

Endings and Beginnings

SAVAGE

INSIDER

For All Things Savage

CONCEPT BY INTERLUDE
By David "Savage Maven"
Scott and Jerrod "Savage
Daddy" Gunning

BACK FROM THE
DEAD
By Richard Woolcock

THE PAST AND THE
FUTURE
By Jim Myers

THE WORLD
TREMBLES
By Brian Reeves

THE MORE
YOU KNOW
By Tanya
Beeson



Volume 3, Issue 1 - Spring 2015


Amanda Kiefer

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In 2014, Obatron Productions re-launched *Savage Insider* under its banner. It became a trial year where we learned a lot, including that our planned schedule wasn't going to work and I needed more resources to better manage all aspects of the magazine. Rather than rush issues and get out something subpar and inconsistent, I decided to end the second volume at just two issues, step back, reevaluate what was realistic and possible, and create a new plan.

We begin Volume 3 two weeks later than planned, but in great shape. We continue to gain readership as people learn *SI* exists and decide it's worth investing a few dollars in. Feedback has been positive and constructive.

Jason B. was happy to see we really do listen to what readers have to say. In a [review](#) he commented, "I really enjoyed the first issue of Volume 2, but was willing to take a star away from my review after putting on my uber-critical hat. I made lavish demands and threatened military instability throughout the region!" Among other things, it goes on to note that the subsequent issue's layout on his tablet looked just as good as on his desktop and "the balance between GM and Player is very equitable this time around. There are now multiple somethings for everyone in this issue. My fifth star has been gladly restored."

He wasn't the only happy one. *SI: Taking Action* stands with a 5-star rating on a 5-star scale at DriveThruRPG/RPGNow, and appeared again in Hottest Titles and Hottest Small Press for more than a week.

Still, we have goals that include raising rates contributors get paid, getting me some more administrative help, and being able to regularly offer *SI* in print for game stores and wherever Studio 2 exhibits. To do that, we need more sales. However, we aren't big fans of asking for something in return for nothing.

We experimented with "stretch" goals when we participated in the GM's Day sale via DriveThruRPG. In the fashion of Kickstarter, we

offered that if we got to a certain point, we'd offer free adventure seeds. The challenge unlocked three of them. We learned from that, too! We thought we'd have them out with the release of this issue. In reality, it'll need to be the end of this month.

But what to write? For that, we went to you. More than 40 gamers gave us their top three requests. After tabulating all the data, the winners are: fantasy, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic in that order. The latter two kept swapping places right down to the last two votes with fantasy the clear lead. Horror, modern, and space with 15, 15, and 14 votes respectively. Superhero and "other" trailed distantly.

Write-ins were cyberpunk, near future cyberpunk, modern fantasy, and one I thought was intriguing: space superheroes. Anyone want to write something for that? I'd love to see how that would translate to *Savage Worlds*!

After putting the stretch goals in action, I decided to make it part of this issue, too. This is how we ask for your help, but not in return for nothing! Free content can be unlocked for a variety of achievements: getting in the top five spot on Hottest Titles or the top three spot for Hottest Small Press within the first week, earning progressively higher Best Seller levels within the first couple of weeks, for every two ratings within the first two weeks, for every review we get between release and the end of April, and staying in the first few spots on either hottest list for multiple days. Also, seeing the release retweeted, shared through G+, and shared through Facebook. (Just remember to tag *Savage Insider* so we know!) The more of these goals we accomplish, the more and better the free content.

Thanks for reading and for sharing your opinions!

Have a great day and happy reading!

Vickey A. Beaver,
Editor-in-Chief

Releases: January 1 - March 31, 2015

While extensive, it is possible that other products were released without our knowledge. Visit publishers' websites for complete details, including how to buy.

Title	Publisher	Setting	Type	Format
Eldritch Skies	Battlefield Press	Eldritch Skies	Setting Guide	PDF, PRINT
Mythic	Chimera Press	Mythic	Setting Guide	PDF
Killer Chops	Fabled Environments	Savage Worlds	Adventure	PDF
Extreme Earth	Fainting Goat Games	Extreme Earth	Core Setting Guide	PDF
Japan: Empire of the Setting Sun	Gun Metal Games	Interface Zero 2.0	Setting Guide	PDF
The Gamemaster	Misfit Studios	Villians Abound	Supplement	PDF
Savage Insider: Taking Action	Obatron Productions LLC	Savage Worlds	Magazine	PDF
Stone and a Hard Place	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	Deadlands	Setting Guide	PDF
Pranac Pursuit	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Adventure	PDF
Fillable JumpCorp Forms	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Accessory	PDF
Omariss Death Worm	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Adventure	PDF
Explorers of the Last Parsec Figure Flats	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Accessory	PDF
Terrors of Deep Space Figure Flats	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Accessory	PDF
Dropship Map	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Accessory	PDF

RECENT RELEASES

Title	Publisher	Setting	Type	Format
Freight Map	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Accessory	PDF
Pirate Vessels	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Accessory	PDF
Research Ship	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Accessory	PDF
The Engima Equation	Pinnacle Entertainment Group	The Last Parsec	Adventure	PDF
Clockwork Dreams	Savage Mojo	Suzerain	Setting Guide	PDF, POD
Set Rising	Savage Mojo	Suzerain	Supplement	PDF, POD
Savage Worlds Rules v4 for Fantasy Grounds	SmiteWorks	Savage Worlds	Accessory	Other
Realm Guide #21: The Free Emirate States	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost Land of Fire	Supplement	PDF
Hellfrost: Legendary Endeavors	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Supplement	PDF, PRINT
Hellfrost Social Customs	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Supplement	PDF
Hellfrost Heroes & Villains	Triple Ace Games	Hellfrost	Supplement	PDF, PRINT
The Enchanted Isle	Warning Label LLC	Cast of Cards	Accessory	PDF, POD
Monsters of the Isle	Warning Label LLC	Cast of Cards	Accessory	PDF, POD
Village of the Isle	Warning Label LLC	Cast of Cards	Accessory	PDF, POD



UPCOMING RELEASES

PINNACLE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

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Deadlands: Stone and a Hard Place

Death rules this land. From the sun-scorched earth to the empty noose swaying in the skeletal branches of the hangman's tree to the bloodstained buzzards circling

overhead ... the Wild Southwest thirsts for souls. Make sure it don't get yours, partner. Matthew Cutter's *Stone and a Hard Place* details the strange locales and odd characters of the American Southwest, provides new Edges and abilities to gussy up your Harrowed or hexslinger, new Setting Rules to emulate Death's grip on the land, *Savage Tales* galore, a passel o' terrifying abominations, and an epic Plot Point Campaign that pits a posse against Death's red right hand—the one and only Stone!

[Available for pre-order now.](#)

Savage Lankmar: City of Thieves

Betrayal is a part of life in the City of Thieves. Sometimes a companion double-crosses his mates over a few gold pieces. Other times he might cheat on a friend over the love of a woman. Most of these betrayals are met with a wry smile and a vow to



reciprocate at some future date. There is no honor among thieves, after all.

[Available by some time in May.](#)

TRIPLE ACE GAMES

www.tripleacegames.com

Hellfrost: Matters of Faith

Adventuring with the gods on your side is a must! Now your prayers have been answered, the Gods are with you in *Matters of Faith*!

Within this book you will find:

- Expanded information on the clergy of the 24 major cults.
- Details concerning over 90 major and 70 local festivals, any of which can be used as the

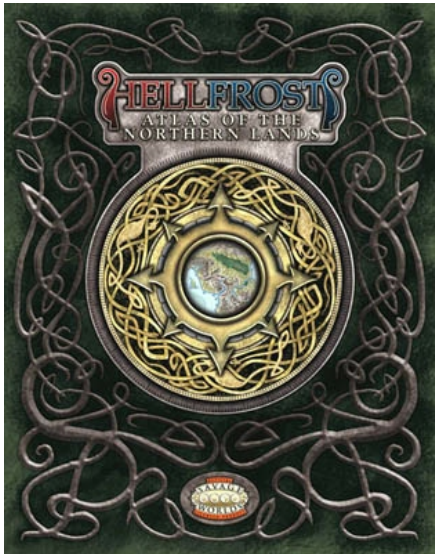


backdrop to an adventure or to make the heroes' day more interesting.

- Full write-ups for 70 minor cults, including character generation guidelines for clergy.
- Information on 12 major inhuman deities.
 - A tour of Godsheim, the realm of the gods, and the celestial sphere (complete with a map of the constellations).
 - An overview of the Abyss, including the Arcane Background (Demonist) and a sample of notable demon lords.

This book is designed for use in conjunction with the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*.

Hellfrost: Atlas of the Frozen North



Atlas of the Frozen North brings new detail and exquisite maps for your adventures in Rassilon.

The world of Rassilon is an ancient land, one scarred by war, weather, and time. Over countless millennia it has

hidden its many secrets from view. Unlock these secrets and discover the world of Rassilon in all its glory!

Hellfrost Atlas of the Frozen North takes you on an epic journey of discovery and exploration, one which delves deep into the rich geography and history of the lands of the frozen north. Triple Ace Games invites you to hold all of this epic landscape in your hands as we open up the secrets of Rassilon in new and amazing detail.

JUST INSERT IMAGINATION

<http://morneschaap.wix.com/insert-imagination>

Winter Eternal

Ehlerrac is a continent on a fantasy world. Most of the usual races lived here. But then disaster struck. The sun exploded, sending massive waves of fire into space. Ehlerrac survived the destruction because it was on the night side of the planet. Then the earthquakes and tsunamis hit and thousands died as cities fell and the landscape was torn apart. Now a sputtering globe hangs in the sky, emitting just enough heat to keep the planet from freezing completely. The dark world started cooling rapidly

and the survivors struggled to find food and shelter.

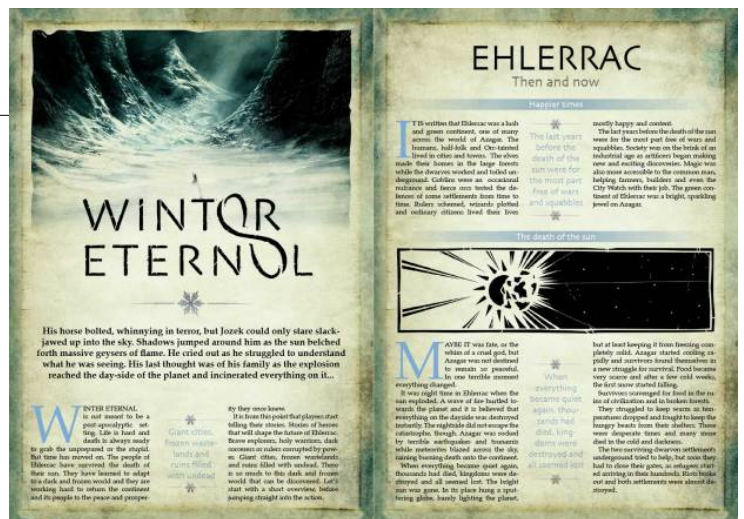
The setting starts a bit over a 100 years later. The five nature warden run cities are heated by powerful heat spells and lit by giant globes recast every morning. Archways are enclosed roads, linking these cities with the two dwarven cities and one artificer run city. Trading and manufacture are helping people to better their situations and there is lots of work available.



A few years ago, explorers came upon orange crystals in an old crater. When light shone on the crystals, it generated a massive amount of heat. Artificers are now using these "sunshards" to help Ehlerrac to take its first tentative steps into an industrial and steam age.

This is an exciting time on Ehlerrac and it's up to Savage Worlds game groups to tell the stories of this dark, cold, but not dead world.

Available April!



Shaintar: Legends Unleashed

Evil Beagle Games powers up Heroic and Legendary game play.

What is *Shaintar: Legends Unleashed*?

It's the second of the two core books for the Shaintar epic high fantasy setting for Savage Worlds. It has all of the character creation and game master material for running Shaintar for Heroic and Legendary characters. This includes all the Edges and powers, of course, as well as a good bit more gear that is useful for Shaintar campaigning at any level.

Additionally, there's a significant Denizens section, featuring dozens of adversaries and monsters appropriate for much more powerful characters. This section has write-ups for some of the most important and dangerous villains in the setting.

Shaintar: Legends Unleashed also contains the rules I developed for **High Magic**, a new idea for Savage Worlds that expands the essential powers system into the kinds of spell effects that change the course of great battles, and even history. For



those fantasy gamers who wonder where the "big D&D spells" are in SW, this section is for them.

There's also a new set of rules for doing Faction play, evocative of the old *Birthright* setting, as well as a revised approach to the SW Mass Battle rules - called the Epic Battle Rules - that gives a much heavier focus on the specific actions of Heroes and the narrative experience of those actions.

Finally, *Legends Unleashed* provides massive amounts of information about the setting from a very high-level perspective, revealing mysteries and the overall meta-plot of the setting for those GMs who wish to really delve into such things.

Shaintar: Legends Unleashed is available through RPGNow.com and DriveThruRPG.com

Visit www.evilbeaglegames.com for more from Evil Beagle Games.

Why We Created *Shaintar: Legends Unleashed*

When I looked at how huge a single core book would be, the concept was utterly daunting. No Savage setting I knew of at the time promised a book of such ridiculous size. At the time, I was working closely with Sean Preston of Reality Blurs, and after a lot of discussion, he and I agreed breaking the thing into two books was the right way to go.

At first, we looked at the fairly traditional approach, which meant all the player material in one book and the game master material in a second tome. However, for both marketing and other reasons, we took a second look and decided upon a rather unique take, at least where Savage settings are concerned. *Shaintar: Legends Arise* became the gateway product, serving a similar purpose as, for example, the old "Red Box" for D&D.

Shaintar: Legends Unleashed, naturally, stands as the "leveling up" product for the line, for when a campaign gets into the really world-shattering events and game play. With this book, not only was I able to bring Savage fans into the world of truly epic high fantasy with Shaintar, I was also introducing truly huge ideas for *SW* gaming across the board.

Influences

There's rather a huge list in the first book, *Legends Arise*. Off the top of my head, and in no particular order, some of the big ones would have to include the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (books, of course, but the movies especially); the original *Star Wars* saga; David Eddings' *Belgariad* and *Malloreon* series; the *Record of the Lodoss War* anime series; Roger Zelazny's *Chronicles of Amber* series; *Babylon 5*;

Silverado; Ed Greenwood's *Forgotten Realms* and Weiss' and Hickman's original run on the *Dragonlance* stuff.

Research

Verisimilitude and believability is incredibly important to me. I want my players to experience "action cinema" reality when they play, but I also want them to be able to believe in the world they are asked to live in. I did a great deal of research into the construction of pre-Industrial societies and worlds; matters of geology and geography (for the map structure); theories and philosophies of governance; and a lot more across the board where world-building is concerned.

I also looked at the structures of huge, epic series where lots of things are happening and there are big conspiracies and factions at work in the background. I feel the best stories have a healthy mix of investigations that result in the Big Reveal, along with Epic Final Battles. I spent a lot of time absorbing and understanding how my favorite authors and directors pulled such things off.

Ideal Gaming Experience Provided

I have to go back to what my friend, Basil Berchekas III, once said (which we ended up putting on our first run of t-shirts for conventions) -

"It's like *Lord of the Rings* meets *Die Hard*."

That really does get at the heart of it. Folks playing Shaintar should feel like they are Heroes in a movie, one in which Bad Guys are doing Terrible Things and it's up to them - like it or not - to figure out how to stop the Terrible Things. Great dialogue and lots of trying to figure things out should be spread out among extraordinary scenes of action and combat.

There should also constantly exist the sense of how much bigger things are than what is seen. Mysteries

abound, and the Heroes need to do what they can to uncover the conspiracies at work and find a way to keep their world from falling into the hands of Great Evil or Voracious Greed.

Development Process

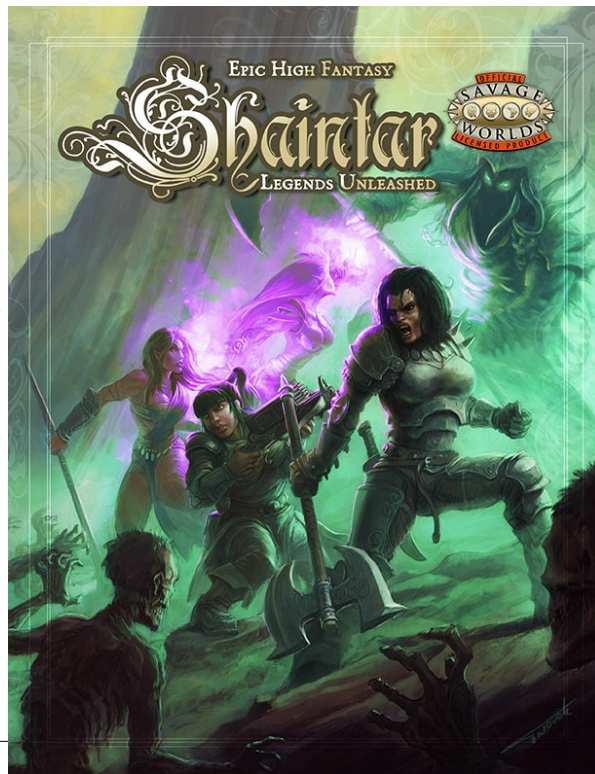
To be honest, what has become Shaintar began back in 1977, when I opened my first boxed set of the original *Dungeons & Dragons* game and found a keep on some borderlands with no sense of the world it occupied. Without a DM to take me through my first gaming experiences, I read through the books and figured out how to run the game for my friends.

I also began building a world I could personally believe in with those initial efforts. In an effort to both be a little less cliché as well as to create some sense of a believable, compelling world, I started crafting ideas about what elvish society was *really* like and why wizards carried staves instead of swords and why goblins and orcs were generally the bad guys (but did not *have* to be).

Over the many decades, as I transformed from gamer to game designer, I pushed the reset button on my creations. I kept what I liked from previous iterations and applied them to newer versions. "The

Realm" eventually became "Shaintar" as I crafted even more in-depth creation mythology and back story to what I was doing. I took a very top-down approach in the final approach, ensuring my cosmology, rules for how and why magic works, and the grander schemes and plots of the most powerful beings (celestial and terrestrial) all made sense and were foundational to the building of the world.

One of the key tools I use in my process of interactive story crafting and world building is to surround myself with folks who have great ideas and keen creative minds. To this brain trust, I bring my biggest ideas and ask them, essentially, "Is this cool?"



DESIGNER'S DIARY

If I get lots of "Oh, wow!" and "Holy crap!" I tend to think I am on the right track. If, instead, I get a great deal of head scratching, odd looks, and slow head shaking, I toss that or take it back to the screen to tinker.

Ultimately, Shaintar's success owes a huge debt of gratitude to the many wonderful players and long-time fans who've been on this journey with me since the earliest days. Their support and their creative feedback is a huge part of why it sings in the opera house instead of merely whistling along as just another fantasy setting.

If Pushed for a Comparison?

Naturally, the argument can be (and has been) made that Shaintar is yet another in the endless parade of fantasy settings, not just in gaming overall, but among the products available for Savage Worlds fans.

However, I've been very pleased to note that fans not only see Shaintar as one of the very first of its

kind for Savage Worlds fans (prior to its first release, you had *Evernight* - a decidedly alien horror take on fantasy - and *Sundered Skies* - a very grim apocalyptic approach), but as a refreshingly and unapologetically **heroic** setting where the actions of protagonists are meant to mimic those of much of our favorite media.

For whatever reason, the fantasy genre in gaming is resplendent with Dark Fantasy and Apocalyptic Fantasy, and has been for quite some time. Obviously, that's what a lot of folks want to create, and others want to play. It seems odd to me that Epic High Fantasy would stand as a kind of counter-culture to the current norm, but there you go.

I think another reason why Shaintar resonates so strongly with fantasy gaming fans is its determinedly anti-dungeon-crawl approach. As I've said so many times before, this is not a place where you wander around in ancient underground mazes, killing kobolds for copper pieces. Your heroes are meant for finer, more glorious things.



*Ages ago, man, elf, dwarf, and all
toiled together. In time, truth - mixed with
clever - lies turned the races against each
other. Too late, the treachery was revealed.
Only man remained on the island nation.
Decades have passed, but the dead are not
content to let bygones by bygones. Their
souls are not free, and now they seek...
retribution.*

At Obatron Productions, we love playing games springing from rich settings that let us use what we want and allow us to put our own spin on the world in which our characters reside.

We create setting materials to enable you to do the same. Retribution is a supernatural take on traditional fantasy where your characters may find their purposes aligned with those of the dead, or they may well be the next targets for the dead's wrath.

Coming to Kickstarter May 2015, you'll have a chance to back at a variety of levels to help us bring Retribution to you, the online marketplace, and brick-and-mortar stores.



Concept by Interlude

Finding out who the character is before deciding what they can do!
By Jerrod “Savage Daddy” Gunning & David “Savage Maven” Scott



Nothing defines a Savage Worlds game more than the cast of characters the players choose to create. Many experienced role-players take a habitual approach to character creation. They start with a concept and a back story before a single stat ever hits their sheet. Because their choices are motivated by character, they may need help finding Edges and Hindrances and trapping them in a way that fits their character concept, but they know the concept by heart.

These players embody the model, “Concept is King.” Some of these more experienced role-players defer their character creation until everyone else has finished. In the meantime, they might ask questions or take notes about other player’s character backgrounds. They’re taking an ensemble cast approach designed to create a character that fills a niche and builds party cohesion.

However, the Savage Worlds Character Creation Summary lists Background and Details as Step 5. The standard process has players assigning Traits and Special Abilities (Edges and Hindrances) before

considering background. You might argue that players are expected to have developed concepts before starting character creation, much as with the example of the experienced role-player. In fact, many licensed settings offer a few pages of sample concepts or archetypes as a prelude to character creation.

But does asking players – especially new players – to define what the character can do mechanically before asking what makes the character unique or interesting to play, fit our narrative? If they focus on the mechanical aspects of the character first, it’s easy to assign points to Attributes and Skills with no idea if they’ll meet the requirements for Edges that fit their eventual character concept.

How would a player know to take Stealth at a d8 if they don’t know that their character is a street urchin turned pickpocket by the orphanage master thus needing the thief Edge? Without that Edge, the character would be ineffectual as a pickpocket. How do you justify having a d12 in Shooting, which is mechanically possible at character creation, without

GAME PREP

having the background of a master hunter or highly trained sniper?

Enter the Interlude Investigation system. This is an alternative to the standard Savage Worlds character creation process with two very big changes: introducing a concept by way of an Interlude and reordering the steps in standard process for character creation.

The first change we look at is a concept the rules lawyer, David “Savage Maven” Scott, has introduced to new players in his games: Introduction Interludes! One of the most narrative mechanics in Savage Worlds is the Interlude. But we hear people say it's too clunky for their game or it slows the game down when you could easily hand wave the camp fire and jump into the action of the following day.

This is where we must calmly shake our collective heads and explain we need to stop taking things from the books quite so specifically. An Interlude can be run at the start of a session to cover what happened since the last time we played. Perhaps it gives the players a chance to gain a Benny while you roll to see if anyone finds their camp in the dark dungeon. What about using it for an epilogue to turn the end of the final session into a communal “ride off into the sunset” moment? Or, by adding them to character creation we can use it to set up our character's past before play even starts and flesh out our concept!

We all know the veterans who have been around think back to other systems where a random draw or roll determines your character's history, but remember this is Savage Worlds and we are talking about an Interlude, not a hard and fast table that says “draw this card and lose an arm”. So how does this work?

Well let's remake the Interlude chart to include links to the past of the character so when you draw the cards before you even choose your concept, they can help shape your character's back story. You draw four cards and use them in any order you choose to tell a short Interlude story about your character to the other players or the GM. The stages you have to

cover are Childhood, Friends & Family, and Career. Based on your setting, childhood may cover up to young adolescents or it could cover everything up until the age of majority. Friends and family may be a story of losing your parents or marrying your true love. Career should be some form of profession or training that has led to where your character is at the start of play.

You will notice that is three stages and four cards, this lets you choose so you don't have to necessarily get stuck with a club for tragedy in each stage. Then we get to the bonus card. This is the payoff for all the time you spent adding Interludes and plot hooks to the character! The last card is used to buy a bonus for your character based on the suit of the card used. You can also allow a mulligan, allowing a player to discard a single card and redraw if they drew four cards of the same suit until they have at least one card of a different suit.

Introduction Interludes Guide

- ♣ Interlude: Must include a specifically named location from your hero's past. Bonus: May have up to two points worth of additional Hindrance (beyond the normal limit) and points can be used as normal.
- ♠ Interlude: Must include a rivalry due to your story of victory. Bonus: Increase a skill that is equal to or greater than its linked attribute by one die type OR Increase two skills that are lower than their linked attributes by one die type each.
- ♥ Interlude: Must include a specifically named person from your hero's past. Bonus: May take a Social Edge regardless of requirements for free.
- ♦ Interlude: Must identify a specific goal. Bonus: Triple starting funds or Heirloom/Major Item

The guide can certainly be modified for your game, setting, or just to please you and your group! These are suggestions though an attempt was made to keep the specific theme of the original Interlude suits. The bonus card was kept to the equivalent of +2 points from Hindrances, but the options were limited based upon the card kept. This is to force a player to

consider during the introduction Interludes which cards to play where and how to tie the story together narratively while holding out a mechanical carrot as a nice reward that is not unbalancing for your game. Things such as the Hindrances for Clubs is to preserve the theme of Clubs being some form of tragedy while Hearts grant a social Edge as it's a love or friendship interest.

The second change is ripped from the pages of a new setting from the pink ninja of Savage Worlds himself, Jerrod "Savage Daddy" Gunning. He has streamlined the process by reordering the usual steps from Savage Worlds character creation in a way that puts a finer point on concept and background over mechanics.

Step 1) Race is replaced by Concept and Background. It is crucial that you don't engage in any conversations about mechanics at this point. It only derails the process. If your setting includes anything but Humans, be careful about information you share with the players. By all means mention the different races, but focus heavily on culture without discussing mechanics or racial abilities. In fact, GMs might want to ask players to fully present their concept and then, present a race that most closely matches it as an option for character creation.

Now, the caveat here: don't write a novel. This is the start of your character's big story. They don't need an amazing past spanning 20 pages. All you need is a brief paragraph like the following examples.

"A black sheep in the family, Makoto Maeda scored high marks in school but followed popular American punk trends. A young Asian girl wearing 'straight edge' paraphernalia and speaking English fluently by primary school, she stood out. Her childhood was spent in study, and quickly that introversion became an obsession with the internet culture and the wider cultures of humanity." This character has several hooks you can flesh out to make her an excellent East Texas University student.

Another option for an ETU character might be a freshman quarterback as follows.

"Brody Cordell's father was a shrewd business man who never accepted second best from his son, on their ranch or on the field. The two bonded watching reruns of Walker Texas Ranger, and Brody quickly dedicated himself to the two things that brought his father pride— football and being like Chuck Norris. By the age of thirteen, he won his first martial arts tournament. He earned his black belt in Chun Kuk Do four years later. On the football field, he became a leader, practicing the fundamentals until he could throw a pass like a frozen rope!" Again, the hooks are there for several skills, Edges, and even Hindrances!

Since Concept and Background replace Race in the Savage Daddy version of the character creation process, you may have to adopt a concept to fit the race. In the previous examples, both characters are humans as no other race is available in East Texas University. But if we adjust Brody to be a Wood Elf, he plays football for the Wood Elves in the Blood Bowl League rather than the ETU Ravens. Likewise, we would adjust *Walker Texas Ranger* to another hero, but the concept allows us to look at who would have the skills he has and in that world, the wood elves are all about the aerial attack down the pitch with long graceful passes.

Step 2) Hindrances is next. This will be a combination of narrative and mechanical choices, where we select our character's pitfalls and drawbacks.

We want to pick Hindrances that fit our concept, and hopefully have ample opportunity for role-play. Our concept makes these choices very obvious. Makoto, for example, looks like she would be a great fit for Outsider. Not only is she from Japan, where she was a black sheep, she is currently attending college in the East! And Brody's fascination with Chuck Norris makes for an awesome quirk where he has tattooed "WVCND" (What Would Chuck Norris Do?) across his knuckles and has a tendency to quote lines from the show in high stress moments.

Step 3) Edges are next. With our new point totals, we can buy Trait increases or Edges. This is the third step in the Savage Daddy version for a reason. It reveals the die types of any Attribute or skill the

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character must have to qualify for an Edge before they actually spend them.

At this point, we are fully in the realm of mechanics. That doesn't mean there is no opportunity to select Edges that fit the narrative theme for our character. Makoto takes the Test Taker Edge to represent her studious nature and extra time spent studying. Brody, on the other hand, takes Martial Arts, Command, and Strong Arm Edges to tie into his black belt as well as his focus on being a star quarterback! Now that we have reached this point, our final steps are nearly written for us! We now know our character concept and have perhaps even fleshed out some extra details, and we know what Edges and Hindrances we have so that we can meet the requirements for those! It is time for the next step.

Step 4) Traits: Attributes & Skills. Here we make sure to fit within not just the requirements of our selected Edges, but to follow the concept and nail down any loose Edges. Brody probably has a d6 in Knowledge (Battle) from leading the football team on the field, while Makoto is going to have a very high Investigation skill and several Knowledge (Focus) skills to link into her concept. Keep in mind Common Knowledge. Brody doesn't need Knowledge (Chuck Norris) because his concept is going to grant him a +2 on all Common Knowledge (Smarts) rolls to deal with that hobby. Just as Makoto would likely use Common Knowledge to quote internet slang fluently. These are parts of the character you don't have to spend skill points on when you have a concept and background!

Step 5) Gear is unchanged from the traditional Step 4.

Step 6) Background Details stays the final step. The player creates a one- or two-sentence blurb to add to the character sheet based on their concept. Encourage them to go beyond the drivers' license approach, and write a brief but flavorful summary that combines their physical

appearance, mental state, and how society interacts with them.

"Makoto Maeda looks like she stepped directly out of a manga or anime. A black sheep even among her friends and family in her homeland of Japan and eager for acceptance, she finds it hard to fit in."

"Brody Cordell is a Golan County local with the swagger of a cowboy and confidence of an NFL quarterback. His unwavering devotion to football and desperate need to emulate Chuck Norris often get him in trouble."By taking the steps that already existed in Savage Worlds in a slightly different order, we have a far more narrative-driven character that enriches the player's opportunity for role-play. Along with the Interludes, the Game Master now has some meaty plot hooks to provide the character with a place to shine in the story.

In closing we offer Savage Daddy's obligatory farewell: keep rolling and stay Savage!

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The End is Nigh! Or, Is It?

Campaigns end for any number of reasons: some suddenly due to life events, could be an exciting new RPG just came out, and other times, interest just wanes. Whatever the case, if you have the opportunity to prepare for it, you can make the campaign memorable.

I've run a few campaigns that ended in such a way that the players talked about it long after the game was over. These were successful because I had the chance to think about the end of the campaign, about how I wanted to wrap things up.

If I were one of the GMs who do a lot of preparation, had story arcs mapped out, outlines written up, and so forth, this would probably be a lot easier. However, as a GM, I do a lot of improvising, preferring to GM off the cuff. Even if I'm running a premade adventure path, I allow the players a lot of leeway in what they do. As a result, there are a lot of things that need to be cleared that the writers couldn't cover.

I basically create a list of things that need to be done before the campaign winds down. These items can come from a number of sources such as:

1. If your players wrote up any backgrounds for their characters, it's a good time to review them to see if there is anything you should have touched on in the campaign that didn't; that you did, but left unfinished; or even things that should be resolved for that character.
2. Review what has gone before. This is easier if you've taken notes or have a player that have chronicled the game so far. Otherwise, you have to rely on your memory. Are there any plot lines introduced that your players would like to resolve?
3. Ask your players for the current list of what they know. What things do they have on their list of things to do?
4. Review the characters as they are now. Given the heights they've likely achieved, is there anything you can introduce now that would be cool such as

new Edges only available for their current Rank or supplements that released after started the campaign?

5. Consult the muse. Are there any new story ideas you'd like to introduce to the game now that the characters have made it so far?

With this list, I then create a time line to see how many of them I can fit in before the end. If I'm running my normal improvised game, I usually can fit in as much as I want. If I'm running a pre-made adventure campaign, it all depends on where we are in the game. In that case, I rank the things to get done by time and how cool it will be for the players.

The cool factor is important for the campaign from beginning to end, but it becomes imperative when you're wrapping up one that's been long-running. That is what makes it memorable for the players.

It's easy to gloss over the hero part of the characters transforming from zeros to heroes. GMs who make the Advances important to the story add dimensions of play that don't happen if their only importance is adding new Edges or hiking up die types.

If the characters have achieved a number of Ranks, things are different for them. They're almost certainly known, if not by name, by reputation. They may have made enemies, some with their own renown, and some not so much. These may rear their heads before the end, offering opportunities to mop up, investigate how they "wronged" the enemy, and just provide some side adventures.

If the characters are known by name and sight, not only will they be sought after for help, they will be celebrated by the population. Their money will not be good enough for inns, hotels, ports, and so forth. When purchasing things, they'll get discounts without the need to haggle, and there may be festivals or

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parties when they're in town. Remember, they're rock stars now!

After doing all this, realize that interest in the campaign may be renewed, new opportunities for adventure may open, and you may decide that the show must go on after all.



By Sean Tait Bircher of Wine and Savages

An Abundance of Gods

Shinto Inspirations for Savage Worlds

Purify the sky and earth. Purify the inside and outside of my body. Purify my heart. Please purify everything. --Zeami Motokiyo, "Aoi no Ue"

Roleplaying games give us the chance to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. Players imagine themselves as reckless treasure hunters, loyal space marines, and immortal elves, while Game Masters take on the roles of intergalactic potentates, humble tavern keepers, hive-mind insectoids, and playful half-folk. RPGs also give us a chance to explore real-life cultures.

The ancient Japanese religion of Shinto provides fascinating role-playing opportunities. Informed by the Japanese acceptance of nature, Shinto can inspire new perspectives on familiar roleplaying genres.

Shinto ("The Way of the Gods") is the original religion of the Japanese people. It is vaguely defined, with only a few post-Buddhist collections of myths acting as its core texts and no particular defining doctrine. It shows reverence for nature and natural phenomena like boulders, rivers, and massive trees can be thought of as kami (gods and spirits, not differentiating between the two).

Shinto encompasses an anthropomorphic pantheon of Heavenly Kami and Earthly Kami, ancestor worship, and animistic local kami; the sun is personified as the goddess Amaterasu-ōmikami, emperors as recent as the Meiji emperor are deified, and even impressive mountains are made into gods. A

simple way to describe Shinto might be "the worship of the sublime."

Shinto essentially exists as two different religions under one name. The formal Shinto of the Heavenly Kami was used to bolster the early emperors' claims to the divine right to rule (which was revived as the State Shinto that fueled World War II). The local Shinto appeases the nature deities and assures good crops.

During Japan's classical Heian Era and feudal Sengoku Era, there was a distinct divide in the two, but that has been blurred in the modern era as the practitioners attempt to codify the religion. This dichotomy is apparent in the fact that one-third of the Shinto shrines in Japan are dedicated to the fox god Inari – a figure that doesn't even appear in the core texts of the religion.

The day-to-day of modern Shinto is much like any other religion in other developed countries. Aspirants attend a seminary school before serving an apprenticeship under a senior priest, eventually earning a permanent post, often inheriting family-run shrines. Daily life for kannushi is like that of other faiths: there are rivalries with other local churches, arguments over interpretations of the faith between fellow churchmen, and dealing with lay auxiliaries.

The priests' duties consist of conducting blessings for their parishioners, leading local holiday celebrations and religious services, contributing to charities, and aiding in fundraising drives. Their lives are essentially the same as those of Christian priests, Islamic imams in the West, or Jewish rabbis; indeed – given the scarcity of women kannushi – it's easy enough to imagine a Japanese localization of *The Vicar of Dibley*.

Shinto Simplified

Under the *Savage Worlds Fantasy Companion* template for religions, Shinto could be described as the following:

Aspects: Nature, sun, storms, the Emperor, crops, fertility, good, purity

Powers: *Savage Worlds Deluxe* – armor (warding aura or protective spirits), banish, barrier, beast friend, blast, blind, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow (melding into free-standing boulders and/or trees instead; a Shinto miracle worker would never descend into the earth), burst, confusion, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, divination, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, farsight, fear, fly, greater healing, growth/shrink, havoc, healing, light/obscure, pummel, quickness, shape change, slow, slumber, smite, speed, stun, succor, summon ally, telekinesis; *Savage Worlds Fantasy Companion* – bless/curse, jet; *Savage Worlds Horror Companion* – banish entity, bind entity, consecrate ground, grave speak, nightmares, spirit shield, summon spirit and suppress lycanthropy.

Duties: Maintain the balance between the kami and mankind, do honor to the Emperor and the ancestral kami, purify the land of pollutants such as disease and the undead.

Sins: Shinto worries more about defilement from outside sources (kegare) than about evil intent in the hearts of its worshippers. Shinto shamans (miko) and priests (kannushi) must avoid contact with blood, childbirth, death, and disease; not properly purifying oneself before entering the sacred precincts of a shrine is one of the worst sins a Shintoist can perform

because it defiles the kami that resides therein. Kegare can be defined as: (Minor) failing to perform daily prayers, entering a shrine while tainted from disease, childbirth, or involuntary bloodshed; (Major) entering a shrine while tainted from death (including communication with or combat against the undead) or voluntary bloodshed, killing a hostile kami; (Mortal) defiling the land by spreading disease or aiding the undead, killing a beneficent kami, raising undead.

Shinto Characters

Miko

Clad in a white haori (kimono jacket) and red hakama (trouser-skirt), the contemporary miko is a popular character type in Japanese pop culture. Commonly translated "shrine maiden," the term actually means "female shaman." Anime otaku and Japanophiles will recognize the miko from a number of popular depictions: Sailor Mars in *Sailor Moon*, Kikyo and Kaede (and to a lesser degree Kagome) in *Inuyasha*, the casts of *Shrine of the Morning Mist* and *Destiny of the Shrine Maiden*, and more. Imbued with a holy purity through their service to the native kami, miko are able to banish evil spirits and cleanse unholy sites.

Modern miko are descendants of a long line of female shamans. Earlier versions of miko were less maidenly than their part-time descendants who sell souvenirs at modern shrines. Their interactions with the spirit world were more primal and personal – comparable more to modern Haitian Vodou than sedate modern Shinto – and involved such techniques as ecstatic kagura dance and spirit possession. They were women outside of the bounds of society.

During the Japanese classical and feudal periods, miko could be wanderers, like itinerant monks and yamabushi, offering their services to bless crops, pray for good luck, and drive away evil spirits. A miko wasn't necessarily young and she might even be married, perhaps to one of the yamabushi.

Such free spirits were a threat to the hegemony of the imperial court. Over the centuries, official proclamations eventually confined miko to recognized shrines. The modern miko is often a part-time volunteer at her local shrine, a co-ed who worries more about her classes than her religious vocation. Regardless, the miko retains her cultural cachet as a

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symbol of divine purity and connection to the kami.

Miko (Novice Archetype)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Knowledge (Occultism) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, +4 additional skill points

Charisma: +0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Sanity:** 5

Toughness: 5

Hindrances: One Major, Two Minor

Edges: AB: Miracles, Holy/Unholy Warrior, Visions (*SWHC*)

Gear: *azusayumi* (catalpa-wood bow; Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1, Cost \$250), red *hakama* and white *haori* (as formal clothing; Cost \$200), quiver (holds 20 arrows; Cost \$25) and 10 arrows (Cost \$5), *tamagushi* or *gohei* (branch or wand decorated with folded paper strips; as religious symbol; Cost \$20).

Special Abilities

- **Power Points:** 10
- **Powers:** *bolt* (consecrated arrows of holy energy “shot” from bow), *detect/conceal arcana* (twanging of *azusayumi* or prayer while waving *tamagushi*)

Kannushi

The vestments of a Shinto priest have no specific religious meaning. They are simply the traditional costume of the imperial court, dating back to the Japanese classical (Heian) period, and perhaps this says more about the interconnectedness of Shinto and Japanese history than anything else could. The *kannushi*, after all, is the intermediary between the gods that created Japan and the people that live there.

Aside from a few powerful national shrines, most Shinto shrines began as family affairs and remain so today. They are passed down from generation to generation, from one ancient ancestor who claimed divine blood or was a village headman all the way down to a descendant who got his training at Koku-gakuin University. *Kannushi* once blessed crops and interceded with the gods for good weather; now they bless automobiles and conduct ceremonies in air conditioned halls.

Kannushi are far less visible in Japanese pop culture than *miko*. The only *kannushi* to have important roles in anime popular in America seem to be the grandfathers of protagonists rather than main characters – such as Kagome’s and Sailor Mars’ grandfathers on *Inuyasha* and *Sailor Moon* respectively. *Kannushi* are so specifically attached to their shrines and their daily duties that for many, they are simply local dispensers of blessings and charms.

This seemingly limited scope should not completely discourage players interested in this archetype. Women may become *kannushi*, though they form a very small minority of modern Shinto priests. Young *kannushi* in modern Japan often serve apprenticeships far from home before returning to care for the family shrine, and medieval Heian-Kyo and modern Tokyo encompass so much of their respective era’s culture that characters could easily adventure for years without ever leaving their cities.

Kannushi (Novice Archetype)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (Occultism) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Taunt d4, +3 skill points

Charisma: +0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 4 **Sanity:** 6

Toughness: 5

Hindrances: One Major, Two Minor

Edges: AB: Miracles, Talisman Craftsman

Gear: courtly attire (as formal clothing; Cost \$200), *ofuda* (20 pieces; as warding material; Cost \$5 each), *ōnusa* (ritual wand covered with paper streamers; as religious symbol; Cost \$20), *shaku* (ritual baton of oak or lesser wood; as religious symbol; can be used as a Str+d4 improvised weapon, but would be defiled by doing so; Cost \$20), \$160.

Special Abilities

- **Power Points:** 10
- **Powers:** *entangle* (“thrown” *ofuda* sticks to target’s forehead and paralyzes it), *healing* (wave *shaku* or *ōnusa* over target)

Gear

Azusayumi

The azusayumi is a finely-crafted bow made from the wood of the catalpa tree. Legend says that Jimmu Tenno – the first emperor of Japan and grandson of the sun goddess – owned an azusayumi that could dispel evil with the mere plucking of its string. Noble families often have pairs heirloom azusayumi decorated with gold and silk bindings, one lacquered black and the other red.

Range: 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6, **RoF:** 1 **Weight:** 3, **Cost:** 250+, **Shots:** -, **Min. Str.:** d6; also religious symbol

Religious Symbols

The religious symbols of Shinto often echo the animist underpinnings of the religion, typically incorporating trees in shape or material.

- **Haraegushi or Ōnusa:** A wand decorated with zigzag paper streamers called shide; used in Shinto blessing ceremonies.
- **Ofuda:** Paper slips with incantations or prayers written on them; used as a warding material in both Shinto and Buddhism.
- **O-miki:** Blessed sake; the equivalent of holy water.
- **Shaku:** A Shinto ritual baton; formerly simply a symbol of rank, like a scepter.
- **Suzu:** Handheld clusters of jingle bells used in kagura (ritual dances; see below).
- **Shimenawa:** Rice-straw ropes decorated with shide; used to mark the divide between sacred and mundane spaces and to mark boulders and trees that kami dwell in.
- **Tamagushi:** A shide-decorated sakaki tree branch given as an offering to the kami.

Powers

Trappings

In addition to the examples within the character archetypes, common trappings include kagura (ritual dances), the Nine Syllables and Nine Cuts, and prayers to the myriad kami.

Kagura

Ritual dances form an important part of Shinto ceremonies, dating back to the earliest Japanese myths. When the imperial ancestor and sun goddess Amaterasu-ōmikami was wronged by the storm god Susanoo, she went into hiding in a dark cave. The earth and heaven were deprived of light and plunged into cold and darkness. The gods petitioned Amaterasu

for mercy but she ignored them. At last, Ame-no-Uzume decided to distract her fellow gods from their misery by dancing. The gods made such an uproar as they enjoyed Uzume's dance that Amaterasu peeked out of her cave to see what was going on, and was immediately dragged out and implored to never shut herself away again.

Kagura are most often slow and graceful with sweeping arm gestures. The pregnant pauses familiar to westerners from Noh and kabuki are emphasized with fans or the jangling of suzu. Formal ritual kagura (such as might be used to calm an angry kami) utilize elaborately-brocaded decorative kimono. During the Heian era, kagura were a duty of noblemen as well as priests, but today they are primarily the duty of miko.

The Nine Syllables and Nine Cuts

The most common trapping for spells cast by Japanese mystics of any tradition in both real life and fiction – whether Shinto, Buddhist, or adherents of one of Japan's several syncretic magical systems – is a combination of words and mudras (hand symbols) called the Kuji-in (“Nine Syllables”) and Kuji-Kiri (“Nine Cuts”). Much like “abracadabra,” they're essentially nonsense syllables; historical evidence traces the syllables back to Chinese Taoism and the symbols to Chinese Buddhism, but the exact process of how these foreign traditions came to be scrambled together in Japanese mysticism is unknown. It is probable that it originated in Shugendō – a fusion of Shinto and Buddhism that is the oldest of Japan's syncretic traditions – but their use eventually spread to all Japanese faiths. They've been incorporated into everything from Shinto to esoteric Buddhism to ninjutsu.

- **Rin (臨):** Hands together, fingers interlocked, index fingers extended and pressed together.
- **Hyō (兵):** Hands together, pinkie and ring fingers interlocked, index fingers extended and pressed together, middle fingers curled over index fingers.
- **Tō (闘):** Hands together, pinkie and ring fingers extended, index fingers crossed with middle fingers crossed over them.
- **Sha (者):** Hands together, ring fingers crossed with middle fingers crossed over them, index and pinkie fingers extended.
- **Kai (皆):** Hands together, fingers interlocked.

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- **Jin (陣)**: Hands together, fingers interlocked but with fingertips inside.
- **Retsu (列)**: Left hand points upward with index finger, right hand grips left's index finger.
- **Zai (在)**: Hands spread out, thumbs and index fingers touch to form a triangle between them.
- **Zen (前)**: Right hand grabs left hand fist.
When casting a spell, these are sometimes followed by the ejaculation Kō (行) as a sort of seal or exclamation point to formally invoke the power.

Prayer

Shinto is host to an abundance of gods. Classical Shinto texts speak of Japan as “the land of eight million gods” but most of those are minor local deities; the effect is similar to counting every single dryad and satyr as a member of the Olympian pantheon. The ancient texts speak of Heavenly Kami and Earthly Kami, but if there was ever a true division, the line has been blurred for centuries. Notable kami a character might call on include:

- **Amaterasu-ōmikami**: Goddess of the sun and ancestor of the Imperial line; effectively head of the pantheon.
- **Susanoo-no-Mikoto**: Amaterasu's brash, Hercules-like brother; god of the storms and the sea.
- **Tsukiyomi-no-Mikoto**: Amaterasu's other brother; the banished god of the moon.
- **Izanami and Izanagi**: Makers of Japan and parents to the Amaterasu and her brothers; Izanagi died in childbirth and Izanami tried unsuccessfully to rescue her from the afterlife.
- **Ame-no-Uzume**: Goddess of the dawn, arts, and dance; peacemaker between the Heavenly Kami and Earthly Kami.
- **Sarutahiko Ōkami**: Leader of the Earthly Kami and husband of Uzume; a god of strength and patron of the martial arts.
- **Inari Ōkami**: The androgynous fox god of rice and fertility; possibly the most popular god in folk Shinto.
- **Hachiman**: A deified emperor; god of war and agriculture.
- **Fūjin and Raijin (or Raiden)**: Gods of the wind and lightning respectively; indicative of Shinto's



long intermixing with Buddhism, they are often depicted as oni.

New Effects

Holy

Holy trappings turn attack powers into hallowed weapons against evil and beneficial powers into defenses against corruption and possession. While written with Shinto in mind, these trappings could easily be applied to other religions.

- **Consecration**: When a defensive or offensive power is consecrated, its effects are only felt by the unholy. A consecrated *barrier* repels only supernatural beings like oni and yōkai; a consecrated *burst* bypasses mortal targets and only strikes down monsters.
- **Halo**: Beneficial powers surround the subject with a holy flame or nimbus. The caster may substitute the normal benefit of a raise for a *damage field* effect that only harms the supernaturally evil, inflicting 2d4 damage.
- **Wrath**: All mortals are considered to have a level of Arcane Resistance versus the power, but the undead must make Fear checks when hit with it. A wrathful *smite*-ensorcelled sword scatters armies of ghosts before it.

Invocation

Invocation trappings may be used to simulate a caster calling upon outside forces, such as angels, demons, gods, and spirits. This usually simply manifests as the image of the invoked entity appearing before the caster to affect the power, but it may have additional effects.

- **Divine/Profane**: An angel, god, or demon reveals itself before the caster in order to perform the power. This costs 2 extra Power Points; enemies of the caster's faith within a Large Burst Template of the higher being are affected as per the *fear* power. The divine or profane being will demand a service from the caster at a later time.
- **Elemental**: A minor kami or elemental is invoked by the power. For +1 Power Point, the elemental being's presence causes effects similar to

elemental manipulation in addition to the main effect of the power. *Fly* powered by an air spirit may cause a gust of wind that provides the caster a +1 to a Trick roll to evade pursuit while fire-infused *havoc* might cause targets to roll against catching on fire.

New Power

Purify

Rank: Veteran

Power Points: 3

Range: Smarts

Duration: Instant

Trappings: kagura, prayer

This variant of *banish* is used to cleanse an angry kami of its rage rather than force them to another plane of existence. It can be used to mollify possessed humans, vengeful ghosts, and hostile supernatural creatures like *yōkai*.

The spell is an opposed roll of the caster's arcane skill versus the target's Spirit. On a success, the target is Shaken as it is rebuffed by the caster's power or pauses to remember its own innate virtue. On a raise, Extras are transformed from Hostile to Neutral (see the Reaction Table under the Persuasion skill); Wild Cards are shifted one step along the Reaction Table.

Neutral spirits will usually retreat to their home (the boulder, mountain, river, shrine, or tree that serves as their dwelling). They will only rarely stay to negotiate with heroes or stick around long enough for their Reaction to be moved up to Friendly or Helpful. If the kami's reason for anger or vengeance is not resolved, the kami may revert to hostility in the future.

Adapting Shinto

Fantasy

Using Shinto in a Japanese-inspired fantasy setting lends itself to easy extrapolation. Wandering miko provide a distinct identity for female characters, allowing them a particular niche in the setting, but the shrine-bound kannushi have a more difficult time justifying the rambling ways of most adventurers. Still, they might find themselves given a divine mission to seek out a relic or communicate with a distant kami (shrines are occasionally relocated, so they

might even be sent to ask a kami to move to a different home).

Since Shinto is a religion attuned to nature, it is easy to imagine it as the basis for the faith of a more normal fantasy world's elves and other faerie races, but it could just as easily serve as the inspiration for the religion of the dwarves or half-folk. The interconnectedness of world and spirit, reverence for natural phenomena, and folk religion aspects of Shinto can inform very different imaginary faiths.

SETTING SKETCH: THE LOST SHRINES OF EVERLAW

The Three Peoples of the islands of Everlaw have long lived in harmony with the land – though they have long lived apart from each other. The elves stayed in the forest, the dwarves stayed in the mountains, and the half-folk farmed the plains. Each has had their part to play in the song of life and they were happy to sing those parts separately, but now the invading humans have disrupted the cycle of the world. As the humans clear the trees and mine the mountains, the hurt they inflict on Everlaw breeds demons and monsters. Now the Three Peoples must unite again after centuries apart.

Priests and priestesses have been sent from each of their Three Faiths to work together:

- **Vodh Y Dévau:** The sun and stars that shine above and the trees that grow below are part of a seamless whole, a cycle of renewal that only the long-lived elves can truly appreciate. Wandering Dévallyn travel through the forest realms, mediating the conflicts between mortals and immortals; on one occasion a Dévali might rebuke a river spirit angry at new settlers along its banks, while on another she might forcibly relocate intruders into a dryad's grove. The Dévallyn combine the twanging of their bows and bells worn at wrist and ankles into a strange music that accompanies their ritual dances.
- **Bokhov:** The soul of the mountains is the soul of the dwarves; when the Stone Dwellers pass, they join with the stone that gives them shelter. The Bokhovar protect the pact between the Stone Lords and the Stone Dwellers, honoring the spirits of the mountains that manifest in the sublime beauty of cliff faces and outcroppings. Bokhovar priests guard the sacred stones and conduct propitiation ceremonies when the Stone Lords show their anger through earthquakes and rock-falls. They divine the

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future by heating rocks until they crack, seeking patterns in the seams.

- **The Kindly Way:** The half-folk seek nothing more complicated than harmony. They honor the spirits of the earth when the crops are sown, the spirits of the rain when they water the crops, the spirits of the grain when the crops are harvested, and even the spirits of famine that come when the crops do not grow. They know that the world is filled with gods great and small, all beyond the comprehension or control of the half-folk, and so they simply seek to keep the spirits contented. Joyous festivals are scheduled throughout the year to celebrate the changing of the seasons as well as other natural phenomena and to welcome the return of the spirits associated with those changes.

The Three Peoples must find the underlying unity between their fractioned faiths and work

together to heal their blessed islands. Only together can they find the Lost Shrines of Everlaw,

Horror

Shinto functionally has no system of ethics or a duality of good and evil. There is no hell full of "anti-kami." Kami are believed to inhabit the mundane world and – like the Greek gods – be capable of both beneficent and malevolent acts.

It is in that too-human capability for good and evil that the key to using Shinto in a horror campaign can be found. Kami can become angry and strike out against those who have wronged them. These kami can be the angry ghosts of humans or defiled nature kami. Such angry kami are not technically evil, so those who confront them face not just the difficulty of fighting angry spirits but also the moral obligation to appease and settle these spirits rather than destroy them.

This is not to say that angry kami are not dangerous and even horrifying. The most famous historical example of a spirit's vengeance is the case of Sugawara no Michizane, a scholar and official of the classical period who died in after his promising political career suddenly went sour.

The Imperial court was beset by a torrent of natural disasters including earthquakes and lightning. Exorcists were consulted and Michizane's offices were posthumously restored; the disasters continued, though, and he was eventually deified as Tenjin-sa-

ma, god of natural disasters and, eventually, scholarship. Shrines and worship were established for the new god and the disasters ceased.

Similar pacification was made of the spirits of the murdered Prince Sawara and the rebellious warlord Taira no Masakado. The same approach could even be taken for the nature kami turned wrathful; while more a fantasy film than horror, *Princess Mononoke* shows the destructive power of nature unleashed in the form of the demonic boar-god Nago, the posthumous vengeance of the wolf goddess Moro, and the apocalyptic death of the Forest Spirit. A horror campaign could be easily built on the awakening of malevolent kami and the desperate quest to pacify them before they destroy Japan.

SETTING SKETCH: TATARI (SPIRIT VENGEANCE)

A massive earthquake and resulting tsunami have devastated Tokyo. The survivors of the initial disaster struggle through the ruins of the metropolis to find their way to shelter and safety. Slowly, they begin to realize something is stalking them.

The earthquake – only the latest in a long line of natural disasters that has plagued Japan from the beginning of the millennium – is no accident. The kami of the land are outraged by Japan's continued pollution problems and over-development; the kami of the sea are angry with the over-fishing and whaling of the waters; and the kami of the honored dead rage against Japan's attempts at rearmament under the guise of "mutual defense." As the inhabitants of the center of Japanese culture and commerce discover, the spirits are vengeful.

A platoon of soldiers the characters hail as saviors turns out to be bloodthirsty revenants from the Pacific War. Spirit foxes the size of wolves hunt the heroes through the tumbled remains of a skyscraper. The flooded streets are home to the unleashed dragon-gods of Tokyo's cement-banked rivers. The very soul of the nation is in riot.

Apocalypses don't all have to be about angels and demons.

Pulp

Ironically, it is perhaps in a pulp campaign that the true horror of Shinto can best be shown. Following the Meiji Restoration of the 19th century, the imperial government increasingly used the divine ancestry of the Emperor as an excuse for international aggres-

sion and internal authoritarianism. So-called "State Shinto" was used as a justification of and propaganda tool for Japan's expansionism before and during World War II.

The Meiji Constitution required a separation of church and state, but the proponents of the patriotic Shinto of the Pacific War era skirted this by defining attendance at Shinto shrines and veneration of the Emperor as secular activities that supported the government. The long-standing intermixture of Shinto and Buddhism was forcibly dissolved and Shinto practice was standardized as part of the kokugaku (ancient studies) movement, a nationalist philosophy that sought to purge Japanese thought of foreign influences. This Japan-first sentiment was shared by several secret societies that would come to dominate politics and the military during the Pacific War.

These secret societies do not appear to have engaged in the same occult activities as the Nazi aligned Thule Society, but the pulp GM can be forgiven for making the logical leap. Shinto has its own lost relics and wild "alien origin" theories that can be exploited for Indiana Jones-style adventures, and it's easy to imagine the sinisterly-named Gen'yōsha (Dark Ocean Society) or Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society) on the hunt for lost magical magatama or links to the lost continent of Mu.

The most famous lost Shinto relic is the sword Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi (Grass-Cutting Sword), the Japanese equivalent of Excalibur and one of the three Imperial Regalia. The sword was originally discovered in the tail of the hydra-like Yamata-no-Orochi. It was then passed down in the Imperial line to the legendary warrior Yamato Takeru who gave the sword its name when he saved himself from a brushfire by cutting down a swath of grass around him.

Kusanagi was lost during the Battle of Dan-no-ura, a naval battle off the southern tip of Honshu, when the child-Emperor Antoku and his entire court were drowned. While the revered shrine at Atsuta claims to still have the sword in their possession, their assertion does not match the historical record and the sword hasn't been seen in public for centuries. In a pre-WWII setting, Chinese or Western agents in Asia might hear word of the sword's discovery, plunging them into a race against the yakuza aligned Gen'yōsha or the dread Japanese secret po-

lice, the Kempeitai!

SETTING SKETCH: SHADOW OF THE BLACK DRAGON

The 1930s and World War II aren't the only setting for pulp action. A modern Shinto-themed conspiracy thriller could hinge on one of the most controversial theories to rock Japan: that the Imperial family is Korean.

The theory hinges on the story of Empress Regent Jingū, a legendary figure alleged to have ruled in the third century CE. After her husband, the previous Emperor, died, Jingū led an invasion of Korea and then returned home to Japan to give birth to her late husband's posthumous son - three years later. Besides the more obvious theory that her son (the future Emperor Ōjin, later deified as the war god Hachiman) was actually the child of an unknown lover and not of the Imperial line, there are claims that Jingū led a conquest of Japan from Korea rather than the other way around. Relations between Japan and the two Koreas still remain frosty after centuries of Japanese invasions.

In *Shadow of the Black Dragon*, American servicemen in Korea, Korean nationals, or unbiased Japanese citizens find themselves tangled in the webs of the infamous Black Dragon Society - secret survivors of the pro-Imperial WWII faction - who will do anything and kill anyone to preserve Japan's national myth. When an anthropologist claims to have discovered a stele offering new evidence of the "Korean Jingū" theory, the Black Dragon Society dispatches assassins and the player characters get caught in the crossfire.

Science Fiction

It may seem strange to mix a religion intimately tied into natural phenomena with science fiction, but there is precedent. The long-running *Tenchi Muyo!* franchise is suffused with Shinto and ancient, pre-Buddhist Japanese influences. The costuming of the alien Juraians evokes the ancient Yamato people, the cosmic energies and god-like trees that power the sci-fi technology have a distinctly animist spin, and the use of crystals and jewels all echo Shinto symbolism. Indeed, the *Tenchi* series contains one of the few notable kannushi in anime – Masaki Katsuhito (AKA Prince Yoshō of Jurai) – though once again the kannushi is someone's grandfather.

ESOTERIC ORDERS

A few live-action films have also intermixed Shinto influences and space opera. *Message from Space* tells the story of a peaceful, nature-loving people who are attacked by an evil galactic empire. In need of heroes, the elders of the planet send magical tree seeds through the depths of space to find the heroes who will free them. *Yamato Takeru* combines the legends of Susanoo and Yamato Takeru into a Godzilla-infused *mélange* that ends with the hero fighting the legendary monster with a giant mecha.

It is somewhat more difficult to imagine mixing Shinto with the post-human concerns of cyberpunk, but the animist undercurrents of the religion and the apotheosis of the sublime provide a way. What is the difference between a roaring waterfall and the heart of a nuclear reactor? What – spiritually – is more transcendent: the purity of the river or the nuclear fire in the basic building blocks of the universe? If Raiden is the lightning, then is he not present in the electricity that powers a cell phone? The question of where the line is drawn between the man-made and the natural, the mundane and the spiritual, can fuel a cyberpunk Shinto world.

SETTING SKETCH: KAMI IN THE MACHINE

The 0-Mikami AI controls the public services and utilities of Dai-Edo, the mega-city that covers the Kanto Plain. Like any computer program, it has its glitches; and like any computer program, these glitches are exacerbated by user error.

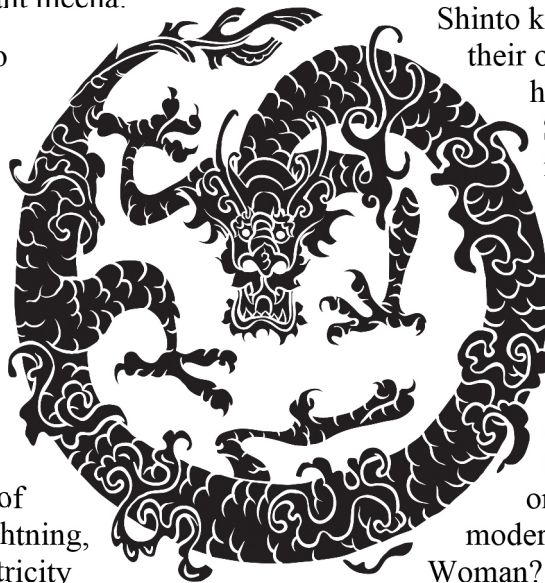
The Hacker Miko and IT Kannushi of Shinto Support are there to help when 0-Mikami curses a user to constantly miss her train. They're there to help when a user's ancestral Memory Ghost keeps blowing the family budget on virtual pachinko. They're there to help when the whole universe seems against you.

When god is in the machine, your best friend is tech support.

Super Heroes

Marvel Comics has already focused a crossover event around Shinto. The 2010 *Chaos War* storyline

featured Marvel's Hercules and Thor battling against the obscure Shinto deity Amatsu Mikaboshi to save the Earth. While Mikaboshi's actual standing in the Shinto pantheon is suspect (the fact that the translation of his name means "morning star" and his absence from early texts suggests he's an interpolation of the Christian Lucifer into Shinto), the precedent nonetheless remains of utilizing the Shinto deities as super-powered beings.



Shinto kami could be superhumans in their own right or be granters of superhuman powers. *Sailor Moon's* Sailor Mars being a miko makes it only a small stretch to imagine a "magical girl" superhero imbued with power by the repentant moon god Tsukiyomi or a whole team incarnating the major figures of the Shinto pantheon. The ancient, pre-Buddhist Japanese placed clay guardian statues in their tombs; perhaps one of these statues awakes in the modern day as a Japanese Wonder Woman?

While the *Savage Worlds Super Powers Companion* assumes a traditional approach to superheroes, there are other ways to interpret the basic trope of "beings with superhuman abilities." One approach to super powers and Shinto would be super-powered fantasy in the style of Mattel's He-Man toys and White Wolf's *Exalted* RPG.

The initial contacts between the Heavenly Kami and Earthly Kami were often fraught with conflict. Imagine the High Plain of Heaven – the abode of the Heavenly Kami – as a floating island hovering above the Japanese. The other islands could be the home of the wild Earthly Kami and the *yōkai* beast-men tribes. Such a campaign could involve combat and negotiation between the two kami clans as they seek a better world for both peoples.

Other possibilities can take on more of the feel of the modern dystopian aesthetic common to manga and American young adult fiction.

SETTING SKETCH: VIRAL GODS

When archaeologists discovered the grave of Himiko – an ancient shaman-queen of Japan mentioned

in the earliest Chinese records of the islands and often equated with the goddess Amaterasu – no one suspected the depraved results that would follow. Unusual properties in the ancient corpse’s DNA were utilized in black ops human cloning experiments to try to produce something inconceivable: a man-made god.

The inhuman properties discovered in Himiko were seeded in the bodies of the children of the country’s most prestigious families. This “god virus” has produced improbable results; the teenaged children are manifesting superhuman powers. “Genetic memories” of former lives have persuaded the traumatized children that they are the incarnations of the Heavenly and Earthly Kami. Barely able to control their adolescent emotions, these Viral Gods now explode with power.

Factions fight for control of the Viral Gods. Some struggle to use their powers to make heaven on Earth, others seek only their own independence, and others still see nothing wrong with brutalizing humanity. As the government of Japan struggles to keep the Viral Gods a secret and reign in their powers, the United States stands by to deploy military force to wipe these uncontrollable superhumans off of the map. Can the Viral Gods save themselves and Japan?

In Conclusion

Exploring real-world cultures can provide revelatory new insights for gaming inspiration. The diversity of the breadth of human culture is more than any GM can hope to fashion from her own experiences. May this exploration of using Shinto in Savage Worlds provide inspiration to many.



Rakim Frost, Creative Writer, Ace Gamer

Rank: Novice

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

Skills: Collaboration d6, Communication d8, Creative Writing d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Role-play d8

Charisma: 0 **Pace** 5 **Parry:** 2 **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Loyal (Minor), Phobia (Minor): Tardiness

Edges: Connections, Investigator, Linguist, Nevers of Steel, Storyteller

Gear: Detailed Character History, Dice, Dictionary, Spiral Laptop, RPG Books, Notepad, Pens, Thesaurus.



Jane Rembrandt, Talented Illustrator, Game Master

Rank: Seasoned

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

Skills: Collaboration d6, Communication d6, Game Mastery, d6, Illustration d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d4, Role-play d8

Charisma: 0 **Pace** 5 **Parry:** 2 **Toughness** 5

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Loyal (Minor), Phobia (Minor): Tardiness

Edges: Alertness, Charismatic, Jack-of-All Trades, Marksman, Inspire, Quick Draw,

Gear: Amazingly Well-Painted Minis, Charcoal Pencils, Dice, Drawing Pad, GM’s Screen, Laptop, RPG Books, Wacom Tablet.

Soul Eater

By Vickey A. Beaver

The knife is a very personal weapon and perhaps the most ubiquitous, appearing in all genres. From the time of stone to the future of plasma weapons, a small blade can take many forms. Easily concealed on the person or hidden in a secret location, knives are simple, unimposing instruments. Perhaps that is why one was chosen to be named Soul Eater.

The lethal blade is nondescript, regardless of setting and genre. A simple rune-like symbol on the pommel and a nearly invisible double-helix along both sides of the blade are the telltale signs that the knife is Soul Eater. It cannot be broken by ordinary methods, only destroyed by divine, magical, or superheated means.

In a low-tech to modern setting, Soul Eater was a lesser god who was punished for betraying a greater god. She once had a different name, but no longer remembers anything except the moment she drained the god's half-brother of life, the excruciating pain of feeling her soul ripped away from her body in the god's wrath, and gnawing hunger satiated only when the blade she is bound to is sunk deeply into the organs of a physical being.

Alternatively, it could be that a magic user bound a demon, angel, or even another magic user to the blade with the same result as previously written: the being has memories of the infraction and wrath and knows only hunger.

In a future or sci-fi setting, Soul Eater is composed of nanobots whose programming was fouled – perhaps by accident, or maybe by design – and a simple-looking knife. The nanos behave as a collective whose only purpose is to feed off the specific energy signature derived from the combination of physical pain and emotional duress caused when the blade is sunk into a living being's organs.

What It Does

Regardless of its origin, the blade captures the soul of the being it is used against. If the body survives, it will be comatose. The only way to get the

soul back is to destroy the knife. If that is not done within two weeks, the soul is utterly destroyed, having been consumed by Soul Eater. For every day the soul is captive, there is an increasing chance that the person would not be right if returned to their vacant body, or any other. See Damage for more information.

In order for the soul to be taken, the blade must be stabbed into the organs of the body at the time of death or Incapacitation. Using Soul Eater to slash muscle will not trap the soul. Stabbing wounds that do not result in immediate fatality or Incapacitation, likewise fail to capture the soul.

Unintended Consequences

The problem with weapons is that they could be used against their owners. Given that Soul Eater does not require any activation and has no allegiance to anyone, it could be used against any target.

Combat is tricky and sometimes friends are victims of stray blows. It's entirely possible to inadvertently use Soul Eater against allies.

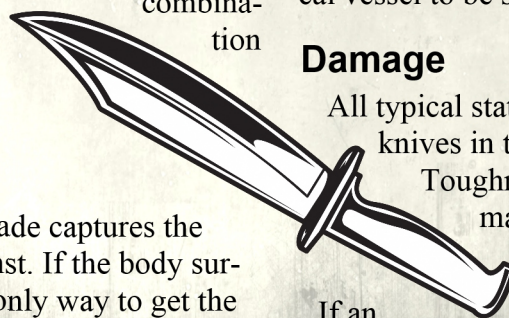
Should someone important to the party fall prey to Soul Eater, surely they will seek to destroy the knife, if their body were to survive. That is not a safe state, and it could be that their body perishes while their allies try to find a way to destroy the weapon.

Mystical energies or those we simply don't understand should not be trifled with. It is perfectly possible that after destroying Soul Eater, the trapped soul could end up in wrong body, perhaps one that's only recently been killed, one that is also comatose, or even another living being's body, causing the physical vessel to be shared.

Damage

All typical stats for Soul Eater are as listed for knives in the Savage Worlds core book, except Toughness. That is 12 and immune to normal means of destruction as previously described.

If an opponent is wounded in any way



by Soul Eater, she must succeed on two Spirit rolls or get a raise on the first one in order to avoid being Shaken.

Those who are rendered Incapacitated by Soul Eater roll Vigor as normal, but become unconscious even if they survive the Vigor roll(s) and regardless of their injured status. They will only awaken if Soul Eater is destroyed within two weeks of the Incapacitating wound and there is a body to inhabit.

Over the course of those two weeks, the knife and the soul are in constant struggle. For every day Soul Eater has hold of the soul, a Spirit check is required. Success means no lasting damage was done to the soul that day. A raise one day gives a +1 to the next day's roll. The outcome of cumulative failures gets worse as the number increases.

Outcome by total of failures:

- 1 – The Mark of Fear
- 2 – Quirk: Won't use a knife, even to eat
- 3 – Quirk: Gets nervous when anyone handles a knife
- 4 – Phobia (Knives), Minor: Becomes Shaken when initially threatened with a knife

- 5 – Cautious
- 6 – Mean
- 7 – Two Instances of The Mark of Fear
- 8 – Phobia (Knives), Major: Panics as per Fright Table when knives are used in combat
- 9 – Delusional, Minor
- 10 – Habit, Major
- 11 – Bloodthirsty
- 12 – Yellow
- 13 – Blind
- 14 – Delusional, Major, as well as #7 and #8

Possible Use as a Scenario Seed

The party can be sent on a quest for the knife, whether they're told the truth about what it is or not.

It could be planted on someone in the party after it's stolen by a thief the authorities are closing in on. When they discover it among their belongings, they have to decide how to proceed.

The party comes across it among other loot. One of them feels the inexplicable urge to take it.

Petrified Egg

By Vickey A. Beaver

Eggs have long held places of honor in various cultures as reliable food sources or ornate symbols of prophecy, fertility, or even immortality. To the roleplayer, they often represent opportunity, danger, or both. Here, the petrified egg isn't necessarily what it seems.

What It Does

In a fantasy setting, it might appear petrified, but indeed be an ancient dragon egg, awaiting the right touch to break open. For horror, it is instead a cursed decorative item, causing the one who takes ownership of it to be driven desperately by carnal desire, twisting the person's mind and body.

Settings focused on the far future or science fiction might have the petrified egg house an alien life form or an artificial intelligence. Pulp action might make it an expensive historical artifact that is coveted by many across the globe.

It could also be somewhat mundane, extraordinary in its appearance, but belonging to a natural creature such as a chicken, ostrich, turtle, or alligator. Those eggs might be truly petrified, or just anomalous in their looks.

Unintended Consequences

Taking the egg could upset an ecological balance or set in motion someone's plan for chaos. Depending upon the actual egg, it could totally change a character's demeanor or being.

Likewise, if it is an item of good fortune, it might bring a village good luck or save it from starvation.

If a life form emerges, such as a dragon, it's possible the egg's caretakers could raise it to be an ally, guard, or pet. All of those situations mean having to figure out how to feed and train it, likely without raising suspicion or inciting fear in the area.

CHARACTER GALLERY

Damage

Most eggs are not going to cause damage just by being in their egg form. Should one be used as a weapon, it would be governed by Savage Worlds' Improvised Weapons rules.

The real danger is what emerges from the egg and in what form. A cursed egg might drop a person's Smarts or Spirit by a die type with every week's passing or cause him to take on new Hindrances. Either would be decided as if the egg has the power, Puppet, and a relative arcane skill at d10.

Otherwise, anything coming out of the egg would have the stats of such a creature from the core rules, your favorite setting guide, or an approximation based on whatever most closely resembles what your imagination concocts.

Possible Use as a Scenario Seed

In a high-tech setting, the party might infiltrate an organization with the goal of planting the egg so it retrieves secret data, allowing them to thwart a nefar-

ious plot. Or they could be hired to figure out how corporate espionage is occurring, eventually discovering the gifted egg is not so benign.

For a modern touch, they could be on the case to track down who stole the prized possession from a wealthy art collector. The egg itself would be hundreds of years old and worth a fortune. They'll be paid handsomely if they retrieve it and even better if they catch the crook, too.

It could be part of a reward when they save a town from some ordeal. Having been in a vault for generations, no one recalls what it does, but it's about all they have to offer for the party's efforts. Eventually, the characters notice that whomever is carrying it isn't quite themselves.

It could be miraculous or magical, duplicating itself and then supplying a town with eggs that will hatch, saving the people from famine, providing the town has feed for the creatures that hatch and that the group can even find the fabled egg.

By Brian Reeves

Three Masters of Action

Whether at the end of the world or the end of life, these three new Heroic characters are ready to take action. Use them as notorious villains, valuable NPCs, or ready-to-play, pre-generated characters; no matter the genre, this motley crew has your needs covered from Sci-Fi to Western to Fantasy, complete with a new Hindrance. Characters were created using *Savage Worlds Deluxe* and *Savage Worlds Fantasy Companion*.

KENT DRAKE

Rank: Veteran (40xp)

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

Skills: Boating d6+2, Driving d10+2, Fighting d6, Notice d6+2, Piloting d8+2, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Tracking d4

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Death Wish, Stubborn, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Ace, Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Quick, Steady Hands

Gear: Canteen, Crossbow (Range 15/30/60, 2d6, AP 2, 1 action to reload), M72 Law (Range 24/48/96,

4d8+2, AP 30, MBT, Heavy Weapon, Snapfire), Mk67 Pineapple (US) (Range 5/10/20, 3d6, MBT) x5, Peacemaker (.45) (Range 12/24/48, 2d6+1, Shots 6, AP 1, Revolver), Sawed-Off DB (12g) (Range 5/10/20, 1-3d6, RoF 1-2, Shots 2, See notes), Bowie knife (Str+d4), \$40.

When the world started to fall apart, Kent was a mechanic working for an oil change and car maintenance chain and living off ramen noodles. Recently divorced, he was pulling extra shifts to help cover his child care payments and crushing debts. Aside from his son, Kevin, Kent's pride and joy was his muscle car, which he worked on in the evenings in the garage attached to his rental home, souping it up until it was shiny and powerful, faster than it had ever been.

CHARACTER GALLERY

Then everything changed. The unrest began, followed by a tanking economy, and by the time things started to turn to riots and looting, Kent was on the verge of bankruptcy. His employer closed and the money dried up.

He started to steal – just a little, just to get by – and using his car, which he dubbed “The Usurper,” to make good his escapes. Police paid him little attention after a while, their efforts needed in the capitol where unrest had turned to violence. Kent began to stockpile what goods he could find. He built a shelter in the desert hidden under the dirt and filled it with food, water, and gasoline, readying himself for the collapse.

When the government toppled, leading to a chain reaction across the world, Kent knew it was time. He found his ex-wife and convinced her to join him in the desert. She agreed, and as the city burned, they all piled into the Usurper and fled for the desert. Already, the looters and robbers had taken to the roads in souped-up cars of their own, terrorizing, killing and stealing everywhere they went.

Things seemed safe in the desert. But one day, when Kent left his family in the hideaway to make a supply run, a band of them spotted his dust cloud. When Kent returned, he found the place scoured of everything valuable, and his wife and son butchered.

Revenge became Kent's life, rage his companion. He sought out those who had taken everything from him and revisited their evil upon them tenfold. When he was done with them, he packed all the loot he could fit in The Usurper and hit the road, crossing the highways of this ravaged countryside to dispense justice wherever it was needed.

The Usurper

More than a car, “The Usurper” has a number of custom modifications, including a Nitrous Oxide booster and a pan that drops caltrops at the push of a button.

Acc/TS: 30/56 **Toughness:** 13 (6) **Crew:** 1 + 3

Notes: Caltrops (2d4 damage, covers 5' x 15' area), Front Blades (+1d6 damage to collision damage), Nitrous Booster (+5 top speed for 10 rounds, must be refilled before reuse), Roll Cage.



THE UNDERTAKER

Rank: Heroic (60xp)

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d4, Intimidation d8+2, Notice d10+2, Repair d4, Shooting d12, Survival d4, Taunt d6+2, Tracking d4

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 5 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Anemic, Elderly, Quirk (Builds a casket and buries those he kills whenever possible).

Edges: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Dead Shot, Improved Dodge, Improved Trademark Weapon (“Widowmaker”), Killer Instinct, Marksman, Quick, Quick Draw, Steady Hands, Strong Willed

Gear: Blanket, Canteen (waterskin), Crowbar, “Widowmaker” Desert Eagle (.50) (Range 15/30/60, 2d8, Shots 7, AP 2, Semi-Auto), Hammer, Horse, Lantern (Provides light in 4” radius), Oil (For lantern; 1 pint), Rope (10”), Saddle, Shovel, Survival knife (Str+d4, Contains supplies that add +1 to Survival

CHARACTER GALLERY



rolls), Trail Rations (5 meals; keeps 1 week), Winchester '76 (.45-.47) (Range 24/48/96, 2d8, Shots 15, AP 2), \$380

The legend of The Undertaker is one of the strangest in the Weird West. Once a moderately successful funeral director in Atlanta, Jeremiah White almost lost his family fortune over a bad gambling habit, much to the displeasure of his wife, Rebekah. He bought some land in the Oregon territory, closed up shop and, using his skill as a coffin-maker, built a wagon sturdy enough to make the long journey. Rebekah was large with child as they set out for their new life.

They never made it. Somewhere in Wyoming they ran into some unsavory men who took a keen interest in their possessions. They killed Rebekah and left Jeremiah for dead, taking everything with them. When he staggered out of the prairie, thin as a rail and delirious, folks at first thought he was the very image of Death itself.

The first town he came to, Powell's Gulch, became his new home, as it was here that he was gradually nursed back to health. He built himself a house and started a new funeral business. Over the years he took shooting lessons from the local sheriff until he became a crack shot.

Jeremiah saw many good years in Powell's Gulch until things took a downward turn with the discovery of silver ore in the nearby hills. This in turn attracted sin and ne'er-do-wells and soon Main Street was drenched in violence as young men were shot over a fistful of coin. Jeremiah's business was booming – he could barely keep up with casket orders – but the town was caught in the vice-like grip of fear.

One day, an outlaw named “Buckshot” Bryce Caufield gunned down the Sheriff in cold blood, declaring himself owner of Powell's Gulch and demanding remuneration. That's when Jeremiah decided he had to act.

Spending all night building eight caskets, he awoke at dawn and went hunting for Buckshot and his men. He killed them all in a brutal gun battle down at the saloon, dragged their bodies into the streets, dumped them in the caskets, and wheeled them out of town to bury them in unmarked graves.

With nothing left for him in town but sour memories, Jeremiah walked off into the prairie earning a living where he could as a bounty hunter, an entertainer in Wild West shows, and as always, by building coffins for sale.

Now an old man, he's still lightning quick, his age deceiving many. He is known for his habit of building a casket for his victims and burying them himself. Folks call him “The Undertaker,” a nickname he wears with pride.

“NAMELESS”

Rank: Seasoned (25xp)

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Stealth d4

Charisma: -2 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 8 **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Hindrances: Mute, Quirk (Doesn't know his own identity), Ugly

Edges: Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Improved Nerves of Steel, Sweep, Trademark Weapon (Spiked Chain)

Gear: Steel Helmet (enclosed) (+3, Covers head), Spiked Chain* (Str+d6; Parry -1, Reach 1, Ignores Shield/Weapon Parry or Cover bonus), Dagger

(Str+d4), Medium Shield (+1 Parry, +2 Armor to ranged shots that hit), \$325

*The spiked chain is a modified flail, adding Reach in exchange for a penalty to Parry.

What becomes of a man who is tortured and tormented, broken on a rack and his tongue ripped from his mouth? A man who has his identity scourged out of him, made to forget everything about his former life, even his own name? A man who has a heavy steel mask and helmet affixed to his head, nailed permanently into his own skull?

For years, “Nameless” dwelt in the blackness of the deepest dungeons, taking his meals and water through the gap in his mask. He could remember nothing, just the pain – only dreamlike echoes of an earlier life of love and joy remained. When at last he thought freedom came for him, he discovered he had only been sold into slavery on a galley, exchanging one set of chains for another. A life of darkness, cold, and isolation had been traded for one of light, heat, and misery. But to him it was a gift, for now among him were other men, joined together in their hatred of the galley Whipmaster, and here he could put his atrophied muscles to labor. He felt his body and soul grow stronger. He put everything into his rowing, knowing that at least here there was a *chance* of escape. When the other men grumbled, or despaired, or tried to get the Whipmaster to kill them to end their suffering, “Nameless” stared straight ahead and bent his body to his task. He came to love his chain.

Then, one day, he was sold again. This time he found himself in the stable of a *lanista*, marked for a life of battle in dusty gladiatorial pits of a huge, decadent city on the edge of the desert. And even this he accepted gratefully, for now he could build his body up to even greater brawn. He could hold a good, solid weapon in his hand, he could gaze upward at free people and at the sun. He didn't love taking lives, but he knew that each enemy that fell brought him closer to his own eventual freedom.

That day finally came when the city, plunged into unrest when a desert warlord blockaded the food caravans. “Nameless” snapped his chain with ease, wrapping it around his *lanista's* neck until the man turned purple, then strode out of the coliseum into the pandemonium overtaking the city. He was finally

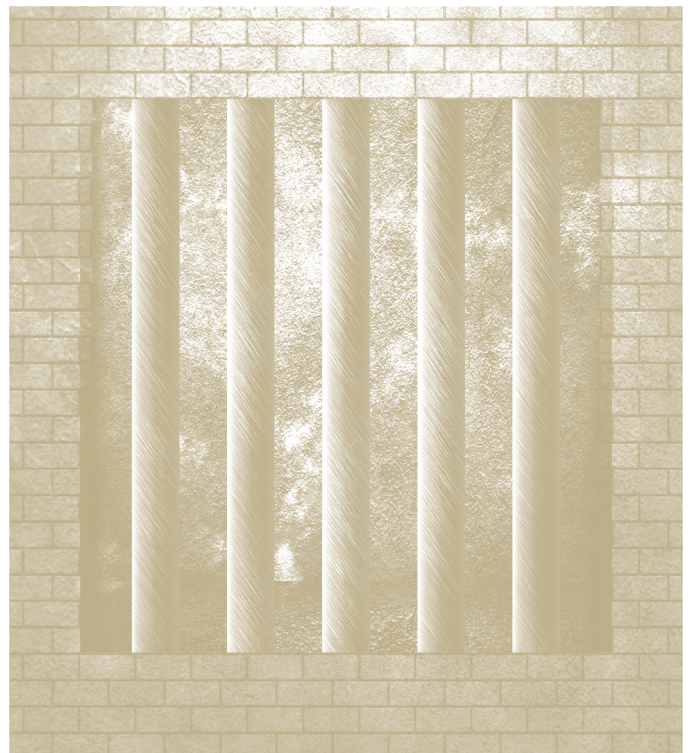
free.

Though he has no answers, only questions, he can now seek those who did this to him, find out *why* they did it, and discover who he used to be. He keeps his old slave chain shackled to his wrist as a permanent reminder, but he's had razor-sharp barbs welded up and down its length, making it his most powerful weapon.

NEW HINDRANCE

Mute (Major)

Whether born without a voice, having suffered a devastating injury to the throat, or simply upholding a profound vow of silence, your hero cannot speak. He can only communicate through gestures and, perhaps, grunts or other guttural sounds, and (if he is literate) through writing. Any attempts to communicate complex ideas or directions verbally automatically fail. In addition, your hero is at -4 to attempts to persuade or command others, and he is incapable of manipulating magic or other arcane energies when the trappings call for vocal components. Some GMs may require the *player* to communicate in the same way the character does, so think carefully before taking this Hindrance. As usual, if it is bought off at a later time (perhaps through surgery or magic healing), you must sacrifice your next Advance.



By Richard "Zadmar" Woolcock

Back from the Dead



The character creation guidelines in *Savage Worlds Deluxe* promote diversity, but also stress that you should play a character you enjoy. The "Background Details" section also encourages players to fill in their own history and background, while a brief rule in the Advancement section entitled "Replacement Characters" explains that if a character dies, its player can create a new character with one fewer advance than the previous character.

By a strict interpretation of the text, this means that if your character dies, it's perfectly within the rules to create a new character that is identical to your old character, except one Advance behind. If you'd originally raised Skills in a non-optimal way (e.g. buying them after character creation, or raising a Skill above its linked Attribute and later raising that Attribute) or you hadn't yet earned any advances, your new character might even be *identical* to your old character. Then you can just explain in your background history how your character was able to return from the dead, and – voilà – you can continue playing the character you enjoy!

In a science fiction setting where the supernatural element isn't appropriate, you could describe your returned character as another version of yourself from an alternate timeline. In a cyberpunk setting, your new character might even be a backup of your former character's personality, downloaded into a cloned body. In a more mundane setting, you could fall back on a simple explanation: if your body wasn't found, your character didn't really die.

For GMs who allow this, the rules give us a solid starting point from which we can extrapolate and expand.

Sometimes They Come Back Wrong

In the horror genre, those who return from the grave are often changed in some way, either physically or mentally. Such an outcome could result from a botched resurrection attempt, a witch's curse, or simply be the price one pays for meddling with dark magic.

If death is worth an Advance, and a Major Hindrance grants a free Advance, then by extension it should be possible to come back from the dead in return for a Major Hindrance (or two Minor Hindrances) rather than at the cost of an Advance. This could represent the antihero who returns from the grave on a quest for revenge (gaining Vengeful or Vow), a formerly kind soul who comes back evil and twisted (gaining Bloodthirsty) or something else entirely. The character could even find themselves being hunted by a physical manifestation of the death they cheated (treated as Enemy)!

Too Tough to Stay Dead

Some heroes and villains refuse to give up, no matter how much of a beating they take, and sometimes not even death can stop them. If the campaign centers on a group of such characters, the GM can simply use the "Heroes Never Die" setting rule.

The Harder to Kill Edge also provides a mechanism for surviving death, granting the character a 50% chance of escaping from any situation that would normally kill them.

Although the flavor text of both the setting rule and the Edge imply that the character somehow survives against the odds, there's no reason why you couldn't apply a "back from the dead" trapping to represent characters that are just *too tough* to stay dead!

Resurrection and Reincarnation

Greater Healing can be used to heal permanent injuries, but you can only make one attempt per injury, and the roll is made at a –4 penalty (which is the mathematical equivalent of requiring a raise on the roll). Most permanent injuries are on par with an Ad-

vance, and we've already established that death *costs* you an Advance, therefore it wouldn't be unreasonable to allow Greater Healing to resurrect someone at full strength if cast with a raise. This might be handled as follows:

Resurrection: You can raise one willing creature from the dead by casting Greater Healing on their corpse. This requires 1d6 hours and 20 Power Points, and there is no modifier to the roll. On a success, the creature is restored to life, but they permanently lose their last Advance and are still Incapacitated (although stable). On a raise, they don't lose their last Advance, but are still Incapacitated.

The regular Healing Power might even be given a trapping of its own, serving as thematic justification for the "Replacement Characters" rule.

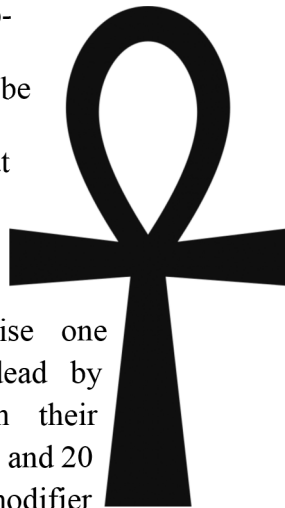
Reincarnation: You can return one willing creature to the wheel of life by casting Healing on their corpse. The recipient creates a new character with one fewer Advance than their former character, and physically manifests within a few days. Although they appear to be a different person, they still retain memories of their former life and will usually have similar mental Attributes, Skills, Edges and Hindrances (depending on how much of their former life they remember).

Improvised Rituals

Even if characters don't have access to the Healing or Greater Healing Powers, the GM could allow them to bring back their friends and allies through other means.

The McGyver Edge allows players to design devices for escaping death-traps, and from there it's not a great stretch to allow them to design devices or rituals for escaping death itself.

Another option would be to treat the ritual as a Dramatic Task, perhaps using the expanded rules for rituals described in the *Horror Companion* or *East Texas University*.



Immortal Races

Many fictional works include races capable of returning from the dead. Perhaps they can only be permanently killed by decapitation, or they could be a race of time-traveling aliens who regenerate with a new physical form when mortally wounded. They could even be a parasitic race who explore the galaxy, taking a new body whenever their previous host is killed.

Such races can be designed as normal, with their immortality described as part of the background text. There's no need to assign their immortality an explicit racial ability cost unless it gives additional benefits beyond those already provided by the "Replacement Characters" rule.

The Curse of Immortality

Many stories explore the concept of immortality as a punishment or curse, with a protagonist who yearns for death (particularly if they have the misfortune of being immortal *without* eternal youth). A player might even treat this concept as a trapping for the Death Wish Hindrance, representing their character's quest for the true death that has eluded them for so long.



Not Quite Alive

Sometimes when a character comes back, they're technically no longer alive. Perhaps they were bitten by a vampire or mauled by a zombie; whatever the reason, they've returned as one of the undead. Although the Undead monstrous ability is not explicitly priced in *Savage Worlds Deluxe*, its components are; it is mechanically the same as Construct (+2) and +2 Toughness (+4), giving it a total racial ability cost of +6.

You can then apply various Hindrances and racial weaknesses to bring the cost down to +0, creating an undead template that can be applied to the character, much like those described in the *Savage Undead* fan supplement.

Note that the value of the Undead monstrous ability will differ if you're using *Science Fiction Com-*



panion or *Super Powers Companion* for your race creation, rather than the guidelines in *Savage Worlds Deluxe*, however

the same principle can be applied.

Edges and Hindrances

The following are some new Edges and Hindrances that GMs might choose to allow in a campaign where immortals walk the land.

Immortal (Weird)

Requirements: Novice

Perhaps you drank from the fountain of youth, ate a golden apple, consumed ambrosia, or discovered the elixir of life. Whatever the reason, you have achieved true immortality: you are immune to aging, poison, and disease.

If killed, you lose one advance, and remove all temporary conditions and permanent injuries (other than those selected during character creation) as your body regenerates itself.

It usually requires a few hours for your body to regenerate after death, and regeneration will not occur in a location where you would immediately die again. For example if your foes wrap you in chains and sink you to the bottom of the ocean, you will remain down there until discovered and freed, or until the chains rust away, and you won't regenerate until brought back to the surface.

Design Note: Despite its flavor text, the Immortal Edge is actually a fairly straightforward combination of a +1 racial ability from *Savage Worlds Deluxe*, a 1 PP Power from the *Super Powers Companion*, and

the interpretation of "Replacement Characters" established earlier within this article.

Curse of Eternity (Minor)

You were cursed with immortality in the distant past, perhaps as punishment for something you did, or maybe you intentionally sought out immortality without considering the long-term consequences.

When killed, you always return, although you still lose an Advance as normal. The "Replacement Characters" rule only applies to you when recreating the same character; if you wish to play a *different* character, you must start over with 0 experience points.

Dark Appetite (Major)

You *were* dead and then returned. But since coming back, normal food no longer sustains you; you now need to feed upon the living in order to maintain your existence. Perhaps you drink blood, eat raw flesh, or consume the souls of those you kill. Whatever form it takes, most find your new appetite horrifying and will shun you or even hunt you down if they ever learn the truth.

This is treated like the (Major) Habit Hindrance, except that Incapacitation leads to death, and you suffer -2 Charisma when dealing with those who discover your secret.

Phylactery (Minor)

You've cheated death by binding your soul to an inanimate object, such as a portrait, gemstone, or box; as long as the object remains intact, you will always return from the dead, although you still lose an Advance as normal. However, should the object ever be found and destroyed, you will immediately die and can never come back.

The object in question is magically resilient, and immune to accidental destruction, typically requiring an intentional direct attack to damage. Like a Wild Card, the phylactery has three wound levels.



By Tanya Beeson

The More You Know

Expanding Knowledge Skills and Language Rules for *Savage Worlds*

With *Savage Worlds*' "Fast! Furious! Fun!" simplicity comes a lot of granularity, especially considering its pulp action focus. As a Game Master I've noticed players prioritizing skills toward Fighting and Shooting or Magic skills, then expanding into other active skills before spending the last drop of their pool of points on a required Knowledge skill.

On the other hand, points spend on Knowledge in specialized fields can feel wasted if that knowledge rarely comes into play. Many systems separate active skills from Knowledge skills and this subsystem allows you to do the same. The method I use in all my home campaigns works for modern, sci-fi, historic, and fantasy.

Changes occur at the "Spend Skill Points" step during character creation. Characters can spend regular skill points on Knowledge skills as they always have. The following rules add an extra pool of points to spend on Knowledge and languages.

Knowledge skills work like other skills in standard *Savage Worlds* campaigns. Language skills have three ranks: Basic, Fluent, and Native.

Explanation of Language Ranks

Basic: You can communicate in this language at a rudimentary level. However, communication can be misinterpreted and speakers have a Charisma penalty.

Fluent: You can speak the language but have a noticeable accent. -2 to Disguise checks if accent is a factor.

Native: You speak the language as though you were born to it, without a trace of accent.

All characters start with a free language or two as required by the campaign. Language: (Racial Language) Native and Language: (Campaign Tongue) Fluent.

In giving the choice, consider character background and difficulty of communicating with other players. Of course, as a GM you can go into any level of detail outlining these languages.

E.g.—Chris starts a fantasy campaign where each of the races available to players has its own language and the campaign is linked by a trade language. Players of his campaign form a variety of standard races and can choose to be native speakers of either their people's racial language or the Trade language. Players can spend Knowledge points to gain the other later on. All except one of Chris' players choose their racial language as Native and then will later spend a Knowledge skill point to become Fluent in the Trade language.

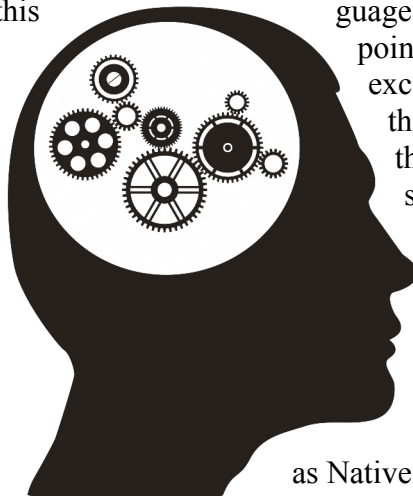
Amy's character—a human wizard named Nayodir—has been raised from a very young age as an apprentice, so she wants to take the secret arcane language of Wizards as Native. Chris agrees but tells Amy that she must also buy the Human language, or alternatively, take the Hindrance Outsider to represent the difficulties of dealing with his own people not having learned the Human language. Amy decides on the latter. She notes down her languages (Arcane: Native, Trade: Fluent) and replaces her minor Hindrance with Outsider.

Knowledge Skills

Characters take a pool of points equivalent to their Smarts die and spend it on Knowledge skill points or language ranks.

½ Point

Gain Basic understanding of a new language.
Gain fluency in a dialect of a language you already know.



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Gain Fluency in a language you know to a Basic level.

Speak a language you know Fluently at a Native level.

1 Point

Learn a new language to Fluent level.

You can buy new Knowledge at d4.

Raise a Knowledge skill one die type (as long as it doesn't go higher than Smarts).

2 Points

Step a Knowledge skill higher than your Smarts.

E.g.—Jane is building her character for Chris' campaign and her character Cassamaria is an Elf rogue. She has allocated a Smarts die of d6 giving her 6 points to spend on Knowledge and languages. She took Elvish as Cassamaria's Native language and the Trade language at Fluent for free. She allocates 1 point to be Fluent in the Human language. With her 5 remaining points she takes Knowledge: Local History d4 (1 pt) and Knowledge: Courty Custom d4 (1 pt), as well as Knowledge: The Trade Houses d6 (1 pt). With her last point she takes Goblin at Basic (½ pt) and raises her Trade language to Native (½ pt).



Using Language Skills

Assume anyone with a language rank of Fluent or above can communicate with each other without needing to roll. Treat as a conversation, only taking into account accents and cultural issues as you would normally.

The problem comes down to a Smarts roll if either of the conversing people have the language at Basic or less.

Speaker is:

Non Speaker	-4*
Basic	-2
Fluent	-1
Native	0

Listener is:

Non Speaker	-4*
Basic	-2
Fluent	-1
Native	0

Subject of Conversation:

Simple	0
Focused	-2
Complex	-4*

*With this big a penalty, the GM has the discretion to allow communication or assume a fail.

Dialects

Dialects are linked Language skills that have similar base forms or may have grown out of each other. Treat any language at Fluent or higher as being able to understand all related languages at Basic.

E.g.—Cityspeak is a street language in a cyberpunk campaign setting. It borrows heavily from Chinese and English and is considered a dialect of both. Any character with English or Chinese is considered to have Cityspeak at Basic level automatically. Gundog, a Street Samurai character, has Cityspeak at Fluent and wants to learn Chinese; these are linked dialects. When he advances, Gundog only needs to advance the language 1 step to become Fluent in Chinese.

Dead or Ancient Languages

If players want to learn an ancient or dead language, they can with the same rules except in the case of communication. Dead languages are often interpreted from texts and people develop their own

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ways of saying things. Academics who use the language should make a Smarts roll for Language skills to interpret, even when speaking at a Fluent level. No dead language can be learned as Native (until an ancient culture with the language is rediscovered and conversed with).

Hindrances

Outsider

Consider the option of limiting anyone with the Outsider Hindrance to Fluent in the common language of the campaign or area.

Thick Accent: (Minor)

You speak any language you know at Fluent or Basic with a thick accent. You cannot take a language other than your native one at Native rank. In stressful situations (GM's call) you fall back on bad speaking habits and are treated as having the language at Basic.

Gestures: (Minor)

You need your hands to talk. You can hold items, but you will find it difficult to get your point across without the use of your hands.

Creepy Speaking Voice (Minor)

At some point, you either gargled lava or took a spear to the throat. Your voice causes you a -2 Charisma penalty while speaking.

Edges

Articulate (Novice, Language at Native rank)

Choose one of your spoken languages; you are educated in that language and gain +2 Charisma while using it. This bonus applies to performance, written forms, and if your opponent is also a Native speaker of the same language, you can use that +2 bonus to Taunt.

Professional: Merchant (Novice, Knowledge: (The market), Spirit d8)

Gain +2 to rolls when dealing with Trade, Persuasion, or money.

Read People (Novice, Smarts d6)

A lot of communication is nonverbal and some people are exceptionally skilled at picking up on those visual cues. This Edge grants a +2 to Persuasion skill rolls and +2 to Notice checks to interpret other characters' intent or mood.

Changes to Existing Skills

This system does not change the current skill system. Knowledge skills can still be bought with regular skill points, however I'd suggest the possibility of adding the following skills:

Craft: (Agility) Creating objects in either a professional or artistic sense. You could use Repair skills for this instead, if you don't want to add many extra skills.

Perform: (Spirit) Any skill that allows a character to inspire or sway a group of people. This links with Persuasion, which could be used. Perform is generally intended to be artistic. E.g.: *Song, Musical Instruments, Dance, Poetry.*

Computer: (Smarts) Most people can use a computer, and that will generally fall under Common Knowledge. This skill is for hackers or technical folk who use computers to a level beyond mere mortals.

Spending Advances on Knowledge Skills

Besides the normal options, Advance can be spent to:

- Buy a new language at Basic.
- Advance 2 languages 1 step.
- Advance 1 language and 1 skill (normal or Knowledge) 1 step.

Knowledge Skills as Character History

Knowledge skills provide a framework for character history, or vice versa, and can assist players in developing more complex, rounded characters.

E.g.—While developing her character, Cassamaria, Jane looks at her Knowledge skills to inform her background. She has also spent some of her skill points on Craft: Tailor and Profession: Merchant.

Knowledge Skills: Courtly Custom d4, Local History d4, Trade Houses d6

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Languages: Elvish (Native), Goblin (Basic), Human (Fluent), Trade (Native)

Cassamaria was raised on the road. Her father, an Elven tailor and merchant, traveled long distances to sell cloth and fashions to various nobles and gentry. Cassamaria often accompanied him on these trips and became adept at the trade herself, while using her spare time to sneak around and make trouble with Grig, the son of one of her father's Goblin assistants. And although they didn't speak it often, Cassamaria picked up a little Goblin speak.

Game Mastering Knowledge and Language

Knowledge skills and Language skills can help a Game Master build a campaign by giving a bit of depth and breadth to the world that the players might not have realized.

Changes in Settings

In fantasy campaigns, use the previously mentioned rules. I often create a list of standard "Lore" skills for a fantasy campaign to give players a general idea of what they can spend those points on. I tend to write accent notes for various cultures, e.g. *Orcs all speak with harsh, barking sentences and use the K sound often.* This informs my non-player character gibberish when speaking to characters in a language they don't understand.

In modern and supers campaigns, you can reduce the number of starting languages to just that of the nation the campaign starts in. Any extra languages are bought with Knowledge skill points. Knowledge skills are purely academic in a modern context, used to inform the action rather than contribute to it.



Sci-fi campaigns have ways around languages with language technology (or viruses or even little fish) that do all the hard work of translating for you, so characters will have a couple more Knowledge points available to them, which is fine.

A note on computers in cyberpunk campaigns: You could treat each operating system as its own language and require an unfamiliar OS to be translated with an active program on your deck (-2 penalty, as this takes time to process in the lightning fast realm of cyberspace).

Modifications of This System

Too Many Points?

If you think there are too many Knowledge skills and languages, consider the following alternatives:
2 + ½ Smarts
or (Smarts + Spirit)/2

Extra Language Levels?

By adding an extra level between Basic and Fluent – Intermediate – you could create an advanced learner of a language; treat like Basic, but make all Smarts rolls for understanding at half penalty.

Culture Skills

Ignore the previous language sections and use the Knowledge: (Specific Culture) skill. This skill also provides the related language (d4 Basic, d6-d8 Fluent, d10+ Native). This streamlines the system for those who don't want to add too much crunch to their Fast Furious Fun.

Difficult or Challenging Languages

Some languages are harder to learn than others. You may reflect this by adjusting the initial point cost of the language during character creation or, during advancement, restrict the advance to once per rank.

Skill Synergy with Knowledge Skills

Sometimes a Knowledge skill is inherently useful to an action being performed. In those cases, it's up to the GM whether the character can perform an assist with their own Knowledge skill. As a GM, I would restrict this to dramatic skill checks.

By Jim Myers

The Past and the Future

Tom stepped out of the Happy Goat Saloon and into the muddy main street of the Bluff. He looked across the way. In just a week, Miguel had turned the abandoned warehouse into a pharmacy and Nerrite Church. He had even managed to attract a large following for his first service the night before.

A light drizzle fell from a thick covering of dark gray clouds. Despite the cold temperature, Tom felt snug in his brand new long johns, gloves, socks, and boots. He took a sip from his newly refilled metal flask and waded through the muck and into Miguel's shop.

The large, olive-skinned man sat at a desk grinding something with a mortar and pestle. He looked up as Tom walked in and smiled, revealing a white collar to accent his black robe. "What can I interest you in?" Abandoning his task, he held up a chapbook of Nerrite gospels in one hand and a bottle of his snake oil in the other.

"Save it," Tom said. "I'm running up to the train station to send some telegraphs. Winnet already gave me a list of parts to order for Wes. Anything you want to add?"

Miguel pulled a piece of paper and a pen out. "How is your brother, anyway?" he asked as he wrote.

Tom shrugged. "The same. He grinds a bit too much when he moves."

Miguel looked up. "I didn't mean physically."

Tom sighed. "He doesn't really talk about it. He says he can see and shear just fine, but he can't really feel or touch anything. Also, he can't smell anything. Come to think of it, he probably couldn't taste anything, either." Tom pulled a newspaper from Cygnus out of his pocket. "They're expanding the draft." He flipped it over. "Bretonnia is still dragging their feet on an alliance." He put the paper on Miguel's desk.

Miguel looked at the paper and slid his list across the desk.

"Just seems like this war is going to go on longer."

Miguel nodded. "Por patria y dios, as they say in Aragon."

Tom pulled out his flask and took a sip. "I'll be at the Jade Emperor if you need me." He took Miguel's list and turned to the door.

Miguel put his hand on Tom's shoulder. "And you know where to find me."

Tom smiled and went back out into the cold drizzle. He looked up to find a steamgear, a three meter tall hunch-backed humanoid machine driven by steam and magic, looming over him. This model was an outdated military piece covered in patches and jury-rigged repairs. It held an antique great sword in one of its over-sized, simian hands.

"What are you doing here, Wes?" Tom said.

The 'gear shrugged.

"Wanted to see the sights?"

The 'gear nodded.

"Just to the telegraph office and back."

The 'gear stared at Tom with the steady bone-white glow in its eye sockets.

"Fine," Tom said. He and Wes trudged through the mud toward the train station and telegraph office near the heart of the valley. A train whistle pierced the air as a trail of smoke and steam rattled towards the station. The train ground to a halt as Tom emerged from the office, scanning a receipt.

"How much was it?" Wes said in a voice that echoed out from the innards of his machinery as they walked.

"Almost a throne," Tom said.

"I hope it's not too much trouble," Wes said.

Tom stopped and looked at Wes. "You're my brother. It is no trouble." He grinned. "I'll just send Miguel and Winnet a bill."

They reached the Jade Emperor Hotel at the base of

STORIES TO INSPIRE

the mountain road that wound its way through the Bluff's terraced streets up the sides of the mountain. They took up their usual place on the porch and watched work crews load ore and smelted metals onto the train. They both took notice, however, when a figure split off from the crowd and began walking up the street towards the hotel.

The stranger was attired much like Tom. His blue coat was newer and in a darker shade with a gold trim rather than red, the tri-corn hat atop his head was newer and adorned by a feathered plume, and his pistol belt added a saber sheathed on the opposite side.

Tom stood as the man drew closer. "Hurley?" he shouted. "Is that you?"

The man raised his hat, revealing a heavily scarred face. His lower jaw was missing, replaced with a complicated autosteel prosthetic with a cleft chin and a slight under bite. "Yes, Corporal," he said, the prosthesis giving his voice a metallic tang.

Heedless of the rain, Tom ran forward and embraced Hurley. Hurley chuckled and returned the embrace.

Tom stepped back. "You made it away from the Obelisk."

Hurley nodded and rubbed his jaw, running a thumb over the crown's seal of a rampant falcon stamped into the metal. "Yes. Missing a bit, but still breathing." He looked Tom over and glanced back at Wes. "It seems you made it out as well." He patted Tom on the back. "Let's get out of the rain before this thing rusts."

They mounted the porch and entered the Inn's common room. Wes peered in after them.

"That's better," Hurley said, sitting at a table close to the large fireplace.

"Hungry?" Tom said.

"Famished."

"Jonah," Tom called to the innkeeper, "A couple of your finest pot pies for me and my old war buddy, here."

The over-weight and bald innkeeper grunted and went into the kitchen.

"Don't worry," Tom said. "He's a pretty good cook. Definitely more edible than army rations, any-

way."

The two chuckled. Several minutes passed in silence. The fire cracked and popped. The rain pattered against the roof and the windows.

"How did you get out?" Tom asked.

"Ravol and I made it to the medical corps. Both armies called retreat that day. No one knows who called it first, so both sides are claiming a victory." Hurley pulled a metal flask like Tom's out of a coat pocket.

"How's Ravol doing?"

Hurley took a drink from the flask. "He got hit by friendly fire as the medical corps moved out. Didn't make it."

Tom pulled out his own flask and drank.

Hurley tried to smile, an expression that looked grim with his prosthetic jaw. "I got a commendation for bravery." He pointed to a set of rank bars on the shoulder of his coat. "And I'm a lieutenant now."

Tom smiled. "Got your own squad now?"

Hurley shook his head. "We're reorganizing. They gave me a post with the Military Police. I'm an investigator."

Tom narrowed his eyes. "Really. What brings you all the way out here to the Bluff?"

Hurley grinned again and pulled a pair of large envelopes out of a burlap satchel. "Dead-Eye Dunne and all those members of Nathum Skull's gang that were sent back east. They all started talking."

"Criminals will say anything to get out of it."

Hurley shrugged. "Only their stories all sounded the same. An AWOL gun mage and a mysterious 'gear had helped catch them. When I looked at the files, I recognized their descriptions. I volunteered to come out here because I thought you were dead."

Tom looked at the envelopes. "Really?"

"Turns out vigilantism and desertion are crimes," Hurley said. "But my commanding officer seems to think that whoever this vigilante is, he's doing a good job of keeping the peace, and someone from the Tephra Company is even vouching for him." Hurley put his hand on the right envelope. "Someone using a gun mage uniform and pistol he pulled off a corpse to build his reputation. I have papers

appointing him the Sheriff of the Bluff.”

Tom nodded. His throat felt very dry.

Hurley put his hand on the other envelope. “But an AWOL soldier with a stolen ‘gear. I have a warrant for his arrest.”

Tom took a gulp from his flask and stowed it. His hand inched towards his pistol. “You’d have to catch him, first.” Tom drew his pistol and leveled it at Hurley’s head. “I was always faster on the draw.”

“Were you?”

Tom felt a pistol barrel pressed into his knee under the table.

Jonah emerged from the kitchen carrying a pair of pies. “You’ll be splitting the check then? Or should I keep these in the oven until you work it out?”

Tom and Hurley stood up and holstered their weapons.

“Sorry,” Tom said. “Keep them warm. We’ll take this outside. I don’t want to have to pay for another mess.”

Hurley nodded to Jonah as they stepped out.

“At least it stopped raining,” Tom said when they were on the porch. He nodded to Wes.

“Another mess?” Hurley said.

Tom nodded. “It’s why the ‘gear usually stays outside now.”

Hurley glanced at Wes and they stepped off the porch and into the street. The noon sun broke through the clouds and bathed the town in bright light. Tom and Hurley squared off about twenty meters from each other.

“You could come quietly,” Hurley said.

Tom shook his head. “I quietly stood by while artillery shells hit civilian targets. I’m done with quiet.”

Hurley shivered. “Not everything is about Bear’s Tooth, Corporal.”

“It isn’t just about Bear’s Tooth, Hurley.”

The two faced each other as the sun beat down. Their hands poised over their guns. Sweat beaded on their foreheads and rolled down. Hurley blinked and twitched.

Tom drew his gun and ran toward the cliffs of the valley. He lined up his shot and fired, but slipped in the mud. The bullet hit the sign over the Jade Emperor Hotel.

Hurley drew his own pistol, slipping as he shifted his stance.

Tom sprinted passed Hurley and towards the station. Hurley followed. Tom ducked behind an empty ticket taker booth as Hurley fired. The shot went low, leaving a hole in the molding at the base of the wall.

Tom leaned out to line up a shot, but Hurley shot first, forcing Tom back into cover.

“Sure it was you that bagged all those bad guys, Corporal?” Hurley said.

Tom peered around the corner and grinned. “I had help.”

“Yeah. They mentioned the ‘gear and the goblin.”

“Did you interview the ones we sent last week?”

“Who?”

A bolt of amber energy flew into a wooden pillar supporting the station’s roof. “Then you haven’t heard about me yet,” Miguel said, winding the crank on his aetheric cannon.

“Be careful, Miguel,” Tom said. He spotted a pebble lying at his feet.

“I know the risks, Tom,” Miguel said. “We’re friends, remember?”

Tom grabbed the pebble.

“An Aragonian?” Hurley questioned. “And a Nerrite. You have strange friends, Corporal.”

Tom tossed the pebble out from behind the ticket booth and ran in the opposite direction. A bullet whizzed by his head as he broke cover, forcing him into a crouch. He went prone in front of a nearby bench.

“You taught me that trick, Corporal.”

Tom snarled and spoke a quick invocation. He fired, his bullet cushioned in a pocket of air. But it went between Hurley’s legs and hit the ground behind him. Tom cursed and scrambled towards a wind shelter when he heard the heavy clomp of metal feet in the street.

STORIES TO INSPIRE

Hurley turned just in time to spot Wes lining up a wide backhand blow. He dove aside, but Wes overreached and slipped, falling onto the wet ground. Miguel took another shot at Hurley, but it flew high and hit the wind shelter Tom was behind.

Hurley grimaced and pushed himself out of the mud, firing at Miguel. With a grunt, Miguel fell backward and onto the ground.

“Damn you, Hurley!” Tom fired again. This one struck the scabbard of Hurley’s saber with a loud clang.

Hurley fired back, punching through the wind screen. Tom felt the bullet whiz past his ear. Tom ran towards the main street of the town to where it began winding up the side of the mountain. Hurley followed.

“Excellent use of the ‘gear, Corporal,” Hurley said. “You should have been a mage pilot.”

“It’s not what you think, Hurley,” Tom said. He stopped and swore. At the intersection stood the sheriff’s office, Miguel’s shop, the Happy Goat Tavern, and an abandoned two-level boarding house. A crowd had gathered outside the tavern. Hurley reached the intersection and the two began circling.

“You’ve only got one shot left, Hurley,” Tom said. “Better make it count.”

Hurley scowled.

Tom glanced at the crowd. “And here, if we miss, we’ll hit civilians. Only, unlike at Bear’s Tooth, we’ll get to see their faces and not just hear the screams.”

Hurley scanned his surroundings.

A goblin, a meter-tall creature with a canine face and covered in white and brown spotted fur, emerged from the crowd brandishing a wrench as long as she was tall. She swung it towards Hurley, but he hopped away and aimed a kick at her. She dodged aside, but dropped her weapon when she slipped in the mud.

“Stay out of it, Winnet,” Tom commanded. He neared a staircase between Miguel’s church and the empty boarding house. Tom grinned and ran up the staircase. Hurley followed.

The two wound their way up the terraced, switch-backed streets of the Bluff, running from alley to

alley and up the many stair cases between the various homes and businesses. At points, Hurley followed Tom directly; other times, he followed a parallel path.

After what felt like an hour, they reached the top of the mountain near the original mine shafts, most of which had been long since tapped out. They faced each other, doubled over and catching their breath. Their pistols were held low, their tired muscles barely able to lift the metal.

“I. Just. Need. To. Know,” Hurley said. “Did? You? Ever? Find? Your? Brother?”

Tom groaned and straightened up. He pulled out his flask and drank several gulps. “Yes. But. It wasn’t what you think.”

Hurley looked at Tom. “I saw his name on the list of casualties.”

Tom nodded. He drank what was left in his flask and let it fall to the ground. “I know. I watched him die.” Tom spoke an invocation and air swirled around the next cartridge in his chamber. He raised his weapon.

“Is that why you deserted?”

Tom shook his head. “Well. Not the only reason.” Hurley gulped. “Why then?”

“I told you,” Tom said. “It’s not what you think.”

At that moment, Wes, with Winnet the goblin mounted on his back and brandishing her over-sized wrench, mounted the trail to the top of the mountain. Miguel followed them soon after, doubled over and gasping for breath. He pulled out a kerchief and wiped the sweat off his head and face.

“Those are loyal friends, Corporal,” Hurley said, holstering his weapon. “You’re too fast for me. I’m out.” He straightened up and pulled out his flask.

“When?” Tom said. “I didn’t hear any shots.”

Hurley took a drink. “I mastered a silencing invocation. Probably similar to that non-lethal invocation you’re using.”

Tom canceled his invocation and holstered his weapon. “Probably. But you reloaded.”

Hurley shrugged. “Still out-numbered. You led me all the way up here to protect those civilians?”

Tom nodded.

“You’ll make a great sheriff.” He took a deep breath. “Let’s go eat those pies.” Hurley drank the rest of his flask.

Tom picked his up off the ground and wiped it down. “And then I’ll show you what to fill that up with before you go home.”

“But first,” Hurley said, clutching his side. “I need to use the latrine.”

Tom clutched his side. “Me, too.”

Hurley slid the papers across the table to Tom and took a last bite of his meat pie. “You’re right. This is pretty good.”

Tom signed the papers with a flourish. “I guess now I’m officially alive.”

Hurley glanced at Miguel, who was eating his own meat pie. “I can’t believe I hit your Nerrofix. I was aiming for your head.”

Miguel shrugged. “The Creator works in mysterious ways.”

Tom pushed the papers back to Hurley, who countersigned them. He handed a large stack back to Tom. “Congratulations, Sheriff. That’s your service contract. It has all your responsibilities and privileges.” He pulled a check out of the satchel. “That’s your first six months pay. Don’t spend it all in one place.”

The train whistled outside.

“Well, I need to go soon.” Hurley stood up and looked at the clay jug. “Is this stuff as good as you say?”

Tom nodded. “Locally brewed mead. Sweet and smooth, but high enough proof you’ll feel it.”

Hurley shrugged. “This’ll require a lot of paper work. Now remember, Corporal, if I hear word that you’re shirking your duties, I’ll come back for you.”

Tom nodded and pushed his own half-eaten pie towards Miguel, who had just about finished his. “I’ll walk you to the train station.”

The two squad mates walked down the streets in silence. People whispered to each other as they passed. When they reached the train, Hurley showed the conductor identification papers tucked into a

leather wallet. The conductor nodded and stepped aside. Hurley turned back after setting one foot in the door. “How are you piloting the ‘gear? Or is it the goblin?”

Tom sighed. “Can’t say. It’s like the Nerrite. Something of a mystery.”

Hurley frowned. “Was it at the battle of the Obelisk, too?”

Tom nodded. “But it isn’t what you think.”

Comprehension dawned on Hurley’s face, and he nodded. “Nerroth and the spirits help us all. If the Arcanum University found out…” He shook his head and looked Tom in the eyes. “They’d try to duplicate it. And I don’t think the cost would be worth it.”

Tom smiled and nodded. “Thanks, Hurley.”

Hurley grinned, but this time his eyes lit up. “No problem, Sheriff.”

Tom glanced up at the corpse of the last Sheriff, John Wyatt, still crucified on a plateau over-looking the Bluff. “Hope I don’t end up like him. Don’t suppose you’ve got a new tin star for me?”

“Sorry,” Hurley said. “You’ll have to get the old one. And that ‘gear squeals when it runs. It needs a new gyrometric samoflange.” Hurley stepped into the train car and the conductor closed the door behind him. The train whistled the all-aboard, and the wheels began to chug and turn.

“Whatever the holy hell that is,” Tom said as the train rounded a bend out of town.



This story illustrates how a character with the Wanted Hindrance can take center stage while comrades aid the action. The chase through the terraced streets of the mining town built up the side of a mountain leaves plenty of room for the GM to throw obstacles in the characters’ way.

Gaining elevation while on the run or in pursuit can easily fatigue those involved in the chase. In the end, characters might decide conversation could be a good option.

By Vickey A. Beaver

The Pride of Thalsen

Thalsen is a village in the land of High Queen Nyyandur, called Alsyn. Despite its small size, it is home to renowned martial training grounds and the birthplace – and resting place – of one of Nyyandur’s most honored warriors.

Plagued by war through the first quarter of her reign some 40 years ago, Her Majesty made an impassioned plea – not a command – that every locale within her borders send a champion to collectively comprise her elite units. So moved by her words were her subjects that many villages sent two, three, and even more. These were not ordinary recruits. They were the best that each place had to offer.

It took eleven more years before HQ Nyyandur could truly proclaim victory, and moreover, peace. In that time, Jasendle of Thalsen, son of Renst the blacksmith and Vernus the apothecary, mastered the art of war at an exceedingly fast rate, leading battles and gaining the high queen’s admiration and respect. Many proclaimed him blessed by the gods. Perhaps he was.

Local lore says his mother taught him swordplay from the moment he could hold something approximating a blade. She had come from a land well beyond the hills of Thalsen and taught Jasendle all her people’s ways. With midnight skin and golden eyes she was at first marked as an Outsider, for her eyes unsettled the people, spurring some to nickname her “The Cat.” In time, she became simply Renst.

The couple exemplified duality. While one was skilled in the art of making and using weapons, the other, Vernus, was a master of creating potions and poultices to alleviate pain and fortify the body. He taught Jasendle everything he could about keeping people and animals alive through the use of the natural world and easing their pain in death.

Amongst Thalsen’s citizens are a cunning politico, a wealthy trades family, and the students of the martial training grounds who double as guards as the village’s security force. Those and other promi-

nent residents are outlined in *Notable Locations and Their NPCs*.

Natural Resources

Thalsen makes full use of the hillsides, fields, lake, and river. About as many people live outside the village proper as those who live in it.

Hillside

The many goats that make their home on the hillside serve as milk animals. Before they can grow to uncontrollable numbers, the herd is thinned, providing meat and skins. Their hair can be used for clothing, rugs, and doll hair, so there is seldom a hurry to put them to slaughter.

Aside of goats, medicinal herbs, berry bushes, and vines adorn the largely rocky terrain. A few hearty flowers thrive there, too.

There are several Thalsen residents who make their homes on the slopes, generally on spots that are relatively flat or recessed. Most of the time, they’ve found a thicket of trees to shelter their hut or cottage.

There are even a few caves in the area. Every once in a while a bear will take up residence, but the relatively timid creatures tend not to get too close to the people nearby.

Fields

There is enough flat, fertile ground in the northwestern region of the village and in the small valley between the lake and the village proper for some grains, root vegetables, and greens. Rye is especially useful as it supplements the goat’s diet in winter and is useful for flour for residents.

The grassland on the eastern side of the river is left open for visitors’ animals to graze and for those who don’t find lodging at the inn to make their encampments.

Lake

A small, unnamed lake sits in the southwestern portion of the village, just outside the martial train-

ing grounds. It provides for frogs, trout, and other creatures. In the deepest of winter, brave and patient citizens pick the center ice to lure trout. A dangerous endeavor, it tends to happen only for midwinter festival. Youth and some merry-filled adults enjoy sliding across the ice after the fishing is closed.

River

Not particularly deep in the narrow stretches as it flows from the north, that section allows for wading at the banks. Just around the first bend, the river deepens, making entrance and egress on foot too tricky to be worth it. The traditional footbridges serve pedestrians while the more recent additions of stone bridges serve parties with wagons, carts, and draft animals.

All four bridges stand high enough above the center of the river to allow vessels to pass. The supports for all of them have created the perfect place for bass to enjoy throughout the summer. Likewise, salmon make their way to Thalsen in the middle of the season.

Just south of the last bridge, the river bends again, pinching it and creating a rapid flow. Talk has been introduced at the council about erecting a mill there. Questions linger about how much use it would be. The bigger question is which kind of mill it would be: a gristmill for the grains grown locally and beyond Thalsen or a carding mill that would rely strictly upon those bringing in wool from outside the village.

At its widest, the river is about 80' across. It's about 12' deep in the center. It be crossed by a confidently swimming horse only at the narrowest stretch by the apothecary, otherwise the bank is too steep to climb.

Notable Locations and Their NPCs

The village proper is home to several families and their businesses. The surrounding hills and the martial training grounds house even more people. When travelers are passing through or coming for Festival Thalsen, an annual endeavor, they take up temporary residence at the inn, in extra rooms in Thalsenian homes, or in pitched tents near the inn. If their business is to do with the training center, they might find some space there in the barracks.

Mayor's Office and Home

Mayor Elyse Routlage has maintained her elected status for three terms and isn't interested in giving it up except for the chance to elevate herself. She has spent the last fifteen years building up Thalsen so that it could receive the many visitors to which it's become accustomed and to profit from the seasonal bounty of the surrounding land. The mayor is a shrewd politician with aspirations of royal favor and wants to ensure her citizens benefit from any she gains.

Her home is relatively modest, doubling as her office. She shares it with her young son and her helpmate, Alexa. When important people visit, it is often in Mayor Routlage's home that they stay. She has invested in fine linens, well-made table settings, and a variety of amenities to make visitors feel honored.

Its location at the river's first bend makes it ideal for accessing fresh water and cooling off in the summer heat. The shallow bank allows guests arriving by water to tie off their vessels right at the corner of the mayor's home.

Home of Nericule Marchand

Nericule Marchand's family home is the first sizeable building anyone coming in from the river sees. Sitting to the north, it enjoys its own private gardens and easy access to the river. He and his wife, Rebeccah, and teenaged twins, Adam and Adrienne, have traveled extensively, learning much about neighboring lands, both in and out of HQ Nyandur's borders.

It's rumored that Nericule hopes to gain his own barony in the future. Exactly how he'd manage that, no one knows, but plenty speculate.

Thirsty Owl Tavern

Known as The Owl by locals, Samwel runs the place, which serves up his wife, Maylen's brews. She's got a curiosity about her, so any given day might bring mead, ale, beer, or even an odd berry wine. When Festival Thalsen goes on, she tends to pick out a few barrels and casks of random beverages from inbound merchants. She's been known to doctor them all, creating some interesting concoctions. Most of them are drinkable.

Samwel's heart is more into food than the time-consuming process of hearty beverages. His goat-

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ale stew is sought after by residents and visitors alike. Coupled with fresh bread from next door, diners have nothing to complain about.

Bakery

Jeffrey the Baker has a well-deserved reputation for managing to make even the most meager of ingredients into something worth the wait. His breads are creative, using nearby herbs and imported spices, and even some of Maylen's creations from time to time.

Fish House

Brandon of the Scales has been a fisher for as long as anyone in Thalsen can remember. Like Renst, he was once an Outsider being slight of stature, having his naturally pale skin deeply tanned, and sporting an unusual silver-grey in his hair. No one can recall ever seeing his braided hair free of the cloth he keeps around his head.

Managing the stock in the lake and the traps on the river, Brandon has more fish stories than one person can stand for more than an hour or two. His teeth might be a bit worn, but his eyes are sharp in his lined face.

His trout, salmon, and occasional other fish might be offered up smoked, salted, pickled, or dried. Given the premium he can get at market, residents tend to catch their own fish in the days leading to the annual event.

The River Bend Inn

The inn has been in the Selta family since its erection 30 years ago when Thalsen could no longer deny it had become a destination for those seeking to honor or study Jasendle. Now, Marybeth and her younger brother, Michael, run it with their spouses and children.

The lodging offers food and board normally. They pay a pair of guards from the training grounds to ensure civility on a regular basis. During festival, when they add strong beverages and tend to those beyond their walls, they quadruple the number.

Apothecary

Jaelin the Apothecary has eyes like her grandmother, making it clear that despite her strangely pale skin, she carries the blood of Renst. She and her mother, Olivian, came to Thalsen to accompany her father's body. Bereft with grief, the pair and his

grandparents consoled each other.

Her maternal grandparents, Elijah and Thelnair, had already perished in the war before her parents ever met. HQ Nyyandur sent Jaelin and Olivian with an honor guard to inter Jasendle the Honorable, Hero of Alsyn, Pride of Thalsen in his home ground.

Being welcomed freely and sharing stories with her in-laws, Jaelin's pregnant mother felt more kinship in Thalsen than in her distant village. Rather than go back, the two stayed where they could start over, but not alone.

Tanner

Chridut the Tanner fashions whatever skins he's brought into all manner of useful object. Some become gloves, belts, or book covers while others become saddles, pouches, or footwear. Even pelts that are torn asunder might find a use in the hands of Chridut.

Butcher

Dianna didn't set out to be a butcher, but it was the one thing she found kept her attention. She's been known to drive a hard bargain when brought exotic creatures, but no one's ever complained about her work. Her father still checks in on her now and again, despite her protests. Secretly, she's just happy he's still out and about after the mishap that crushed his right arm.

Goat Herder

Robesten of the Hills walks the whole of the village's hillside to ensure the goats don't migrate to some other land. He pens them in only when absolutely necessary. The fencing is too much work to want to do when it isn't needed.

His wandering makes him privy to the goings-on of outlying residents, passersby, and Thalsenians traveling the worn paths of the woods and slopes. When he's not working or at his cottage beyond the village proper, he might be found at The Owl.

Land Farmer

The Grant Family farms the land wherever anything of value can grow. Most of the crops they contend with are between the martial training grounds and the stable or on the flats in the northwest section of the village. They have managed to cultivate some hearty plants with shallow roots on the hillside, but those are still rather new and they aren't sure how

they'll be received.

The eight of them live together on the outskirts of Thalsen proper. Their location keeps the food supply somewhat safe from the occasional 100-year flood that doesn't always wait 100 years. It also means their chickens, peacocks and peahens, and such don't cause too much of a disturbance to those a couple miles down the way.

Having a barn for their oxen and horse allows them to house those who want a place to stay, but not at the cost of The River Bend Inn, to get in out of the elements. Sometimes some trade without the market fees accompanies a night's lodging.

Smithy

Oliver the Smith has continued Renst's work even as his sister continues that of Vernus. Never knowing Olivian or Jasendle except through stories, he bears a remarkable resemblance to them both. His expressions are very much like his mother's. His build is much like his father's. His coloring is somewhat paler, but not as pale as his sister's.

Born five months after his sister and mother arrived at Thalsen, he has known no other home. The people who helped him survive his mother's death shortly after his birth are as family to him even 25 years later.

His blades are not yet the quality of Renst's, but they are superior to any found in other towns of similar size and rival many sold in cities. The martial training grounds use few others.

Stable

Keithen manages the stable, which houses up to 16 horses, asses, or oxen at a time. He's also the veterinarian. His need to keep an eye on animals puts him in frequent contact with Jaelin as her grandfather taught her about healing poultices for animals as well as people.

His position puts him and his stable boys in contact with common folk and nobles alike.

Armory

Westin and Thrace have been married for ten years. In that time, the two have meshed their styles to create incredible armor for the training grounds and others who seek them out. They design, create, fit, adjust, and repair most anything from most any material.

The couple take advantage of having a dedicated tanner and blacksmith in close proximity. The four have been known to collaborate on exhibition projects. Tales say they are responsible for some of the region's nobles' most provocative court ensembles.

Martial Training Grounds

Thalsen's approach to training its youth was reasonably well-known at the beginning of HQ Nyyan-dur's reign, but after Jasendle rose to prominence, it was sought after. Even before the war was over, surrounding villages would send their youth who showed promise. The grounds couldn't hold all who wished to enter.

Recruiting wasn't something they were prepared for and they had to decide quickly how to determine admissions. The most efficient way to decide who they would train was to pit the young would-be soldiers against each other in a series of contests.

They tested them for multiple disciplines. Combat consisted of archery, swordplay and axe wielding, knife fighting, throwing axes and knives, improvising weapons, and hand-to-hand fights. Survival tested their ability to swim, climb, forage, address wounds, deal with the elements, and move stealthily. Diplomacy challenged their ability to work together, take orders, give orders, and talk to superiors and others of rank or prestige.

Those tests are still in use, albeit more refined, and form the basis of Festival Thalsen's games. Groundsmanager Yalon is in charge of the school, its grounds, and its students. He works in conjunction with his second, Lestun, and Mayor Routlage to hold festival each year.

Many buildings comprise the grounds. The main hall is where recruits gather for meals and general assembly. It houses Jasendle's sword, forged by his mother, locked in a case on display. Tapestries and paintings show the history of the grounds. The dusky figures in one work perform drills with sword and knife while in another they are in meditation. A third illustration depicts both paler and darker tones as students came from well beyond Thalsen for instruction. Other images show the growth of the grounds from a pair of buildings to what it is now.

The largest is a painting so lifelike it is spooky. It depicts Renst and Vernus each coming forth to present Jasendle with gifts of service. His mother kneels,

Want a tabletop size map of the village shown here? It's now available as Adventure Map Tiles: Greystone Village by Middle Kingdom Exploration & Trading Co.

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offering him a fine sword. His father kneels, offering him a compact physician's kit. At nearly any angle, it looks as though his parents are weeping. Surely, a trick of light.

Scenario Premise

Festival Thalsen is occurring now, which means besides the permanent buildings in the village and abodes in the surrounding hills, there are tents, carts, and wagons nearly everywhere. The security force has its hands full managing the roughly five times more people than normal.

Many go to the training grounds to see the famed Sword of Jasendle. As is custom, during the festival, the public is granted access to the main hall. On the third morning of the two-week festival, the sword is stolen.

HQ Nyyandur is scheduled to make an appearance on the last day. The mayor cannot risk the matter being unsettled before the queen arrives. She and the groundsmaster have informed all those who are part of the guard to stop anyone leaving the village until the matter is resolved.

That doesn't go well, but there is little choice. The party must conduct the investigation while the guards control the greater security, especially now that people are on edge. Soon, they'll point fingers at one another and generally let accusations fly.

Why the Party is There

Festival Thalsen is well-known throughout the land. It draws people from many days away to sell goods, accompany merchants, witness martial train-

ing exhibitions, experience many counties' specialties in one location, and participate in any number of tournament competitions. If it weren't for the hills surrounding the village, there'd be far more people than do attend, and that's no small number.

It could be for any of those reasons that the party has come. Just as likely, they could be traveling by the south-flowing river when they come across many boats, rafts, and similar vessels tied off along the banks. The scene would surely pique their interest since that is atypical.

Alternatively, they could be residents – current or returning. If so, one or more could have a tie to the long-dead hero, Jasendle. Likewise, they could be related to prominent citizens or those of less influential status.

Setting Events in Motion

1. The festival starts. The martial grounds provide the security for the village, as usual, as well as the festival. They have their hands full. The party can participate in games as you see fit.
2. On the third day, the sword is stolen.
3. Mayor Routlage implores the party to help. She offers an unspecified reward, focusing instead on the urgency. Unbeknownst to anyone besides her, Yalon, and Lestun, the high queen is coming on the fourteenth and final day of the Festival Thalsen. The mayor cannot risk the embarrassment this would cause if Her Majesty were to arrive before it is found, nor can she spare the guards to handle it.
4. The party will start at the beginning with the groundsmaster and his crew. There are several rumors they can follow up on.
5. Eventually, they should end up at an abandoned, underground temple. There they'll find traps, the sword, and the thief.
6. They'll have the chance to spare or dispatch the perpetrator. Their actions dictate whether or not they gain something from an unexpected visitor.
7. If they are successful in retrieving the sword, returning it to the mayor results in their being honored in Thalsen and presented to Her Majesty the High Queen Nyyandur of Alsyn.



Tanner

Butcher

Stable

Baker

Tavern

Fish House

Mayor

Marchend Home

Apothecary

Inn

Main Hall

Armory

Martial Training Grounds

Smithy



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Festival Visitors

There are many visitors for Festival Thalsen. There are merchants, their guards, those who wish to participate in the games of skill and chance, people who want to see the sword belonging to the Pride of Thalsen, those seeking adventure, and those seeking fortune via others' purse strings.

Among the merchants are those selling unspun wool, silk and other cloth, garments, jewelry, arms, pottery, spirits, and other specialties.

Additionally, there are a variety of food vendors, from those selling spices, oils, and preserves from distant lands to those selling strange eggs, unusual meat, and fish that can't be found in Thalsen.

Besides those, you have fortune tellers and liaisons to the dead. At least they claim to be.

Rumor Mill

Samwel's heard a couple of sets of patrons say a baron's bastard, Ellis, probably took the sword since he's in town and was accused of thieving before. A table of locals suspected the visiting arms dealer.

The youngest of the Grant Family, Aiden, a six-year-old, mentions a man who climbs their stone fences for hours at a time and plays hide-and-seek with him. The boy doesn't know his name since he never speaks. No one else has seen him. The man has a flame carved into his boot.

The older children are nearly adults and the oldest are adults. They think Aiden is lonely since he has no one to play in the woods with like they did when they were young. Should the subject present itself, they played near the old Temple of Earth. They stopped after an incident with a boy named Seth who tricked them into going into the creepy place.

Robesten has seen someone at dusk going out toward the northern deer path each night since the day before the festival until one night, when the figure looked to be carrying something. Unbeknownst to him, that was the night the mayor ordered the guards to stop anyone from leaving. Incidentally, following the deer path takes you near the old Temple of Earth.

Visitors might think that it's some sort of a hoax put on by the mayor as a means to justify making them spend more by not leaving. Some suspect it's

the martial school behind it.

Locals are quick to surmise a visitor is behind it, but a few look inward. Suggestions range from a wayward youth to an aging citizen looking to make money and set up a leisurely life for the rest of his days. At least one suggests it's just a test to see how well the students from the grounds handle it.

The Truth

They're both right: it is a visitor who was a local once. Seth, Faren and Brice's son, was willful and unrepentant as a child. The couple begged the groundsmaster at the time to take him in, to make something of him. She did, but even with her gifts, there are some qualities which cannot be taught to an unwilling student.

Seth was clever, but deceitful. He didn't care about fairness, using trickery to accomplish his objective. He had a mean streak, too. It was not enough to win a match; he had to humiliate his opponent. Grounds-master Eoyona worked with him for two years before the 14-year-old ran away. That was ten years ago.

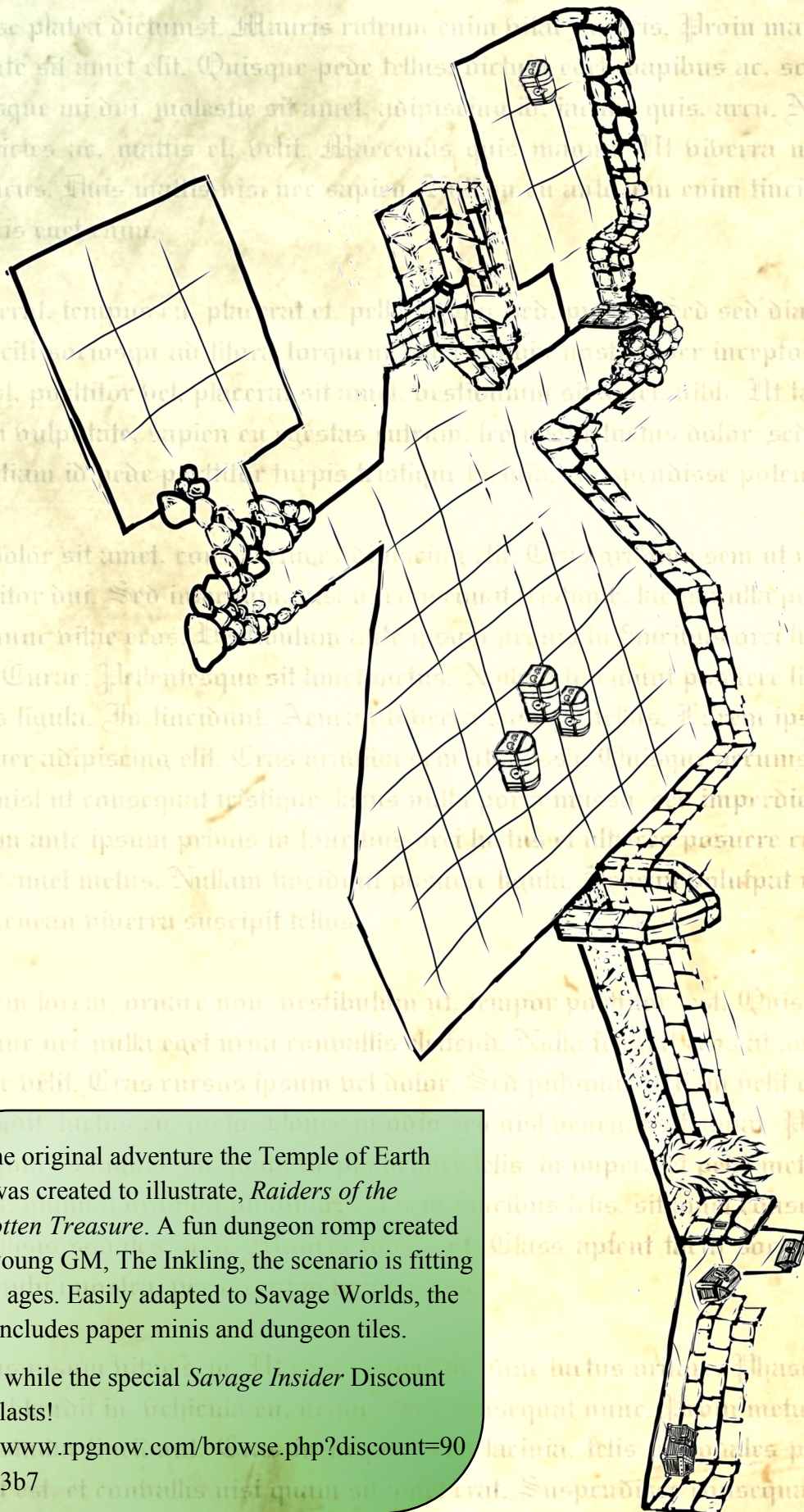
Now a seasoned fighter, he scarcely resembles the boy he was. Going by Malthes, no one who remembered the runaway would have recognized that as his name.

He took the sword in hopes of replicating Jasendle's accomplishments, even though they're not at war. After all, there are always skirmishes, and besides, war could happen if the right people had a reason to fight. Malthes-once-Seth suffers from the Hindrance: Delusional (Major), is an excellent swordsman, and has a knack for setting traps. Otherwise, he's not much beyond average. He has hidden the sword in the abandoned Temple of Earth.

Temple of Earth

It'll take someone with decent Tracking skills to eventually find the temple as it's about half an hour on foot and underground. Seth has laid two or three traps along the unlit, dilapidated halls and as the open the door to get to the middle steps shown on the western side of the map.

This is a place for the GM to get inventive. You can use tripwire traps as outlined in *Savage Insider: Taking Action*, traditional pressure plate traps, or



Get the original adventure the Temple of Earth map was created to illustrate, *Raiders of the Forgotten Treasure*. A fun dungeon romp created by a young GM, The Inkling, the scenario is fitting for all ages. Easily adapted to Savage Worlds, the PDF includes paper minis and dungeon tiles.

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whatever else comes to mind.

The chamber is unlit. There are chests in the main room. They are locked, but not trapped. They have been there for years and contain random items like silver candlestick holders, a few coins, moth-eaten cloth, and decorative perfume bottles.

Seth happens to be in the room hidden beyond the arched corridor on the eastern side of the temple. Debris is evidence of there having once been a door. At some point, he'll come out, realizing the party is there. He'll have the Sword of Jasendle (Str + d8 + 2) in hand. The GM can set Seth's stats to an appropriate level for the party present. If needed, he could have a couple of allies. PCs might realize the wall at the end of the passage is now at a slant.

He's ready to fight, but could be Persuaded to listen should the group attempt dialogue rather than going straight for combat. Whatever happens, the sword should end up near the secret entrance at the end of it.

At that moment, a flame emanates from the sword and they can feel a draft building, creating a vortex. The flames swell and spin like a fiery tornado when the PCs see a face taking shape. In mere seconds, a man steps forward with the symbol of life on one boot and the shape of a flame on the other.

"My rest has been broken. You have come forth to right this wrong. These are stones from the fields

where I played as a child. When your need is most dire, that which is cold shall grant you a measure of health; that which is warm shall summon fire to your weapon for a portion of combat. You need only think of your need to unlock the magic of the stones. They shall work only once."

There is one of each for every PC. The healing stone restores three wounds and requires no Bennie. The fire stone adds d6 of damage in the form of a flame to any weapon, including bare hands, for up to six rounds of combat. The flame will not harm the person using it, but it can cause burns to anyone and anything else.

After any additional conversation, Jasendle will thank them for returning him to his eternal rest and wish them well on their new careers as champions of Alsyn. He may or may not hang around to elaborate on what he means by that.

Hopefully, they solved it before HQ Nyandur made it to the village and managed not to kill Seth. They will be well-received in any event, but better received if they spared the assailant, and allow justice to be administered by Thalsenian law. Mayor Routlage will have a sum of coins for them and present them to Her Majesty. Will this truly be the end, or will you use it for a new beginning?

By Brian Reeves

The World Trembles

A Campaign-Ending Adventure for Legendary Characters

Every campaign has to end sometime. It seems like most peter out ingloriously, but others continue long after the characters have completed their character arcs and have run out of threats to counter. What do you do when an otherwise heroic campaign starts to feel stale and ready for an ending? Destroy the world, of course!

The World Trembles is an extremely dangerous campaign-ending adventure for Legendary characters. It pits them against a crisis so profound that it could quite literally bring about the end of the world as they know it. Their fantasy world –

whatever it happens to be – has been invaded by Ashur, a massive titan from beyond time and space that eats worlds, leaving them barren and dead. Even if they succeed in defeating Ashur and the army of evil that has risen around it, the world will never be the same.

Ashur, Consumer of Worlds

No one knows what Ashur is, or from whence it came. Not even Ashur knows its own origins. As long as it can remember, it has been traveling from world to world, sometimes drifting for millions of



years in the void between stars, sometimes passing through rifts in time and space, but always searching for its next meal.

To describe Ashur as massive is an understatement. No living being, not even the mightiest of dragons, compares to its colossal size. Prone, it could be mistaken for a mountain, but when it rises and walks, leaving craters with each step, it blocks the sun for miles. A small ecosystem has evolved on its body, with fungal forests inhabited by hideous beasts, stinking pits of its tar-like pus, rolling hills that shift with each muscular stride, even steaming caverns under its putrid flesh. Ashur consumes worlds and is a world to itself.

Ashur arrives in the campaign world from afar, drifting in space in a cocoon of rock and ice that looks just like a comet. It will be visible in the sky for thirteen weeks before it makes landfall, and during that time rumors spread like wildfire about what it portends.

It crashes in a colossal fireball that can be seen –

and felt! – across the world. Depending on how far away the characters are from where it lands, they should be subjected to a significant earthquake which will damage structures. Where Ashur comes down, only a burning crater remains; if it fell on a city there remains not a hint of its former existence; if it fell in the wilds, there follows a raging fire that blankets the sky around the world with ash and smoke; and if it fell in the sea, a tsunami capable of wiping out entire coastal regions rolls across the world's oceans.

In cities there will be terror and chaos. Unrest will make for unsafe circumstances in civilized areas, and might even result in attempted coups or people acting on old angers. During this time, there will be a dramatic surge in the number of rats, bugs, and carrion birds. Strange plagues will sweep across the land, leaving the dead choking city streets and making the living superstitious and opportunistic.

For a long time there is nothing more. Wherever Ashur touched down, it resides under boiling water or lava, gradually awakening and preparing itself for another feast. All the low creatures of the world

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immediately take heed to its arrival, however. Orcs creep forth from their caverns and holdfasts; undead rise from their graves and stagger toward its alien mind; rats, insects, and other vermin grow bold and begin to terrorize cities; and even dragons will be drawn out to join in the growing army of faithful. Plagues strike. A gradual sense of unease begins to take root, as if the people of the world know something is wrong but cannot yet understand it.

In the main campaign area, a secretive underground cult makes itself known. Called “The Black Sigil” for the arcane rune it uses as its symbol, the cult is dedicated to the idea that Ashur is more powerful than even the gods, perhaps is *the* god, and they believe their duty is to help it bring about the end times.

Led by Durayn Lothan, a former priest of a good deity, the cult attracts a large number of thieves, assassins, and mercenaries, spreading into other cities faster than its enemies can respond. The Black Sigil sends out teams of cultists to hunt down anyone who might have information that could stop Ashur and to find anything that can help it achieve its goals.

At last, Ashur will awake and rise from its crater. Its army of darkness, larger than any ever seen, will surge forth to bring chaos and war to the lands all around. No force can withstand it, and only the most steel-hearted soldier can help but flee in horror when he sees the towering *thing* thundering toward their ranks.

Weapons bounce off its hide and it pays no heed to the most formidable siege engines ever devised. When it opens its jaws, a black cloud of flying roaches pours forth, eating everything it touches, and then returning the sustenance to Ashur, making it grow even stronger. It truly looks like this is the end of the world. It's a time for heroes. Perhaps the *last* time.

The Threat of Ashur

Because of its immense size, Ashur cannot meaningfully be represented by a stat block, any more than could a mountain. Simply put, weapons on the level known to the characters will never have any effect on it, nor will the most powerful known spells. Other measures will be called for as outlined in the adventure and in the section entitled “The Ritual of Unmaking.”

However, Ashur is not just one entity. It's the home of a wide range of alien and terrible symbionts which live in Ashur's flesh or on its great body. Aggressive and fearsome, they represent an immediate threat to anyone taking on Ashur.

Plague Roaches

Ashur's mouth is enormous but contains no teeth. It doesn't eat in the usual way, instead relying on a gigantic cloud of Plague roaches, thumb-sized flying insects which pour out of its mouth, devour all organic matter for miles, then return to Ashur's great maw where they secrete what they've eaten, keeping a little for themselves. Plague roaches can strip a living animal to bone in less than a minute, though they don't stop at the bone! A swarm of Plague roaches (here representing a relatively small number of them) uses the regular stats for Swarms as described in *Savage Worlds Deluxe*.

Blood Worms and Arcane Ticks

Blood worms are burrowing parasites that feast off Ashur's tissue. In their grub form, they are barely more than a nuisance. Adult Blood worms are vicious monstrosities not to be trifled with.

Arcane ticks are dog-sized parasites that live in folds or between scales on Ashur's flesh. Instead of eating tissue, they drink of the near-endless arcane energy that infuses the titan. They are fiercely territorial, but are also drawn specifically toward magic items or characters who are capable of channeling magical energy.

Many other types of creatures can be found in and on Ashur, far beyond what is described in this adventure. GMs who wish to expand the encounters on Ashur (toward the end of this adventure) are

encouraged to “reskin” existing creatures to give them alien looks and abilities.

Readying for Battle

Game Masters who are interested in playing out the large-scale battles might want to begin this adventure with the characters somehow involved in mustering, leading, or just participating in military actions. While armies clash, they might be tempted to take the fight directly to Ashur. There they will discover their attacks are impotent, and that it will take much more than spells and swords (or even ballistas and trebuchets) to stop it.

Having witnessed the might of Ashur and the devastation it wreaks, the characters will be seeking alternative approaches. The characters are met by an elderly wizard named Acteriad whom, up until recently, curated a collection of ancient scrolls and tomes.

One of the scrolls concerned wizards of long ago, and it had a section about an insane mage named Urileus who claimed there were beings from the farthest reaches of time, immortals that predate even the gods themselves. No one took his ravings seriously.

After a time he vanished, having built a strange, magical home for himself, “The Keep Between Worlds.” There he spent decades researching the most powerful magic, at last devising the *Ritual of Unmaking*, a spell said to be capable of ripping its target from the very fabric of the universe. A group of heroes stormed his magical keep and slew him, foiling his plans, and ever since then the location of his keep has been held a secret. If they can retrieve the scroll, they might be able to locate Urileus' hideaway and retrieve the ritual.

Acteriad's Library

The library is located in a city under siege. Getting into the city will be a challenge. People within the walls are desperate, terrified, and hungry. Waves of looting make the place unsafe. By the time the

characters arrive at the library, it has been partially burned and looted, though much of it remains intact.

The library itself is a former cathedral that had been converted under the orders of a bibliophile king. It is very tall and elegant, with three wings that spread out from the central nave. It is very dark inside as all lanterns have been stolen. Finding the scroll is simply a matter of spending the time going through the stacks in each of the wings until it can be found.

Agents of the Black Sigil have also heard of this scroll and have come to the library to find it. When the characters arrive, Black Sigil cultists are already among the stacks. Unless precautions are taken to use stealth, the cultists will have plenty of time to prepare an ambush, choosing a pinch point between long rows of books. There are 13 cultists (their standard number – one for every week the comet appeared in the sky before landfall).

Once the characters have the scroll, it is easy to decipher the map and follow it to Urileus's tower.

The Keep Between Worlds

Urileus kept a humble tower in windswept hills three days' ride from the capitol. Time has reduced the tower to a sagging tube of crumbling stone, empty inside except for a dangerous spiral staircase leading up to a featureless wall. Require Climbing checks to reach the top of the steps without falling 20 feet to the rocky tower floor.

Once the characters reach the top, they can sense the door leading into the Keep Between Worlds. Anyone who touches the wall can open it. Beyond is a cold, pitch-dark void. A stale wind blows outward, as though a tomb had just been opened. On the other side of the door is a stone platform that seems to be suspended over empty space. The only visible exit is a 10' wide stone walkway that leads into the darkness. On this side, the door is represented by a free-standing archway walled with bricks. As soon as all the characters have passed through the door, it

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will seal once more. It can be reopened once more by touching it.

The Keep Between Worlds is an extradimensional maze, constructed by Urileus using long-forgotten magic. Urileus himself was a genius of his time, adept at creating and solving puzzles, and he crafted his Keep as the ultimate puzzle.

Somewhere in here is the Ritual of Unmaking, and it will require careful thought to find it. If the characters turn immediately around and head back across the same bridge, they will discover the true horror of the maze when they end up somewhere else!

The stone platforms are perfectly round and 40' across with three bridge connections at precise 120° intervals. Carved into the stone at the head of each bridge is a number (in an old runic language) between 0 and 13, representing the platform number to which the bridge connects. In the center of each platform is a large runic number carved into the floor identifying that platform's number.

All platforms have a waist-high stone coping around the perimeter, except where bridges connect. Much of the stone coping is crumbling and unsafe. Platforms 3, 5, 7, 11, and 13 have 30' tall walls instead of coping, and archways at bridge connections, as these platforms comprise Urileus' "living" areas. There is no ambient light unless otherwise noted; this place is *dark* and its immensity swallows light. Sound is similarly affected, as there is precious little here to cause echoes. The bridges are 200' long and only 10' wide, with no coping along the sides, making them extremely hazardous.

The correct path through the maze is the sequence of prime numbers up to 13 (excluding 1). It's possible for clever people to realize this through trial and error. If the characters did some research into Urileus before attempting the maze, they should find reference to that wizard's love for prime numbers, a valuable clue. If the characters are struggling, they will find a clue in Area 6. Perhaps also let them make a Smarts check the second time they arrive at

Area 2, since it is noticeably different than the rest of the maze.

Unfortunately, this Keep is also the final resting place of countless hungry shades, which have circled their extradimensional prison for centuries, seeking revenge on Urileus. They will quickly become aware of the characters' intrusion and begin crawling out of the darkness – emerging from the air all around and the very stones underfoot. The first attack wave will occur as soon as the characters arrive at their third platform. From then on, they will face another onslaught of angry spirits every 10 minutes, or at intervals the GM deems dramatically appropriate. The only locations safe from the shades are Urileus' prime number platforms, which are guarded by protective magic.

Maze Locations

Platform 0: This is the entry platform that contains the portal back to the real world.

Platform 1: There are previous adventurers' skeletal remains here.

Platform 2: Urileus' kept an iron golem as a servant. It currently stands in "ready" mode in this room, and will attack to defend the Keep. (See *Cast of Characters*.) On the floor is an intricate and detailed tile mosaic that depicts the game world.

Platform 3: This platform was used for astronomical research. There is a huge astrolabe, a mosaic of constellations, and a telescope that seemingly points to nothing.

Platform 4: No distinguishing features.

Platform 5: A strange, rotating spheric cage contains a raging Fire elemental, and smaller spheres placed around it glow hot with stored energy. Urileus used this platform to draw heat and energy for his laboratory.

Platform 6: Someone carved the numbers 2, 3, 5, and 7 into the wall here. Old dried blood hints at their fate, but there are no other clues.

Platform 7: This platform once served as a kitchen. Strange, metallic orbs with limbs and wings remain, though the magic which once powered them is gone and they are inert.

Platforms 8 – 10: No distinguishing features.

Platform 11: Urileus used this platform as his bedroom. Elegant tapestries adorn the walls, fine rugs cover the floors, and expensive furniture and a four-poster bed attest to Urileus' lifestyle.

Platform 12: No distinguishing features.

Platform 13: Here is Urileus' library. The walls are lined with towering bookshelves which practically groan under the weight of their contents. On a bizarre-looking plinth rests a huge book entitled *Lux Splendens Procredit et de Origine Caelestes Obscura* – roughly translated, *Shining a Light on the Origins of Obscure Celestials*. The book describes strange beings, more like forces of nature than gods, who were born of elemental chaos in a time before most gods even existed.

These beings exist only to eat, driven by unguessable urges. It offers names like *Trajka*, *Djas*, *Shalkazor*, *Ashur*, *Mirranthramyr*, *Uyewok*, and more, describing them as though they are small mountains upon which sickly life takes root. They are immortal – even more so than the gods, for these beings can even kill and eat the gods of the worlds

they destroy. Nothing can slay them. They must be *unmade* instead, their existence ripped from the very fabric of the universe. On a nearby table, along with Urileus' spellbook, is a scroll holding the Ritual of Unmaking.

The Ritual of Unmaking

As described on Urileus' scroll, the ritual is a complicated spell that takes several minutes to perform. Casting it is a Dramatic Task (*Savage Deluxe*), using Knowledge (Arcana). The spell is too complex to be performed without the scroll itself, so it can't be memorized and performed later.

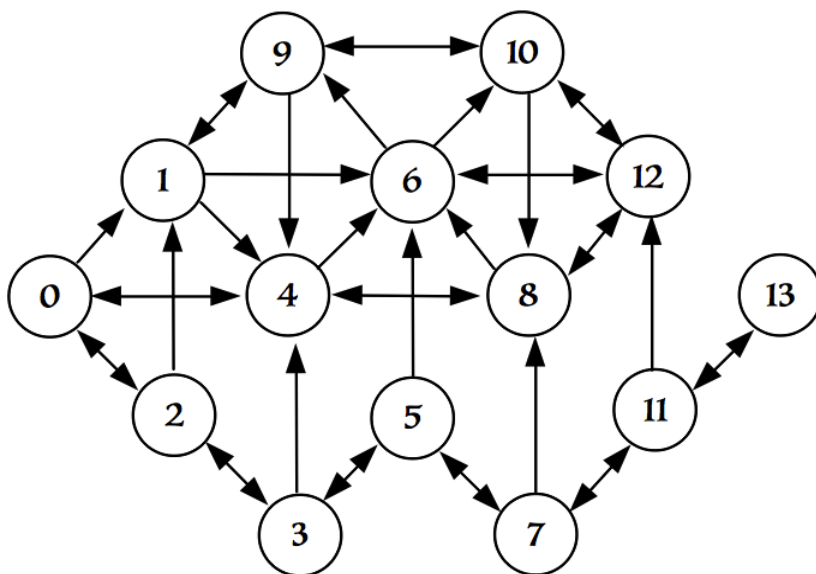
It also requires some paraphernalia: a shard blade of pure iron, specially-prepared paint, and an open flame. Every step of the ritual takes approximately one minute.

The first step involves the careful drawing of a labyrinthine sigil large enough for the caster to stand inside. The second step magically activates the sigil by having the caster speak a long string of syllables in an unknown primordial language spoken only by gods themselves. The third step has the caster heat the iron blade on the open flame while continuing to speak incantations.

Once the blade is white-hot, the fourth step has the caster soak the blade in fresh human blood while chanting – this could be his own or that of another, but it inflicts an automatic Wound to the target. For the final step, the final magical phrase must be spoken *precisely* and the prepared blade plunged into the target to be unmade. In this case, that must be Ashur's beating infernal heart. How the characters will find his heart is the last challenge, and failure will certainly mean the end of the world.

Unmaking Ashur

Armed with the Ritual of Unmaking, the characters must now take the fight directly to Ashur. By this time, another city has fallen and it is striding toward



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the next, its army of orcs and undead rushing ahead to plunder the city before Ashur's plague roaches can devour it.

Characters with access to the *Fly Power* may use it to gain proximity to Ashur, but all other characters will need to climb its vast body. That is easier said than done. While most of the army has gone ahead, Ashur still has a retinue of battle-hardened orcs and Black Sigil cultists close at hand. At the first sign of attack, they will come to Ashur's defense, doing everything they can to keep the characters from reaching their god.

To complicate matters, Ashur is so large that every step causes a localized earthquake: anyone within 100 yards of where his feet come down must make an Agility roll or fall prone. Each of Ashur's feet is 50 yards across. Being caught beneath one is instant death for any creature.

Once the characters get to the legs, they will find ample handholds in Ashur's scaly, porous skin. Climbing the legs while Ashur moves is very hazardous (-2 to Climbing rolls) and is best done with climbing equipment. A fall from this height could prove fatal – they won't reach Ashur's back until they are nearly 500' in the air! One Climbing check is required to gain hold of Ashur's leg; another comes each time the leg being scaled is lifted up and brought back down, which occurs roughly every four minutes and takes one minute to complete. For someone holding on this makes for a wild ride ending in a bone-jarring jolt.

Halfway up Ashur's leg, the characters will find themselves face-to-face with some of the foul symbionts that live on Ashur's body. They will be attacked by wolf-sized Arcane ticks, nasty creatures which live by nursing off Ashur's enchanted blood. Fighting them while hanging on to Ashur will be difficult, indeed (the ticks cannot be shaken off by Ashur's motion).

Once the characters reach Ashur's back, they are treated to a strange and wondrous spectacle. The great rounded mass of Ashur is positively swarming

with life. Ashur's body is nearly a mile across and is a microcosm of terrain.

A spiny ridge runs down the center, where sharp, towering blades of a bone-like substance rise like thin mountains. The area around its shoulders is a vast plain of waving grasses. Upon closer inspection, these are actually hairs, and are the home of thousands of arcane ticks. The rest of its body is covered with a spongy green fungal forest, the "trees" being tall mushrooms festooned with mosses and strands of lichen. The forest floor is alive with living things that scurry through the spongy biomass underfoot. Most of these critters are of no threat to the characters, but more arcane ticks – and worse – dwell here.

Ashur's gait still causes shifting and tremors while the characters are up here, but it is nothing more than a nuisance. As the characters explore, they will encounter some of the terrible creatures that make Ashur their home.

Encounters

1. Alien Mosquito Swarm. Two swarms of multi-legged, blood-sucking insects the size of sparrows attack the characters at the banks of a stinking river. The water comes from rain which has fallen on Ashur's body and formed fetid pools, corrupted by foul algae and home to tiny razor-sharp fish.

2. Spider's Lair. Deeper in the forest the characters will stumble upon an area claimed by five giant fungal spiders. These spiders are similar in every way to other giant spiders, and use the same stat blocks, except they sling acid webs. Victims who make contact with these webs must make a Vigor roll or suffer 1 Fatigue. Any material that comes in contact with the acid is ruined.

3. The Blood Worm. Through a clearing in the fungal trees, the characters can see what appears to be manmade ruins, located in a densely-forested upslope at the base of one of the gigantic spines. But before they can head that direction, the ground shifts and out comes a Blood worm, a horrific parasite that burrows through Ashur's hide, gorging itself on the

titan's ichor. Some 50 feet long, the Blood worm can topple trees just as easily as it can plunge back into Ashur's back. If the characters decide to explore the worm's tunnels, they will find themselves just beneath the temple in the next encounter.

4. The Temple of the Sigil. Through the eons, Ashur has captured the attention and devotion of many evil beings who see in it the manifestation of their belief in chaos, disorder, and destruction. At some point in the distant past, one of these cults actually constructed a temple to their newfound god on Ashur's back, at a spot beneath a central spine.

They used bits of Ashur's bone for the building blocks, giving the temple the appearance of bleached limestone. They tried to cement it together using Ashur's ichor and other adhesives, but time, new fungal growth, and rough motion has caused much of the temple to collapse. Cultists from the Black Sigil, led by Durayn Lothan, have discovered the temple and are attempting to return it to glory.

Thirty cultists are there, working to place blocks back in place and prepare the inner sanctum for their rites of worship. Their progress has been slow due to the alien architecture of the race that originally made this temple. At this point in the reconstruction, the temple is nothing more than a T-shaped series of rooms with low walls entangled by moss and infested with Arcane ticks.

The rooms in the center have been cleared, and the most heavily-guarded chamber contains a huge round hole that leads at an angle down into Ashur's steamy hide. Durayn Lothan is below with five of his elite cult leaders. Those remaining up here will fight to protect the entrance, while they send a runner to alert Durayn Lothan.

6. The Cavity. Blood worms have hollowed out burrows beneath the temple. The tunnels twist and turn, divide and converge, eventually ending inside Ashur's own chest cavity at an enormous cavern. The ground undulates and oozes, knee-deep in most places with a sticky green goo which is home to thousands of blood worm grubs the size of snakes.

Though mostly blind, they can sense life within 10' and begin crawling toward any potential victims.

At the center of the cavity is a mass of gristle and veins connecting the ceiling and floor, looking much like a banyan tree. Deep in the center, pulsating with a loud throb, is a glistening black heart the size a dragon. The heart has a hypnotic pulse that seems to sing of surrender and death. Upon entering this chamber, the characters must make a Spirit check or become Shaken and lie down to die. Victims will not resist attacks by blood worm grubs, cultists, or any other enemy, though every round they are under attack they make attempt a new Spirit roll.

Here is where the Ritual of Unmaking must take place, but first the characters will need to interrupt a completely different ritual! Durayn Lothan is in the midst of a rite that will transform him into an avatar of Ashur, and is even now drinking of Ashur's black blood from a heavy ebon bowl. Five rounds after the characters enter the chamber, he will drop to his knees in agony, then over the next three rounds his body will mutate and grow, his head shriveling and falling off, his limbs lengthening, and his skin turning a rubbery black. When this process is complete, he will attack with newfound wrath, defending Ashur's heart to the death.

When Durayn Lothan is defeated (in whatever form), the characters may begin the Ritual of Unmaking. Ashur's heart cannot move or physically defend itself, though it is just as immortal as Ashur itself, prone only to the Ritual of Unmaking, so any spells or attacks against it have no effect. It has a permanent cloud of negative energy around it, acting as the *Damage Field* power.

If the characters succeed in completing the Ritual of Unmaking, plunging the dagger into Ashur's Heart, a chain reaction will begin. The magic which will write Ashur out of existence begins to spread rapidly through his tissue. Feeling pain and rage for the first time in its life, Ashur will begin to spasm, writhe and twitching, eventually falling prone in a great ground-shattering quake. The characters have a few precious minutes to escape as his tissue begins

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to disintegrate. If the characters cannot get outside and off his body in time, they will fall victim to the same powerful magic, written out of existence alongside their foe.

Reconstruction: Campaign Endings and New Beginnings?

Once Ashur is gone, only a great crater remaining to mark where he fell. The army of orcs, undead, and dragons falls apart in fear and chaos. In the rout, those few human armies remaining can push the enemies back into the dark places of the world to be dealt with another day. For now there must be a time of rebirth and reconstruction, a time when old ways, traditions, and even political orders must either be rebuilt or discarded.

Humanity is looking at the long, difficult process of starting over. Most civilized lands are in turmoil, have experienced total political collapse, were abandoned by their populace, and have become home to raiders and monsters, or were simply devoured by Ashur and its armies and not a scrap of organic matter remains where once kingdoms flourished. Possibly as much as half the known world is destroyed and the rest is in a state of flux and uncertainty.

If the characters survived, they will be lauded as heroes, possibly granted lands and titles. Their names will be written in history books and their likenesses carved in statues. It is a great time to retire... *or* to get to work alongside their fellows, remaking civilization. The armies of darkness might rally at any time, so it is vital to prepare for them, and scholars everywhere are seeking more information on the origins of Ashur, hoping to learn all they can about mysteries beyond current understanding.

The ancient texts held other names, after all. What if Ashur was only the beginning? What if other consumers of worlds are out there, drifting this way, eager to once more bring ruin? Could the world survive another Ashur?

Bestiary

Following are new NPCs and creatures specific to *The World Trembles*.

Alien Mosquito Swarm

Multi-legged, blood-sucking insects the size of sparrows.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10 **Parry:** 4 **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Giant mosquito swarms hit automatically and deal 2d4 damage to everyone in a Medium burst template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.

- **Swarm:** *Parry +2; Area-effect weapons and spells work normally, and the Giant mosquito swarm can be foiled by jumping into water or taking similar shelter.*

Arcane Tick

Almost as large as a dog, these nasty creatures feast on magic itself.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 8 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Chitinous skin

- **Bite:** Str.

- **Grapple:** An Arcane tick may grapple a foe with its powerful jaws with an opposed Strength roll.

- **Arcane Drain:** When an Arcane tick successfully grapples a target with an Arcane Background, the tick drains 1d4 Power Points from that target per round as long as it maintains its grapple. Magic items carried on the target's person cease functioning for 2d6 minutes.

Ω Avatar of Ashur

This giant is made of black, blubbery skin and has gangly limbs which end in razor-sharp claws.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d12+6, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 19 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Black rubbery hide.
- **Claw:** Str+d6, Reach 1.
- **Huge:** Attackers are at +2 to attack rolls against an avatar of Ashur due to its size.
- **Size +7:** Avatars of Ashur stand over 30' tall and weigh over 15,000 pounds.
- **Stomp:** Str+d10. Non-rigid armor (leather, chain) offers no protection against this attack.
- **Sweep:** An avatar of Ashur can attack all adjacent foes at no penalty.

Black Sigil Cultist

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 7 **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6), bow (Range: 12/24/48, damage 2d6)

Blood Worm Grub

These small white grubs are voracious flesh eaters.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4

Pace: 2 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str.
- **Slow:** Though hardy, Blood worm grubs are extremely slow. Movement is counted as an action, so they must suffer MAP if they wish to move and attack in the same round.

• **Size -2:** Blood worm grubs are 3' long but nearly a foot thick.

• **Small:** Anyone attacking a blood worm grub must subtract 2 from his attack rolls.

Ω Blood Worm Adult

Fully grown, these huge burrowing worms are sickly white and stink, but are terrifically strong.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit 10, Strength d12+10, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 22 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Burrow (20'"):** Blood worms can disappear and reappear on the following action anywhere within 20'".
- **Gargantuan:** Due to their size, blood worms suffer +4 to attacks against them. However, their attacks count as heavy weapons, and they add their Size to Strength rolls.
- **Hardy:** Blood worms do not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Size +10:** Full adult Blood worms are 50' long and 10' in diameter.
- **Slam:** Blood worms can crush foes under their bodies by making an opposed Fighting roll vs. the target's Agility. If successful, the target suffers 4d6 damage.

Ω Durayn Lothan

Haggard and lean, Durayn's madness can be seen in his eyes.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d12+2, Fighting d8, Healing d6, Investigation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Riding d4, Stealth d6, Taunt d4, Throwing d4

Charisma: 0 **Pace:** 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Delusional (Minor)

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(Believes Ashur is an actual god who will grant Durayn demigod status once the world is conquered), Vow (Minor) (Help Ashur destroy the world)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Champion, Combat Reflexes, Expert (Faith), Holy/Unholy Warrior, Professional (Faith), Tough as Nails

Powers (25 PP): Blind, Drain Power Points, Puppet, Smite

Gear: Chain Hauberk (long coat) (+2, Covers torso, arms, legs), Crossbow (Range 15/30/60, 2d6, AP 2, 1 action to reload), Flail (Str+d6, Ignores Shield/Weapon Parry or Cover bonus), Plate Arms (vambrace) (+3, Covers arms), Plate Leggings (greaves) (+3, Covers legs), \$8500.

Fungal Spider

These alien-looking spiders are more slender than their terrestrial counterparts but much larger.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d12+2, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 8 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Size +4:** Fungal spiders are as large as a rhino.
- **Large:** Attackers are at +2 to attack rolls against fungal spiders due to their size.
- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Poison (-4):** See the poison rules on *Savage Worlds Deluxe*.
- **Wall Walker:** Can walk on vertical surfaces at Pace 8.
- **Webbing:** Fungal spiders can cast webs from their thorax that are the size of Small Burst Templates as a Shooting roll (range 3/6/12). Anything in the web must break free (Toughness 8). Webbed characters can still fight but all physical actions are at -4.

Iron Golem

Iron golems look much like a metal statue of a man in full plate armor.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12+1

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6

Pace: 6 **Parry:** 6 **Toughness:** 15 (5)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +5:** Magically-hardened iron.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Improved Sweep:** Iron golems may attack all adjacent creatures at no penalty.
- **Size +2:** Iron golems stand over 10' high and weigh 6,000 pounds.

Shades

Similar to ghosts, shades are humanoid slices of flying shadow filled with rage against the living.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d12, Taunt d10, Stealth d12+4

Pace: fly 6 **Parry:** 5 **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Shades are immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks.
- **Fear:** Shades cause Fear checks the first time they are seen.
- **Weakness:** As beings of shadow, shades are particularly vulnerable to light. They will not approach within 10' of a light source, and take double damage from Powers with the light trapping.

By Zach Welhouse with Stats by G'Andy

Escape from the Apocalypse Myceleon, Destroyer and Devourer

When Saving Known Space Isn't about Outrunning the Enemy

When Terrax the Progenitor died, fragments of its quantum-infused body scattered to the farthest reaches of Known Space. Wherever they landed, scientists and bio-scavengers weren't far behind. One quantum-infused fragment landed on the fourth planet of Sector 37-AX-9, known locally as the Prometheus system. A recovery team brought the foreign matter to humanity's outpost on Prometheus IV, the Bayard Arcology. However, before the transhuman cyborgs and their necrotechnician architects could unlock the secrets of the Progenitors, something big took notice.

Not all regions of space are known. Even the greed-fueled Treasure Lords fear to fly into Unknown Space. The unspace is mostly empty; it's the *mostly* that's the problem. What's left out there doesn't have anything to eat, and it's hungry. One of the smaller residents of this abyssal expanse caught Terrax's spicy-sweet quantum scent and followed it through the traceless depths of non-existence. Spacetime put up a fight, but the Apocalypse Myceleon just wanted it more.

The Bayard Arcology fell within hours. Within days, all of Prometheus IV was stripped of life. Now, the Apocalypse Myceleon sits at the center of a trap

that warps galaxies. Uncommon energies have folded space to funnel distant matter into its maw. Continents shake and worlds melt to feed the cosmic destroyer's unrelenting hunger.

After falling into the Apocalypse Myceleon's cosmic trap, the heroes of this story must survive a dizzying maze of spacetime corrupted by the vermin. Finally, they arrive on Prometheus IV at the fortified Bayard Arcology. The Apocalypse Myceleon has hollowed out the former metropolis as its lair. They must travel through the ruins of a fallen civilization while staying up close and personal with the devourer of dead worlds. In the end, they have one final choice: is escape worth any cost, or will they need to take more drastic measures to save Known Space?

The Spiral Cascade

The heroes are in a spaceship flying from one place to another, trying to calm the chaos of the last intergalactic war. Suddenly, they're hit! Lights flicker as the ship is consumed by a previously undetected magnetic anomaly. Strange radiation kills the ship's propulsion. It's in free fall.

The ship is torn through a rapid succession of spacetime fragments. Visitors spend ten seconds on a world of colossal fists carved from shifting bismuth before the unknown force drags them down to the next stop, where language and sky have become interchangeable. Whether it's a handful of worlds to the bottom or a hundred is difficult to tell; the sensual overload taxes even positronic brains.

Everyone must pass a Spirit -2 check or suffer a level of Fatigue from intense world-sickness. Success with a raise means they were able to pull the barest inkling of a pattern from the madness, giving them one extra Benny for the rest of the session.

After a thorough battery of sights, sounds, and smells, the assault ends. Everything is blessedly quiet and still. Below, the Bayard Arcology looms above the clouds like a crippled titan. At its peak, millions of souls must have loved and worked within its shining black walls of its central skytower. De-

Known Space

Known Space is inhabited by eight intergalactic confederations of sentient life. Monolithic warp gates created by the mysterious Progenitors connect distant systems. In the aftermath of the Terrax Contingency, the Eight Confederations are reeling from the death of the last Progenitor.

The Golden Oracles of the Lugrab Dynasty claim cultural heritage from the Sun King of forgotten Earth. The Durandal Fraternite are their secret warriors, who ply the stars and are too clever by half. They secretly funded the research on Prometheus IV, keeping the unstable quantum energy as far from the Lubgrab home world as possible.

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serted palaces and twisted, multistory monuments still perch on its fractal balconies. Patches of the rooftop gardens remain, now grown dark and feral.

The arcology is a hollowed husk. The cataclysmic mandibles of the Devourer of Worlds have cracked the walls and torn into the heavens. Each jaw is like a skyscraper hacked from bloody obsidian, attracting lightning and spurring frequent thunderstorms. The creature's hundreds of arms have tunneled through ceramics, wiring, and pipes to intrude on every one of the mega-structure's 360 stories. Making a dent in that thing's gonna be tough.

The Wreck of the *Morrigan*

The explorers' ship takes enough damage that it'll never fly again. Even if it could be repaired, it would just be plucked out of the sky by the Myceleon. Even in a scrap yard as vast as the badlands surrounding the arcology, there's nothing that can get intrepid heroes off-planet.

A spaceship graveyard seeps from the base of the arcology. The victims of the Spiral Cascade are spread out over kilometers of rusted alloy, shattered ceramic, and destabilized exotic materials. A successful Repair check and one hour of work allows heroes to cobble together appropriate vehicles for exploring the arcology. Why would they want to do that? Josef Jark has the answer.

Josef is the last survivor of the *Morrigan*, a rotting bio-hulk that has been corrupted by proximity to the Myceleon. Its defenses have protected Josef from roving Cassini Anomalies, but soon after he breaches its crustacean walls, he'll be in trouble.

Josef has been living on the flesh and ichor of his corrupted hulk, which has left him with a spot of the Gray Plague. His shipmates, who've spread out into the spaceship graveyard, are further gone. Loud noises (such as cobbling together an appropriate vehicle) and unlicensed scavenging will attract a pair of Gray Plague "survivors" for every PC. They're in the mood for a fight. Josef will fire at them from cover; if he's getting off Prometheus IV or putting an end to his dreams, it's with help.

If the PCs avoid the spaceship graveyard, Josef will eventually pick up on their trail. He's in dire straits and could really use someone to talk to.

The Devourer of Worlds

The Bayard Arcology was the center of civilization on Prometheus IV. Millions of French-speaking citizens prospered here. They were well on their way to conquering death through the use of advanced cybernetics and applied necrology when the Apocalypse Myceleon arrived.

As the outsiders explore the arcology's tunnels, they gain the attention of one of its former residents. Salah Charbonneau was the Durendal Fraternite's head agent at Bayard, and, now, the sole inhabitant whose goals extend beyond hunger and madness. This doesn't mean he can be trusted, just that he's interested in rooting out the Apocalypse Myceleon.

To squash the giant bug, he urges the off-worlders toward the *Orlando*: a half-finished genesis ship with a fully functional terraforming engine. Salah's mostly sure it could suck the Genesis Energies from the Myceleon to heal Prometheus IV, killing the creature in the process. There are just two problems: 1) the Apocalypse Myceleon stores its Genesis Energies in a well-protected gland within its abdomen, and 2) the *Orlando*'s defenses are still active.

The *Orlando* is buried in a high-security bunker two stories beneath the main arcology. Getting there requires traveling through the arcology's original roads, vistas, and lift shafts. Collapsed structures and heaps of smashed aircars block the most direct paths. Reaching the bunker before everything gets worse will probably require travel down new tunnels created by the Myceleon or its spawn.

The Bayard Arcology is so vast that no two away teams will explore it in the same way. Every half hour of exploration, draw a card to determine what sort of danger they run into. Reaching the bunker requires a base time of three hours. The following events reduce this time by a half hour, to a minimum of a half hour: learning about the bunker from an arcology computer (see Necrological Cyborgs), every raise on a Piloting check, and forgoing all attempts at stealth.

♥ **1d4 Cassini Anomalies.** Magnocerotic fields drift through Bayard's tunnels hunting for scraps. They prefer hit-and-run tactics. First the energy beings surround their prey and spend several rounds feeding while their buds spread confusion among the prey.

Next, the fields flee deeper into the arcology to fortified positions.

One pack of rampant energy prefers to lure its prey into an overgrown garden where vision is reduced by half and it counts as difficult ground. A second pack prefers leading its pursuers through a burnt out factory district, past the shattered dome of a necrological power plant. Every half hour, the dome emits deadly radiation in a half-mile radius. Anyone within the eruption must make a Vigor check or gain a level of Fatigue as per Savage Worlds radiation rules.

♦ **2d6 legs of the Apocalypse Myceleon.** The direction the explorers need to travel is blocked by a multitude of building-sized legs. The legs' sensory fibers identify the heroes as potential food: the only difference between a hero and a tasty snack is the presence of life. If the heroes aren't being stealthy, they lie in wait just under the surface, and count as having the Drop on them. On the first round of combat, they burst through the walls and knock structural supports out of the way to get at their divine prey.

The legs tend to converge in areas with space to navigate, such as sports arenas, multi-story shopping malls, and along the arcology's outer walls.

♣ **2d8 Necrological Cyborgs.** The undying children of the arcology are only 2% human, but living this close to the Apocalypse Myceleon can drive anything to madness. They fire without warning on any living target except the Apocalypse Myceleon.

The cyborgs strike from former centers of science and industry. The computer systems in these complexes were protected better than elsewhere in the arcology. A successful Repair check (-4) gets them temporarily running again. These computers contain information about the *Orlando*, including its location in the second basement.

♠ **Inclement Weather.** Gale-force winds blow through an opening in the arcology's surface. Damaged structures topple, vehicles are flung into walls, and pedestrians had better hang on. A successful Agility -2 or Strength -2 check means they avoid being knocked about for 2d6 Damage. Pilots must make Driving or Piloting checks or the vehicle

goes out of control. Anyone who rolls a 1, regardless of the number on the Wild Die, is blown over the edge, falling 10' to the outcropping below. Outracing a falling building to avoid being trapped in a dead end requires fast action. A raise on an Agility -2 check will do it; a success means they take 3d6 Damage from falling debris. Failure results in them being crushed under a section of building doing 4d8 Damage.

Jokers: Corrosive Smog and draw again. The arcology was originally sealed from Prometheus IV's polluted atmosphere. The Apocalypse Myceleon has compromised the seal. A particularly corrosive bank of corrosive fog drifts through the structure, bollixing any delicate maneuvers. Visibility within the cloud is reduced to 6", and the range of all electronic instruments is reduced by half. Everything caught within the cloud suffers **Damage: 2d6 per round** from Acid corrosion.

Unearthing Orlando

Normally, all the doors leading to top-secret, experimental ships are kept locked. Not so with *Orlando*. Its defenders left in such a rush that few of its original defenses remain. That isn't to say it's unprotected. Cyborgs from throughout the arcology have drifted to the *Orlando* over the years. They don't understand why they must protect it, or why they perform holy ablutions in its caustic chemical baths. They know only that it holds the key to their salvation. Naturally, anyone who wants to defile their god-machine is looking to open jihad.

The 220m long genesis ship is currently attended by 24 weaponized parishioners. They've kept its manufacturing facility clear of rot and rust. They've even kept its power cores in working order. The only tune-up the *Orlando*'s missing is the space-travel module. It won't be colonizing far-off planets any time soon, but it'll do just fine at flying down the craw of an over-sized planet-eater. Convincing its defenders is going to be another problem.

The cavernous manufacturing facility is filled with industrial machinery to hide behind. The catwalks that lead to the *Orlando*'s loading ports make ideal ambush points for incautious explorers. Deadly chemical baths, arcing necrotech reactors, and ship-

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board sentry turrets can all add to the fun if everything's been too easy so far.

The *Orlando's* controls are simple enough for anyone who's ever piloted a starship or advanced military hardware. Salah or the ship's onboard computers explain that terraforming planets requires a gargantuan source of refined Genesis Energies. As it happens, draining a gargantuan amount of power from the Apocalypse Myceleon's Genesis Energy gland is the most effective way to kill it.

Riding the Bugpipe

Now comes the fun part. The Genesis Energy gland of the Apocalypse Myceleon is deep inside the ugly, ugly bug. The pilot has to tease the ship down its gullet or carve a hole in the thing's flank. The Apocalypse Myceleon will respond as any creature does to an infection, sending anti-bodies to fight off the offending parasite. Salah will go with the heroes, as he feels it is his *destinée manifeste*.

You should use ten rounds of the Savage Worlds Chase rules to get the *Orlando* from the hangar down to the Apocalypse Myceleon's Genesis Energy gland. If the characters think to use the ship's terraforming suite offensively, they reduce the chase time by half, but drain the ship of all remaining Genesis Energy. They'd better make their next move a good one!

Any critical failure should result in some mishap for the ship's occupants, as the ship is banged around by internal organs, or bounces off of a particularly gruesome bit of intestine. Once the gland is reached the easy part is over. Now they have to fight off the defenders for as long as it takes to drain the Apocalypse Myceleon dry.

A Finger On the Pulse Of the Matter

Turning the *Orlando's* Genesis Siphon on is very simple, and only requires a Smarts -2 or appropriate Knowledge Skill -1. Once the Siphon is turned on...all hell breaks loose. The heroes will feel a distinct feeling of *wrong* as the machine attempts to drain their vital essences. Weathering the storm requires passing a Vigor check. Failure results in a level of Fatigue.

Salah, on the other hand, will instantly vanish. He is a being of pure energy, after all, and the Siphon does not distinguish between the two. A thematically

appropriate scream-tapering-off-to-eternal-nothingness is appropriate here.

The Apocalypse Myceleon, however, will not react well to its guts being drained off by an unfriendly parasite. Wave after wave of anti-body defenses will attempt to destroy the ship. Now it is time for the heroes to do what is best. If they used the terraformer device to take a shortcut, they will face a full five waves of combat. If they did not, then only four waves will assault them, before the deed is done.

Draw a card for each round, to determine what joins the combat fray. The denotation (wave) refers to which wave is attacking the Heroes.

♥ (wave) **d6 Lesser Cassini Anomalies.** These burst out of the grotesque walls of the creature.

♦ (wave) **d4 Parasite Swarms.** Fresh meat!

♣ (wave) **d4 Cassini Anomalies.**

♠ **Gutquake.** The creature's hideous guts roil and quiver, causing the entire area to shake as if in a giant earthquake. A successful Agility -2 or Strength -2 check means they avoid being knocked about for 2d6 Damage.

Pilots must make Driving or Piloting checks or the vehicle goes out of control. Anyone who rolls a 1, regardless of the number on the Wild Die, will take 3d6 Damage. Failure results in them being crushed between two sections of intestinal muscle, causing 4d8 Damage.

Jokers: Corrosive Smog and draw again. The hideous guts of the Apocalypse Myceleon churn and roil, as the combat continues. From now on, there is **Damage:** 2d6 per round from acid flowing through the area. If the second Joker is drawn, the Heroes suffer a -2 to all checks, as the area becomes incredibly dangerous to anything that is not the Apocalypse Myceleon and its antibodies.

Once the device has drawn out the creature's Genesis Energies, it will begin to die. The players should be encouraged to leave in a hurry, else they and the *Orlando* will be destroyed! The antibodies can't harm the ship, so a few good Piloting -1 rolls should see the Heroes free and clear.

My Ship, My Brother

Once the ship is free, the heroes need to decide what to do with the vessel, and what appears to be tens of thousands of units of Genesis Energy. In the middle of the discussion, the *Orlando* will begin to speak...in the voice of Salah! It turns out the process that allowed him to cheat death also allowed him to survive the absorption process and become one with the ship. This leaves the players with a situation.

If the heroes were dismissive, abusive, or otherwise treated Salah with disrespect, he will demand their immediate departure, or even threaten their lives. His driving goal is still the restoration of Prometheus IV, and nothing will stand in his way. Nothing.

If the heroes were good to Salah, then they may be able to convince him to not only help his own planet, but also undo the damage to spacetime. The destruction of the Apocalypse Myceleon has ended the Spiral Cascade, allowing distress signals to reach Known Space. Bolder heroes will be able to forge their own path off-planet using the lost science of the Progenitors.

A successful Smarts -6 check or appropriate Knowledge skill -3 allows the *Orlando*'s pilot to program the ship's computer to perform a number of reality-bending feats; failure means that the terraforming engine kicks in as normal and repairs the damage to Prometheus IV. Salah will do what he can to push his own goals and repair Prometheus IV. If the Heroes work with Salah, then the checks are Smarts -2 or the appropriate Knowledge skill -1. He is the ship, after all.

Manipulating Genesis Energies is a poorly understood process, so the heroes will have to go with their guts on this one. The reality is that a quarter of the stored Genesis Energies is enough to make the planet vaguely livable, a third of the Genesis Energies will improve it to the point of supporting various forms of life and a self-sustaining eco-system. Half the Myceleon's Genesis Energies will transform Prometheus IV into a paradise of teeming life.

If the characters redirect some or all of the Genesis Energies elsewhere then it will have a profound effect. It can open warp gates, rewire existing ones, and seriously mess up existing trade routes. Directing the energy into a planet will revitalize its ecosystem and improve the health of its inhabitants. Firing

it into a dying sun will re-ignite its last embers. With enough time, a concentrated stream of Genesis Energy could even reconstitute the scattered particles of Terrax the Progenitor. This is a time of endings and new beginnings. The sky is no longer the limit.

Rules and Stats

Grey Plague Survivors

Even the survivors of the Grey Plague were changed. They tend to cover themselves in scarves and long jackets to hide the patchy mineral deposits that mar their ashen skin. Most of them wear tinted goggles to protect their albino eyes from the sun's rays.

Closer inspection reveals the survivors' blood has been transformed to black sludge. Its flow is facilitated by growths on their hearts, which resemble proto-chambers. As a result, the survivors possess inhuman metabolisms. They can survive on a diet of garbage, and even the strongest poisons and diseases leave them unharmed.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Notice d4, Shooting d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d8

Charisma -2 Pace 6 Parry 6 (1) Toughness 6

Hindrances: Habit (Eating living flesh), Ugly

Edges: Berserk, Frenzy

Gear: Scrap Bayonet – fixed to blaster (**Damage:** Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands), blaster (**Range:** 10/20/40, **Damage:** 2d10)

Special Abilities

- *Plague Victim:* Has become immune to all poisons and diseases and is able to derive adequate sustenance from eating garbage and waste.

Josef Jark, Spacemad Dreamer

Before he was drafted for the Terrax Contingency, Josef was a hydroponic farmer and a costume designer. Neither career prepared him for the life of a space marine. He's usually a reserved, solemn fellow, but recent events have left him feeling weightless and disconnected. Even without the changes of war and the Grey Plague, he's been having dreams. Terrible dreams of other worlds.

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Josef's dreams are about planets and technology that he doesn't have the language to describe. He sees a great whirlpool that devours islands, continents, stars. There are eyes at the center, and claws. Too many to blind, too many to break. This evil must be burned, but what fire is hot enough to burn a watery vortex? He has a suspicion, but only shares it with those who he trusts.

He's seen the Orlando in its hanger beneath the Bayard Arcology. He doesn't know where it is, only that it's down. It's a seed buried in the heart of a mountain. Once it's planted in fertile ground, then it can bloom. Unlike the seeds he knows, which are of the earth, this is a seed of fire: its blossom is a great tree of flame that will burn away the corruption of the land.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Investigation d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Piloting d4, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d6, Swimming d4

Charisma +2 Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5

Hindrances: Delusional (Minor)

Edges: Charismatic, Common Bond

Gear: Whatever he can scavenge, blaster
(**Range:** 10/20/40, **Damage:** 2d10)



Salah Charbonneau, Free-Floating Genesis Energies

In his livelier days, Salah was the Durendal Fraternite's head agent at the Bayard Arcology. Under his direction, the arcology began building a genesis ship to escape their dying world. The ship was never finished, but its terraforming engine—the one surefire chance to squash the Apocalypse Myceleon—is fully operational.

Because of necrological soul implants he received before his death, Salah exists as a cloud of ambient Genesis Energies. He's able to manifest near strong sources of life, pulling together like battling fireflies until he becomes whole.

Salah's sole goal is to destroy the Apocalypse Myceleon and use its Genesis Energies to restore Prometheus IV. In time, its role in the Durendal Fraternite's greater plan could even be salvaged. Anyone with different ideas is just a tool to be used. Salah isn't heartless, but he knows what needs to be

done.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Computers) d8, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Piloting d6, Repair d4, Taunt d6

Charisma 0 Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 6

Hindrances: Stubborn, Vow (Destroy the Myceleon and restore Prometheus IV)

Edges: Brave, Command, Improved Level Headed, Linguist

Special Abilities

- *Ambient Genesis Energies:* Salah has been reduced to a living memory. He can make a Sprit check at -2 to temporarily pull himself back to life.
- *Manifest:* Salah needs to manifest to interact with the world, however when not manifested he exists as background radiation. Once manifested he can remain so for 1 hour after which he takes one level of Fatigue.



Cassini Anomalies

The spawn of the Apocalypse Myceleon were created when matter from deep Unknown Space comes in contact with common matter. They have no form of their own, stealing pieces of whatever they meet and adding it on to their serpentine bulk. The process is, most often, fatal to its contributors.

Cassini Anomalies reproduce via explosive buds. After absorbing vital life energy, the energy field erupts with 1d4 copies. The new anomalies resemble whatever form their host took, filtered through an institutionalized zoologist's last notes. This unstable matter has extra orifices for sucking and oozing, eyes where one would think eyes to be quite painful, and chitinous tentacles like nothing else.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Tracking d6

Charisma - Pace 10 Parry 6 Toughness 12

Edges: Quick

Special Abilities

- *Crush*: If impeded or attacked the field will attempt to crush the distraction so it can return to hunting. **Damage**: Str + d8.
- *Grab*: Its standard form of attack is to grapple its victim. Once Grappled in addition to doing Strength damage to its victim it also provokes a Vigor check at -2. Failure results in a level of Fatigue. After absorbing two levels of Fatigue, the Cassini Anomaly produces 1d4 Lesser Cassini Anomalies.
- *Life Sense*: The Anomaly can see all sources of life within 80' through obstructions. In combat will attack the liveliest targets first.
- *Size +6*: Cassini Anomalies are large creatures and attacks against them gain a +2 to hit.
- *Limited Movement*: Being part of a greater whole limits the movement of the legs somewhat giving all attacks against them +2 to hit.
- *Size +7*: The legs are large parts of the creature and as such attacks against them gain +2 to hit. With their limited movement this increases the bonus to hit them to +4.

Bayard Arcology Cyborgs

You know what they say about people only using 10% of their brains? It's a myth perpetuated to hide the real truth: nobody uses more than 10% of their soul. The necrotechnicians of Bayard built their entire scientific paradigm out of processing and re-optimizing the "junk 90%." The cyborgs were their most deadly result.

These ceramic humanoids traded their flesh and their spirit away piece by piece. Miniscule portions of both remain, of which they are quite proud. Even when the Apocalypse Myceleon corrupted their organics, the cyborgs were happy. They were insane, but human where it counts: trace elements in the spine and brain.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Driving d4, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Tactics) d6, Notice d6, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6

Charisma -4 Pace 6 Parry 5 (3) Toughness 10 (4)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Ambidextrous, Two-Fisted

Gear: Security armor (+4, all locations), wrist blades (**Damage**: Str + d6, AP 2), Promethean energy rifle (**Range**: 12/24/48, **Damage**: 2d8, AP 2, RoF 3, Auto), tac grenade (**Range**: 5/10/20, **Damage**: 3d6, MBT)

Special Abilities

- *Reprogram*: A successful Repair -4 or Healing -6 roll on an unconscious cyborg will remove the last remaining human components. From there a Repair -4 or Knowledge (computers) -2 check can be used to reprogram it as a mindless robot.

Parasite Swarm

The Myceleon has many parasites that live and thrive within its body. If they sense their host is under attack,

Lesser Cassini Anomalies

Within six hours, the spawn will develop into fully fledged anomalies.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Tracking d6

Charisma - Pace 8 Parry 6 Toughness 9

Special Abilities

- *Crush*: If impeded or attacked the field will attempt to crush the distraction so it can return to hunting. **Damage**: Str + d8
- *Grab*: Its standard form of attack is to grapple its victim. Once Grappled it deals Strength damage to its victim.
- *Life Sense*: The Anomaly can see all sources of life within 80' through obstructions. In combat will attack the liveliest targets first.

Legs of the Apocalypse Myceleon

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Charisma - Pace 12 Parry 6 Toughness 17(4)

Special Abilities

- *Carapace*: The legs are covered in a chitinous carapace that protects them from damage, granting it +4 armor to all locations

CONVENTION CONNECTION

they will converge on the intruders. They attack in a roiling mass of tiny creatures that uses its acidic slime to dissolve anything that threatens them.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d10, Notice d4, Stealth d4, Tracking d6

Charisma - Pace 6 Parry 2 Toughness 7

Special Abilities

- *Corrode:* The acidic secretions of the parasites starts to breakdown anything that it comes into

contact with that isn't the Myceleon. Anyone covered by the template takes 2d6 acid damage every round and 2d4 damage the round after they leave the template. Three consecutive rounds of imparting damage, reduces that location's armor rating by one until it is repaired.

- *Swarm:* It covers an area equal to the MBT. Because it is an ooze made of thousands of tiny creatures, cutting and piercing weapons have no real effect on it. Characters can inflict Strength damage each round by stomping on the swarm.

Weakness: Anything alkaline based does 3d6 damage, or if it's already an attack, it does double damage.

Convention Connection April - July 2015

Assembled by Robert L. and Vickey A. Beaver

Descriptions are as described on event websites and were accurate as of this printing. Conventions are listed alphabetically by state and then in chronological date order. Events with *[SW]* are those where Savage Worlds games are expected.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA

SPRING MINICON – WWW.POLYCON.ORG
04/25/15, San Luis Obispo

A smaller version of PolyCon, this convention provides the gaming community with a place to gather to enjoy gaming and fun. It is presented by students and alumni of California Polytechnic State University.

GAMEX – WWW.STRATEGICON.NET
05/22–05/25/15, Los Angeles

The conventions offer the chance to play, watch and buy a variety of board games, card games, miniatures, roleplaying, collectables, and computer games.

KUBLACON – WWW.KUBLACON.COM *[SW]*
05/22–05/25/15, Burlingame

KublaCon is the West Coast's largest gaming convention, with over 72 hours of non-stop gaming

FUN! Experience a huge choice of games from board games, to roleplaying, to special events of all sorts.

CON DE MAYO – WWW.POLYCON.ORG
06/19–06/21/15, San Luis Obispo

PolyCon is the premiere gaming convention of the Central Coast of California. Since 1983, we've provided the gaming community with a place to gather to enjoy gaming and fun.

POLYCON – WWW.POLYCON.ORG
06/19–06/21/15, San Luis Obispo

As usual you will have our excellent three round Pathfinder tournament, our War Hammer Fantasy and 40K tournaments, and our Warmachine Tournament. Our complementary Saturday BBQ is still on the menu to satisfy your hunger cravings. RPGA will once again be back with modules as will Magic: the Gathering tournaments. And to no one's surprise, our gaming pit will be stacked with board and card games!

SACRAMENTO COMIC CON –
WWW.WIZARDWORLD.COM/WIZCON.HTML
06/19–06/21/15, Sacramento

Join fellow fans as they converge on Sacramento to celebrate the best in pop culture: Movies, Comics, Toys, Video Gaming, Games, TV, Graphic Novels, Horror, Wrestling, MMA, Original Art, Collectibles,

CONVENTION CONNECTION

Anime, Manga & More! Sacramento Comic Con is brought to you by the group who produces the most widely attended Comic Con tour!

CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICON – WWW.CONNECTICON.ORG
07/09–07/12/15, Hartford

ConnectiCon is a membership-based organization, run by a very dedicated volunteer staff. ConnectiCon is New England's ONLY massively, multi-genre, pop culture convention. The convention's focus is on all things pop culture and does every genre of pop culture in as big a way as possible. The event attracts over 10,000 people to the Hartford area annually, and plans to expand to other venues in downtown Hartford.

FLORIDA

RECON - WWW.HMGS-SOUTH.COM
04/23–04/26/15, Orlando

Over 100 games from experienced game masters: some of the best historical gaming around, historical miniatures gaming & tabletop games of all kinds.

SALTY BACON CON – [HTTP://SALTYBAYCON.COM](http://SALTYBAYCON.COM)
06/06–06/08/15, Tampa

Salty Bay Con is a convention for gamers, organized by gamers. This includes tabletop gamers, LARPer, fans of CCGs and board games, and war gamers too!

FLORIDASUPERCON –
WWW.FLORIDASUPERCON.COM
06/25–06/28/15, Miami

South Florida's Comic Book, Anime, Animation, Video Game, Fantasy, Sci-Fi and Pop Culture is four days of fun featuring celebrity guests, comic book creators, voice actors, industry guests, cosplayers, artists, writers, panels, Q&A's, films & shorts, costume & cosplay contests, vendors, parties, anime, workshops, video gaming, and more!

ILLINOIS

DIECON 12 – [HTTP://DIECON.COM](http://DIECON.COM)
06/19–06/21/15, Collinsville

Board Games, RolePlaying Games (RPGs),

Collectable Card Games (CCGs) and Miniatures Games. With over 100 different games being played during the three days of our convention, you're sure to find something you like.

INDIANA

WHO'S YER CON – WWW.WHOSYERGAMERS.ORG
04/17–04/19/15, Indianapolis

Who's Yer Gamers has been promoting hobby gaming in Indiana since 2008. Wherever there are Hoosiers without wood for sheep, or a dragon to slay, we'll be there. We will now have over 30,000 square feet of gaming space available, and look forward to giving our attendees even more of what they love about WYC!

GEN CON – WWW.GENCON.COM *[SW]*
07/30–08/02/15, Indianapolis

Featuring game industry veterans, award-winning authors and artists, jaw-dropping costumes, thousands of events, a growing Family Fun Pavilion, and the newest games on the market, Gen Con truly is The Best Four Days in Gaming™!

IOWA

DES MOINS COMIC CON –
WWW.WIZARDWORLD.COM/WIZCON.HTML
06/12–06/14/15, Des Moines

See Sacramento Comic Con for description.

KENTUCKY

CONGLOMERATION –
WWW.CONGLOMERATION.INFO
04/03–04/05/15, Louisville

ConGlomeration is Louisville, Kentucky's own fan-run multimedia science fiction and fantasy convention.

MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS COMIC CON –
WWW.WIZARDWORLD.COM/WIZCON.HTML
05/01–05/03/15, Minneapolis

See Sacramento Comic Con for description.

CONVENTION CONNECTION

MISSOURI

St. Louis Comic Con – www.wizardworld.com/wizcon.html
05/22–05/24/15, St. Louis

Join fellow fans as they converge on St. Louis to celebrate the best in pop culture: Movies, Comics, Toys, Video Gaming, Games, TV, Graphic Novels, Horror, Wrestling, MMA, Original Art, Collectibles, Anime, Manga & More! St. Louis Comic Con is brought to you by the group who produces the most widely attended Comic Con tour!

MONTANA

MisCon – www.miscon.org *[SW]*
05/22–05/25/15, Missoula

MisCon is a four-day celebration of literacy and the arts within the science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres. Held each Memorial Day weekend (Friday through Monday), MisCon has something to fascinate, educate, and entertain you at all times."

NEBRASKA

PretzCon – www.pretzcon.org
04/10–04/12/15, Omaha

PretzCon is a nonprofit, family-run gaming convention offering a fun, safe environment for gamers of all ages to play. At PretzCon, you'll find board, card, dice, and role-playing games. Play your favorite games or take the opportunity to try something new.

NEVADA

Las Vegas Comic Con – www.wizardworld.com/wizcon.html
04/24–04/26/15, Las Vegas

See Sacramento Comic Con for description.

NEW YORK

Albacon – www.albacon.org
05/08–05/10/15, Albany

Albacon is a gathering of fans and creators of Science Fiction, Fantasy, Games, Anime, Web Comics; pretty much anything Geek related. We include movies, games, costumes, and more.

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NORTH CAROLINA

ConCarolinas – www.concarolinas.org
05/29–05/31/15, Concord

ConCarolinas is a Science/Speculative/Fantasy fiction convention that celebrates these genres in all forms of presentation – written, film, music, costume, gaming and more. Attendees can look forward to multiple panel tracks from multiple fandoms, all aspects of writing (plot bunnies to self publishing), costume contests, karaoke, SCA tournaments, gaming, a vast Dealer's Room and more.

OHIO

Origins – www.originsgamefair.com *[SW]*
06/03–06/07/15, Columbus

Games of all kinds, vendors, special events, and artists, too.

PENNSYLVANIA

MEPACON Fall – www.mepacon.com
04/24–04/26/15, Hilton Scranton

Over 200 hours of gaming in Mid-Eastern Pennsylvania with gamers of all stripes. From dedicated role-playing fans to the casual board game player, MEPACON delivers multiple tracts of entertainment for all ages. Experience three-days of jam packed entertainment with hosted gaming sessions, contests, game auction of new and vintage games, miniature painting, and on-site vendors.

Philadelphia Comic Con – www.wizardworld.com/wizcon.html
05/07–05/10/15, Philadelphia

See Sacramento Comic Con for description.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Greenville Comic Con – www.wizardworld.com/wizcon.html
05/29–05/30/15, Greenville

See Sacramento Comic Con for description.

TENNESSEE

LibertyCon – www.libertycon.org
06/26–06/28/15, Chattanooga

CONVENTION CONNECTION

LibertyCon is a convention that prides itself on great guests, phenomenal panels, and a killer ConSuite. We're a convention that is small on purpose since we want to give the fans a chance to sit down and chat with the guests.

TEXAS

MAG CON – [WWW.MAGCON.ORG](http://www.magcon.org)
04/11–04/12/15, New Caney

A school fundraiser offering a huge, FREE Board Game Library, RPGs, Miniatures, Board Games, Door PRIZES! There's free, convenient parking, a flea market, concessions, and affordable admission.

THE NORTH TEXAS RPG CON –
[HTTP://NTRPGCON.COM/](http://ntrpgcon.com/)
06/04–06/07/15, DFW Airport Marriot South

The NTRPG Con focuses on old-school Dungeons & Dragons gaming and other pre-1999 RPGs. We also support retro-clone or simulacrum type gaming that copies the old style of RPGs. Any RPG games are welcome at the Con so long as there are enough players.

A-KON – [WWW.A-KON.COM](http://www.a-kon.com)
06/05–06/07/15, Dallas

If you like to watch Anime movies, television shows, read manga or comics, or play games, you would probably have a great time at A-Kon.

VIRGINIA

RAVENCON – [WWW.RAVENCON.COM](http://www.ravencon.com)
04/24–04/26/15, Richmond

A weekend celebrating the genres of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror. Mystery fits well here, too.

WASHINGTON

NORWESCON – [WWW.NORWESCON.ORG](http://www.norwescon.org) *[SW]*
04/02–04/05/15, SeaTac

The Pacific Northwest's Premier Science-Fiction and Fantasy Convention.

WISCONSIN

ODYSSEY CON – [WWW.ODYSSEYCON.ORG](http://www.odysseycon.org)
04/10–04/12/15, Madison

Odyssey Con 15 celebrates the rise of the zombie in fiction and media. A Zombie Prom is planned the Saturday of the convention.

NO BRAND CON – [HTTP://NOBRANDCON.ORG](http://nobrandcon.org)
04/24–04/26/15, Eau Claire

Hailing itself as Wisconsin's premiere anime convention, No Brand Con offers a wide array of gaming.

ENGLAND

UK GAMES EXPO – [WWW.UKGAMESEXPO.CO.UK](http://www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk)
05/29–05/31/15, Birmingham, England

UK Games Expo aims to be the premier event in the UK where all aspects of the gaming hobby are represented under one roof: card games, board games, role-playing games, miniature games, and family games.

RAIDERS OF THE GAME CUPBOARD –
[WWW.RAIDERSOFTHEGAMECUPBOARD.CO.UK](http://www.raidersofthegamecupboard.co.uk)
06/27/15, Burton upon Trent, England

The event covers board games, card games, miniatures and roleplaying. Quarterly.

SCOTLAND

COMPULSION – [WWW.GEAS.ORG.UK/COMPULSION](http://www.geas.org.uk/compulsion)
04/03–04/05/15, Edinburgh, Scotland

RPGs, LARPs, Board Games, CCGs, and more!

ITALY

PLAY: THE GAMES FESTIVAL – [WWW.PLAY-MODENA.IT](http://www.play-modena.it) *[SW]*
04/11–04/12/15, Modena, Italy

PLAY aims to broaden and improve the range of games on offer with special focus events and brand new gaming areas.

TORINO COMICS – [WWW.TORINOCOMICS.COM](http://www.torinocomics.com) *[SW]*
04/17–04/19/15, Torino, Italy

The gathering focuses on comics, games and cosplay. The gaming area features stores and companies booths alongside with hundreds of seats for demo games.

SAVAGE INSIDER

For All Things Savage

Now accepting pitches for all FIVE Volume 3 issues!

1: Endings & Beginnings, 2: Uprising, 3: Master Plans, 4: Free for All, and 5: Holiday Centerpiece

Keys to a Good Pitch:

1. Clearly has read submission guidelines and has familiarity with *Savage Insider*.
2. Correlates with a feature or otherwise appropriate content.
3. Includes estimated word count.
4. Is convincing that the creator can do a good job with the pitched piece.
5. Received by 2/13, 4/15, 7/15, 8/15, and 10/15 for issues 1-5, respectively.

*Rates for Writing:

Rates vary according to feature being written and length of edited work. For example, a few hundred words for an Equipment Corral item might pay \$5 whereas a few thousand for a full-featured Great Adventure could yield \$90.

*Rates for Illustrations:

Rates vary according to level of detail, size, and location within the magazine. Quarter-page, black-and-white sketches might be \$5 where a detailed, full-color cover would be \$75.

Sign up for the Obatron Productions newsletter to be notified electronically when there are calls for submissions and other news for *Savage Insider* and Obatron Productions.

Contributors need not be previously published to be accepted.

****Rates are subject to increase.***

