement or laugh out loud with your brilliance, the Tale-Weaver may replace the Easy (1) with Easy (5).

It is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide whether a Negotiation is necessary, or to just role-play the scene. There is no need to slow a game down by rolling dice whenever characters disagree with each other about such things like whether a scarf's colour is lilac or mauve. Like Combat, Negotiations should only be entered into if the range of consequences will have a noticeable affect on the Tale.

Appeal: You attempt to sway the argument. Roll a D100. If the result is under your Argument Apex, your target's Opposition is decreased by the amount it was passed by. However, if the result is above your Argument Apex, then it raises your target's Opposition by the amount it was failed by.

Critical Argument: If the result of your Appeal is under your CommB then you will have achieved a Critical Argument. The amount deducted from your foe's Opposition will be doubled.

Dismiss: You try to show that your opponent's last Appeal is not worthy of consideration. If your opponent made an Appeal in the last round you may make a Dismiss action in yours. Make an I vs I test. On a success, the Appeal is ignored and treated as if it did not happen.

Fortify: This is an attempt to bolster your upcoming arguments, using either reasoned evidence or by appealing to emotions. Take an Intelligence or Passion test. If the goal you are arguing for directly effects a group important to you (at the Tale-Weaver's discretion and if your Disposition towards the group is above 20) it becomes Easy (Disposition towards the group). If you succeed, the amount passed by adds to your AP until after you make an Appeal. Any subsequent Fortify actions, while you have your AP already fortified, add to the bonus from the previous rounds. A failed Fortify action reduces your characters Fortify bonus to 0, but has no effect apart from that.

Insult: You launch a blunt attack to discredit or enrage your opponent. Take a Hard (20) Intelligence or Passion test. This is Hard (Disposition) in regards to your opponent. If it succeeds, your opponent will be so taken aback that she will not be able to Dismiss your next Appeal. However, if the Insult fails, your opponent will take you for an immature fool. The opponent is granted an immediate, free Appeal in addition to her turn.

Assist: You may Assist a friendly character if you are present, but not taking part in a Negotiation, with encouragement or just your presence. Each friendly character Assisting you will grant you a bonus to your Appeals equal to their CommB's.

Types of Negotiation

Haggle

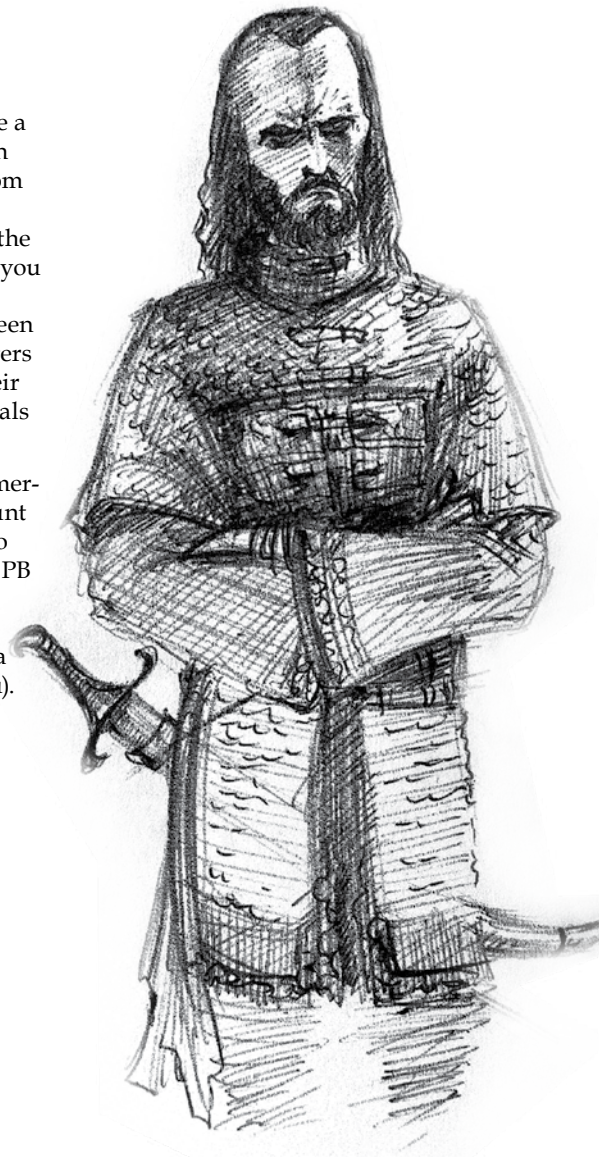
It can be assumed that whenever you visit a merchant, there will be a little to- and-fro and the cost of an object will be lowered slightly from its original price. This is the Cost displayed in the object's entry in the Marketplace section. However, if you want the price reduced further, a Haggle ensues. A Haggle is between a Buyer and a Seller. Both characters add their Mercantile points to their AP. Both Buyer and Sellers' Appeals are at Easy (Disposition).

The Buyer begins the Haggle. A merchant is always busy, so the amount of rounds the Seller is prepared to Haggle for is equal to the Buyer's PB (if the Seller's Disposition is positive to the Buyer then double this number; halve it if the Seller has a negative Disposition towards you).

You may only Assist a Buyer if you are going to buy one of the objects being haggled for too.

If a round begins with either side at 0 Opposition, or the amount of rounds ends, the Haggle is over. If the Seller's Opposition is equal to 0, the object is sold for half price. If the Seller's Opposition is lower than the Buyer's, then the object is sold for three-quarters of the price. If the Seller's Opposition is equal to or higher than the Buyer's, then the object can only be purchased for the original cost.

If the Seller lowers his price but you do not purchase the object, then the Seller will not like you or the companions that he knows are close to you. The Seller will be at Disposition (-20) towards you all from now on. To appease him you must all spend an amount of Wealth at his shop equal to his PB.



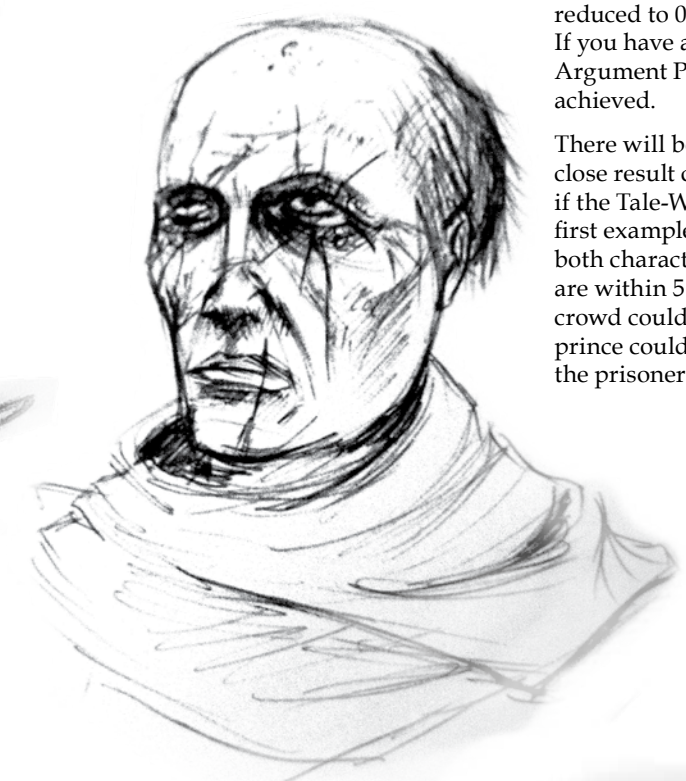
Dispute

A Dispute arises when you are in a one-on-one disagreement with an opponent. You both are designated as Speakers. A Dispute could take many forms, such as a confrontation over a perceived slight, trying to convince a bandit to leave a treasured heirloom, or explaining the benefits of a change of diet over an exorcism for a headache.

There will always be goals for either side in a Dispute, something that the successful character will gain if she wins. In the above examples the goals could be "combat/leaving in peace", "heirloom/no heirloom" or "consult a trained physician/continue excorcism". The Tale-Weaver should determine this before the Dispute begins.

The character with the higher Communication goes first (if they are both equal, determine randomly). Characters will subconsciously let their opponents know how favourable they are to their Allegiances and whether they are acting in their best interests or not, so Appeals are Easy (Disposition). The amount of rounds that the Dispute will last for is equal to both characters' PBs added together.

If a round begins with either character at 0 Opposition, or the amount of rounds ends, the Dispute is over. If your Opposition is higher, then you win the Dispute and your goal is achieved! If the opponents are both equal in Opposition, then the argument will be at a stalemate for 24 hours.



Judgement

When a (supposedly) neutral third party is involved in a Negotiation, and two sides want its favour, they enter a Judgement. Therefore, there will only be two Speakers plus a Judge in any Judgement. Examples of this include characters of opposing views trying to convince a crowd (the Judge) of the evilness/goodness of a ruler; or a prisoner's relative and the Head Watchman arguing for a prince (the Judge) to release/execute the prisoner.

There will always be goals for either side in a Judgement – something that the succeeding party will gain if they win. In the above examples the goals would be "peasants rise up/go about their business with more scepticism towards rabble-rousers" or "prisoner dying/living" respectively. The Tale-Weaver should determine this before the Judgement begins and any modifiers to Appeals for difficult goals.

The character with the higher Communication goes first (if both are equal, determine randomly). You will carry more weight with the Judge if the Judge favours you. Your Appeals are Easy (Judge's Disposition towards you). The Speakers try to decrease the Judge's Opposition, not each other's. If the Judge is not an individual (such as a crowd) then the Tale-Weaver sets its Opposition value.

Every time you make a successful Appeal, note how many points you reduce the Judge's Opposition by. These are your Argument Points.

When the Judge's Opposition is reduced to 0 the Judgement is over. If you have a higher amount of Argument Points then your goal is achieved.

There will be some cases where a close result can take a different turn if the Tale-Weaver wills it. Using the first examples, on a close result (ie; both characters Argument Points are within 5 points of each other) the crowd could split into factions, or the prince could delay his decision on the prisoner for another week.

Combat

Glory, courage, honour, a test of skill and wits – that is the mythology of war. Scribes and clerics, never witnessing or participating in battle, will describe the slaughter with glee and revel in the blood of their ruler's enemies. However, when soldiers struggle in the dirt – blood drenching their armour, the screams of friends and enemies ringing in their ears as they try to stop their insides from spilling into the sand – thoughts of glory are far from their minds.

To be a good soldier is, simply put, to be an instinctual killer whose body obeys orders – whether they are from someone else or from their own mind. Warriors must ensure they are prepared to look into another human's eyes as they slay him. Most soldiers will simply fight for their comrades – glory, courage and honour are afterthoughts. The psychological effects of this vary depending on the circumstances and the characters that are fighting, but no human will leave unscarred from taking another's life.

Combatants

A Combat is entered just before the first violent act from a character. Each character rolls a D100 and adds their Reflexes. The Tale-Weaver may modify the difficulty of the test depending on the circumstance, eg; characters hiding among ruins that plan to ambush any passing travellers can add 10 to their roll. The Tale-Weaver then assigns each character a place in the round, with the highest roll going first.

When it's your turn, you take an amount of actions equal to your Action Points. You may only use the Actions described below, along with any Combat Abilities you may have. If an action uses more points than you have available, then the action will carry over into your next turn; eg, Dugou is weighed down by armour and has an Agility of –20, meaning she has only 1 action point per round so it will take her two turns to complete an action that uses 2AP. Until you are prepared to fight by entering a Combat Stance you may not use a Strike action. A

Melee Strike is any Strike that uses a weapon's Reach, a Ranged Strike is any Strike that uses a weapon's Range. When you want to Strike your opponent, deduct her Melee or Ranged Defence – MD if she is the victim of a Melee Strike and RD if she is the target of a Ranged Strike – from your Melee or Ranged Power (MP or RP), then add that result to 50. This number is the Impact Apex.

Massoud is incensed at the death of his friend in the wilderness, and seeks to exact vengeance from Lady Hedewig for not giving them sanctuary. One of her guards has spotted him in his hiding place and begins calling for reinforcements. Massoud notches an arrow to his bow to silence him. Massoud's RP is 30 and the guard's RD is 45. The Impact Apex that Massoud must roll under is 35 (Impact Apex = 50 + (30-45)).

The following table gives a quick reference.

MP/RP verse defender's MD/RD	Impact Apex
-5	45
0	50
5	55

Some actions will reduce your Fatigue. Whenever your Fatigue equals 0 only 1 Action can be performed per round and your MD and RD is halved. The only way to regain Fatigue is to perform certain actions. Fatigue is restored after a Combat.

Combatants seek to reduce their foes' Damage Thresholds to 0. If your DT equals 0 then you can fight on for a number of rounds equal to your PB, but all Strikes against you are Easy (20) and have the possibility to inflict severe wounds. After those rounds are over, you must make a P test. If passed, your next Action will be to Surrender or Flee; if failed, your next Action will be to Cower.

Although not essential, a tactical map using miniatures or counters could be helpful in resolving Combat, with every metre equal to an inch.

It is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide whether a Combat is needed, or just to role-play the situation. There is no need to slow a game down by rolling dice whenever characters are fighting something like a rogue kitten in their bedding. Like Negotiations, Combats should only be entered into if the range of consequences will have an effect on the future.

Moving in Combat

If you use any Move Action – apart from a Shuffle – it will allow any opponents to make a free Melee Strike against you if you pass within their weapon's Reach during any point of your Move. The Action Points used in the opponent's Strike carry over into the opponent's turn.

Some Movement Actions can be combined with Strikes. If this is the case, next to the amount of Actions in the move's description there will be an "[MS]". If you combine this move with a Strike then the Fatigue drained will be the highest out of either the Movement or Strike Action. However, the Action Points used are cumulative.

Shuffle:

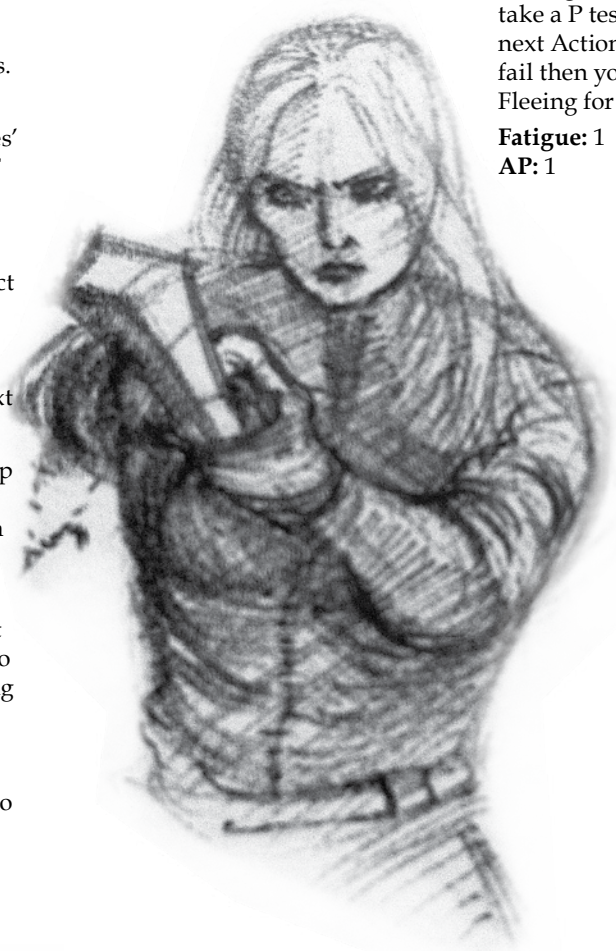
You carefully tread 1 metre.

Fatigue: 0
AP: 1 [MS]

Lunge

You move an amount of metres equal to your AgB (minimum of 1 metre) into contact with an enemy. If you combine this with a Melee Strike then the Strike is Easy (10).

Fatigue: 2
AP: 1 [MS]



Manoeuvre

You move up to 3 metres. You can also use this action to perform miscellaneous movements that aren't covered under the other actions, such as climbing a ladder, pulling a lever, kicking over a barrel of oil or to switch, sheath or draw a weapon.

Fatigue: 1
AP: 1

Evade

You move up to 4 metres and any Strikes against you will be Hard (your Ag value– to a maximum of 50) until your next action.

Fatigue: 2
AP: 1

Run

You move 5 metres. Melee Strikes against you are Easy (10) and Ranged Strikes against you are Hard (10) until your next action.

Fatigue: 1
AP: 1

Flee

You move 6 metres for the remainder of your actions this turn, directly away from your enemies. All Strikes against you are Easy (20) until you gain control over yourself. You will lose any Stances that you were in. At the beginning of each turn you must take a P test. If you pass then your next Action will be to Guard; if you fail then your Actions will be spent Fleeing for the remainder of the turn.

Fatigue: 1
AP: 1

Stances

For a human with an average range of emotions, there is something within that will balk at the reality of thrusting a blade into another person. The story of war has many interludes of combatants shooting above the heads of approaching foes, using their weapons for defence rather than slaying in a melee and of firing squad members diverting their aim from their blindfolded victims. For characters to commit to cutting down their enemy, they must enter a Combat Stance. No character may use a Strike Action outside of being in one of the Stances.

You may attempt to enter a Stance at the beginning of your turn. This is an entirely free action and you can await the results before deciding on how you plan to spend the rest of your turn.

To enter a Stance take a P test and apply any modifiers described in the entries. If Disposition is used it will be what you hold towards your closest enemy.

Different frames of mind are needed in different circumstances and ranges, and these are described below. Also, if you are in a Killing Stance you count as being in a Hostile Stance, and a character in an Execution Stance is in all three.

Enemy Range describes the distance between you and the closest enemy that you need to be to enter the Stance.

Hostile Stance

When you wish to turn a ranged weapon to an enemy you must make a mental effort to aim for the vitals. Until you enter a Hostile Stance you may not use a Ranged Strike Action. You will need to pass a Passion test at Hard (Disposition) at the beginning of your turn. If you have been attacked that day the test will be Easy (20). For each friendly warrior within 5 metres that also has taken on a Hostile or Killing Stance the test will be Easy (10). If the test is successful you will enter a Hostile Stance for the rest of the Combat or until it is knocked out of you.

Enemy range: Over 50 metres

Killing Stance

When you realise that you are entering a situation where you will need to, or are ordered to, inflict injury and death, you must overcome your instinctual aversion to it. Until you enter a Killing Stance you may not use a Melee Strike Action. You will need to pass a Passion test at Hard (Disposition) at the beginning of your turn. If you cannot see your closest enemies faces clearly (eg; they are within helmets) the test will be Easy (10). If you have been attacked that day the test will be Easy (10). For each friendly warrior within 5 metres that is in a Killing or Execution Stance the test will be Easy (5). If the test is successful you will enter a Killing Stance for the rest of the Combat or until it is knocked out of you.

Enemy range: Within 50 metres

Execution Stance

Fighting in a swirling melee is one thing, slaying a defenceless enemy is quite another. To do something like this requires you to venture into a mind-set that is often considered wrong, or at least dishonourable, in most religions and philosophies of the world. Until you enter an Execution Stance you may not Strike (Melee or Ranged) at a Cowering or Surrendering opponent. You must be in a Killing Stance to take the test. You need to pass a Passion test at Hard (Disposition). If you cannot see or hear your enemies clearly (eg; they are within hoods or gagged) the test will be Easy (10). If friends have been slain or seriously injured in combat that day, the test is Easy (10). For each friendly warrior within 5 metres that is in an Execution Stance, the test will be Easy (5). If you reduce a Cowering or Surrendering enemy's Damage Threshold to -1 or below through a Melee Strike, you will automatically slay your opponent if you are in an Execution stance.

Enemy range: Under 3 metres

Strikes

Melee Strike

You attack a target within your weapon's Reach. Roll against the Impact Apex using your MP and your opponent's MD. If the result succeeds, then it lowers the opponent's Damage Threshold by the amount it was passed by. If you need to work out what location the Strike hits, roll on the Injury table, but don't apply the result.

Fatigue: 1
AP: 1

Critical hit

If the result of your Strike is under your MelB (for a Melee Strike) or RngB (for a Ranged Strike) then you will have achieved a Critical Hit. Your opponent will apply the damage as normal, but must also immediately roll on the Injury table.

Ranged Strike

You attack a target within your weapon's Range. Roll against the Impact Apex using your RP and your opponent's RD. If the target is within 3 metres of the weapon's minimum range, the test is Easy (10), if the target is over half the maximum range the test is Hard (10). You may attempt a long-shot at up to double the weapon's maximum range, but the modifier for this type of Ranged Strike is Hard (30). If your target is within your weapon's Reach then you can only perform a Melee Strike with it. If your attack succeeds, then lower your opponent's Damage Threshold by the amount it was passed by. You may not use a Ranged Strike against an opponent within a friendly character's Reach.

Fatigue: 0
AP: 1

Unarmed

If you end up without a weapon for some reason, the following details apply to an unarmed strike.

Reach: 1
Range: 0
Special rules: Unwieldy.

Other Combat Actions

Guard

You are on guard and centre yourself. Strikes against you are Hard (10) until your next Action and you gain 1 Fatigue point.

Fatigue: 0
AP: 1

Prone

You lie flat on the ground. Melee strikes against you are Easy (20). Your Melee Strikes are Hard (30) and the only weapon that you can perform a Ranged Strike with is a crossbow. Whilst Prone you may slide 1 metre as part of a Prone Action. Getting up takes 1 Action, however, if you are within reach of an opponent's weapon you will need to take a Ref v Ref test or remain Prone. Regardless of the outcome of the test your opponent will get a free Melee Strike against you.

Fatigue: 1
AP: 1 (0 if forced)

Cower

You may choose to Cower or may be forced to. Helpless characters, like bound prisoners, also count as Cowering. When you are Cowering you will try to make yourself as small as possible as the battle rages around you. When you begin to Cower you will lose any Stances you are in and drop to the ground, curled into a ball or nursing your wounds. You may crawl 1 metre as part of your Cowering Action. You will need to pass a Passion test before being able to take any other type of Actions, and if it is successful your next Action will be to Guard. A character must be in an Execution Stance before they can Strike at a Cowering character. Melee Strikes against a Cowering character are Easy (10). Choosing to Cower takes 1 Action point, and each full turn you remain Cowering allows you to gain 1 Fatigue point.

Fatigue: 0
AP: 1 (0 if forced)

Surrender

You throw down your weapons and plead for mercy to an opponent within 10 metres. You lose all of your Stances. A Dispute will be entered into between you and your assailant. If you win the Dispute then your attacker removes all Stances. If you lose then the attacker may choose to continue with combat or not. Rounds overlap between this type of Dispute and Combat if there is a battle raging around the negotiating characters. Each turn spent Surrendering allows you to gain 1 Fatigue point. You may only Surrender once per combat.

Fatigue: 0
AP: 1 (0 if forced)

Tend wound

You can attempt to use Tend Wound if you are in contact with an injured character, and neither of you are within reach of an opponent. You can also apply Tend Wound to yourself. It requires concentrating on applying tourniquets and staunching blood flow. You must then pass a Knowledge test for it to be successful.

Fatigue: 1
AP: 2

Combat Considerations

Cover

Cover makes you difficult to hit, depending on how obscured you are and how impenetrable the cover is. Decide how much of you is behind hard cover (which includes castle walls, tree trunks and barrels). If your torso is behind hard cover, any attacks against you are Hard (20). If your torso and at least two limbs are behind hard cover, any attacks against you are Hard (30). If you are entirely behind hard cover from your attackers point of view, you will be impossible to hit.

If you are behind soft cover (which includes anything a sword could penetrate; like thick curtains or bushes) decide how much of your body is obscured. If your torso is behind soft cover, any attacks against you are Hard (10). If your torso and at least two limbs are behind soft cover, any attacks against you are Hard (20). If you are entirely behind soft cover the attacker needs to pass an Awareness test (taking 1 Action point) to detect you and any Strikes made will be Hard (30).

Unstable Ground

Keeping your balance on shifting ground, such as deep sand, rooftops or a moving cart can be difficult, all the more so during battle. If you are standing on Unstable Ground at the beginning of your turn you will need to pass an Agility test at Hard (Tale-Weaver's discretion). As a guide, sand will be Hard (10), ice will grant a modifier of Hard (50) and being on an icy, steep slope will be Hard (75). If you succeed then you can take your turn as normal. If you fail then you will stumble for this action and spend the next regaining your balance. Unstable Ground is ignored if you are Prone.

Low Visibility

Fighting when your vision is obscured by events such as dust storms or darkness will hamper your ability to attack or defend yourself. At the beginning of a turn in a Low Visibility area you will need to pass an Awareness Test at Hard (Tale-Weaver's discretion). As a guide, absolute darkness will grant a modifier of Hard (80) and being blinded and deafened will be Hard (95). If you succeed then you can take your turn as normal. If you fail then you may only take a single Manoeuvre Action in a random direction, or Cower or Surrender.

Injuries

If your Damage Threshold is reduced to below 0, roll a D100 on the Combat Injuries table immediately.

After Combat

Damage Threshold

When characters lose points from their Damage Threshold they will not be replenished until they have had a chance to rest for at least 6 hours.

Infection

If you were wounded during a battle; ie, you rolled on the Injury table and the result was an un-armoured part of your body, you are at risk of infection. A Tend Wound Action can be used on you now if it wasn't already during the Combat. Take an H test. It will be Easy (10) if you have been the target of a successful Tend Wound between now and the start of the Combat. If you pass, you beat off infection, if you fail then the wound will fester. At the beginning of each day take an H test. If a successful Tend Wound is used on you it will be Easy (10). If you fail you will lose D5 Health. If you pass then you have overcome the infection.

Combat trauma

Fighting and killing not only affects your body, it may also manipulate your psyche. The next time you sleep after being involved in Combat, take a Passion test. It will be Hard (5) if you entered a Hostile Stance, Hard (10) if you entered a Killing Stance and Hard (20) if you entered an Execution Stance. If any character, friend or foe, was killed, the test will be an additional Hard (10). If the test is passed then you will be able to continue on without any mental scars. If you fail then something in the fight has stirred your emotions. Perhaps you saw the dying eyes of another character that reminded you of your brother, or maybe you have come to believe that none of your enemies deserve mercy. Roll a D100 on the Combat Trauma table. Results are permanent and cumulative.

Story characters do not have to roll on this table, as they do not adhere to the natural laws of a brutal reality.

Other dangers

Fire

If you catch on fire you can put it out by smothering it with water or material, by rolling along the ground or by removing the things that have caught fire from your body. Every Round you will take Health damage as burning heat combines with the choking smoke to drain your life. The amount of Health damage depends on the type of fire that you have fallen into:

Small fire (candle): 1 Health damage

Medium fire (torch): 2 Health damage

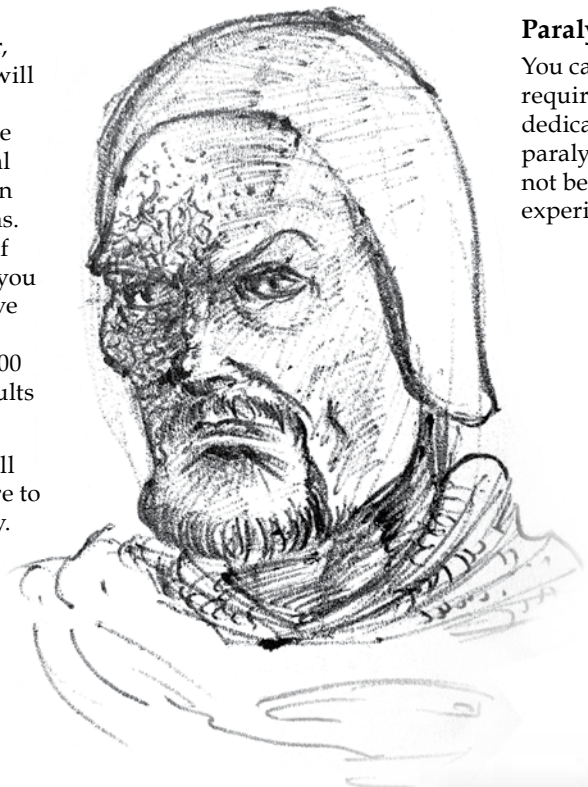
Large fire (bonfire): 5 Health damage

Particularly nasty (boiling oil): 10 Health damage

Every round that the fire continues to burn you, double the amount of damage from the previous round.

To escape from fire you must succeed at an Ag test, Easy (30) for a small fire, Easy (0) if it is a medium fire, Hard (20) if it is large and Hard (30) if it is particularly nasty. If you are reduced to 2 Health you will pass out and be very close to death. Should your Health be reduced to 0 you will die.

Any character that survives more then 20 points of Health damage from a fire will end up with the Rough Features Characteristic.



Drowning

You may hold your breath for an amount of minutes equal to your HB. After that time is up, you must pass a P test to gain an extra 30 seconds (with each attempt getting more difficult by Hard (10)). When you fail, your lungs will begin to fill with the liquid you are immersed in. You will only have another amount of rounds equal to your HB to reach oxygen or you will begin to drown. If you begin drowning you will lose D10 Health every round until a successful Tend Wound test is used on you after you gain access to breathable air.

Falling

To calculate falling damage work out how high you have fallen in metres. For every 3 metres you need to pass an Ag test or have 5D10 deducted from your Damage Threshold. If your DT is reduced to 0 then roll on the Injuries table for each 3 metres you have fallen. Your armour will offer no guard against falls and so you will count as not wearing any.

Amputees

Any Amputee gains the Rough Features Characteristic. If you have no hand, you may carry a shield in that arm, but no weapon. If you are without an arm, your MP and MD reduced by 10. If you are without a leg then reduce all movement that requires use of your legs by half.

Blindness

Your RP and RD is 0. Your MP and MD is reduced by half.

Paralysis

You cannot perform any actions that require use of your legs. Without a dedicated carer, a character that is paralysed from the neck down will not be able to move at all and will experience extreme conditions.

Injuries table

	Left leg
1-5	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends this leg by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your legs, treat this result as 6.
6	**Blood spurts, drenching the scene in gore:** The area within 3 metres of you is now unstable ground and the Ag test is Hard (10).
7	**A deep wound has been inflicted, needing time to heal:** Your movement is halved for D5 days.
8	**The pain and blood overcome you:** At the beginning of each of your turns, make a P test. If you pass then you may only take 1 Action this turn, if you fail you may only Shuffle or Cower. This lasts until you have a successful Tend Wound performed on you.
9	**A sharp crack announces your bone breaking beneath the attack:** Your leg is broken and takes 2D5 weeks to heal. Unless is it properly boneset within a week all your movement is reduced by 1 metre permanently.
10	**A mighty blows rips and tears through flesh, leaving your limb lying in the blood-soaked dust of battle:** You can only Cower or attempt a Tend Wound on yourself until you have staunched the blood-loss. You will die from blood loss in D10 rounds unless you successfully tend the wound. You lose the limb. The area within 3 metres of you is now Unstable Ground and the Ag test to move over it is Hard (20). The character responsible for the attack must pass a P test or spend her next action Manoeuvring away from the fountain of blood.
	Right Leg
11-15	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends this leg by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your legs, treat this result as 16.
16	**Blood spurts, drenching the scene in gore:** The area within 3 metres of you is now unstable ground and the Ag test is Hard (10).
17	**A deep wound has been inflicted, needing time to heal:** Your movement is halved for D5 days.
18	**The pain and blood overcome you:** At the beginning of each of your turns, make a P test. If you pass then you may only take 1 Action this turn, if you fail you may only Shuffle or Cower. This lasts until you have a successful Tend Wound performed on you.
19	**A sharp crack announces your bone breaking beneath the attack:** Your leg is broken and takes 2D5 weeks to heal. Unless is it properly boneset within a week all your movement is reduced by 1 metre permanently.
20	**A mighty blows rips and tears through flesh, leaving your limb lying in the blood-soaked dust of battle:** You can only Cower or attempt a Tend Wound on yourself until you have staunched the blood-loss. You will die from blood loss in D10 rounds unless you successfully tend the wound. You lose the limb. The area within 3 metres of you is now Unstable Ground and the Ag test to move over it is Hard (20). The character responsible for the attack must pass a P test or spend her next action Manoeuvring away from the fountain of blood.
	Left Arm
21-25	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends this arm by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your arm, treat this result as 26.
26	**A deep wound has been inflicted, needing time to heal:** You cannot hold or lift anything with this arm for D5 days.
27	**A sharp crack announces your bone breaking beneath the attack:** Your arm is broken and takes 2D5 weeks to heal. Unless is it properly boneset within a week any Strikes using this arm are Hard (5) permanently.
28	**The pain and blood overcome you:** At the beginning of each of your turns, make a P test. If you pass then you may only take 1 Action this turn, if you fail you may only Shuffle or Cower. This lasts until you have a successful Tend Wound performed on you.
29	**Your mind is overwhelmed by the thundering pain of the blow:** You pass out from the shock for D5 rounds.
30	**A mighty blows rips and tears through flesh, leaving your limb lying in the blood-soaked dust of battle:** You can only Cower or attempt a Tend Wound on yourself until you have staunched the blood-loss. You will die from blood loss in D10 rounds unless you successfully tend the wound. You lose the limb. The area within 3 metres of you is now Unstable Ground and the Ag test to move over it is Hard (20). The character responsible for the attack must pass a P test or spend her next action Manoeuvring away from the fountain of blood.
	Right Arm
31-35	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends this arm by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your arm, treat this result as 36.
36	**A deep wound has been inflicted, needing time to heal:** You cannot hold or lift anything with this arm for D5 days.
37	**A sharp crack announces your bone breaking beneath the attack:** Your arm is broken and takes 2D5 weeks to heal. Unless is it properly boneset within a week any Strikes using this arm are Hard (5) permanently.
38	**The pain and blood overcome you:** At the beginning of each of your turns, make a P test. If you pass then you may only take 1 Action this turn, if you fail you may only Shuffle or Cower. This lasts until you have a successful Tend Wound performed on you.
39	**Your mind is overwhelmed by the thundering pain of the blow:** You pass out from the shock for D5 rounds.
40	**A mighty blows rips and tears through flesh, leaving your limb lying in the blood-soaked dust of battle:** You can only Cower or attempt a Tend Wound on yourself until you have staunched the blood-loss. You will die from blood loss in D10 rounds unless you successfully tend the wound. You lose the limb. The area within 3 metres of you is now Unstable Ground and the Ag test to move over it is Hard (20). The character responsible for the attack must pass a P test or spend her next action Manoeuvring away from the fountain of blood.
	Left Hand
41-45	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends this hand by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your hand, treat this result as 46.
46	**Stunned:** You drop anything you hold in this hand.
47	**A deep wound has been inflicted, needing time to heal:** You cannot hold or lift anything with this hand for D5 days.
48	**A sharp crack announces your bones breaking beneath the attack:** Your hand is broken and takes 2D5 weeks to heal. Unless is it properly boneset within a week any Actions or Abilities using this hand will be Hard (5) permanently.

49	**Fingers fly:** D5 fingers have been sliced off, and you drop your weapon. If this results in a loss of all of your fingers, add the results of 50. Otherwise; at the beginning of each of your turns, make a P test. If you pass then you may only take 1 Action this turn, if you fail you may only Shuffle or Cower. This lasts until you have a successful Tend Wound performed on you.
50	**A mighty blows rips and tears through flesh, leaving your limb lying in the blood-soaked dust of battle:** You can only Cower or attempt a Tend Wound on yourself until you have staunched the blood-loss by successfully tending the wound. You lose the limb. The area within 1 metre of you is now Unstable Ground and the Ag test to move over it is Hard (10).
	Right Hand
51-55	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends this hand by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your hand, treat this result as 56.
56	**Stunned:** You drop anything you hold in this hand.
57	**A deep wound has been inflicted, needing time to heal:** You cannot hold or lift anything with this hand for D5 days.
58	**A sharp crack announces your bones breaking beneath the attack:** Your hand is broken and takes 2D5 weeks to heal. Unless is it properly boneset within a week any Actions or Abilities using this hand will be Hard (5) permanently.
59	**Fingers fly:** D5 fingers have been sliced off, and you drop your weapon. If this results in a loss of all of your fingers, add the results of 50. Otherwise; at the beginning of each of your turns, make a P test. If you pass then you may only take 1 Action this turn, if you fail you may only Shuffle or Cower. This lasts until you have a successful Tend Wound performed on you.
60	**A mighty blows rips and tears through flesh, leaving your limb lying in the blood-soaked dust of battle:** You can only Cower or attempt a Tend Wound on yourself until you have staunched the blood-loss by successfully tending the wound. You lose the limb. The area within 1 metre of you is now Unstable Ground and the Ag test to move over it is Hard (10).
	Abdomen
61-70	**The attack crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends your body by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your body, treat this result as 71.
71	**Knocked back:** You are knocked D5 metres, directly away from your attacker, by the powerful blow.
72	**Winded:** At the beginning of each turn, take an H test. Until you pass you may only use the Shuffle or Cower Actions as you try to catch your breath.
73	**You bleed heavily from the blow:** You fall to the ground, Prone, and cannot recover until a successful Tend Wound is used on you.
74	**Your organs are smashed:** You fall to the ground, Prone, and cannot get up for the rest of the Combat. You may only Cower or Surrender.
75	**Your intestines spill out of your body and lie steaming in the dust:** Moaning in pain, you soon join them. It takes D10 rounds for you to die, so try to come up with something profound to say. Your allies within hearing distance must take a P test, and if they fail they will lose any Stances they are in as they are overcome by your death wails.
	Chest
76-85	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends your body by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your body, treat this result as 86.
86	**Your chest cracks under a powerful blow:** At the beginning of each round, make a P test. Until you pass you may only use the Shuffle action as you try to overcome the pain.
87	**You are knocked breathless:** You fall to your knees as you try to recover your breath for D10 rounds. During this time you may not take any Actions.
88	**Your opponent's weapon comes shockingly close to your heart:** You become more in touch with your mortality. Take a P test. If you fail, you Flee from your opponent. If you pass you have all of your Stances removed.
89	**Your vertebrae are crushed and pierced:** You fall to the ground, Prone. Roll a D10: A 1-9 results in the number being the amount of rounds that you cannot move; 10 results in you becoming paralysed below the waist. This is equivalent to losing both legs.
90	**Your ribs crack and pierce your internal organs:** Blood gurgles in your mouth as you fall to the ground, dead. The character responsible for the attack must pass a P test or spend her next action Manoeuvring away from the horrifying sight.
	Neck
91-93	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends your neck by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your neck, treat this result as 94.
94	**The blow jolts your neck and a strange sense of painlessness envelops you:** You realise you have fallen to the ground, Prone, but don't feel a thing. You drop everything in your hands. Roll a D10: A 1-9 results in the number being the amount of rounds that you cannot move; 10 results in you becoming paralysed below the neck permanently.
95	**Decapitated:** It seems like the world is spinning, but you soon you realise it is just your head. When it hits the ground, a few metres from where your corpse lies in a pool of blood, you have only a few more seconds of life before it all fades to black. You are dead. The area within 3 metres of your decapitated body is now unstable ground and the Ag test is Hard (20). The character responsible for the attack must pass a P test or spend her next action Manoeuvring away from your blood-spurting corpse.
	Head
96-98	**The attack slices and crushes your armour:** Reduce the Protection of any armour that defends your head by D10. If you have 0 Protection for your head, treat this result as 99.
99	**My eye!:** Your eye (randomise which one) is injured. Thick goo runs down your face. You Shuffle in a random direction for D5 rounds. You A is lowered by D10 permanently, you lose an eye and gain the Rough Features Characteristic. If this is the second time this has happened, you are now blind.
100	**Your skull cracks and your vision darkens:** The pain is short-lived because, unfortunately, you are now dead. The character responsible for the attack must pass a P test or spend her next action Manoeuvring away from the piercing stare of your dead eyes.

Trauma table

1-2	**Projection of hate:** Deduct D10 Disposition from an already hated Allegiance.
3-4	**Focused hate:** Deduct D10 Disposition from an enemy Organisation involved in one of your recent combats.
5-7	**Class hatred:** Deduct D10 Disposition from an enemy Class involved in one of your recent combats.
8-11	**Generalised hate:** Deduct D10 Disposition from a Faction involved in one of your recent combats.
12-15	**Slay the heretic:** Deduct D10 Disposition from a Religion involved in one of your recent combats.
16-17	**Post-Traumatic Stress:** Your Awareness is increased by D5, but entering a Combat Stance becomes Hard (10).
18-19	**Violent Episodes:** If you lose a Negotiation with an opponent who you have a negative Disposition towards, make a P test. If you pass you will immediately enter a Killing Stance and attempt to punch them.
20-21	**Morbid Thoughts:** You become uneasy at the happiness of others – can't they see the horrors of life? During celebrations and merry-making (such as fairs or festivals) you are a further Disposition (-5) towards everyone.
22-23	**Ghosts of the Dead:** You see a resemblance to those you have seen killed in the eyes of all your enemies. You cannot enter an Execution Stance, and if forced to you will Cower instead.
24-26	**Night Terrors:** You are plagued by bad dreams and often wake screaming from reliving your battles. Whenever you sleep you must pass a Passion test or awake muddle-headed. Your lack of sleep will reduce your Ref by 5 for the rest of the day.
27-29	**Moody:** You cannot see the point of living and no one would miss you anyway. When travelling with you to a place away from your home city your companions will suffer -5 to Passion as they are drained from your mood and having to convince you to accompany them.
30-32	**Addict:** You need to escape reality. You must spend D10 Wealth a month on either alcohol, hash or brothels. You keep this secret enough most of the time, though your close friends will notice you have a problem. If you cannot spend the Wealth then roll twice on the Plight of the Poor table at the beginning of the next month.
33-35	**Hellbound:** You believe you are going to Hell for your crimes against morality and try to be as pious as you can. Your Passion is increased by D5, but your Health is reduced by D5 as you stress over what awaits you in the lake of fire.
36-38	**Sadist:** You begin to enjoy seeing living beings suffer. Entering an Execution stance becomes Easy (5).
39-41	**Sadomasochist:** You begin to inflict pain on yourself. This could be to take your mind off of the visions of death that plague you, or to punish yourself for your part in the horrors of war. You gain Rough Features, and if you already have that Characteristic, your scars are very obvious and can never be hidden.
42-45	**Obsessive:** You have found a secret ritual that kept you alive after the last combat you were in. This minor ritual uses up a Manoeuvre Action after you enter Combat.

45-55	**Troubled Sleep:** Your dreams ring with the sound of steel on steel and the wails of the dying. Your moaning and violent movements during sleep keep others near you awake, plus you sometimes hurt yourself by falling out of the bed. Any character that sleeps in the same room or vicinity of you has a poor sleep and their Ref is reduced by 5 for the next day. You must also pass a Bulk test whenever you sleep or you will lose D10 from your DT because of the injuries you have sustained from your rough night.
56-58	**Fear of Combat:** You have an aversion to fighting, because you truly believe that the next one may be your last. Entering any combat Stance in Hard (5).
59-61	**Hedonist:** You seek to gain pleasure whenever possible to balance the pain you have witnessed. You are often late and reek of alcohol or hash. Your P and Merc are reduced by D5.
62-64	**Penitent:** You give D5 points of Wealth at the beginning of every month to a charitable cause to atone for your sins. If you cannot pay, roll twice on the Plight of the Poor table.
65-67	**Paranoid:** You feel the stare of your enemies upon you at all times. Your A is increased by D5, but your eyes often dart to ensure no enemies approach you from your blindside. Your RP is reduced by D5.
68-69	**Memory Loss:** You block out all of the pain from your last battles. You do not gain any experience from the past 24 hours.
70-72	**Voices:** You are constantly hearing voices; some are mere whispers, while others are demonic. They are especially bad at night. On a night of the Tale-Weaver's choosing you may be asked to take a P test. If you fail, then the Tale-Weaver may create an interesting situation for you to awake too, from finding yourself in the opposite sex's clothes to awaking in the desert with your hands covered in dried blood.
73-75	**Drunkard:** You are violent, stink and are often incomprehensible. You must spend D5 Wealth on alcohol every month. If you cannot then your Merc is reduced by D5. Your Appeals are Hard (-5).
76-77	**Damaged:** Future tests for Combat Trauma are Hard (5).
78-79	**Nihilist:** You believe in nothing. You never Surrender or Cower, as death cannot be any worse than your life is.
80-81	**Power Abuser:** You gain D5 to your Cmd, but are constantly upsetting people by abusing your power. Any character that has a negative Disposition towards you has it doubled.
82-84	**Blasphemer:** You are known to be a rebel of the mind, and strong believers will often seek to do you harm. If you fail an Awareness test at the beginning of a week, D5 Bandits will set upon you at a time of the Tale-Weaver's choosing.
85-87	**Reinforced sympathy:** Add D10 Disposition towards a present favoured Allegiance
88-90	**Small sympathy:** Add D10 Disposition towards an Organisation involved in one of your recent combats
91-93	**Class favour:** Add D10 Disposition towards a Class involved in one of your recent combats
94-96	**Generalised sympathy:** Add D10 Disposition towards a Faction involved in one of your recent combats
97-100	**Religious sympathy:** Add D10 Disposition towards a Religion involved in one of your recent combats

Attribute loss

Bulk: A character at 10 Bulk is either a child, an adult with stunted growth or a malnourished figure. A character at Bulk 0 has died from starvation.

Muscle: An adult character at Muscle 10 finds it hard to do simple things, like walk up stairs or run. A character at 0 Muscle has wasted away to nothing and is dead.

Awareness: A character at Awareness 10 is muddle-headed and often reacts with surprise at things that have missed his attention, like discovering he was wearing his hat after spending the day looking for it. He may also have sustained injuries that impede basic use of his five senses. A character at Awareness 0 cannot react to the outside world and is effectively in a coma.

Health: A character at 10 Health may be suffering from a disease or injury that is destroying his body from the inside out. A character at Health 0 has succumbed to death.

Intelligence: A character at Intelligence 10 is perhaps brain-damaged or has a mental disability. A character at 0 Intelligence is brain-dead.

Passion: Characters at Passion 10 are flirting with nihilism. They will squander their talents and become anti-social. Only the most extravagant experience arouses their emotions and so they may become lost in mind-altering substances. A character at 0 Passion is a true sociopath, having no empathy for anything. This character is a monster whose only delights from this grey world are splashes of blood red and the wails of the tortured. A character at 0 Passion is constantly in an Execution stance and can never leave it.

Attribute loss is replenished at D10 + HB per good night's sleep.

Extreme conditions

In searing heat, freezing cold, drought or going through starvation, you may end up experiencing extreme conditions. Every morning, you must pass an H test or suffer a D5 reduction to your Health until you reach normal conditions. Items such as rations, water, shade or blankets make the H test easier to pass. You will pass out should your H reach 1, and will only live for another amount of days equal to your HB unless you are saved from the harsh environment that got you there.

Disease

Disease was rife in these times of ignorance and superstition. A plague can descend on a population in a number of ways. The rotting heads of the slain catapulted over a besieged city's walls is just one way, rats and lack of hygiene another.

Characters amongst disease will need to pass three H tests over a time period set by the Tale-Weaver, or whenever they are exposed to the disease; whichever comes first. If they fail they enter stage 1 of the disease, if they fail a second time they enter stage two, and failing three times puts them into stage 3. Every disease is different, so the symptoms associated with its stages will be different for each and is detailed by the Tale-Weaver. An example is below.

The Glutton's Curse

Exposure: Ingesting rotten meat that has not been cooked properly, tainted bodily fluids that have entered the bloodstream through wounds or close contact.

Stage 1: Uncontrollable vomiting and diarrhea D5 hours after failing the H test. This lasts for D5 days. Afflicted characters will fail at any activity more strenuous than a slow walk and any attempts at one will cause a violent discharge of vomit and flatulence if an M test is not passed. After the D5 days are up, afflicted characters must pass an H test or move into stage 2 of the disease.

Stage 2: Diseased characters will still struggle to keep any sustenance within them and suffer from thirst and hunger. Their bodily expulsions become red with the taint of blood. The greatest movement they can achieve is a slow shuffle. They are now suffering from extreme conditions. This stage lasts for D5 days. After the D5 days are up, afflicted characters must pass an H test or move into stage 3 of the disease.

Stage 3: The weakness of the victims is apparent in their dry, cracked lips and croaking voice. Blood seeps from their orifices at all times and they are completely bed-ridden. This stage lasts for D10 days and they will suffer from extreme conditions until the days are up. Characters that make it through the D10 days will go on to make a full recovery in D5 days. During the D5 days of recovery the character will only be able to manage a slow shuffle and nothing more strenuous.

Objects

Sometimes it may be necessary for you to smash something. This works like combat, except objects only have a Bulk value. They are automatically hit by Melee Strikes. To hit with a ranged weapon, you need to make an RP test at Easy (Size). When its DT is reduced to 0 the object is destroyed.

Sample objects

Object	Size	DT
Wooden door	40	120
Chest	30	90
Stone wall	200 (per square metre)	600
Barrel	30	90
Shirt	1	3

Advancement

"And all of us die?" Firuz growled at the soldier who had succumbed to battle-lust. "Fall back to Antioch." He gave the signal. The trumpet screamed the call to retreat and it echoed throughout the blood stained battleground.

As Firuz lead his men away from the carnage, trampling the arrow-studded corpses of friends and enemies, he spotted the Frankish knights. They were disturbingly close. They roared as they quickened their pace. Held before them were the standards of Ridwan's army, and more horrifying trophies of their victory.

The Sultan had been defeated. The men of the west had now proved their mastery in battle to every defender of Antioch.

The knights' mounts pounded their heavy hooves across the plain. They lowered their lances or raised their swords. Ahead, Firuz saw the bridge to Antioch's gate. It was crammed with retreating soldiers struggling to enter.

Dark streaks zipped across their path. The Christian archers were firing. A cry came from Firuz's horse and he bucked. Firuz's body left the saddle and seemed suspended in the air for far too long. He landed roughly on his horse, a throbbing pain ascending from his groin, as he scrambled to reach a riding position. He saw the arrow in his mount's thigh. He hoped it wouldn't slow him down too much.

The knights were so close that Firuz could hear their taunts and war-cries. He was glad he couldn't understand their language.

Firuz and his soldiers reached the surging mass of men at the threshold to the city. The Franj were now within range of Antioch's archers on the wall and they let their arrows fly. Joining the chaos, Firuz's horse pushed through, clearing a path for his men. Looking back from a safe position, he saw the knights smash into the retreating soldiers. The air became polluted by death and the muffled screams of the crushed and maimed. The Christian footmen arrived to join the slaughter. Spears held frantic men under the bubbling river to drown. What barbarians are these, Firuz thought, as he saw their blood-washed armour deflecting the arrows fired from Antioch, still bellowing through their helmets when they finally turned away from the walls.

Overview of Organisations

White Quills

Other names: Silks, Coin Counters

Goals: The protection of trade and merchants.

History: Seeking to traverse the Silk Road without fear, a number of merchants from the lands that the road runs through gathered and swore an oath to keep the path safe for trading. The Council of the White Quills in the Holy Lands was based in Damascus during the entirety of the crusading eras. Syed Ali bin Muhammad was the head of the Council during the Dawn era through to the Dusk era but was assassinated at the old age of 83. It was whispered that others in the guild disagreed with his later decrees that brought a vast amount of foreign mercenaries into White Quill safe houses. The remnants of the guild became fragmented as the Mongols took over vast areas of the Silk Road and their numbers began to dwindle, so they were a power on the wane during the Death era.

Signifiers: Quill using the feather of a dove, white silk scarf with subtle pattern, ring embossed with the symbol of the White Quills.

Allegiances: Merchants, White Quills, Scholars, Artists

Initiation: Taking responsibility for the protection of a trade caravan on a dangerous journey.

Apostles of Sobek

Other names: Bone Worshippers, Dead Heads.

Goals: To bring about the resurrection of Sobek in the form of a mighty reptile, and to rule the world as his most favoured servents.

History: The first prophet of the Apostles of Sobek was Yacob Alhazra, or as he came to be known – Abu Tymzahr. The story says that he was a Shii'ite preacher during the time of the Fatimid Dynasty in Egypt. He was travelling along the Nile river when his boat capsized and he was left with the rest of the passengers in the crocodile infested waters. Onlookers screamed from the banks as the water turned red with blood. But Alhazra emerged, the only person on the boat to ever reach land again. He was a changed man and his friends started to worry as he often raved at the visions he received as he struggled under the dark waters of the Nile with the cold, reptilian beasts. He would take himself to caves, far into the countryside to pray, he would say. When he returned, his robes would be tattered and his hands would be caked with dirt and dried blood. Then, he just never returned to his home, leaving his wife without a husband and his six children without a father.

His brother travelled to the caves that Alhazra prayed at. As he wondered at the strange sight that greeted him a low growl emanated from the cave's mouth, seeming to come from some gargantuan creature deep within the dark tunnels. He ran to Alhazra's old house and, when he caught his breath, told his wife what he had seen.

A great shrine, made with the petrified bones of creatures that he was sure never existed, was raised high into the sky. Atop it was a skull from what could only be a dragon. The next day Alhazra's brother went back with his sister-in-law, and armed himself and some of his friends. They could not find the site. It was like it never existed.

During the reign of Salih Al-Din, caravans became afraid to travel past Baalbek on nights with a full moon. Many caravans went missing without a trace and the tales of Sharayar Shah, a young girl who was the only survivor of one of the attacks, described wailing savages, festooned with the carcasses of reptiles and wielding great bone weapons.

Signifiers: Bone weapon, reptile accessory, initiation scars, crocodile tooth jewellery, shaved head with a strip of hair allowed to grow from ear-to-ear.

Allegiances: Pagans, Outcasts, Apostles of Sobek.

Initiation: Single, combat with a bone dagger against a crocodile, in a ceremonial pool where water will rise to the initiate's waist. The crocodile's heart must then be eaten.

Wavering Flame

Other names: Candles, Ma'arrites

Goals: To never allow curiosity and criticism to die.

History: "The Prophets, who too, among us came to teach,

Are one with those who from the pulpit preach;

They pray, and slay, and pass away, and yet

Our ills are as the pebbles on a beach." – Al Ma'arri

Al Ma'arri was poet who died just a few decades before the Franj arrived on the coasts of the Holy Land. Blinded by small pox at a young age, Al Ma'arri questioned the traditions and authorities that ruled his lands. He became quite famous for someone so outspoken, even travelling to Bagdad, yet he refused to make money from his work. He lived out his final days in the town of Ma'arra, abstaining from meat and dairy foods, and remaining strong in will until he passed.

As irritable as he was, Al Ma'arri had a small number of followers who sought to hold on to his message under an onslaught of irrationality and ignorance. They called themselves the Wavering Flame and took in a number of folk who did not fit in well with the time that birthed them. Women, the deformed and those whose studies lead them to contradict the prevailing views of their rulers all sought the Flame to guard them from the darkness that had swallowed the rest of the earth. Barukh, the two-headed giant, was one such member, who relished his life away from judgemental eyes and where he could focus on his love of the strange bones that he excavated from the caverns he watched over.

During the first crusade, after Antioch was taken, the Franj came to Ma'arra on route to Jerusalem. It was besieged and the inhabitants were massacred. Stories tell of the crusaders roasting prisoners, children and dogs on spits to quell the hunger in their ravaged bodies and souls. A woman named Fatima was regarded as the leader of the Wavering Flame at that time, though she did not call herself the leader of anyone. As the fires of zealots consumed her city she asked her fellow Candles to flee and seek refuge in safer cities so that the wisdom they had gained would not die with them. She fled to Damascus, but it is known that Tseng Kung-Song, a Candle who was a Chinese hunchback and experimenter with gunpowder, found his way to Jerusalem just before the Crusaders began their sack of the city. What happened to both of them is lost to history.

During the reign of Salih Al-Din, tales tell of a swimmer who carried messages from the besieged city of Acre to the Sultan. It was said that he was in love with a creature, nicknamed Jullanar of the Sea from the tale from the Arabian Nights. She was supposedly a beautiful woman, but she could only survive under water because her body never gave up the gills she possessed while she was still in her mother's womb. Poets with a romantic bent claim she was the leader of the Wavering Flame during that time, but her sightings faded into nothing once Acre was taken by King Richard and her love, the swimmer, was found washed up upon the coast with an arrow in his back.

Signifiers: Inscribed candle, book, secret poem.

Allegiances: Scholars, Wavering Flame, Outcasts, Artists

The Abu Al-Myiit

Other names: Fathers of the Dead, The Lepers of the Olive Grove

Goals: To continue to live as they always have.

History: The father of this ghoul-sept was Ishaq Atesh, a fierce preacher who roamed the desert, chastising everyone he passed as sinners who were fit only for the flames of hell. Ishaq had been exiled from Bagdad by the vizier at the time, as he had destroyed a graveyard containing the headstones of some of the nobility. Ishaq defended himself with scripture, blasting his accusers with the claim that all men are equal under God, even in death, and no headstone should stand above another's. The vizier was worried should he gain a following, for he was a powerful speaker, and had him dumped into the middle of the desert one night.

Almost dead from exhaustion, Ishaq wandered into the territory of the Bandit-King, Aslan the Mace, and found himself surrounded by Aslan's hardened thieves. He did not show fear and continued his preaching, placing the fear of God into Aslan's followers. Aslan was impressed, and made a deal with Ishaq. Aslan would grant Ishaq the position of spiritual guide to his gang, for Aslan was continuously irritated with their lack of discipline. It seemed to work, as Aslan carved a large territory for himself near the cavernous mountains of Antioch.

Then the plague struck.

It did not discriminate between strong or weak, man or woman, and soon there was no one to raid, or to till the fields. Hunger and desperation set in. Those affected by the disease would have their skin peel away until chunks of flesh were gouged from their bodies. The sun would burn them, so they retreated to the caves. Without being able to maintain their crops the remnants of the Bandit-King's thief-state turned to hunting to survive. There were few animals, but many caravans passed near the mountains as a short-cut to trade with the large city on the coast. They began hunting humans.

Aslan was one of the first to die from the plague. He became insane, as every movement he made seemed

to result in the dripping of another piece of flesh, until his organs became exposed and infested with flies. Ishaq was the obvious choice to take over. He had been afflicted with the Curse, as he called it, but to a much lesser extent and he did not succumb to it. He felt little pain, and protected his skin with black, thick cloth lest the sun burn it away. His followers regarded him as a prophet, and Ishaq obliged them, asking only that they submit their wills entirely to his rule. Then would God allow the Curse to be lifted.

That was over a hundred years ago. Yet, it is still whispered that Ishaq Atesh still lives, a walking corpse, and his clan continues to hunt for the flesh of men from the shadows of the mountains of Antioch.

Signifiers: Black cloak, amputated limbs, scars, pale skin, trophies of human body parts, common features (of Ishaq Atesh).

Allegiances: The Abu Al-Myiit

Initiation: Being born into the sept in the most likely way. If they are low on females, a woman could offer herself as a breeding mother, but that would only be to escape the cooking pot as a breeding mother's life is not pleasant by the standards of most societies.

Nizari

Other names: Batini, Assassins, Hash Eaters, Fedayeen

Goals: To bring about the revival of a Shi'ite Caliphate, or at least offer protection to their followers.

History: Nizar was a leader of a sect of Shi'ites and, after his death, his followers became known as the Nizaris. The term 'Assassin', from the Arabic 'Hashishin', was used as an insult by the Nizari's enemies – which were many.

Hassan-i-Sabbah initially ruled the Nizaris from Alamut in Persia as Grandmaster, and his representative in the Holy Lands was Sinan, known as the Old Man of the Mountain. Although the Nizari killers were from the lowest ranks in the order and used as expendable pawns to do the Grandmaster's bidding, they underwent intensive training. The Assassins were chosen because they were young in age, and so had malleable minds and bodies. To get close to their victims, the Assassins would have to be patient and cunning. They were generally intelligent and well read because they were required to possess not only knowledge about their enemy, but his or her culture and their native language. They were trained by their masters to disguise themselves, sneak in to enemy territory and perform the assassinations instead of simply attacking their target outright.

Alamut and the Nizari fortresses in Persia were destroyed by the Mongols, leaving the Old Man in the Mountain power to rule the lands of Syria.

As tensions in the Middle East grew during the Crusades, the Nizari were also known for taking contracts from outside sources on either side of the war, whether it was from the invading Crusaders or the Saracen forces, so long as the assassination aligned with the Grandmaster's plans.

Signifiers: Dagger

Allegiances: Nizari, Shi'ites

Initiation: Conversion to Shi'ite Islam and follower of the Nizari sect. Ingratiating yourself with the hierarchy of the Old Man of the Mountain and his inner circle would be the only way to gain access to his fortresses.

The 44

Other names: XLIV, The Hanged Men.

Goals: To free good men who have been condemned to death.

History: Ralph Basset, an English royal justice, travelling through the country in 1124, demanded the hanging of 44 thieves in the town of Leicestershire. In retaliation, the sons of some of thieves became outcasts and began a campaign of freeing other doomed folk from the hangman's noose. They saw nothing wrong with what their fathers did, for their lands and crops were so harshly taxed that they had to hide food from the Baron's collectors. When the secret stores were found, they were charged with thieving from their lords by the harsh judge.

Initially, the gang had a loose set of objectives to free only fourty-four of the condemned. However, once they reached that point, they realised they had become quite good at it (better than they were at being peasants at any rate) and had gathered a lot of well-wishers and notoriety. So they continued.

No one knew where they would strike, and many men who thought they would receive the help of The 44 where left hanging. The order has not been centrally organised since Robert Fletcher, the original leader, was captured, tortured and executed in the horrific manner reserved for traitors and heretics. His cause has lived on, however, in a myriad of gangs that have sprung up wherever the bards tell his tale (in fact, the bards are often the founding members of a new group of 44's in a town).

The gangs of The 44 that have sprung up in the East were originally made up of Frankish members, but their cause has spread to other cultures. This has inevitably given rise to arguments within the initial order's members about whether they should risk their lives for good men that follow different prophets.

Another problem that has arisen is with how they should deal with bondsmen – those who are bound to the order for a year after their salvation – that have betrayed the order. A 44, Piter La Bouche Noire, arrived in his village in France after his year with the order. Piter's failed executioners knew his background so arrived before him and butchered his family for his unpaid crimes. He was captured as he wept over the rotting remains of his loved ones that were left for his arrival. When his heels sizzled as he was lowered into a cauldron of boiling oil, his cries implicated the names of 44's throughout the Holy Land. Many of those named are now fearful for their families in Europe.

Signifiers: Noose or other item from the execution that the member escaped from. A Saracen member will often wear a necklace bearing an executioner's blade or engrave the scene of his imminent death into a weapon or piece of armour. Bondsmen who decide to stay on after their year of service often scar themselves with the 'XLIV' in their chest or shoulder.

Allegiances: Outcasts, The 44, Peasants

Initiation: The 44 of the Holy Lands has formed a number of peculiar practices. Once someone is saved from the gallows (or whatever execution awaited them) they will be bound to the order for one year. During this year they will not be able to see their homes or families (though many are far from home to begin with) and will be forced to join the ranks of The 44 in other operations for the time of their service. 44's here are generally disillusioned with their war leaders, as they were often the judges that consigned them to death, so the order gives their bondsmen a chance to be baptised into a worthy cause.

Changing Allegiances

If you reach a level of Disposition that is higher for a Faction or Religion that isn't one of your Allegiances, you have been converted to a new cause. Replace your original Faction or Religion with your more favoured one when you gain at least one Signifier for it. If you wish to add a Class Allegiance will have to gain Disposition (20) for the Class you want to add along with at least two Signifiers for it. Your maximum amount of Classes is four. If you wish to add an Organisation to your Allegiances, you must gain Disposition (20) plus two Signifiers for it, as well as passing the initiation test that is required of you before you enter its ranks. You may be allied to as many Organisations as the Tale-Weaver thinks is sensible, too many and you may start to be viewed as a double agent by your fellow members.

Gaining experience

Experience is gained as characters complete sections of their Tale or Story. The amount is determined by the Tale-Weaver. Between games, players may spend experience points on their characters to raise Attributes or Disciplines.

The experience that the Tale-Weaver grants can be used to raise Attributes and Disciplines – 100 points of experience gives you 1 point to add to an Attribute or Discipline.

Ability types

Extended: When this Ability begins it will continue for a certain amount of time before the result is achieved.

Combat: This Ability can be used during Combat as an Action

Negotiation: This Ability can be used during Negotiations as an Action

Persistent: This Ability is constantly applied to you.

Attribute Abilities

You will receive your first Attribute Ability option when you reach 60 in an Attribute. For every ten points in an Attribute thereafter, you may choose another Ability. Temporary bonuses to your Attributes, like those from an Ability or piece of equipment, will not result in a temporary Attribute Ability. They are chosen like Abilities for Discipline Paths and may be acquired when their prerequisites are met.

Maximum base Attribute values for a human are 100.

Bulk

Weight of the world

To have such a girth in such hard times means you must be extremely wealthy.

Prerequisite: Bulk 60
Type: Persistent

Merchants and Nobles will always be at least Disposition (your BB) towards you. You also become quite famous and will make an extra D5 wealth per month at any time you wish to spend a day making a spectacle of yourself to a crowd.

Lead Fist

You throw your body weight behind your attacks.

Prerequisite: Bulk 70
Type: Persistent

Whenever you pass your opponent's Impact Apex, double the damage deducted from his DT.

Juggernaught

You are huge and cannot be easily stopped when moving.

Prerequisite: Bulk 70
Type: Persistent

In Combat, no opponents can stop a Juggernaught from moving, unless they themselves are a Juggernaught. Any enemies in your path need to pass an Agility test. On a success, an enemy will be moved 1 metres in a direction of their choosing, if failed the Juggernaught will trample them where they stand. Compare the current BB's between the Juggernaught and the trampled enemy. If the Juggernaught's is higher, the difference is the amount of D10's the enemy's Damage Threshold will be lowered by. A character can be in a Hostile Stance and use this.

Thick skin

Your skin has so many thick layers that it adds extra padding against attacks.

Prerequisite: Bulk 90
Type: Persistent

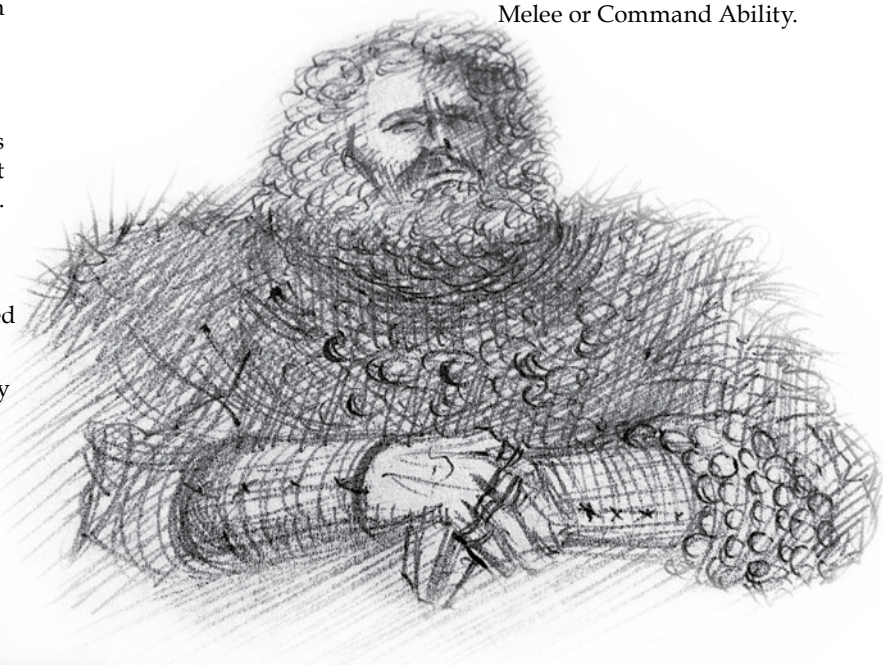
You gain an amount of Protection equal to half of your base Bulk.

Giant

You are a titan amongst men.

Prerequisite: Bulk 100
Type: Persistent

You now count as larger than man-sized. Any armour you wear must be modified for your girth so you may only wear High-Quality or Magnificent Armour that is especially made for you. Long weapons may be wielded in one hand and the reach of every weapon you use is extended by one metre. All rolls for Cmd abilities are Easy (10). You also gain a free Melee or Command Ability.



Muscle

Ox's strength

You can carry almost anything without slowing down and are renowned for your great strength.

Prerequisite: Muscle 60
Type: Persistent

You gain Carry (X), where X is equal to your Muscle value. You also become quite famous and will make an extra D5 wealth per month at any time you wish to spend a day performing feats of strength to a crowd.

Shuddering force:

You hit like an earthquake.

Prerequisite: Muscle 70
Type: Persistent

Whenever you hit in melee the opponent needs to take a B test or be forced to the ground, Prone.

Crush

Metal crumbles under your assault.

Prerequisite: Muscle 70
Type: Persistent

Whenever you successfully use a Melee Strike against an opponent you will destroy D10 + MB points of protection from a piece of armour of your choosing.

Skewer

Your strikes are so powerful that they will cleave through one opponent and into another.

Prerequisite: Muscle 90
Type: Persistent

Whenever you successfully use a Melee Strike against an opponent, if there is another enemy within your reach you will hit him also if he fails a Ref test. Abilities like Hydra's Strike accumulate after this, so if you were to successfully use the Hydra's Strike against two enemies within reach you would hit your first target once, then skewer the second enemy, then continue the Hydra's Strike against the second enemy.

Hurl Opponent

You fling your enemies into the air with your monstrous strength.

Prerequisite: Muscle 100
Type: Persistent

A character can be in a Hostile Stance and use this. On a successful Melee Strike, if your opponent's Bulk is less than yours, you will hurl him an amount of metres equal to your MB directly away from you. Anyone entering a Killing stance against you or an ally within 5 metres of you will suffer a Hard (20) modifier. You also gain a free Ability from the Melee Discipline or Acrobat Path.

Health

Resistant to elements

Whether it is the heat from the desert or the freeze of snow, your holistic health keeps you from pain.

Prerequisite: Health 60
Type: Persistent

You take half damage from sources of heat or cold, such as fire and freezing conditions. You also become quite famous for feats of endurance and will make an extra D5 wealth per month at any time you wish to spend a day performing to a crowd.

Body temple

Your body cannot be defeated by plague or poison.

Prerequisite: Health 70
Type: Persistent

Although you may be severely debilitated by an intoxicant or disease, your immune system will always overcome. Your Health value will never fall below 1. After you survive the side effects or Overdose of an attack upon your body from a particular source (either an intoxicant or disease), you will be immune to it from then on.

Supple

You gain almost inhuman powers over your body.

Prerequisite: Health 70
Type: Persistent

Add your Health value to your Ag.

Hyena's Heart:

You never tire.

Prerequisite: Health 90
Type: Persistent

Your Fatigue points are regenerated to full at the end of each Combat round.

Regenerate

Your supreme health overcomes even the strongest of attacks.

Prerequisite: Health 100
Type: Persistent

At the end of each Combat round add 2D10 to your DT. The regenerated points may not exceed your initial DT. You may also gain a free Ability from the Melee Discipline or the Acrobat or Physician Paths.

Awareness

Arrow catch

You have no trouble plucking speeding objects from the air.

Prerequisite: Awareness 60
Type: Persistent

Whenever a projectile that you could hold in one hand is fired at you, you may attempt to grab it with a Ref test. Bolts, arrows and rocks can be used as short improvised weapons. You also become quite famous for your antics and will make an extra D5 wealth per month at any time you wish to spend a day performing to a crowd.

Holistic Awareness

Your senses are so finely tuned that no condition is too hard for you to navigate through, and your other senses more than make up for the loss of one.

Prerequisite: Awareness 70
Type: Persistent

Complete darkness and blindness does not affect you in anyway. Also, you are never affected by unstable ground.

Anticipate

You know where to move to avoid danger.

Prerequisite: Awareness 70
Type: Persistent

You may reroll one result on the Injury table per day but the second result is final.

6th Sense

You have an uncanny ability to react to danger from any direction.

Prerequisite: Awareness 90
Type: Persistent

At the start of every round during a Combat, and before any other characters act, you can take one Action. If there is more than one character with 6th Sense, then the character with the highest Agility goes first. Determine randomly if they are equal.

Everywhere at once

Time seems slower to you than to an average human.

Prerequisite: Awareness 100
Type: Persistent

Whenever a Combat begins, you will be counted as entirely aware of what is going on and are able to spread your Actions between the Actions of other characters anywhere within the round. You also gain a free Subterfuge, Melee or Projectile Ability.

Intelligence

Human abacus

Your memory is infallible and you easily solve puzzles and confuse others with your intellect.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 60
Type: Persistent

Once a day you may try to recall something that relates to a particular problem you have encountered. It will make your next Action Easy (20). You also become a hit on market day and will make an extra D5 wealth per month at any time you wish to spend a day performing your memory tricks to a crowd.

Book wyrm

You can drain every last drop of information from a book.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 70
Type: Persistent

You now have the Literate Ability if you didn't already. You are a metaphorical devourer of books and will automatically gain one of your choice. The bonuses from any books you read are doubled. You also do not need to have your books in your possession to gain their bonuses, but you must have read them.

Immortal concentration

You can snap your focus to a task at an amazing speed and are not easily distracted.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 70
Type: Persistent

You will halve the time it takes for any Abilities of the Extended type. Also, at the end of every month you will gain an extra D10 experience points.

Genius

You are an expert at a particular field of study.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 90
Type: Persistent

Choose a Path. All rolls for the Abilities of the Path will be Easy (20).

Polymath

You are a master of probability and can calculate the threads of chance almost instantaneously.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 100
Type: Persistent

Rolls for any challenge are Easy (10) from now on. You also gain a free Communication, Subterfuge, Knowledge or Mercantile Ability.

Passion

Unbreakable

You are so convinced in the righteousness of your actions that nothing can keep you down.

Prerequisite: Passion 60
Type: Persistent

If you are forced to Cower, you may instead take a P test, and if it is successful you can continue without Cowering. You also become a hit on market day as you can withstand such an incredible amount of pain. You will make an extra D5 wealth per month at any time you wish to spend a day injuring yourself in front of a crowd.

Strike from the Heart

You cannot keep your emotions from the battlefield.

Prerequisite: Passion 70
Type: Persistent

Any Melee Strike against an opponent adds or reduces the amount of damage based on the Disposition you hold towards the target. Eg, if you are at Disposition (+20) towards an opponent, then all your hits will be reduced in power by 20; however, if you are at Disposition (-20) towards an opponent, then all your hits will take a further 20 from his DT.

Frenzy

You cannot control your emotions when something dear to you is endangered, or an evil foe overcomes your defences.

Prerequisite: Passion 70
Type: Persistent

Whenever a character that you hold at Disposition (+30) has his DT reduced to 0 or your DT is reduced to 0 by an opponent you hold at Disposition (-30), your next Action will be spent going into a frenzy. You enter an Executioner's Stance, regain your Fatigue, gain D10 x PB to your DT, and double your Action points. Your strikes must be directed against the opponent that struck down your favoured ally or tried to strike you down. The frenzy lasts for D5 rounds or until your DT is reduced to 0.

Zealous

No matter what you think, you think very strongly about it.

Prerequisite: Passion 90
Type: Persistent

Your Dispositions towards everyone are doubled.

Idol

You attract followers to you like flies to a corpse

Prerequisite: Passion 100
Type: Persistent

Your maximum amount of followers is doubled. Whenever you appear in public there will be D10 beggars asking you for guidance about how they should live or beseeching you to reveal your latest poem. They will also defend you with their lives and try to follow you on your adventures. You also gain a free Communication or Command Ability.

Disciplines

Your Disciplines can reach 0 without any consequences, and a Discipline's base value will never go below 0 or above 100.

Any Ability that requires a test against your Discipline score will be Easy (Intelligence Bonus).

Rank: When an Ability refers to a Path Rank it means the total amount of Abilities you have on that particular Path. So, if the Abilities you have in Melee are three Ravager ones and two for Duellist, your Ravager Rank will be three, your Duellist Rank will be two and your Guard Rank will be zero.

Communication

Special: Gaining 20 points in Communication will grant you the Literate Ability (see the Books section in Marketplace).

Counsellor

Teach

You grant your companions insight into the skills you possess.

Type: Extended (D10 weeks minus the IB of your student, minimum of 1)

You will have to spend at least two hours a week giving instruction to your student. At the end of the training your pupil will need to take an I test at Easy (your Counsellor Rank x 5). If successful, the pupil will gain the Ability you have been teaching. Only Abilities gained from Disciplines can be taught through this and you may only teach one Ability for the time. Your two hour lectures/training courses can hold an amount of students equal to you Counsellor Rank.

Analogy

You make a concept you are seeking to communicate much easier to understand by using an analogy.

Type: Negotiation

After you spend a turn using an Analogy, your next Appeal will be Easy (10). This Ability can be used once per Negotiation per your Counsellor Rank.

Cure trauma

You try to cure a friend's emotional trauma.

Type: Extended (D10 weeks minus the PB of the traumatized character, minimum of 1)

You will have to spend at least two hours a week speaking with the traumatised character for time of counselling. At the end of the weeks your patient will need to take a P test at Easy (your Counsellor Rank x 5). If successful, the patient will have an amount of traumas removed equal to your Counsellor Rank at the beginning of the sessions.

Calm

You are a bastion of composure in the whirlwind of battle.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

You may not be in a Combat Stance before you take this Action. Pass a Comm vs P test against one assailant within hearing distance. If you are successful the target will have every Combat Stance removed. This Ability can be used once per Combat per your Counsellor Rank.

Mercy

You are a fine actor or an emotional wreck and it is easy for your enemies to pity you.

Type: Persistent

Your Appeals to Surrender are Easy (10). Also any opponent that accepts your Surrender will not be able to enter a Combat Stance for an amount of rounds equal to your Counsellor Rank.

Diplomat

Linguist

You are a master of languages and learn them effortlessly.

Type: Persistent

You are fluent in a number of languages equal to your Diplomat Rank, and speak with an accent in another set of languages equal to your Diplomat Rank. Each time your Diplomat Rank increases, you may modify your fluent/accented languages.

Rebuttal

You are a master at turning dismissive or insulting barbs around to your favour.

Type: Persistent

You can use this Ability as soon as your opponent makes a successful Dismiss or Insult. If you pass a Comm vs Comm test against your opponent the benefits of the Dismiss or Insult will be stripped from them and applied to you. This Ability can be used an amount of times in a Negotiation equal to your Diplomat Rank.

Peace-Maker

You try to stop the fighting raging around you and begin shouting, threatening and pleading to the belligerents as to why it is in their best interests to stop the bloodshed.

Type: Combat (2AP/1F)

You may not be in a Combat Stance before you take this Action. Take a Comm test. It will be Hard (10 for each character, friend or foe, in a Killing or Execution Stance within hearing distance). If it succeeds then all characters will have their Combat Stances removed. Using this Action will be Easy (5 x Diplomat Rank) and it may only be used once per Combat.

Veiled Threat

Using a sophisticated balance of metaphors and double-meanings, you can put a very harsh point across and still maintain an air of respectability.

Type: Persistent

If you use an Insult you won't suffer the immediate Appeal or loss to Disposition from your opponent should you fail. Using an Insult becomes Easy (5 x Diplomat Rank).

Patience

Your stoic demeanour rubs off on others.

Type: Negotiation

You spend the round convincing your opponent that this conversation should not be rushed. The Negotiation is extended by an amount of rounds equal to D5 + your Diplomat Rank. This may only be used once per Negotiation.

Socialiser

Joke

You've got an excellent sense of humour, which will come in handy considering how laughter can be the best medicine.

Type: Extended

You may tell a joke outside of a egotiation or Combat and it must be aimed at a character that will appreciate the humour behind it. It takes around 5 minutes. The targeted character's next Health test made within 24 hours will have an Easy (5 x Socialiser Rank). A joke may be told once a day.

Orate

People have heard of you. You are known as an entertaining person to be around, whether it is through something like your poetry skills, storytelling ability or philosophies.

Type: Extended

You may spend a day enthralling the masses and kindly accepting donations so that your audience remains entertained. Gain D5 wealth. You may use this an amount of times per month equal to your Socialiser Rank.

Boost Morale

In bad situations there's nothing worse than bad company. That's why your friends, who often end up in bad situations, like you around.

Type: Extended

You spend a few minutes telling uplifting tales to your companions within hearing distance. By passing a Comm test you make any Passion tests Easy (5 x your Socialiser Rank) for an amount of hours equal to your Socialiser Rank. This may be used once a day.

Charm

You find it easy to make friends, even with your enemies.

Type: Negotiation

By passing a Comm vs P test, your adversaries will feel that you truly do have their best interests at heart. Their opposition will be lowered by 10 x your Socialiser Rank. This can only be used once per Negotiation.

Information

You are an expert at gossip and a frequent visitor to the rumour mill.

Type: Extended

You may use this a number of times per month equal to your Socialiser Rank and it will take a day of your time. After you pass a Comm test you can use the information you've gathered in one of three ways:

Blackmail: You have discovered a secret that an individual would rather keep hidden. Your appeals against him or her are Easy (10) throughout your next negotiation.

Ambush plans: You know the perfect spot for an ambush, or have heard where your enemies plan to ambush you. When you next combat members from the particular Organisation you have spied upon, you and your friends are aware before them and gain a free turn before your enemies can act.

Bargain: You hear of a merchant selling goods for very low prices. You may purchase a non-high-quality item at half price.

Knowledge

Special: Gaining 10 points in Knowledge will grant you the Literate Ability (see the Books section in Marketplace).

Metallurgist

Repair

Your hammer is the bane of dents and your tongs – the mender of cracks!

Type: Extended

You may spend a full day repairing damaged armour. You may work on one piece of armour per your Metallurgist Rank. At the end of the day make a Know test for each piece. If you are using a forge each test will be Easy (20). If you pass then you successfully restore the armour's Protection; if you fail then your time is wasted on that piece.

Death's hand

Your arrowheads strike fear and steel into the hearts of knights, your bludgeons shake the ground with their force and the blades refined by you seem to cut the very air.

Type: Extended

You may spend a full day working on a weapon made of metal or crafting arrow or bolt heads for use in a bow. At the end of the day make a Know test for the weapon; the test will be Easy (20) if you are using a forge. If you pass then Strikes made with the weapon are Easy (10). If you fail then your day is wasted. The benefit of the Death's Hand lasts for an amount of Combats equal to your Metallurgist Rank.

Reinforce Armour

Your expertise in metal craft allows you to strengthen the defensive qualities of armour.

Type: Extended

You may spend a full day working on a piece of armour and take a Know test; the test will be Easy (20) if you are using a forge. If you pass, its current Protection is doubled. If you fail then your day is wasted. The benefit of the reinforced armour lasts for an amount of Combats equal to your Metallurgist Rank. If the armour is damaged, then the deductions are made to the added Protection. If your Reinforced Armour comes to the end of its effective Combats and has only had damage applied to its added Protection, then your armour will not suffer from any deterioration.

Artisan

You are an accomplished smith and can create weapons and armour.

Type: Extended

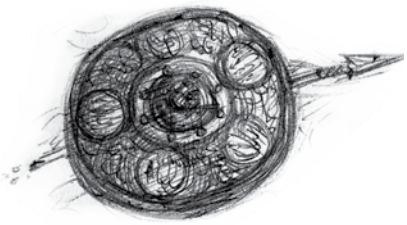
Choose a weapon or piece of armour. To craft it you will need to spend an amount of full days in a forge equal to half of the item's Cost. At the end of the crafting time make a Know test. Its difficulty will be the same as the weapon or armour's Rarity. If the result of the Know test is equal to or under your Metallurgist Rank, then the item will be High-Quality. If you fail then you will need to spend one more day in a forge to take the test again.

Strength of Steel

Your constant hammering of metal is easily transferred to the hammering of your foes.

Type: Persistent

Strikes made with bludgeoning weapons, against foes with 1 Action Point to spend per Combat Round, are Easy (5 x Metallurgist Rank).



Physician

Bone-Mending

You have an in-depth knowledge of the structure of bones. You know how to best heal, and break, them.

Type: Extended or Combat (1AP/1F)

You have the capability to bone set an injured character. It requires a quiet place where you may need to re-break bones and apply a cast or splint. The procedure will take around an hour. Make a Know test; the test will be Easy (5 x Physician Rank). If you pass then the boneset character may not use their limb for D5 days; if you fail then they may not use the limb for 2D5 days.

This Ability may also be used for a Bone Strike in Combat. If wielding a bludgeoning weapon against an immobile or unaware character, and you successfully hit an un-armoured location, you will automatically break a bone in their body of your choosing, see the Injury table for details.

Staunch

You are an expert at mending battlefield injuries.

Type: Combat

Your tests to tend wounds are Easy (5 x Physician Rank). You can also revitalise your patients and so whenever you successfully Tend Wound you will add a D10 x Physician Rank to your target's DT.

Herbology

You can prepare potions that affect the bodies of the imbibers.

Type: Extended

To create an intoxicant you will need to acquire the materials for it, brew it, and then allow it to ferment. You must pay half of the cost of the potion you plan to concoct, and then spend a day brewing it. It needs to be stored somewhere for an amount of days equal to half of its Cost, but you do not have to stand next to it after the first day. At the end of the time you will need to pass a Knowledge test; on a success you will have produced an amount of potions equal to your Physician Rank. If you fail then your time is wasted.

Preventative Care

Your knowledge of sanitation and the workings of the body are enough to benefit all around you.

Type: Persistent

At the beginning of every month, if you pass a Knowledge test, you can increase the Muscle or Health Attribute of yourself or a companion by 1. This may be used on an amount of companions equal to your Physician Rank.

Pressure point

You can loosen a friend's muscles, using techniques such as acupuncture, heat treatment and stretching and also know about the pressure points of the body

Type: Extended or Combat (2AP/1F)

Giving a massage will take an amount of hours equal to the companion's MB. After the massage; take a Know test, if it is passed then your target will double his Agility value for an amount of days equal to your Physician Rank. Also, you may attack an opponent's pressure points in Combat. Make an unarmed Melee Strike, and if it is successful apply any damage. Also, your opponent will not be able to strike for D5 rounds. If the result of the D5 is under your Physician Rank, then the opponent will be completely immobilised for that amount of rounds.

Alchemist

You are constantly creating items many years ahead of your time.

To create an invention you will need to first acquire the base through whatever means is available to you. The base for an Alchemical device will always need to be High-Quality. You can then proceed to add a Peculiarity to it. Item's may only ever have one Peculiarity. The item remains the same type of object as the base that is used for it. Using the table below, you will see the Creation Investment for Peculiarities. Each time you pay for materials, hire a forge and spend a full day working on your invention, make a Know test and deduct the amount of points that you passed the test by from the invention's Creation Investment. Your Knowledge tests are Easy (5 x Alchemist Rank). You have finished your invention when you have reduced its Creation Investment to 0. It is worth recording your Knowledge value and Alchemist Rank after you complete your creation, because there is a chance it will be used for some Peculiarities.

Weapon enhancement

You create the most feared weapons a warrior could ever need.

Type: Extended

Base: Any High-Quality weapon used for Melee Strikes

Peculiarities: Flaming, Blasting, Honed

Flights of Death

The sight of projectiles that have been produced by you bring a smile to their wielders and tears to their targets.

Type: Extended

Base: Arrows, bolts or missiles. The cost involved is acquiring the firing weapon. A Missile Launcher fires missiles and has all the statistics as a Crossbow (including Cost). It is created as part of the Missile it fires, so you will not have to find an Alchemical Missile Launcher before you begin creation. Alchemical arrows, bolts and Missiles can only be fired from the bow or Missile Launcher that was specifically used for them.

Arrows and bolts Peculiarities: Flaming, Blasting, Honed

Missile Peculiarities: Greek Fire, Arachne's Curse, Giant's Ball

Helm Mastery

Your enhancements to the bearers of your helmets allow them to see through darkness or make their subjects quake beneath their shadow.

Type: Extended

Base: High-Quality helmet

Peculiarities: Flaming, Scope, Lion's Roar

Shroud of the Eccentric

Donning a piece of your apparel will make anyone stand out from the crowd.

Type: Extended

Base: High-Quality body armour that covers the chest or Fancy Apparel

Peculiarities: Refined, Winged, Blasting

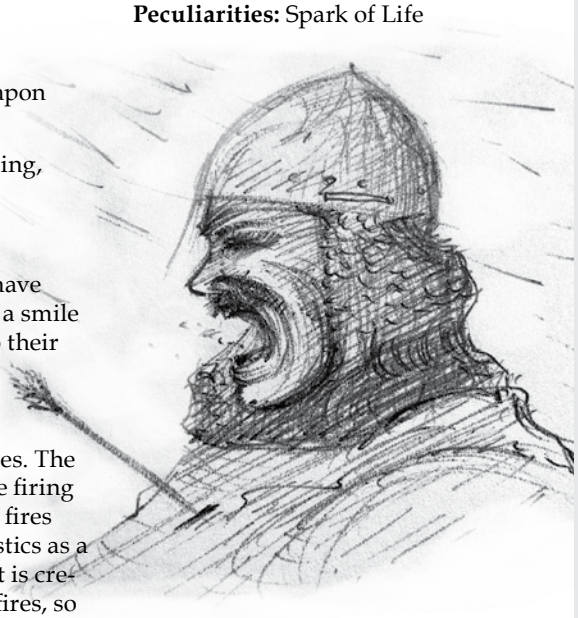
Forge Lesser Automaton

You can create mechanical, four-legged servants that are close to the size of large dogs.

Type: Extended

Base: Cost 50 for the necessary materials.

Peculiarities: Spark of Life



Peculiarities

Flaming

Melee weapon

Creation Investment: 200
Bonus: By triggering the flame with a lever, you can engulf your weapon in fire. It will make your Melee Strikes Easy (10) and light anyone it hits with a Medium Fire if they fail an Ag test. The flame lasts for an amount of rounds equal to the creator's Alchemist Rank. It will then need to be refuelled in your laboratory, which will take a few hours.

Arrow or bolt

Creation Investment: 100
Bonus: Any target hit will suffer damage, as normal from the type of projectile, and it will light anyone it hits with a Medium Fire if they fail an Ag test.

Helmet

Creation Investment: 50
Bonus: The flame is lit on your helmet so can drive away the darkness and keep your hands free. Any negative modifiers to your Awareness due to environmental effects on your vision, such as darkness or fog, are halved. Also, if an opponent ever injures your head in Melee, you, your opponent and anyone else within 3 metres of you will be set alight by a Medium Fire.

Blasting

Melee weapon

Creation Investment: 150
Bonus: If you hit an opponent in Melee, and roll under the Know Value of the weapon's creator, your foe will be knocked directly away from you an amount of metres equal to the creator's Alchemist Rank. It will have an amount of charges equal to the creator's Alchemist Rank and when they are used up it will then need to be recharged in the creator's laboratory for a few hours.

Arrow or bolt

Creation Investment: 150
Bonus: If you hit an opponent, and roll under the Know Value of the weapon's creator your foe will be knocked directly away from you by an amount of metres equal to the creator's Alchemist Rank.

Armour or apparel

Creation Investment: 150
Bonus: If an opponent hits you using a Melee Strike and rolls under the Know Value of the weapon's creator, your foe will be knocked directly away from you an amount of metres equal to the creator's Alchemist Rank.

Honed

Melee weapon

Creation Investment: 25
Bonus: Your target does not count as wearing any armour when injured with this weapon, unless they are wearing High Quality or Magnificent armour on the injured location.

Arrow or bolt

Creation Investment: 25
Bonus: Your target does not count as wearing any armour when injured with this weapon, unless they are wearing High Quality or Magnificent armour on the injured location.

Greek Fire

Missile

Creation Investment: 250
Bonus: This has a range of up to D10 x the creator's Alchemist Rank, roll each time it is fired. Any character between the weapon and the end-point will be hit by a Large Fire unless they pass an Ag test.

Arachne's Curse

Missile

Creation Investment: 150
Bonus: This has a range of 10 x the creator's Alchemist Rank. Any character hit with the missile will not be damaged, but will be rooted to where they stand for a number of rounds equalling the creator's Alchemist Rank. At the beginning of each round the stuck character can only take an M vs (creator's) Know test in an attempt to throw off the goo.

Giant's Ball

Missile

Creation Investment: 200
Bonus: This has a range of up to D10 x the creator's Alchemist Rank, roll each time it is fired. Any character between the weapon and the end-point will be hit by a great steel ball unless they pass an Ag vs (creator's) Knowl test. The amount that their DT is reduced by is equal to the creator's Knowledge value and victims will be hurled an amount of metres equal to the creator's Alchemist Rank in a random direction. The weapon takes 10 Actions to reload.

Scope

Helmet

Creation Investment: 50
Bonus: The Range of your weapon is doubled.

Lion's Roar

Helmet

Creation Investment: 50
Bonus: Any Cmd Abilities you use are Easy (10). Also, your voice carries much further than usual.

Refined

Armour

Creation Investment: 150
Bonus: Your Ag is increased by an amount equal to the armour's Heaviness plus the creator's Alchemist Rank while wearing the armour.

Winged

Armour or apparel

Creation Investment: 100
Bonus: These add an extra 10 Bulk. When the wings are unfolded, you will take a maximum of 2D10 falling damage and can glide from heights above six metres.

Spark of Life

Automaton

Creation Investment: 250
Bonus: When you have completed your creation, you will need to give it the Spark of Life. Each of its Attributes will equal D5 x your Alchemist Rank, roll separately for each. You may choose either the Ranged or Melee Discipline and add D10 x your Alchemist Rank to the automaton's value, selecting Paths and Abilities as you see fit. It will also have a Protection value equal to D10 x your Alchemist Rank. The Automaton can be armed with the equivalent of any weapon that is equal to or below Reach 3. You must purchase its weaponry separately.

Functions

It will be able to perform the following functions that require a Manoeuvre Action on your part to deliver the instructions to the automaton. Your automaton must be within hearing distance of you to acknowledge your commands, and if you do not pass a Knowl test when you ask it to switch to a different function it will simply Heel:

Guard: It will follow you at a distance of between 1 and 4 metres and attack the first opponent to attack you.

Heel: It will stay by your side.

Target: It will attack an enemy of your choosing.

Perform: Undertakes one of its Abilities.

Command

Cult-Maker

If you are a Cult-Maker you will have a number of followers whose numbers won't surpass your Cult-Maker Rank. The make-up of this party can be changed whenever an appropriate opportunity arises, such as when you are resting in a city where there will be followers to your cause. The types of followers are explained in the ability entries.

Fanatics

You have taken under your wing a number of the down-trodden and easily-led. To repay you for their rescue, they will gladly follow you into the gates of hell, should you ask.

Type: Persistent

You gain as many fanatics to accompany you as you can hold in your party.

Henchmen

You have some burly guards, but they do not come cheap and, unfortunately, are only in it for the money.

Type: Persistent

Your henchmens' Mel and Rng added together equal your Cmd. You may begin the month with as many guards as you can hold in your party. At this time decide how much Wealth you will spend on their wages. Before each Combat make a Cmd test at Easy [the amount of Wealth you have spent on your guards]. If you fail then you will lose D5 of your Men-at-arms to desertion before the fight and can only hire anew at the beginning of the next month.

Aids

You have attracted some skilled and intelligent followers to your cause.

Type: Persistent

You gain as many Specialists to accompany you as you can hold in your party. The level of skill for each of their Specialist Disciplines is equal to half of your Cmd value.

Sycophant

You have one follower who waits upon your every word and this character's lack of intelligence is more than made up for with devotion.

Type: Persistent

You can have a maximum of one sycophant in your party. Create a new character. This character never gains any more experience or abilities, but is entirely controlled by you without having to resort to Cmd tests or the like. If your current Sycophant is killed or you want a new one, you must go 30 days without a Sycophant before you can groom a new character intro the role.

Treasurer

Leading your flock would be time-consuming and expensive work without your treasurer managing your finances.

Type: Persistent

You decide to raise funds from your followers. At the beginning of each month make a Cmd test. If you pass you will gain an amount of Wealth equal to a D5 x Cult-Maker Rank. Your treasurer is an NPC controlled by the Tale-Weaver and does not count towards your party limit, as it is very unlikely for the treasurer to accompany you on an adventure.

Glory-Seeker

War Cry

Your voice is like a trumpet, urging your comrades to battle

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

This can affect an amount of companions equal to your Glory-Seeker Rank, from the closest to furthest (including yourself). If you succeed at a Cmd test then they will instantly enter a Killing Stance. You may only use this once per Combat.

Second wind

You exhort an ally to push hard before giving in to exhaustion.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

This can affect one of your companions within hearing distance. If you pass a Cmd test your target's Fatigue will not be reduced for a number of rounds equal to your Glory-Seeker Rank. However, once the rounds are up, the character will be winded and Cower for D5 rounds. You may only use this once per Combat.

Lead from the front

You charge your enemies and inspire courage in your friends.

Type: Combat (0AP/0F)

Whenever you combine a Lunge with a Strike and deal damage to your enemy, you may use this Ability immediately after the results of your Strike are seen. Take a Cmd test; if passed, all of your companions' Melee Strikes will be Easy (D10 x Glory-Seeker Rank). The bonus lasts until your next turn. You may only use this once per Combat.

Rousing Speech

You share your lust for glory with your companions.

Type: Extended

You spend around 10 minutes giving a rousing speech about the courage of your friends and the despicableness of your enemies. Take a Cmd test; if you are successful you may choose an amount of Allegiances equal to your Glory-Seeker Rank. If you enter battle against enemies bearing that Allegiance within 24 hours of your speech, each of your companions that heard it will automatically pass their first attempt at entering a Killing Stance against them and have an Easy (20) modifier to their first Strike in the Combat. This Ability may be used once a day.

Coward's Bane

You urge your companions back into the fight.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Take a Cmd test. If you are successful, you will affect an amount of companions within hearing distance equal to your Glory-Seeker Rank. If your allies are Surrendering or Cowering they will get a free Strike immediately with whatever weapon is at hand, should their players wish. This may only be used once a day.

Strategist

Controlled confusion

Your tactics disorientate your enemies.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Take a Cmd test. If you are successful, you will affect an amount of companions within hearing distance equal to your Strategist Rank. They will each gain a free Manoeuvre Action immediately. A number of your enemies equal to your CmdB within the battle (starting from those closest to you) will be disorientated and will not be able to Strike during the confusion. This may only be used once per Combat.

On Your Feet

With a roar you snap your companions into upholding their part in your stratagem.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Take a Cmd test. If you are successful, you will affect an amount of companions within hearing distance, including you, equal to your Strategist Rank. Roll a D10 for each of your CmdB points. You may spread out the result amongst your companion's DT. This may only be used once per day.

Focus

You've spotted the head of the snake and cutting it off will lower the resolve of your enemies.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Select a single opponent and take a Cmd test. If you are successful, you will affect an amount of companions within hearing distance, including you, equal to your Strategist Rank. All their Strikes against the target are Easy (10) for a number of rounds equal to your Strategist Rank. This may only be used once per Combat.

Retreat

You throw up a distraction and order a retreat that gives your companions a good chance of escape.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Take a Cmd test. If you are successful, you will affect an amount of companions within hearing distance, including you, equal to your Strategist Rank. If they wish they may take an A test, and if they pass they may take an instant Run action and may not be interfered with by enemies during the move.

Spy

You have a network of loyal spies.

Type: Extended

At the beginning of a month you may send out a spy to an amount of Organisations equal to your Strategist Rank. Apart from any other information the Tale-Weaver may decide to grant you, you will never be surprised by their activities should you pass a Cmd test when the Tale-Weaver calls for one. For example: You are on your way to your manor, and the Tale-Weaver had planned for a Nizari to attack you on the way. However, because one of your spies had infiltrated the ranks of the Nizari, he asks for a Cmd test on your part (this represents how well you have instructed your spy to find out secrets of importance). You succeed. The Tale-Weaver reveals the street the Nizari is waiting in, if he has any accomplishes and his possible tactics. You can now choose to meet your assassin or not.

Mercantile

Special: Gaining 30 points in Mercantile will grant you the Literate Ability (see the Books section in Marketplace).

Appraiser

Arms Seeker

You seek out a supplier of well-made weaponry

Type: Extended

You devote a day to finding and haggling with a seller of fine weapons. If you pass a Merc test you will find the merchant. You may purchase a number of slashing, bludgeoning and polearm weapons equal to your Appraiser Rank for one wealth point each. Or you may purchase a High-Quality weapon from the merchant at the cost of the regular form of weapon. Or you may purchase a Magnificent bladed or blunt weapon, long bow or crossbow for three times the price of a High-Quality weapon. A Magnificent weapon grants all the bonuses of a normal and High-Quality weapon, plus makes strikes Easy (20) and grants your character a Command, Ranged or Melee Ability of your choice whilst it is wielded. Arms Seeker may only be used once a month.

Armourer Contact

You seek out a supplier of well-made armour.

Type: Extended

You devote a day to finding and haggling with a seller of fine armour. If you pass a Merc test you will find the merchant. You may purchase a number of pieces of armour equal to your Appraiser Rank for a quarter of their cost each. Or you may purchase a High-Quality piece of armour from the merchant at the cost of the regular form of armour. Or you may purchase a piece of Magnificent armour for twice the price of a High-Quality piece. A Magnificent piece of armour is your choice of a hauberk, shield, great helm or nasal helmet. It grants all the bonuses of a normal and High-Quality piece, but never loses any of its Protection value and grants your Character a Command Ability whilst it is worn. Armourer Contact may only be used once a month.

Landlord

You are adept at finding pieces of land at a good price.

Type: Persistent

Your MercB is treated as one higher when you are determining your dwelling. Also you will have tenants on one of your properties who will be granting you an extra amount of Wealth equal to your Appraiser Rank at the beginning of every month.

Hirelings

You are an experienced buyer of servants and slaves.

Type: Persistent

You will gain an extra amount of days help from hirelings equal to your Appraiser Rank. Also, you will only select the best quality hirelings, so once a day, whenever a hireling acquired by you makes a test, you may substitute your Mercantile value instead of their Attribute or Discipline that is being tested.

Jeweller

You are a buyer and seller of expensive jewels.

Type: Persistent

If you are wearing your expensive jewellery then your Appeals while Haggling will be Easy (10). Also, at the beginning of each month you may take a Merc test, if successful you will gain an extra amount of Wealth equal to your Appraiser Rank.

Smuggler

Dealer

You are part of an underground network that supplies intoxicants to those that can pay.

Type: Persistent

Your Smuggler Rank is deducted from the Rarity and Cost of intoxicants whenever you purchase them, before Haggling. Also, you only buy the best, so the duration of the intoxicant's effects is doubled.

Slaver

You have a part to play in preparing slaves for harems or labour.

Type: Persistent

You constantly have a slave by your side. If the slave dies then you will gain a new one when you return to a city. When giving orders to slaves you double your Cmd value.

Fence

You are a buyer and seller of rare and forbidden goods.

Type: Persistent

If you are wearing Fancy Apparel, or can produce an Intoxicant to a fellow merchant, then your Appeals while Haggling will be Easy (10). Also, at the beginning of each month you may take a Merc test, if successful you will gain an extra amount of Wealth equal to your Smuggler Rank.

Bribe

You know how to buy someone's favour without risking disdain.

Type: Negotiation

You may spend up to your Smuggler Rank in Wealth for an Easy (number of Wealth points spent x 5) modifier to your next Appeal.

Risky business

You take on a difficult and dangerous operation.

Type: Extended

This takes D5 days, during which time you are beset by evils as you travel to deliver a forbidden item to its new owner. Take a Merc test. If you succeed you gain 2D10 + Smuggler Rank in Wealth. If you fail you will need to roll on the Injury table. This may be roleplayed without resorting to the Injury roll if the Tale-Weaver includes a suitably dangerous challenge. This Ability may be used once a month.

Trader

Hawk

You set up in a bazaar to see if you can take a few dinars from locals.

Type: Extended

You must spend a day selling your goods. Take a Merc test, if successful you will gain D5 wealth. Also, you may resell a number of items equal to your Trader Rank at double the normal selling price. This may be used a number of times a month equal to your Trader Rank.

Love of Money

You do not hate anyone who likes to trade.

Type: Persistent

If you have a negative Disposition against an opponent while Haggling, it will be 0 instead. Also your Disposition towards Merchants will be doubled if it is positive.

Nomad friend

You are a friend to the Bedouin tribes and other folk who dwell in the wild areas.

Type: Persistent

When travelling through wilderness (ie; anywhere that isn't within sight of a city or village), pass a Merc test. If successful you will know of a trade route and the possible dangers. You and your companions' A tests will be Easy (10) throughout the journey.

Cosmopolitan

From your wide ranging travels you have come to know a bit of every language.

Type: Persistent

You are adept in the tongue used for trading. At the beginning of a Negotiation when languages are decided you may make a Merc test. If you are successful you will be able to speak the language as accented.

Marketeer

You have a wide range of contacts from bazaars and markets across the entire known world.

Type: Persistent

Whenever you are searching for an item you may halve its Rarity value. You may also reduce its Cost by D10 times your Trader rank, down to a minimum of 5. This ability may be used once a month.

Melee

Guard

Protect

You conjure a whirling wall of steel between your enemy and those you hold dear.

Type: Persistent

Choose an ally within 5 metres. Whenever your defended ally is dealt damage it will be applied to you instead. The damage dealt to you is reduced by 5 x your Guard Rank. This Ability uses 1 Fatigue point at the beginning of your turn, but you may take other Actions and it will still apply.

Throat Punch

You place a crushing blow to your opponent's throat, disrupting any ability that relies on spoken commands.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

You may be in a Hostile Stance and take this Action. Make a Melee Strike against your opponent at Hard (the target's neck protection). If it is successful you smash your opponent's windpipe so apply the damage. The opponent's Cmd, Comm and Mag values will be 0 for an amount of rounds equal to your Guard Rank.

Grapple

You incapacitate your opponent with a powerful hold.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)

You may be in a Hostile Stance and take this Action. Make a Melee Strike against a human-sized opponent or smaller. If it is successful, both you and the target will not be able to perform any Actions until either your opponent breaks free of the hold (a turn spent performing an M v M test) or an amount of rounds equal to your Guard Rank is up.

Knock down

You aim to bludgeon your opponent into a disturbed slumber.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

You may be in a Hostile Stance and take this Action. Make a Melee Strike against your opponent at Hard (the target's head protection). If it is successful you smash your opponent's skull so apply the damage. The opponent will be knocked Prone for D5 rounds. If the D5 result is below your Guard Rank, the target will also be unconscious.

Armour Expertise

You wear armour like a second skin.

Type: Persistent

This may be used for a number of heavy armour pieces equal to your Guard Rank. For the pieces of armour, add your Guard Rank or the Heaviness of the armour (whichever is lower) to your Agility value.

Ravager

Hydra's Strike

You transform into a whirlwind of steel.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)

You Melee Strike a number of times equal to your Ravager Rank, at any foes within your melee weapon's reach. Each Strike is Hard (20).

Dual Strike

You attack with a weapon in each hand, or both ends of your weapon.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)

You must have a weapon in each hand, or be using a long weapon. You make a Melee Strike at a target at Easy (5 x Ravager Rank).

Blood Rush

You are overcome by your lust for battle.

Type: Persistent

When you enter a Killing Stance, your Action Points are raised by your Ravager Rank for an amount of rounds equal to your PB. This can only be used once per Combat.

Fool's Valour:

Your training has been so intense that you will never give up.

Type: Persistent

When your DT equals 0 take a Passion test as normal. If it succeeds then you will continue to fight until the Combat is over or until your injuries totally incapacitate you, rather than an amount of rounds equal to your PB.

Death-stare

You have a look of hate and madness about you when you enter a fight.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

This may be used against an opponent you have made a successful Melee Strike against. Take a P v P test, and if you are successful the opponent will Flee for their next Action. This Ability cannot be used against the same enemy more than once per Combat.

Duellist

Parry

No blades can pass through your defences.

Type: Persistent

You do not need to be in a Combat Stance to take this Action. Melee Strikes against you are Hard (5 x Duellist Rank).

Disarm

With a deft flick of your weapon, you send whatever your opponent holds flying.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

You may be in a Hostile Stance and take this Action. Make a Melee Strike against one of your opponent's hands at Hard (20). If it is successful you crush the target's fingers, so apply the damage. Whatever the opponent holds in that hand is sent D10 metres in a random direction. If the D10 result is under your Duellist Rank, you may take the object into one of your free hands. Objects and weapons that are long and require two hands to wield, as well as blockers, cannot be lost in this way.

Flurry

With a flurry of attacks you force your opponent to move.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)

You may be in a Hostile Stance and take this Action. Make a Melee Strike against a man-sized or smaller opponent. If it is successful you hit your opponent, so apply the damage. You may move the target a number of metres equal to your Duellist Rank.

Sure strike

You observe your opponent and anticipate where to make the most effective strike.

Type: Persistent

Select a target within 10 metres. Each consecutive Guard Action you use will grant you an Easy (10) Melee Strike against your foe if it is the next Action you take after the Guard. The maximum bonus you will receive will be Easy (10 x Duellist Rank).

Feint

You trick your opponent into blocking an attack that never comes, opening up your target's defences.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Make a Melee Strike against your opponent. If it is successful, no damage is done, but your target will lose an amount of Fatigue equal to your Duellist Rank.

Projectiles

Harrier

Combat Abilities have a minimum range of 10 metres.

Rain of Death

You can fill the air with steel.

Type: Persistent

It takes you 1 less Action to reload a weapon and this may result in a 0.

Snare

You drive a missile through your targets legs.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Make a Ranged Strike against your opponent at Hard (double the target's leg protection). If it is successful you slice into your opponent's legs so apply the damage. The opponent's movement rates are halved for an amount of rounds equal to your Harrier Rank.

Warning shot

Your shot darts past your opponent's eyes, and the target realises that it could have been between them.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

You do not need to be in a Combat Stance to take this Action. Make a Ranged Strike against your opponent at Hard (10). If it is successful do not apply any damage. The target will lose his Stances and will not be able to enter another one for an amount of rounds equal to your Harrier Rank.

Taunting shot

Your shot distracts your enemy, giving you time to get to a better position.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

Make a Ranged Strike against your opponent at Hard (20). If it is successful apply the damage and move an amount of metres equal to your Harrier Rank. Your target's next action will be a lunge towards his nearest enemy that isn't you.

Bleeder

You split your opponent's skin, drenching the area in blood.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Make a Ranged Strike against your opponent at Hard (arm, leg or abdomen protection). If it is successful you cause the target to bleed so apply the damage. The opponent will lose D10 to his DT at the beginning of a round, for an amount of rounds equal to your Harrier Rank.

Skirmisher

Combat Abilities have a maximum range of 20 metres

Entangling missile

Your hail of missiles helps your comrades to overcome their distracted enemies.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

Make Rng test to target an enemy. If you are successful any Melee Strikes against the target will be Easy (5 x Skirmisher Rank) until your next turn.

Charging shot

Your weapon has become such a part of your body that movements do not affect your aim.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

You may Manoeuvre, leap an extra amount of metres equal to your Skirmisher Rank, then a take a Ranged Strike at your finishing point.

Defensive shot

You pop out of cover to unleash your missiles before ducking back.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)

You may move a total amount of metres equal to your Skirmisher Rank and make a Ranged Strike at Hard (10) at any point during your move.

Quick Draw

Your opponents think you will be at a disadvantage wielding a bow, until a blade is an inch from their faces.

Type: Combat (0AP/1F)

You may swap a bow or crossbow with any other weapon as a free action. You may also enter a Killing Stance at Easy (Skirmisher Rank).

Point blank

You fire into an enemy and drive a wedge between you both.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Make a Ranged Strike against an enemy that has you within his reach, ignoring the minimum range of your weapon. If successful, apply the damage and move your target directly away by an amount of metres equal to your Skirmisher Rank.

Sniper

Combat Abilities have a minimum range of 20 metres

Target Weapon

You fire at your target's weapon, knocking it from his hands.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Make a Ranged Strike against one of your opponent's hands at Hard (20). If it is successful you injure the target's hand, so apply the damage. Whatever the opponent holds in that hand is sent D10 metres in a random direction. Objects and weapons that are long and require two hands to wield, as well as blockers, cannot be lost in this way.

Sharp shot

Your skill to account for wind and difficult trajectories greatly enhances your missile attacks.

Type: Combat (1AP/0F)

Select a target within range. Each consecutive Action you use to aim will grant you an Easy (10) Ranged Strike against your foe if it is the next Action you take after aiming. The maximum bonus you will receive will be Easy (10 x Sniper Rank).

Weak Spot

You target an enemy's soft spot.

Type: Combat (2AP/0F)

You spend a moment examining your target and aiming for a point that will cause maximum damage. You must pass a Rng test, then take a Ranged Strike against your foe. If the attack results in the target rolling on the injuries table, then he will count as not wearing armour on any location that results.

Cold blood

You see your enemies as objects; they are simply targets to you, nothing more.

Type: Persistent

You may enter a Hostile Stance by passing a basic Rng test modified at Easy (5 x Sniper Rank). No Disposition modifiers are applied.

Anticipation

You have practiced well at hitting moving and difficult targets.

Type: Persistent

When firing at a target in cover or under the benefits of an evade action, your Ranged Strikes will be Easy (5 x your Sniper Rank).

Subterfuge

Acrobat

Special: Your Agility must be at least 20 to perform any Acrobat Abilities.

Cobra's Bite

You dart through a battle to strike, before backing away to safety.

Type: Persistent

The reach of any weapon you wield is raised by an amount equal to your Acrobat Rank, to a maximum of 6.

Dodge

You can anticipate where a missile will land to avoid it.

Type: Persistent

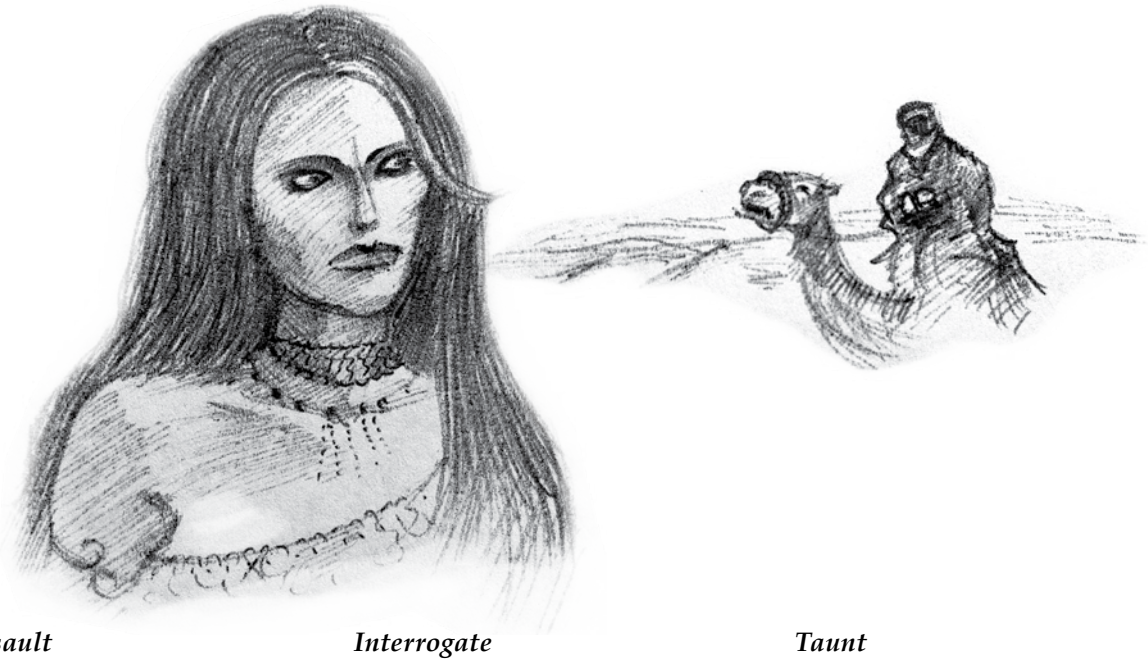
Your RD will be raised by 5 x your Acrobat Rank.

Cliff spider

Uneven surfaces are just as easy to navigate as flat ground for you.

Type: Persistent

You will only need to test for falling damage after 6 metres rather than 3. You also ignore slippery or unstable ground. You may Manoeuvre vertically up any surface for an amount of metres equal to your Acrobat Rank.



Somersault

You can flip out of combat and into a safe place.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

Take a Ref test. If it is successful you can move an amount of metres equal to your Acrobat Rank, vertically as well as along the ground. No Melee Strike may be made against you during this move.

Blur

You are a constant whirl of steel in combat.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

Take a Subt test. If it is successful all Melee Strikes against you will be Hard (5 x your Acrobat Rank) for an amount of rounds equal to your HB. This ability may only be used once per Combat.

Manipulator

Intimidate

You know how to name-drop a dangerous ally or powerful patron, or perhaps you just know how to create a deadly and mysterious air about yourself. Either way, others will hesitate to arouse your ire.

Type: Negotiation

After you make an Appeal you may immediately take a Subt v A test. If you are successful then your opponent will lose her next turn. This may only be used an amount of times per Negotiation per your Manipulator Rank.

Interrogate

Through a range of subtle threats, torture and promises, you can make anyone admit to pretty much anything.

Type: Extended

You interrogate your victim to get them to admit to something that a normal, open-air negotiation will not produce. Your target has to be detained so that they are at your mercy. The inquisition may last for a number of days equal to your Manipulator Rank. Every day that you spend interrogating will result in the opponent losing 2D10 Health and Passion (roll separately for each). If the result of the D10's is equal to or less than your Manipulator Rank then the victim will tell you what he thinks you want to hear, whether he knows the truth of it or not (it is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide). Regardless, you have recorded the victim's confession. If the victim reaches a level of Passion equal to your Manipulator Rank he will attempt to bribe you with all his current Wealth if you will free him. If the victim reaches 0 Health then he will die.

Lie

You a practised and cool-headed con-artist.

Type: Persistent

Whenever you are called upon to use your Communication Discipline, you may replace it with your Subterfuge value instead. Also, your tests to Bluff are Easy (5 x your Manipulator Rank).

Taunt

You know how to make someone angry – very angry.

Type: Negotiation or Combat (1AP/0F)

If you use the Insult Action against an opponent during a Negotiation you may turn it into a Taunt. After a successful Insult have your opponent take a Passion test. If he passes it then the Negotiation will turn into a Combat, with both of you aware, and the opponent's first Action to be a combination of entering a Killing Stance, Lunge and Melee Strike against you with whatever weapon is close to hand.

If this is used in Combat then your target within hearing distance is forced to take a P test. If he passes it then your target's next action will be a combination of entering a Killing Stance, Lunge and Melee Strike against you with whatever weapon is close to hand.

Whether the conflict started as a Negotiation or Combat you will be prepared, so your Melee Defence will be bolstered by your Subterfuge value for the first round of Combat.

Blather

You gain yourself time by talking nonsense.

Type: Negotiation

If you pass a Subt v A test, then your opponent will not be able to use any Actions for an amount of rounds equal to your Manipulator Rank. During this time you may take Movement and Negotiation Actions, but if you leave your opponent's sight the Blather will be over. Any Appeals you make during your blather will be Hard (20).

Sneak

Special: Your Agility must be at least 10 to perform any Sneak Abilities.

Cutpurse

You can make money just by walking through a crowded market place.

Type: Extended

You must spend a day stealing from the unwary. Take a Subt test, if successful you will gain D5 wealth. If you are unsuccessful you have been caught! You will need to pass an A test or roll immediately on the injury table. This may be used a number of times a month equal to your Sneak Rank.

Assassinate

You can disappear from sight to strike your enemies where they least expect it.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)

You must be in an Executioner's Stance to take this Action. Make a Subt test. If you are successful you will be, in effect, invisible until you affect another character in any way, such as striking or using an Ability on them. Assassinate will last for an amount of rounds equal to your Sneak Rank. If you come within an amount of metres equal to an opponent's AB, you must pass a Subt v A test to remain hidden.

Lockpick

You know ways to get into places where others do not want you to be.

Type: Extended

If you encounter something like a locked door or manacles, you may attempt to loosen the locks without needing a key. Make a Subt test at a modifier set by the Tale-Weaver. You will get an amount of attempts equal to your Sneak Rank.

Crowd Mastery

You blend in with the crowd and swim through it like an eel through water.

Type: Persistent

Anyone trying to detect you in a crowd has a Hard (5 x your Sneak Rank) modifier to their Awareness. A crowd of people never slows you down. If you are involved in Combat within a crowd, Strikes against you are Hard (5 x your Sneak Rank).

Backstab

You are an expert at piercing a victim's vitals.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)

This may only be used with a sharp, thrusting weapon, such as a sword, dagger or spear. Your target must have made a Strike at another character for their last Action. Make a Subt v A test. If you are successful you may Manoeuvre towards your target and make a Melee Strike, your target may not strike at you throughout this move. If it hits, do not apply any damage, but roll immediately on the injury table. This may be used once per Combat.

Disciplines for Story-Dwelling Characters

Magic

To cast a spell you will need to spend the Action and Fatigue points as detailed in the entry, then pass a Mag test. Because spells need to be uttered using esoteric words and actions, you need will to be able to speak and move your hands to cast. Because of this, wearing any piece of heavy armour will make a Mag test Hard (the armour's Heaviness). While you are casting a spell any Strikes against you will be Easy (10). The entry will also detail the spell's Range, Damage, how your target can defend themselves, Duration and any other special rules. If you are interrupted before a spell is completely cast (for example your Fatigue could run out or a spell uses 4 action points, but you can only spend 3 this round and before your next turn you are hit and injured) your Mag test will be Hard (20). If you cast a spell with 0 Fatigue you will lose D10 Health as you are buffeted by the supernatural energy that has been unleashed.

Fire Eater

Breath of Mushussu

You spit a ball of raging flame through the air.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F). You must be in a Hostile Stance to take this Action.
Range: Fire Eater Rank in metres
Damage: D10 x Fire Eater Rank
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Fire Eater Rank)
Duration: Instant
Special: This spell will affect an amount of enemies equal to your Fire Eater Rank within range.

Fiery Dart

A molten bolt shoots from your fingertip.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F). You must be in a Hostile Stance to take this Action.
Range: 10 x Fire Eater Rank
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Fire Eater Rank)
Damage: D10 x Fire Eater Rank
Duration: Instant

Blaze

Your touch delivers a blast of flame.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F). You must be in a Killing Stance to use this directly against an opponent.
Range: 1 metre
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Fire Eater Rank)
Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Fire Eater Rank.
Special: This grants a weapon you touch a damage bonus every time it passes its target's Impact Apex, which is D10 x your Fire Eater Rank. This may also be used on an opponent who will become the victim of a Medium Fire for the spell's Duration.

Molten Skin

Your skin cracks as molten blood rises to its surfaces, infusing your body with the power and protection of fire.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)
Range: Self
Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Fire Eater Rank.
Special: Any character within 3 metres of you at the beginning of a round has D5 x your Fire Eater Rank deducted from their DT. You will also be immune from all heat-based injuries.

Choking smoke

As the words of the spell tumble from your lips, a ghostly sound of crackling twigs permeates the air, followed by a cloud of dark smoke.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)
Range: 10 x Fire Eater Rank
Damage: 2D10 each round
Defence: H or A test at Hard (5 x Fire Eater Rank)
Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Fire Eater Rank
Special: This conjures a cloud of dense smoke at a point you mark within range. The radius of the smoke is equal to double your Fire Eater Rank. Any character failing their defence test within the smoke will shuffle in a random direction for all of the Actions in their turn.

Transmuter

Beast

Your body warps into the form of a beast you have seen in your travels.

Type: Combat (3AP/3F)
Range: Self
Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Transmuter Rank
Special: You transform into an animal that is up to twice the size of a man. An elephant is too large, but a lion is appropriate. This animal may not swim or fly. Your MP, MD, Ag, and DT are doubled. Your Strikes do not count as unarmed. When you return to your normal self, your DT will be completely replenished and everything you wear will have fallen to where you had cast the spell. This Ability may only be used once per Combat.

One with nature

Your body shrinks into a creature you are familiar with.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)
Range: Self to 1 metre
Duration: A number of hours equal to your Transmuter Rank
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Transmuter Rank)
Special: You transform into an animal between the size of a pig to a sparrow. Everything you are wearing will fall to where you cast the spell This animal may swim or fly. Your Awareness is multiplied by your Transmuter Rank, and any attempts to injure you will need a MP or RP v Ref test. If it hits you will instantly return to your natural state, naked. This Ability may only be used once a day.

Imbue Life

You transform an object into a beast of a similar shape.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)
Range: 1 metre
Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Transmuter Rank
Special: You may transform a staff into a viper, a shield into a tortoise, or anything into a swarm of harmless (but irritating) beetles. The creature(s) will seek to hide as soon as possible, and although it won't bite or attack, it may cause a lot of commotion in it's frantic state.

Stone shaper

You transform a living thing into stone or vice versa.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F). You must be in a Hostile Stance to take this Action.
Range: Self to 1 metre
Duration: A number of hours equal to your Transmuter Rank
Defence: P test at Hard (5 x Transmuter Rank)
Special: Your target freezes and becomes indistinguishable from a (finely sculpted) statue. Should this spell be cast on a sculpture like a stone gargoyle, the creature will come alive and be under the caster's control.

Lead to gold

You transmute one pure element into another.

Type: Extended
Duration: D5 days
Special: At the end of the D5 days devoted to this undertaking you must succeed at a Mag test, at Easy (5 x Transmuter Rank). If you are successful you may add an amount of D5 x your Transmuter Rank to your Wealth.

Summoner

Guardian

You summon a supernatural being to protect you.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)
Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Summoner Rank
Special: You summon a djinni within 1 metre who you have control over. This may only be cast once a day.

Howling Shades

You act as a portal for a gale of dead souls.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)
Duration: A number of rounds equal to your Summoner Rank
Special: A whirlwind of ghostly figures emanates from you in a radius equalling your Summoner Rank in metres. No projectile weapon can penetrate the Howling Shades, and it counts as unstable ground with a Hard (5 x your Summoner Rank) modifier.

Terror

You force an opponent to gaze upon the abyss

Type: Combat (1AP/2F). You must be in a Hostile Stance to take this Action.
Defence: P test at Hard (5 x Summoner Rank)
Range: 5 metres
Duration: D5 rounds
Special: The target will Cower for the duration of the spell. If the amount of rounds rolled is under your Summoner Rank, the target will lose D10 x your Summoner Rank to his Passion for the remainder of the Combat.

Muse

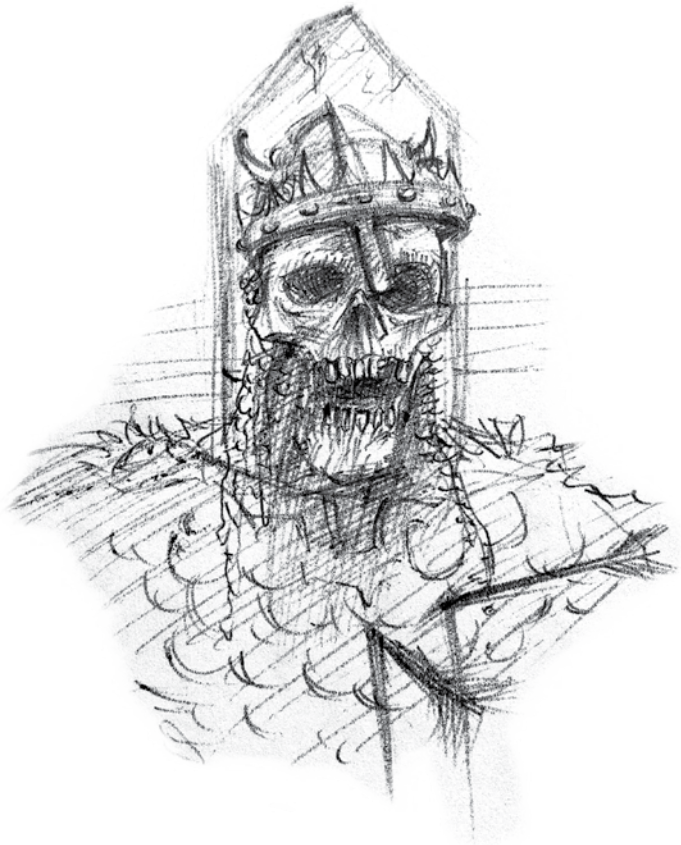
You ask guidance from the beyond.

Type: Combat (3AP/1F)
Special: Before you attempt any roll, you may ask for help from your spiritual muse. If you can interpret the riddle of the muse by passing an I test, your next roll will be Easy (5 x your Summoner Rank). This spell may also be useful for roleplaying purposes if you come across a difficult problem or aren't sure where to go next.

Task

You command a being from the unseen realms to perform a task for you.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)
Range: Ten times your Summoner Rank in metres
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Summoner Rank)
Damage: D10 x Summoner Rank
Duration: Instant
Special: The creature doing your bidding is invisible and can lift any item that a character with a Muscle value of 100 could. This spell could be used to deliver a message, throw an opponent, retrieve an item from a known location or plunge a dagger into an enemy.



Necromancer

Martyr's curse

You curse an enemy to shoulder the weight of battle.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F). You must be in a Hostile Stance to take this Action.
Defence: P test at Hard (5 x Necromancer Rank)
Duration: Rounds x Necromancer Rank
Special: You may curse your opponent with the damage done to an amount of characters equal to your Necromancer Rank. These characters may be allies or enemies. For each point of their DT that is reduced, the cursed target will lose a point from his own DT.

Children of the grave

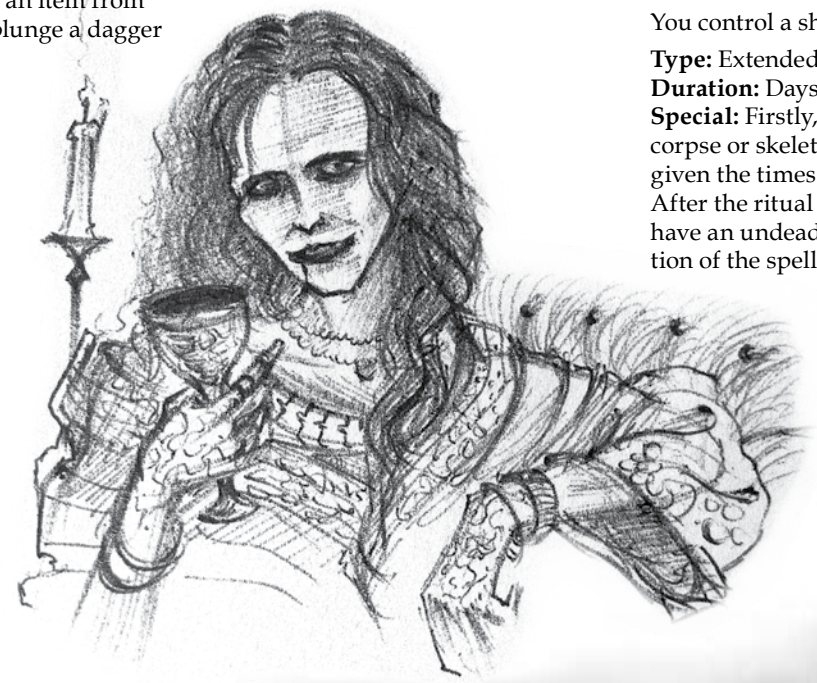
Bubbling up from your feet rise the crawling things that shun the light.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F)
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Necromancer Rank)
Damage: D5 x Necromancer Rank
Duration: Rounds x Necromancer Rank
Special: The thousands of scarabs, spiders, flies and worms spread out from your feet at a radius equalling your Necromancer Rank in metres. All Melee Strikes against you are Hard (5 x your Necromancer Rank) and any enemy within the radius will take damage.

Undead Servant

You control a shuffling corpse.

Type: Extended
Duration: Days x Necromancer Rank
Special: Firstly, you must find a corpse or skeleton (not too hard given the times you are living in). After the ritual is complete you will have an undead servant for the duration of the spell.



Dead chill

You control the cold touch of death.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Necromancer Rank)
Damage: D5 x Necromancer Rank
Range: Self to 1 metre
Duration: D5 rounds
Special: The target is immune to all heat based injuries.

Soul drain

Black tendrils latch onto your enemy, drawing his life force into you.

Type: Combat (2AP/2F). You must be in a Killing Stance to take this Action.
Range: Ten times your Necromancer Rank in metres
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Necromancer Rank)
Damage: D5 x Necromancer Rank
Duration: Rounds x Necromancer Rank (requires concentration)
Special: For each round that damage is dealt to your target, you may add that same amount to your DT. The effects will last until the end of the Combat.

Magician

Garbled voice

You make your target speak backwards or quack whenever they intend to utter something.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)
Range: 10 x Magician Rank
Defence: P test at Hard (5 x Magician Rank)
Duration: Rounds x Magician Rank
Special: The target cannot speak and will have his Cmd, Mag and Comm values reduced to 0.

Levitate

You raise yourself or something you touch into the air.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)
Range: Self to 1 metre
Defence: Ref test at Hard (5 x Magician Rank)
Duration: Rounds x Magician Rank (requires concentration)
Special: You may move the target through the air up to your Magician Rank in metres for every Action point you spend.

Third Eye

Your vision shifts into another dimension so that nothing will escape your detection.

Type: Combat (1AP/1F)
Range: Self
Duration: Rounds x Magician Rank (requires concentration)
Special: You can see in the dark and your A increases by 10 x your Magician Rank.

Disappear

You warp the light around something so that it is invisible to observers.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)
Range: Self to 1 metre
Duration: Rounds x Magician Rank
Special: You or the character or object you target is invisible for the duration of the spell. Also, the target will gain an Easy (20) modifier to any Sneak Abilities, Concealment tests and Melee strikes.

Suggestion

You order another character to obey your command.

Type: Combat (1AP/2F)
Range: Ten times your Magician Rank in metres
Defence: P test at Hard (5 x Magician Rank)
Duration: Instant
Special: You control your target for an amount of actions equal to your Magician Rank. The target may strike at his allies, or hand over the keys to your locks, but may not blatantly self harm, such as throwing himself off a cliff. However, you could move him close enough to the cliff edge for a bit of a shove in the next round.

Weaving a Tale

Firuz turned his head, his face wincing as the heat dried his eyes. A flickering brightness crept into his field of vision. He saw only a hazy smoke. The glow had vanished. Firuz shifted his body to look beyond the wall at his back. The silhouettes of the jagged orchard and ruined houses were the only things that he could make out. A bead of sweat ran down from his temple. This was foolish. He would get up and find a safer place among the ruins to sleep.

He brought his feet under him. An explosion of light filled his eyes. The stench of sulphur rose through his nostrils. He covered his face and fell back heavily against the clay wall behind him.

A sound, like a gale of air rushing to feed a monstrous fire, preceded a high-pitched, crackling voice, "You may ask one wish of me."

Firuz was in danger of passing out. The heat was intense. His mind struggled. A 'wish' did the thing say? He allowed his hand to slip from his face, but was horrified by what confronted him. Two bolts of flame lit the creature's face as eyes. Its hair was black and animated, as if a powerful wind blew from below it. It had the face and torso of a child, but below its waist was nothing but a smoky trail that faded into the night. Those traits were strange enough, but rage began to mingle with the fear inside Firuz's mind – the djinni had chosen to wear his son's face.

Its mouth gaped like a cave, "Wish for the manner of your death."

It took Firuz some moments to come to terms with what he beheld. The djinni hovered over him, arms folded, waiting for his reply.

"I..." Firuz stammered, trying to be careful of his words, "I do not wish to die."

The djnni huffed. "Your fate was sealed when you released me. If you do not make your choice then it will be mine to make – a most painful and horrifying outcome for you." The djinni turned its head up to the moon. It was on its descent. "Quickly now, we must move past this."

Firuz collected his thoughts. "Please, great djinni, why do you reward such a good deed with evil. I saved you from your prison. Surely your lord and mine would be dishonoured by your actions."

The djinni's eyes blazed, "You would know much of dishnonour, Firuz."

What a Tale-Weaver needs

A calendar or diary to note what is going on and when, a tactical map and miniatures or counters for accurate combat, a source for background music, a bunch of D10s, pens/pencils and this rulebook.

Character motivations

It is worth talking to your players to discover what motivates their characters and ensuring your Tale meets their needs. Here are some guidelines so that the story-arcs of the characters can align with the goals that their players want for them.

The path to riches

"What problem, we just need a few dinars to grease our path"

Characters following the path to riches want wealth so that they can eat the finest foods, have the best equipment and live in luxury. Theirs could be a rags-to-riches story, like Ali Al-Din after he came across the djinni in the lamp, or perhaps they were born into wealth – and are beset by those who seek their treasures.

The motivating factor for these types of characters is treasure. They may not want to increase their Mercantile Discipline, but they will want to be given the opportunity to gain wealth in other ways, such as banditry, hiring themselves to powerful patrons or being able to explore desolate regions where they may find long lost treasures to loot. However, they may also want to build a powerful mercantile empire, with caravans and ships that travel to the most exotic places on the planet, but, like Sinbad, their gambles may leave them with many scars along the way.

The climb to power

"If I was king, that type of behaviour would be forbidden so I wouldn't have to put up with it."

Power-hungry characters want authority over others for their own selfish purposes, or perhaps a more noble cause. They may believe that life would be easier for them and those they care about if only they had the manpower to get things done. But, like King Shahryar, power often brings its own problems, such as betrayal from those thought most close and the possibility of rebellion from once-loyal subjects.

A Tale where characters are motivated by power needs to include them gaining authority over others. These underlings could be anyone such as a ship's crew, a small rural village, or a cult of raving fanatics. It could also be an army and the characters may seek glory on the field of battle to further their ambition, as involvement with war was probably the best way to achieve social mobility throughout the middle ages. Characters that gain power will also gain influence and enemies among their neighbours, and they will have to enter the shadows of intrigue to maintain their position against those that covet it.

The destruction of the enemy

"I will not rest until they have been burned from the earth so that our women may once again nurse children in safety!"

Often through a life-shattering experience, character's that follow this path think only of the eradication of their foes. They often hold a strange juxtaposition in their minds; on the one hand they believe that their enemies are less than human – inferior creatures who deserve only death for their pollution upon the world – but they also have a tremendous fear of them, because in their minds the enemy is a danger to all that these characters hold dear.

Blood, vengeance and war are the staples of a Tale demanded by these characters. Pitting their combat skills against their enemies is their calling. Negotiating with anything but steel means that time is being wasted by not slaying their adversaries. These characters have a black and white view of morality, yet everything in the mythos of the Nights of the Crusades is in shades of grey. Moral dilemmas are a part of any good Tale, and characters whose goals are only to eradicate their enemies may look at themselves one day and realise that they are worse than the monsters they have sought to destroy.

The seeking of knowledge

"Books are my blade, the abacus – my armour"

Knowledge seeking characters crave information about the world they are in and recognition for their contributions. Characters that are deemed as highly intelligent yet have no role to play during exciting elements of a Tale, such as combat, may wonder why they bother. It is the Tale-Weaver's duty to ensure that a knowledgeable character can point out that the Noble of some marauding bandits bears the sigil of House Bremen, so will not attack anyone carrying a purple silk cloth; or that the knowledgeable character knows that a lunar eclipse is due in two nights, so that will be the best time to fool the Apostles of Sobek into believing that the companions are Heralds of Osiris and demand the release of any sacrificial victims. Both of these examples would translate into real benefits for the characters by making the inevitable combat easier.

These characters also seek new places, peoples and artefacts that they can discover and announce to the world. Perhaps they will find a powerful patron who also holds the quest for knowledge dear. There is danger for too much free thought in these times too. When the vast majority of the populations are ill-educated and there are vested interests in keeping them that way – seekers of knowledge will gain enemies by simply voicing their discoveries. Tales focusing on the uncovering of truth will have antagonists violently opposed to their blasphemies so this will never be a path to a peaceful life.

The passage to righteousness

"And how many times has God granted victory to a few over many? Charge, God wills it!"

These characters will act as bastions of their faith. Either clerics or intensely devout laypeople, a character on the passage to righteousness will take vows and be on the straight path of their religion, which will, they have no doubt, lead them to heaven. Every event is seen as the invisible hand of God, angels or saints, or the work of demons and djinns. Prayer and faith is the best type of armour and the words of God are the best weapons against the only true enemy – Satan/Iblis. Those who work against God are many and treacherous, so a constant vigil is necessary.

It goes without saying that Tales for these types of characters are helped if they all either follow the same religion or at least know each other well enough to be lenient in their interpretations of scripture in regards to their choice of friends. Otherwise, a fanatical zealot would have little reason to be in a group with a drinking, swearing, womanising lute-player because the zealot may well have slain others for lesser transgressions. Vast evil cults, wicked/tolerant clerics (both are as bad as each other to a fanatic) and the touch of the devil should infuse these types of Tales, so that the characters can truly fight against what they want to.

The road to virtue

"Since when was a king's law based on what is right and good for us?"

This is a path not often tread in these dark times. The type of characters that follow this road seek to make the world a better place to live in, putting thoughts of the afterlife into the background. Their heretical beliefs may include things such as women not being servants to men; or that a ruler should be chosen for his merits rather than his father. These characters' main challenge will be the bastions of authority that hold the world back from becoming (their version of) fair to everyone.

Battling corruption and manipulation of the lower classes by the powerful will be the main focus to these characters. And this will make their lives very difficult. There are many stories of individuals seeking progress throughout the Middle Ages, but to deny the authority of a King or Caliph is not only against the law – it is against God – and torture and death await those who blaspheme and rebel against the rightful order.

How to challenge your players

The rules for Negotiations and Combat aim to give two evenly matched opponents a 50 percent chance each of overcoming the other. A very easy fight would have only one opponent whose MD was roughly the same as the lowest PC's MP. A challenging combat would have either an opponent who was outnumbered yet could easily defeat at least one of the PCs single-handedly, or an even number of opponents that only some PCs could defeat in a one-on-one combat. A character should gain around 1000 experience points per month for overcoming challenges.

A typical month

It will suit most characters to spend a lot of their time within a large city, such as Jerusalem, Acre, Damascus or Cairo, especially if some of them need access to a stable workshop for some of their abilities. It is also worth bearing in mind that a character's Wealth resets at the end of every month, so it will be a painful experience for some characters if they are far from civilisation at this time, though as the Tale-Weaver you should feel free to bend the rules.

One way to organise a month is to plan it in weekly blocks, ensuring that the characters will not be away from civilisation for more than a week at a time. There should also be at least one week of downtime for the characters to purchase goods or use abilities over an extended period of days.

It will also add an extra element of realism if you prepare weather in advance for your characters. You would only need to prepare it around seven days into the future, but may want to plan more days should you be running a marathon gaming session. With an internet connection, getting realistic weather is not a problem, as the cities of the Nights of the Crusades are also in the real world. At the time of writing, typing 'damascus weather forecast' into a search engine results in a site that displays that Damascus's weather is fairly

stable for the coming week. It seems to have clear skies and a temperature variance of 38 C/100 F in the middle of the days to 18 C/64 F during the nights.

Underlings

So that combat doesn't slow down, if your players are up against a large number of underlings and cannon fodder, they will instantly incapacitate them once their foes' DT is reached. This style of play is appropriate for the action-hero type of game, which in general goes against what Nights of the Crusades is about. Every combat should be brutal and the wails of the dying should ring in the characters' ears long after the dust had died down.

What if a stupid player wants to play a smart character?

So a character with an Intelligence of 83 cannot solve how to piece together a fairly simple puzzle, that, if left to role-play, could easily be solved by other players whose characters are not as intelligent? The player obviously wants his character to contribute to the group in cases like this and should be the best character at overcoming it. It is the Tale-Weaver's goal to keep the game enjoyable, and for a player to be in control of a character that constantly fails at the tasks he is supposed to excel at is no fun. In cases like this, the dice and the character sheet should take priority over roleplaying and the physical act of the players solving the puzzle. Or a better option may be to give your players a clue for each Intelligence test they pass.

Force, Finesse or Wits?

The best Tales will allow every character to shine. You, the reader, will know doubt be able to list many Role-Playing games, whether they are on a board, using pen, paper and dice or on a computer, that only offer a single solution to a challenge – and that solution is often slaying those that stand in your way. The Crusades were a time of war and bloodshed, but that does not mean that a Tale should be one constant sword fight.

After a Tale-Weaver finishes preparing the Tale, it is worth looking back on it and analysing the challenges that the characters will face. The goal of a Tale-Weaver is to offer multiple ways of overcoming these hurdles so that there will be a chance for any group to succeed if they're smart about it, no matter if they are made up of scholastic monks or the remnants of a mercenary band. This basically translates into offering a solution that may not involve Combat, or will make Combat much easier. The characters should be able to use force, finesse or wits to overcome any challenge.

Example one:

Three bandits hold up the characters' progress through a narrow mountain pass. The alternative is a dangerous journey over the jagged, dust-blown cliffs. They must use this pass to reach Acre before sunset because if they don't, Hugh Le Vaughn will escape from justice once-again.

Force: By killing the bandits, or making them flee by a show of force, the characters will be able to access the path.

Finesse: Although the cliff face is difficult to climb, dexterous characters could find a decent ledge to use with an Awareness test, then climb it without drawing any attention with a Subt vs A test. They will be above the bandits so another Subt vs A test is needed to keep from being seen. Once that is done the path will be clear.

Wits: With a successful Merc or Subt vs Merc test a character can convince the bandits that a piece of junk is worth the toll and pass by safely. A successful Know or I test sees that the rocks above could avalanche with only a tiny bit of encouragement from a well placed bolt or arrow. The knowledgeable character could either warn the bandits that they will send the rocks onto their campsite so they'll lose whatever ill-gotten gains they've received, or just run through as the dust settles and the moans of the bandits are buried under the rubble.

Example two

The carriage of Yasmina, the Vizier's daughter, is out of control and is heading straight for the bazaar!

Force: A well-placed spear would stop the horses pulling the carriage within seconds, yet it is well known how expensive and loved the horses of the Vizier's stables are. Alternatively, a large cart of hay could be moved into the path of the carriage that would slow the horses and perhaps save everyone in the carriage injury if it is used as a barrier. However there isn't much time and the cart is heavy. Three M tests are needed with the amount of success determining how much injury is caused to the horses and passengers. No successful results means the carriage continues into the bazaar.

Finesse: An agile character could leap onto the carriage as it passes and hopefully direct the horses away from the bazaar. The character must pass an Ag test to get onto the carriage to then steer it.

Wits: On a successful Intelligence or Knowledge test a character remembers that a Chinese merchant is selling fireworks and also knows that the entrance to the bazaar has a side gate that can be opened out to the fields. While the crafty character runs to get the fireworks the others in the group can work to open the gate. As the carriage bears down upon the character with the explosives, there will only be a few rounds to pass an I or Know test to start the fireworks and divert the horses outside the city's walls.

Example three

Rescuing a peasant farmer's son, wrongfully accused of treason, from the gallows.

Force: Although it would be suicidal for the PCs to storm the Baron's dungeon, they could launch their rescue when he is being transported to the town square. However, the Baron's guards are well armed and fear the Baron enough to fight with their lives.

Finesse: A character could don a disguise, perhaps that of a prison guard or cleric offering the last rites. Even if the ruse is successful, the keys to the cell must be found or the lock must be picked. Then how to escort the peasant's son out? Maybe another disguise would need to be brought for him. Alternatively, the sneaky characters could drop to the carriages roof as it passes under the bridge of the Blind Archer's Gateway, and gain entry to the inside of the carriage. The warden may put up a bit of a fight but has become fat from the Baron's purse and loves life too much to face a dagger in the belly. He, like the coach driver, will be easily thrown off and the PC's, after setting some obstacles to slow down the Baron's guards, will be able to escape with the peasant's son.

Wits: The knowledgeable character knows that even though the Baron's guards fear him, they also hate him with a passion. A bribe to the captain of the guards escorting the prisoner should be enough for them to turn the other way, but the warden will be suspicious. A poisoned beverage should keep him in his bed on the day of the execution. Another means of achieving the result could be to petition Lady Sidonia, the Baron's young wife, to pressure her husband for the peasant's son's release. She is quite powerful in his court, as it is only through her that he maintains good relations with the Byzantine merchants that provide him with so much power. However, gaining an audience with her may require some thought, as she is often accompanied by the Baron's eunuch when she leaves the castle walls. A chance may arise if the PC's can somehow slip her a note.

Areas

Every area has an Allegiance and Disposition Chart that represents the majority of the people there. When the area's Allegiances clash with its ruler's, all sorts of problems can occur. It is useful for the Tale-Weaver to assign Allegiances and a Disposition Chart to the areas that the characters will visit often, so that Allegiances and Dispositions can easily be applied to NPCs that may need to be called upon during the Tale.

Stories and Storyscapes

Stories serve a number of purposes in the Nights of the Crusades. They can make a long ocean journey more interesting, give the players an opportunity to experiment with different types of characters and also introduce sorcery into the Tale. It can also be an easy way for a player who may have the time to write a full tale swap roles with the regular Tale-Weaver who wants to experience focusing on one character rather than a hundred.

It is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide how to deal with Stories. Each one could be different so players will always have to have a new character ready for them. Players could even come up with a myriad of SCs and so have a variety of options when their MCs meet up with a Storyteller. These types of SCs would be one-offs and so would be experienced characters without the option for advancement. At the other end of the spectrum is a long fable about the SCs that runs in parallel to what is happening in the real world of the Tale. These SCs will gain experience like MCs. This way of using Stories would mean that whenever the MCs come across a Storyteller they will hear a story about their SCs.

For example: The Players Peter, Mandy and Khalil use Hussain, Gertrude and Sir Baldrick as their MCs throughout the Tale. They really liked the last Story that involved their SCs; Aerwulf, Stryxis and Pharukh. It involved them being

trapped in cave at the edge of the ocean as winged serpents sought entry. Only by Pharukh managing to solve the riddle carved into the stone walls could Stryxis finally summon the sea gods to aid them. When that Story ends, Hussain, Gertrude and Sir Baldrick continue on their way through the Horns of Hittin, looking for remnants of the Templar's Jewel. They find another scavenger, a merchant called Afiz Theos, with a cart of scrap metal amongst the haunted plain. As he seems harmless enough, Hussain strikes up a conversation with him. Afiz says that the heat is almost too much for him and he hopes he doesn't end up in the same mess as Aerwulf, Stryxis and Pharukh do in the Story of the Three Suns. Hussain says he hasn't heard that one, and Afiz, the Storyteller, begins it. The Story will be told while the MCs perform the tedious task of picking through the corpses of the warriors of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Whether this Story picks up straight after the one about the winged serpents or even well before it, is up to the Tale-Weaver.

A good Story has a lesson that an astute player can pick up on and use in the main Tale. How the Tale-Weaver works this into a Story will define her brilliance. As a blunt example, using the Story of the Winged Serpents above, perhaps the riddle of the walls could only be solved when Pharukh read the inscriptions upside down. In the main Tale, when the Templar's Jewel is found, it's secrets will only reveal themselves when it is placed upside down in its cradle.

A Storyscape is the setting that links stories together. In the example above, winged serpents, powerful sea gods and magic are part of the Storyscape. Creating a Storyscape needn't be as much work as putting together the main Tale, as every Storyteller is different and will put his own slant on things. However, some stories will become well known across the lands and begin to share common events among their characters – so when Sir Baldrick asks Afiz if he has heard the Story of Stryxis, Her Companions and the Winged Serpents, he will reply, "Yes! I love the part where the clever Pharukh stands on his head to solve the riddle of the stone walls – haha!"

A woman's place

From your own research, you may have gathered that women in the Middle Ages, from West to East where not involved in as much adventure as men were – at best. Women where able to be married at 12 or younger and were often used as the glue between the alliances of families and empires. Noble women were educated, not in knowledge, but in etiquette and courtly duties such as dancing and history. To be a better choice for a husband they could learn the potential language of a suitor and maybe become a lady-in-waiting, spending her life by the courts and at tournaments in the hope of attracting a husband.

Peasant women worked the fields but were constrained by their sex to the role of mother, wife and perhaps worker. Biblical and Qu'ranic precedents of the sinful Eve and the laws requiring women to obey men were used to justify their place as inferior, directly from the pulpit. Rape was a crime that was often unreported and unpunishable, especially by all-male courts with the backing of misogynistic clerics. There were even cases of women being thrown out of crusader camps when God would not grant them victory during a long siege.

However some women did gain power, the most obvious being some of the queens of Europe and Shajar al-Durr, the Sultana of Egypt after the Mamluk's took power. Islamic chroniclers record their shock when they hear of women amongst the fighting forces of the Franj. Female characters, to justify their part in an adventure, could use the examples of Muhammad's wives, Khadija the merchant and Aisha, who led her troops into battle on a white camel.

However it was always seen as disruption to the natural order for a woman to be equal, let alone have authority, over a man during the middle ages, and so a female adventurer will often have those supposedly closest to her – her family – pressuring her to settle down and be a lady.

Interestingly, the stories of the time often have intelligent and adventurous women in the lead roles. Shahrazad, the storyteller of the Arabian Nights, saves an entire kingdom from the vengeance of a king against all women (however it's hardly a feminist tale – she does, after all, marry him!).

Appendix 1: Sample Characters

What follows are example characters that may be used as is, or as a base for an adversary or ally in you Tale.

Creatures

Beast

Beasts are dangerous creatures that can harm or kill a character. The following entry is for a land-based creature, but a Tale-Weaver could add Monstrous Abilities to turn the beast into a truly terrifying creature.

B	M	A	H	I	P
30 (20)	50	50	50	15	20

Allegiances: None

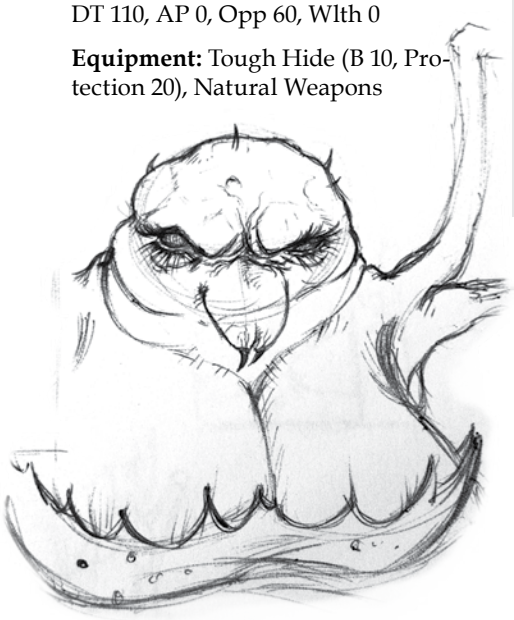
Dispositions: None

Disciplines: Subt 20, Mel 20

Abilities: Dodge (Acrobat), Somersault (Acrobat), Blood Rush (Ravager), Death Stare (Ravager)

Traits: Ag 20, Ftg 5, Action Points 2, Ref 35, MP 55, MD 55, RP 0, RD 45, DT 110, AP 0, Opp 60, Wlth 0

Equipment: Tough Hide (B 10, Protection 20), Natural Weapons



Monstrous Abilities:

A number of these can be added to the creature you are spawning, equal to its base Bulk Bonus.

Fly: The creature can move vertically as well as horizontally.

Fast: Whenever a Movement Action is taken, double the amount of metres moved.

Swim: The creature is at home in water and doesn't count it as unstable ground.

Fear: Combat Stances are Hard (base Bulk) when going into combat against this monster.

Tough Hide: The beast has scales or leathery skin which count as armour that cover the creature's body. B = half the beast's base Bulk, P = the beast's Bulk.

Immune to Fire: Does not take any damage from fire-based attacks.

Necromantic Infusions: This creature is only as strong as the Necromancer that created it. Because of this, the Magic value of the Necromancer can be split up and added to the Undead Servant's Attributes and Disciplines. The creature can only be ordered by the sorcerer that created it, and it is his Magic value, rather than Cmd, that is used to control it.

Ethereal: Can spend a full turn to change Bulk value between 0 and 100. At 0, the creature's movement is not impeded by physical objects, such as walls and characters, and can move vertically as well as horizontally through the air. The creature has access to all Bulk Abilities, but can only use those that it has the prerequisite Bulk for before beginning its turn. The creature's DT is based on the maximum Bulk that the creature can gain. The creature cannot affect the real world, ie Strike or use magic on a target, unless its Bulk is at least 10. If its DT is reduced to 0 it will be banished back to the plane of existence it came from.

Natural Weapons: These count as weapons with a Reach equal to the creature's base Bulk Bonus.

Sure Footed: The beast is multi-legged or has hooked feet that allow it to ignore vertical surfaces.

Camouflage: Tests to become aware of the creature are Hard (10). This may be chosen multiple times and added together for a more powerful Ability.

Poisonous: If a character is hit they will need to take a Bulk Test. If unsuccessful, they will suffer a D10 loss to their Health. This may be chosen multiple times and added together for a more powerful Ability.

Dangerous Adaptation: Add 10 to an Attribute or Discipline. This may be chosen multiple times and added together for a more powerful Ability.

Djinni

The myths say that Djinn populate the deserts and are made from fire, unlike men who were made from clay. They have free-will and their own desires, some may be good, some may be evil; yet all are proud and detest servitude.

B	M	A	H	I	P
0–50	60	60	70	20	30

Allegiances: None

Languages: Arabic

Dispositions: None

Disciplines: Comm 5, Subt 10, Mel 50, Mag 20

Abilities: All Bulk, Ox's Strength (Muscle), Arrow Catch (Awareness), Resistant to Elements (Health), Supple (Health), Taunt (Manipulator), Protect (Guard), Grapple (Guard), Knock Down (Guard), Hydra's Strike (Ravager), Death-Stare (Ravager), Blaze (Fire Eater), Choking Smoke (Fire Eater)

Traits: Ag 60 to 10, Ftg 7, Action Points 2 - 3, Ref 35 to 60, MP (assuming Bulk is 10) 105, MD 105, RP 0, RD 55, DT 150, AP 5, Opp 90, Wlth 0

Equipment: High-quality scimitar

Monstrous Abilities: Immune to Fire, Etheral

Ghoul

Ghoul clans haunt the wilderness, capturing and eating the unwary. However, the old tribes have been joined by new outcasts, for war has forced many men from the West to take on the shroud of the ghoul to survive.

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	40	40	40	10	20

Allegiances: Ghoul Clan

Languages: Dependant on regions; Arabic by default but rarely speaks so counts as a second language.

Dispositions: Outsiders from ghoul-clan -30

Disciplines: Subt 20, Mel 10

Abilities: Blood Rush (Ravager), Cliff Spider (Acrobat), Blur (Acrobat)

Traits: Ag 20, Ftg 4, Action Points 2, Ref 30, MP 40, MD 40, RP 0, RD 30, DT 60, AP 0, Opp 50, Wlth 0

Equipment: Teeth and claws (count as short weapon)

Adversaries or Allies

Bully from Neander Thaal

This man hails from the Neander Valley in Germany, however there are those of the same ilk in every town across the globe. His travels have cemented what he always believed: his home is the greatest place on earth, and because of that, foreign lands are inhabited by those less trustworthy, uglier, stinkier and prone to eating foods that should not be eaten. And he loves the opportunity in telling them so, with his fists if possible.

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	35	20	20	20	20

Allegiances: Franj, Catholic, Outcasts

Characteristics: Uncouth, Rough Features

Languages: German, French

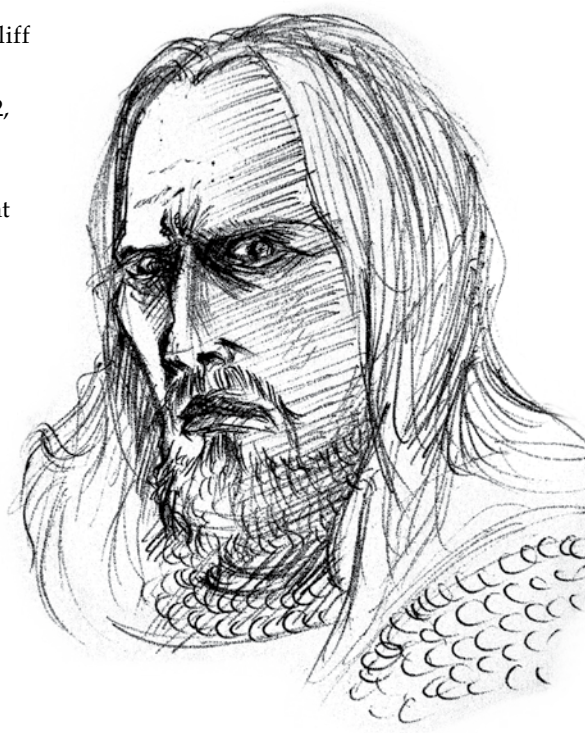
Dispositions: Saracen – 10, Jews -5, Orthodox - 5

Disciplines: Subt 10, Merc 5, Rng 10, Mel 10

Abilities: Intimidate (Manipulator), Quick Draw (Skirmisher), Knock Down (Guard)

Traits: Ag 15, Ftg 2, Action Points 2, Ref 18, MP 28, MD 28, RP 10, RD 18, DT 60, AP 0, Opp 60, Wlth 5

Equipment: Club, Rope



Fanatic from a Frankish camp

Travelling such a vast distance from his home and through much hardship, has made the fanatic see his luck in surviving the experience as definitive proof of his protection from God.

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	20	20	20	50

Allegiances: Franj, Catholic, Peasant, Cleric

Characteristics: Rough Features

Languages: French, English

Dispositions: Saracen – 30, Judaism – 10, Paganism - 10

Disciplines: Comm 10,Cmd 20, Mel 10

Abilities: Cure Trauma, War Cry, Lead from the Front, Fool's Valour

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 2, Ref 10, MP 20, MD 20, RP 0, RD 10, DT 60, AP 10, Opp 150, Wlth 0

Equipment: Religious Icon, Bludgeoning Weapon or Club

Desert Bandit

Turning to pillage is an easy career-shift for an ex-soldier to make; especially in the barren lands between the cities where the only law enforced is the man with the sword's.

B	M	A	H	I	P
28 (20)	30	30	20	20	20

Allegiances: Saracen, Sunni, Warrior, Outcast

Characteristics: Uncouth

Languages: Dependent on Allegiances.

Dispositions: Nobles -10, Merchants -10

Disciplines: Comm 10, Subt 20, Merc 5, Rng 20, Mel 10

Abilities: Veiled Threat (Diplomate), Crowd Mastery (Sneak), Backstab (Sneak), Bleeder (Harrier), Snare (Harrier), Knock Down (Guard)

Traits: Ag 2, Ftg 2, Action Points 2, Ref 16, MP 36, MD 36, RP 20, RD 16, DT 84, AP 10, Opp 60, Wlth 0

Equipment: Sword, Bow, Brigandine, Field Garments

Templar Knight

The men of iron, as described by the Arab chroniclers, and uncomprising champions of their faith.

B	M	A	H	I	P
72 (20)	50	10 (20)	30	20	50

Allegiances: Franj, Roman Catholic, Warrior, Noble, [Knightly Order]

Characteristics: Fine Manners and/or Secret Symbol

Languages: Fluent in French, German or English, accented in another.

Dispositions: Saracens – 40, Outcasts – 10

Disciplines: Comm 20, Merc 40, Cmd 30, Mel 50

Abilities: Orate (Socialiser), Boost Morale (Socialiser), Landlord (Appraiser), Hirelings (Appraiser), Arms Seeker (Appraiser), Armourer Contact (Appraiser), Coward's Bane (Glory-Seeker), War Cry (Glory-Seeker), Rousing Speech (Glory-Seeker), Parry (Duellist), Flurry (Duellist), Sure Strike (Duellist), Protect (Guard), Knock Down (Guard)

Traits: Ag -22, Ftg 3, Action Points 1, Ref -12, MP 38, MD 38, RP 0, RD 48, DT 354, AP 20, Opp 150, Wlth 40

Equipment: High Quality Sword, Hauberk, Brigandine, Leather Coif, Great Helm, Shield, Uniform, Horse.

Jerusalem Beggar

A wretch, dwelling in the streets of cities and seeking alms to continue his meager existence.

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	40	20	20	20

Allegiances: Franj, Roman Catholic, Outcast

Characteristics: Uncouth, Rough Features

Languages: English, Arabic

Dispositions: Nobles – 10, Outcasts + 10

Disciplines: Comm 10, Subt 10, Rng 10, Mel 10

Abilities: Charm (Socialiser), Cutpurse (Sneak), Warning Shot (Harrier), Grapple (Guard)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 20, MP 30, MD 30, RP 0, RD 30, DT 60, AP 10, Opp 60, Wlth 0

Equipment: Staff

Servants

Whenever you order a Servant to perform a task that may put her in danger or goes against her personal code of honour, you will need to pass a Cmd vs P test. If you fail then you will have to wait a day before attempting the test again. Combat is an obvious example, but asking your hired Diplomat to search through a pile of offal for your lost jewellery is another. It is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide the Servant's behaviour after refusing a command. A Hireling will break the contract between you and her should your Cmd vs P test result in a value lower than the Servant's Passion. They will simply try to flee from you and become controlled by the Tale-Weaver during their flight and onwards.

Specialists

A Specialist begins with 20 points to spread on top of the 20 base for each Attribute. They also gain 50 points to spend on Disciplines. The Cost to hire a Specialist is their highest Attribute or Discipline Bonus per day, plus the once-off cost of their equipment. You will need to pay to work out in advance how many days you will hire the Specialist and then pay the amount required as soon as the Specialist enters your service and becomes a Servant. The Rarity of a Specialist is half the value of their highest Discipline. What follows are some examples.

Royal Physician

A man of knowledge whose time is much sought after, therefore – a man who doesn't suffer fools and those who do not heed his advice.

Cost: 8; + 4 per day

Rarity: 20

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	20	20	40	20

Allegiances: Saracen, Judaism, Scholar

Characteristics: Fine Manners

Languages: Arabic, Latin, Hebrew

Dispositions: Saracens + 5, Jews + 15

Disciplines: Comm 10, Know 40

Abilities: Joke (Socialiser), Surgery (Physician), Preventative Care (Physician), Herbology (Physician), Staunch (Physician)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 10, MP 10, MD 10, RP 0, RD 10, DT 60, AP 10, Opp 90, Wlth 0

Equipment: Mortar, Pestle and Distiller, Healing Herbs

Arab Diplomat

A son who is far from being in line to succeed his royal father will often turn to the path of adventure, and his noble upbringing is helpful in many situations.

Cost: 40; + 3 per day

Rarity: 15

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	30	20	30	20

Allegiances: Saracen, Sunni, Scholar

Languages: Arabic, French, Greek, Persian, Latin

Dispositions: Nobles + 10, Peasants - 10

Disciplines: Comm 30, Subt 20

Abilities: Linguist (Diplomat), Rebuttal (Diplomat), Peace Maker (Diplomat), Intimidate (Manipulator), Blather (Manipulator)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 10, MP 10, MD 10, RP 0, RD 10, DT 60, AP 30, Opp 90, Wlth 0

Equipment: Fancy Apparel (Saracen)

Dimascene Guard

A Mamluk, trained since a young age to fight for whoever owns him, will sometimes gain his freedom. Since he has only known fighting, the path of the mercenary is often his only calling.

Cost: 96; + 4 per day

Rarity: 15

B	M	A	H	I	P
44(20)	40	20	20	20	20

Allegiances: Saracen, Sunni, Warrior

Languages: Arabic, Persian

Dispositions: Nobles + 10, Franj - 10

Disciplines: Rng 20, Mel 30

Abilities: Taunting Shot (Harrier), Bleeder (Harrier), Protect (Guard), Grapple (Guard), Knockdown (Guard)

Traits: Ag -4, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 8, MP 43, MD 43, RP 20, RD 8, DT 196 AP 0, Opp 90, Wlth 0

Equipment: Spear, Crossbow, Nasal Helmet, Scale Cuirass

Constantinopolese Trader

Hailing from a family of great sailors and merchants, this Byzantine merchant can be found in many of the great cities administered by Franj and Saracen alike.

Cost: 10; + 4 per day

Rarity: 20

B	M	A	H	I	P
30	20	30	20	20	20

Allegiances: Byzantine, Orthodox, Merchant

Languages: Greek, Arabic

Dispositions: Nobles + 10, Peasants - 10

Disciplines: Comm 10,Merc 40

Abilities: Rebuttal (Diplomat), Jeweller (Trader), Cosmopolitan (Trader), Love of Money (Trader), Marketeer (Trader)

Traits: Ag -10, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 10, MP 10, MD 10, RP 0, RD 10, DT 90, AP 10, Opp 90, Wlth 40

Equipment: Abacus and Scales

Forest Witch

In many rural areas of Europe, old and un-married women would live at the edge of the their village and practice the old ways of healing. In the stories, these women end up eating children, copulating with demons and holding supernatural powers.

Cost: 1; + 5 per day

Rarity: 25

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	40	20	20	20

Allegiances: Pagan, Outcast

Characteristics: Uncouth

Languages: German, French

Dispositions: Franj - 10, Saracens – 5, Jews - 5

Disciplines: Mag 50

Abilities: Beast (Transmuter), One With Nature (Transmuter), Guardian (Summoner), Terror (Summoner), Howling Shades (Summoner)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 30, MP 30, MD 30, RP 0, RD 30, DT 60, AP 0, Opp 90, Wlth 0

Equipment: Charm, Staff

Property

To purchase any of the following, will require an initial fee, and an upkeep fee that must be paid at the beginning of each month. Should you not pay it, then your living property will be lost to starvation or escape from its horrible conditions. Once you purchase any of the following they will become a Servant until death or lack of upkeep takes them from you.

Misrian Field Slave

Captured in battle or sold by those who he sought protection from, the field slave's will, as well as his back, is bent to serving his new master.

Rarity: Hard (10)

Cost: 20 (Upkeep: 3)

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	30	20	20	20	10

Allegiances: Saracen, Shiite, Outcast

Characteristics: Uncouth, Rough Features

Languages: Arabic, Persian

Dispositions: Outcasts + 10

Disciplines: Mel 10

Abilities: Grapple (Guard)

Traits: Ag 10, Ftg 2, Action Points 2, Ref 15, MP 25, MD 25, RP 0, RD 15, DT 60, AP 0, Opp 30, Wlth 0

Equipment: Farm Tool (long improvised weapon)

Mediterranean House Slave

Serving her masters within an opulent home allows a house slave to learn many things, such as reading and fine manners.

Rarity: Hard (10)

Cost: 20 (Upkeep: 3)

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	20	20	20	10

Allegiances: Byzantines, Orthodox, Outcast

Characteristics: Fine Manners

Languages: Greek, Arabic

Dispositions: Outcasts + 10

Disciplines: Comm 10, Subt 10

Abilities: Information (Socialiser), Blather (Manipulator)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 10, MP 10, MD 10, RP 0, RD 10, DT 60, AP 10, Opp 30, Wlth 0

Equipment: Nothing

Undead Servant

A shambling, rotting carcass that has been raised from death to serve without question.

Cost and Rarity: See the Undead Servant Ability for details

B	M	A	H	I	P
10	10	10	0	0	0

Allegiances: None

Languages: None

Dispositions: None

Disciplines: Mel 20, Mag 20

Abilities: Protect (Guard), Grapple (Guard), Flurry (Duellist), Children of the Grave (Necromancer)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 1, Action Points 1, Ref 5, MP 15, MD 15, RP 0, RD 5, DT 30, AP 0, Opp 0, Wlth 0

Equipment: Shovel (Improvised short weapon)

Special Abilities: Necromantic Infusions (the Undead Servant above was created by a Necromancer with a Magic value of 40).

Arabian Horse

A slender horse, built for speed and endurance.

Rarity: Hard (20)

Cost: 30 (Upkeep: 4)

B	M	A	H	I	P
80	90	30	50	10	20

Allegiances: None

Dispositions: None

Abilities: Weight of the World, Lead Fist, Juggernaught, Ox's Strength, Shuddering Force, Crush, Skewer

Traits: Ag 10, Ftg 5, Action Points 2, Ref 35, MP 55, MD 55, RP 0, RD 45, DT 240, AP 0, Opp 60, Wlth 0

Equipment: None

Special Abilities: Fast, Natural Weapons, Mount (2), Carry (200)

Domestic Donkey

An animal whose survival instincts are strong, leading many to believe it is stubborn and hard to command.

Rarity: Easy (10)

Cost: 20 (Upkeep: 3)

B	M	A	H	I	P
60	60	30	40	10	40

Allegiances: None

Dispositions: None

Abilities: Weight of the World, Lead Fist

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 4, Action Points 1, Ref 15, MP 15, MD 15, RP 0, RD 15, DT 180, AP 0, Opp 120, Wlth 0

Equipment: None

Special Abilities: Natural Weapons, Mount (2), Carry (120)

Street Dog

Often hunting in small packs or with street urchins, these dogs can be dangerous when hungry.

Rarity: Easy (20)

Cost: 5 (Upkeep: 1)

B	M	A	H	I	P
12	22	40	40	10	20

Allegiances: None

Dispositions: None

Disciplines: Mel 10

Abilities: Grapple (Guard)

Traits: Ag 10, Ftg 4, Action Points 1, Ref 25, MP 35, MD 35, RP 0, RD 25, DT 36, AP 0, Opp 60, Wlth 0

Equipment: None

Special Abilities: Fast, Natural Weapons

Appendix 2: Over Dark Seas

What follows is a sample adventure that will introduce the characters to each other and launch them into the dark times ahead.

Each player should have a Main Character, as well as a Story Character. They should also prepare a background story as to why they where passengers on a Byzantine merchant ship that was stopping at ports along the coast of the Holy Land.

Send the following description of recent events to your players before the first game, so that they will have answers to why they were on the ship, and can even prepare acquaintances between themselves before the Tale truly begins.

A great crashing shudders you from your light slumber. You seem to be tilted at a crazy angle, then you are dropping to a floor or wall. You aren't sure which. The ground moves again and you feel objects flying past your head in the darkness. You almost udder an uncontrollable scream. You have lost all sense of where you are.

Then it dawns. You are at sea. And the demons of the ocean must have unleashed their evil upon your ship.

It is a merchant vessel, mainly carrying Byzantines to ports along the areas controlled by the Franj, as well the Saracens. However, there are other passengers from different lands, some you have seen for the first time.

A chill seeps to your feet. The ship is taking on water! You hear distant screams of panic and moans of pain. Lightening lashes out, and from its pale, blue light you can make out where other passengers are running. You do not hesitate to follow.

As you reach the open deck, past the treasures that are on a journey to the bottom of the sea, you grab a chunk of wood that has been splintered from the masts. You look out across the unwelcoming darkness of the churning water. As your body is frozen by the rush of the sea meeting it, you pray to your god to take you to one of the small boats you see in the distance.

Cast

Captain Georgios Polikseni

A young merchant captain with experience beyond his years.

B	M	A	H	I	P
30	20	30	20	20	20

Allegiances: Byzantine, Orthodox, Merchant

Languages: Greek, Arabic, Latin, French

Dispositions: Nobles + 10, Merchants +10

Disciplines: Comm 10, Merc 40

Abilities: Rebuttal (Diplomat), Jeweller (Trader), Cosmopolitan (Trader), Love of Money (Trader), Marketeer (Trader)

Traits: Ag -10, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 10, MP 10, MD 10, RP 0, RD 10, DT 90 AP 10, Opp 90, Wlth 40

Equipment: High-Quality short sword

Shark

The wolves of sea, giving no mercy to the victims of their hunger.

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	50	50	50	15	20

Allegiances: None

Dispositions: None

Disciplines: Subt 20, Mel 20

Abilities: Dodge (Acrobat), Somersault (Acrobat), Blood Rush (Ravager), Death Stare (Ravager)

Traits: Ag 30, Ftg 5, Action Points 2, Ref 40, MP 60, MD 60, RP 0, RD 50, DT 110, AP 0, Opp 60, Wlth 0

Equipment: None

Special Abilities: Swim, Natural Weapons

Orestes Taphos

The Captain's cousin who has almost wasted away and given himself to the cold embrace of the ocean.

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	20	20	20	10

Allegiances: Byzantines, Orthodox, Labourer

Characteristics: Fine Manners

Languages: Greek, Arabic

Dispositions: Merchants + 10

Disciplines: Comm 10, Subt 10

Abilities: Information (Socialiser), Blather (Manipulator)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 10, MP 10, MD 10, RP 0, RD 10, DT 60 AP 10, Opp 30, Wlth 0

Equipment: Nothing

Prince Ali

A young prince that has never gone without.

B	M	A	H	I	P
44(20)	40	20	20	20	20

Allegiances: Saracen, Sunni, Noble, Warrior

Languages: Arabic, Persian

Dispositions: Nobles + 10, Pagans - 10

Disciplines: Comm 30, Rng 20, Mel 30

Abilities: Joke (Socialiser), Charm (Socialiser), Boost Morale (Socialiser), Taunting Shot (Harrier), Bleeder (Harrier), Parry (Duellist), Flurry (Duellist), Sure Strike (Duellist)

Traits: Ag -4, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 8, MP 43, MD 43, RP 20, RD 8, DT 196 AP 30, Opp 90, Wlth 0

Equipment: Sword, Bow, Nasal Helmet, Scale Cuirass

The Ghoul-Queen

This creature lures travellers to the waiting jaws of her brood.

B	M	A	H	I	P
20	20	40	20	20	50

Allegiances: Pagan, Outcast, Ghoul-Clan

Characteristics: Uncouth

Languages: Arabic

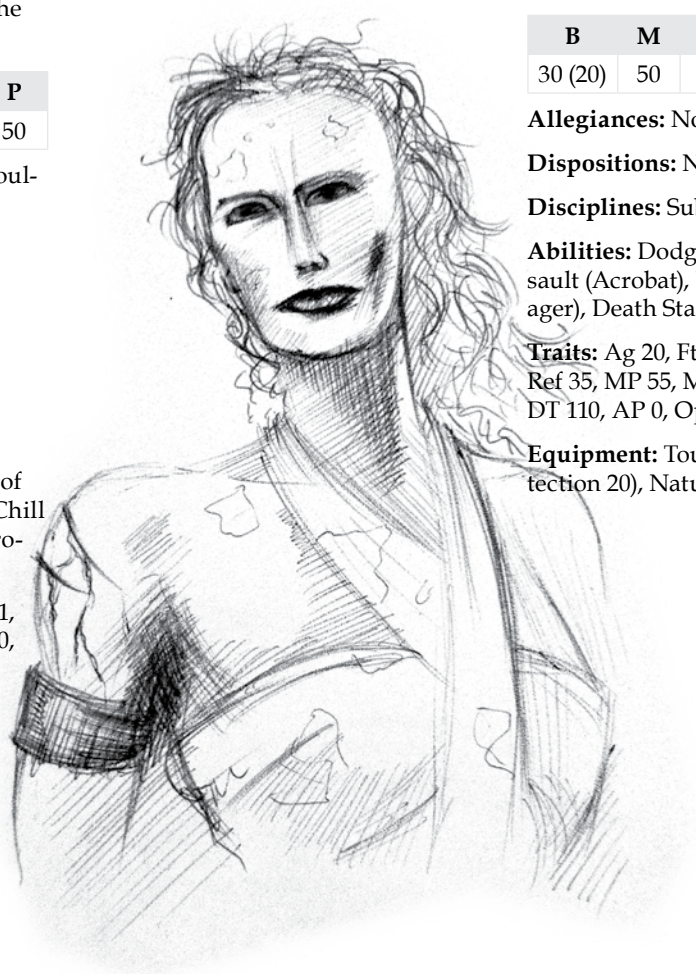
Dispositions: Saracens - 30, Franj - 20

Disciplines: Mag 50

Abilities: Disappear (Magician), Suggestion (Magician), Children of the Grave (Necromancer), Dead Chill (Necromancer), Soul Drain (Necromancer)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 30, MP 30, MD 30, RP 0, RD 30, DT 60 AP 0, Opp 90, Wlth 0

Equipment: Club



Ghouling

The spawn of the Ghoul-Queen and the Incubi and Djinn of hell.

B	M	A	H	I	P
10	10	20	20	10	20

Allegiances: Pagan, Outcast, Ghoul-Clan

Characteristics: Uncouth

Languages: Growls only the Ghoul-Queen can understand.

Dispositions: Warriors - 10

Disciplines: Subt 10, Mel 10

Abilities: Backstab (Sneak), Death-Stare (Ravager)

Traits: Ag 0, Ftg 2, Action Points 1, Ref 10, MP 20, MD 20, RP 0, RD 10, DT 30, AP 10, Opp 30, Wlth 0

Equipment: Nothing

Special Abilities: Natural Weapons

The Beast

The beast is a strange creature, part cat, part reptile; and always hungry.

B	M	A	H	I	P
30 (20)	50	50	50	15	20

Allegiances: None

Dispositions: None

Disciplines: Subt 20, Mel 20

Abilities: Dodge (Acrobat), Somersault (Acrobat), Blood Rush (Ravager), Death Stare (Ravager)

Traits: Ag 20, Ftg 5, Action Points 2, Ref 35, MP 55, MD 55, RP 0, RD 45, DT 110, AP 0, Opp 60, Wlth 0

Equipment: Tough Hide (B 10, Protection 20), Natural Weapons

Chapter 1: The Thirsting Deep

Ambiance Centerpiece: Redemption Lost by Ahab, The Divinity of Oceans.

Scene: A rickety boat, almost submerged below the ocean waves. Burning sun. No land in sight.

Cast: Captain Georgios Polikseni, Orestes Taphos, Sharks (Beasts) and Player Characters.

The characters begin with one set of clothes, only light armour, and a maximum of one weapon. A number of chests are among the debris of the sunken ship, containing their other valuables, though they are not reachable yet. The sharks circle the boat. Any attempt to attack one will cause a thrashing as the other sharks take advantage of its wounds, starting a dangerous rocking of the boat. It is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide if any characters need to test to see if they are thrown overboard.

Read out the following:

> You consider putting your hands below the salty water, just to cool your face, but think better of it. Your mind may be blurred from the constant glare of the sun, but you are not yet foolish enough to reach into the water. The slap of a shark's tail against the side of your sinking boat reminds you of what you are afraid of.
>
> You look at the faces of your fellow passengers that are also wary of the ocean's mercy. Captain Georgis Polikseni, a Byzantine who commanded your doomed vessel, sits quietly with his eyes closed. His face is weathered, far beyond what it should be for a man who has seen less than 30 summers. Maybe that's why you are where you are now, because of an inexperienced captain.

> Beside him sits his even younger cousin, Orestes Taphos, whose eyes never seem to leave the maelstrom of fins and teeth that circle the small, barely floating, chunks of wood you are calling a boat. His blank stare is distant and morbid. You had seen some of the others you are sitting with during the voyage, but do not really know much about them at all.
>
> No land breaks the endless waves. Only chunks of debris from the cursed ship offer a change in scenery. Hopefully one of the chests that is floating nearby contains your possessions.

All characters are suffering from Extreme Conditions and must take 4 Health tests. For each one they fail, they must deduct D5 from their Health value.

If none of the PCs start up a conversation or one of them questions the Captain, he introduces himself and his cousin. Orestes Taphos ignores anyone who speaks to him.

Read out what he has to say:

> "I know there isn't much to say, but all men, and I suppose, women, are old friends at sea. You'd all know my name, I'm the Captain that's responsible for where you are. I've sailed through a storm every month since I became captain of that ship more than five years ago, and only didn't get through one." He smiles at his joke. "This is my sister's boy, Orestes. He's been at my side since the start of the year and didn't really see himself here, I'd wager. But I suppose none of us did…" He turns away and looks into the distance, then turns back to PC who is most likely looking at him (the PC with the highest Awareness or the one who is yet to speak).
>
> "You there, what's your story? How'd you come to be on my ship?"

Once all the PCs have finished introducing themselves as much as they plan to, night begins to fall. Read out the following:

> A gleam enters the Captain's eyes. "Do you like stories? Ah, I think this one will be worth hearing even if you don't. It'll take your mind off of our other hungry friends below the water anyways…"

Chapter 2: The Tale of the Ghoul-Queen

The PSCs start on horseback.

Read out the following:

> "Once, there was an old King who was nearing his journey to heaven. His son was growing up fast and the King was sure he'd keep his people happy and make a fine ruler. However, the King's Vizier, didn't believe so. The Vizier thought that managing the kingdom's treasury was hard enough with the short-sighted King, but his son was worse, caring only for the pleasures of the harem and the glory of the hunt.
>
> This is where [PSC's names] found him…"

Scene 1: The Hunt Begins.

Ambiance Centerpiece: When Halos of Candles Collide by Melechesh, The Epigenesis.

Scene: From a grassy plain to the grey stone at the edge of the mountains.

Cast: Prince Ali and Player Story Characters.

Read out the following:

> As you ride across the open plain, under the shadow of the tusks of a great mountain range, you come across a lone horseman. He is dressed in well-crafted hunting clothes and his horse is of a fine pedigree. He bolts past you, but offers a greeting, "Good day to you all, quick, come join me in the hunt. It seems I have lost my companions, and will offer you a reward should you find my quarry before I do."

Should they follow him, he offers a reward of 5 Wealth. A PSC can Dispute the Prince to increase the price of the reward, the maximum being 10. He is after a creature that is said to resemble a scaled mountain lion. If they do not follow him, they will meet him again trying to help the woman that the PSCs will soon meet. Read out the following:

> The rugged plain becomes difficult for your horses to traverse quickly, and shadows from the mountains begin to darken the earth. Soon you are in a boulder-strewn valley at the edge of the mountains. The Prince [if he is with them] exclaims, "It looks like giants used this place for sport… " A pained scream cuts him off, close by. It is a woman in tattered rags, with a deep gouge taken out of her calf, and bleeding hands that have been used to fend off whatever attacked her. Her wicker basket and the club she used to defend herself have been tossed to the ground.

The woman is clearly in pain and points to the outcroppings of rock above the characters and up the mountainside. She only speaks Arabic with a strange, course accent. A character that can speak Arabic understands her to be saying, "The Dragon-Lion, it waits above. Help me, my leg, help me."

All characters (including the Prince) need to roll a D100 and add their Awareness value. Whoever rolls highest catches sight of the beast.

Read out the following:

> A shadow, more like a bear than lion, detaches itself from the darkness that smothers the mountainside now that the sun is almost gone. It scales are black, and they glisten when the scarce light catches them. It springs from where it lies, like a cat, then slithers between the jutting rocks further into the ruins.

Any character suspicious of the woman can make a Subt vs Subt against her. If successful, the character will see that she is less hurt than she is making out.

A character that attempts to tend her wounds her will earn her favour.

The woman begs to be accompanied to her home in the ruins.

On inspection, her wicker basket contains a few clubbed rats.

Scene 2: Into the Ruins.

Ambiance Centerpiece: Ankh by Scarab, Blinding the Masses.

Scene: A gradual shift from the rocky, sparse landscape at the base of the mountains to an old town reduced to ruins.

Cast: Prince Ali, The Ghoul Queen, Ghoulings and Player Story Characters.

The characters tail the beast, however the injured woman may slow them down. Each character takes a number of Awareness tests equal to his/her RefB. The tests will be Hard (20) if the woman accompanies them and has not had a Tend Wound action spent on her.

Read out the following:

> After tracking the beast across the rocky mountain trails, a stone-hewn archway becomes a threshold into what may have once been a temple dedicated to pagan gods. The roof has crumbled to the ground and its ruined walls jut from the grey earth. Shrines and idols, wasted by the elements, still stand in a geometric arrangement that range out from the centre of the temple. They tower above the rest of the ruins and their arrogant looks seek to both awe and horrify you with their power.

If there were no successes for the tracking tests, the characters have lost the trail of the beast; if there was 1 success then they will know that beast has stopped here somewhere, for more than 1 success they will know which of the shrines that the beast above, concealed among the cavernous monuments dedicated to old pagan gods.

Night is beginning to fall. The woman thanks the characters for accompanying her, and bids them farewell. She pulls a satchel from beneath her rags and gives it to the character she pretends to like the most. This will be the character with the highest muscle value. She explains that the satchel contains a magical powder, which will allow the character to see into the near future and protect any companions from harm. A character that knows Arabic or is the recipient of the satchel may take a Subt vs Subt test. If successful it will reveal that she isn't telling the whole truth.

If a character spends a few minutes examining the satchel (which won't allow him time to follow to the woman) and passes a Know test at Easy (Alchemy or Physician Ranks x 10), he or she will know that inhaling the powder will send the imbiber into a hallucinatory state that will effectively knock him unconscious for D5 hours. But his dreams will be very interesting.

If any characters want to follow her, Prince Ali will ask them to stay with him and not to worry about her. If they insist then a character will enter a Dispute with the woman. The woman's goal will be to leave in peace and the PSC's goal will be to accompany her to her village. If she loses the Dispute, she will beg the characters' pardon and ask to relieve herself before they begin the next leg of the journey. If the characters seek to hold her against her will she utter a shriek that will deafen and blind them for a few seconds allowing her to escape.

Interlude: The Ghoul-Queen Revealed

Ambiance Centerpiece: The Harvest Floor by Cattle Decapitation, The Harvest Floor.

Scene: Labyrinthine ruins and the lair of the ghouls

Cast: The Ghoul Queen, Ghoulings and PSCs

If any character follows the woman, they will need to take 3 Subt vs Subt tests. If they fail all of them, the woman escapes. If they succeed at at least one, the character will find her lair..

Read out the following:

You see the woman approaching a dark, cavernous hole that has been carved into a bone-strewn pile of ruined stone pillars. She makes a soft, high-pitched singing noise which causes a scrabbling sound from within the echoing cave. Soon, gaunt, hairless creatures clamour from the hole. Their eyes squint from the dusk-light as they gnash their teeth and submit themselves to the woman's orders.

Characters that know Arabic can understand what she says with an Intelligence or Knowledge test. "We will not worry the rats tonight, my children. We will all feed well. I have given the warrior Slyha's Blessing so he will not worry us." *A successful Knowledge test – it will be Easy (20) if the character is a Cleric or has ranks in Magic – will know that Slyha is the name of a she-djinni who's spells sent her enemies into a troubled sleep.*

If the character that tended her wounds is male. "I may also have a new father for you, for you have been very patient and deserving of brothers."

If the character that tended her wounds is female. "I may also have a wife for you, Tsanguatha, for you have been very patient and deserve some sons."

If the characters scored 0-1 success when they tracked her, they will not be in a very good position when the ghoulings move out to ambush their prey. They will need to pass an A test to realize when the ghoulings are starting their attack. If the characters fail the A test, then they can either run or fight them, as they are too slow to find a hiding place. Follow the rules for a chase if they decide to run.

If the characters successfully predict that they will need to find a hiding place, they will need to pass a Subt test to hide from the ghoulings as they begin the attack. By passing an Intelligence test a character will see that the ghoulings hunt by hearing rather than sight, so keeping completely still will make each Subt test to hide from them Easy (20).

The Ghoul-Queen will not attack (and order her Ghoulings to not attack) the character that healed her unless he or she attacks her. If that character surrenders or is bested in combat, he or she will awaken in the clutches of the Ghoul-Queen, imprisoned in their lair.

If the characters scored 2-3 successes when they tracked the Ghoul-Queen, they will be in a good position to hear what she says and notice some moulted scales that resemble the beast's, as well as escape back to their companions with enough time to alert them to the danger.

Scene 2: Under the Shadows of Pagan Gods.

Ambiance Centerpiece: Tomb of the Black Witch by Faustcoven, The Halo of Burning Wings.

Scene: The ruined temple.

Cast: Prince Ali, The Ghoul Queen, Ghoulings, Beast and Player Story Characters.

Start keeping track of rounds from now on.

Round 1: A party that tracked the Ghoul-Queen and scored 2-3 successes arrives and has enough time to speak a few sentences.

Round 2: The beast leaps from the Idol of Chaos and attacks the character furthest away from the rest of the group, or the weakest (ie; with the lowest Bulk value). A character that passes a Ref test can take one action while it is in the air. Roll Initiative for combat after the beast's turn is over.

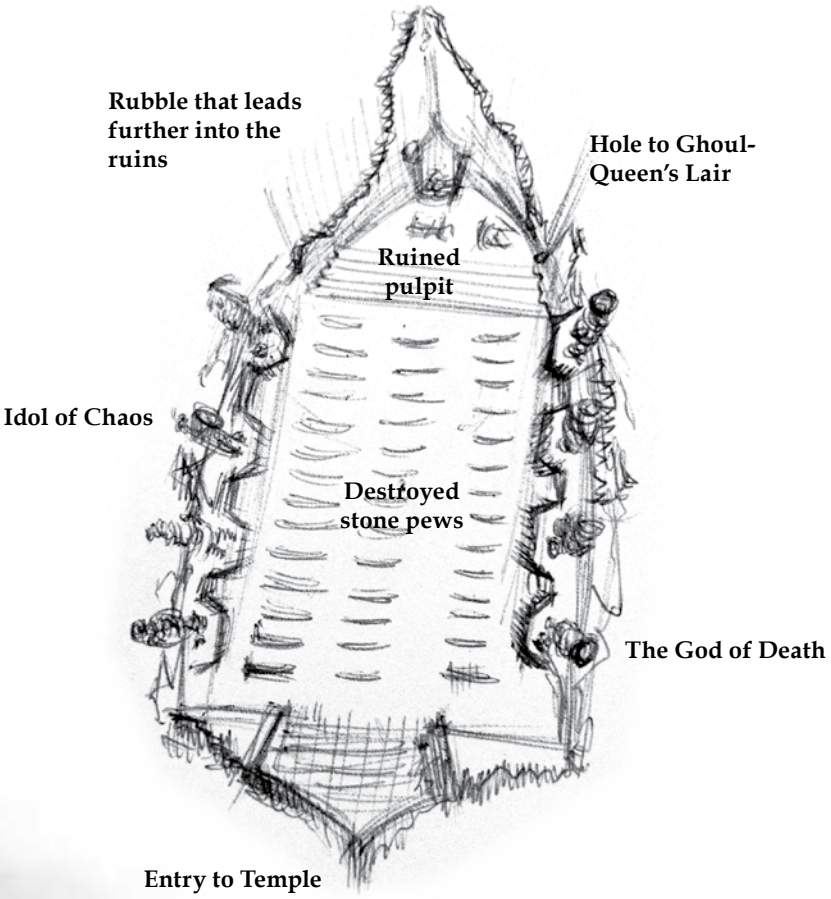
Round 3: The beast attempts to somersault behind the monument of the God of Death.

Round 4: The Ghoul Queen arrives with her Ghoulings. They all attack the closest character and will stop the fight if they can slay a character so that they can drag his corpse away to their lair. The Ghoul-Queen will not attack (and order her Ghoulings to not attack) the character that healed her unless he or she attacks her.

Round 5: The beast leaps upon the character furthest away from the fighting with the Ghoulings.

The beast and the Ghoul-Queen are only looking to kill one character each. Once they have their prize, they will attempt to retreat with it. However, if one of the Ghoulings is killed, the Ghoul-Queen will turn her attention to the character that healed her and attempt to take him or her as a prisoner to breed replacements (with her if the character is male, or with a ghoul when the ghoulings reach an appropriate age should the character be female).

The Ruined Temple



Chapter 3: Betrayal

Ambiance Centerpiece: A Darker Place by Enslaved, Below The Lights

Scene: The rickety boat. Freezing cold and a few hours before dawn.

Cast: Captain Georgios Polikseni, Orestes Taphos, Sharks (Beasts) and Player Characters.

The Captain finishes off the story.

> "And so Prince Ali realises that he was sent on the hunt by the Vizier and urges [PSC's names] to help him in his new quest – to alert his father, the king, to the Vizier's treachery. But that, alas, is another story."

Before they sleep, the Captain speaks. Read out the following:

> The pangs in your stomach are enough to almost drive you to hallucinations. The moon takes on the looks of a leering skull, and slap of the sharks' tails sound like clapping and cheering of a great banquet. *All characters must reduce their Health by 5D10, to a minimum of 5.*
>
> The Captain's voice takes on a lower tone, almost a whisper. "We need to start thinking what we're going to do here…" He trails off for a while. Then he pulls a number of lengths of wood splinters from his pocket. Even in the moonlight, you can see that one is shorter than the rest. "We'll all die if someone doesn't make a sacrifice. We'll be able to go for weeks on one of us. What do you say lads?"

Allow the players to talk amongst themselves for awhile. Orestes will agree almost straight away. To any character that refuses, the Captain has this to say, "You're a selfish fool! Has your mind gone the way of your stomach – completely drained?" The PSC will need to enter a Dispute with the Captain, and will take part in the drawing of splinters if he or she loses out. If the Captain loses, then before he begins to offer splinters to those participating, he will look right into the eyes of those not participating and say, "You've been warned, you're no friend of mine."

The shortest splinter ends up being chosen by Orestes. The Captain begins to weep, as Orestes just stares overboard. After a while, the Captain says, "You don't have to do it, son. I'll defend you." Orestes replies without looking away from the sharks, "No, I like my lot as well as any other." To which the Captain replies, "You should see the sun rise again, we should sleep." He closes his eyes and drifts off to slumber. The characters will be so exhausted that at one point or another during the night they will all fall asleep.

Chapter 4: Eyes Glazed Red

Ambiance Centerpiece: Ghost of Perdition by Opeth, Ghost Reveries

Scene: The rickety boat. Freezing cold and a few hours before dawn.

Cast: Captain Georgios Polikseni, Sharks (Beasts) and Player Characters.

The first character to awake is greeted with the sight of a frenzy of sharks surging around the boat. Orestes's arm has fallen over the side of the boat in his sleep. On closer inspection, the character sees that his throat has been cut and blood drips overboard, infuriating the sharks.

The character with the lowest Passion is responsible, but only the Tale-Weaver knows it at the moment.

Only a Passion test at Hard (20) can prevent a character from eating from the corpse. Characters that do will have their Health bolstered by 2D10.

As the characters begin to sleep, the character who slew Orestes finds a bloody knife in his or her pocket. All characters need to test for Trauma tonight, and the murdering character's test is Hard (10). Any Trauma's that rely on an enemy will instead be directed at the suspect that the Traumatised character believes slew Orestes.

Chapter 5: Sanctuary

Ambiance Centerpiece: The Storm Still Rages Inside by Orphaned Land, Mabool.

Scene: A small, poor village by the sea, far from civilization.

Cast: Captain Georgios Polikseni, Gulalallah and Player Characters.

Read out the following:

> The shriek of a bird startles you. You rub your sun-burnt eyes as they adjust to the brightness of the bloated sun. Something claws at the back of your mind. That's it! Birds are only ever near land. You are close to shore!
>
> Your companions awake and soon realise the same thing. Soon the faint dark line on the horizon turns into a ragged cliff-face.
>
> Upon reaching land you see the washed up remains of the doomed vessel and the smoke from a small village.

The PCs can rummage through the debris and find their soaked equipment that they had taken on their ill-fated journey.

After a while, they see an old woman hobbling towards them from the direction of the village.

Read out the following:

> From a space between the cliffs that you would not have thought existed, hobbles a woman. She has a lot of energy for someone who looks like the oldest person you have ever seen. Her bony limbs thrust her robe in awkward angles and her skin looks like a weathered olive branch. She calls out in a shrill, cracked voice [in Persian accented Arabic], "Welcome strangers, welcome."

She bids them to follow her and allow her people to look after them. She will also tell them that a merchant caravan in due in a few days, so after she has fed them her village will ensure that the merchants take them along to their next stop (which will be a city or town that means something to the PCs). If any of the PCs are obviously Franj, she will warn them that, as they are guests, they will be under her protection, but they should not wander without her company in these parts.

Conclusion

This is where the adventure concludes. Award each character (including PSCs) 500 experience points. It is up to the Tale-Weaver to decide what adventures the characters will undergo in the village by the sea and if they will ever see civilisation again.