

BRIAN MCCLELLAN'S

# POWDER MAGE ROLEPLAYING GAME



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# POWDER MAGE ROLEPLAYING GAME

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# Table of Contents

## **Introductions** .....4

Brian's Introduction .....4

Alan's Introduction .....5

Game Master Introduction.....7

An Introduction to  
the Powder Mage Universe.....11

## **Character Creation** .....13

## **Nations of the Nine** .....26

Adro .....27

The People ..... 28

Recent History..... 28

Important Institutions..... 30

Geography..... 33

VIPs ..... 34

Current Schemes ..... 35

Bakashka .....36

The People ..... 36

Recent History..... 36

Important Institutions..... 37

Geography..... 39

VIPs ..... 40

Current Schemes ..... 40

Brudania .....41

The People ..... 41

Recent History..... 42

Important Institutions..... 43

Geography..... 45

VIPs ..... 45

Current Schemes ..... 46

Deliv .....47

The People ..... 47

Recent History..... 48

Important Institutions..... 48

Geography..... 49

VIPs ..... 50

Current Schemes ..... 50

Kez .....51

The People ..... 51

Recent History..... 51

Important Institutions..... 55

Geography..... 56

VIPs ..... 56

Current Schemes ..... 57

Novi .....58

The People ..... 58

Recent History..... 59

Important Institutions..... 59

Geography..... 60

VIPs ..... 61

Current Schemes ..... 61

Rosvel .....62

The People ..... 62

Recent History..... 63

Important Institutions..... 63

Geography..... 65

VIPs ..... 65

Current Schemes ..... 66

Starland .....67

The People ..... 67

Recent History..... 67

Important Institutions..... 68

VIPs ..... 71

Current Schemes ..... 71

# Table of Contents

|                                         |     |                                      |     |
|-----------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|-----|
| <u>Unice</u> .....                      | 72  | <u>Pregenerated Characters</u> ..... | 105 |
| <i>The People</i> .....                 | 72  | <u>Adventures</u> .....              | 111 |
| <i>Recent History</i> .....             | 72  | <i>Blood in the Alley</i> .....      | 111 |
| <i>Important Institutions</i> .....     | 73  | <i>Caravan Guards</i> .....          | 115 |
| <i>VIPs</i> .....                       | 76  | <i>Swashing the Buckle</i> .....     | 117 |
| <i>Current Schemes</i> .....            | 76  | <i>Betrayal?!</i> .....              | 120 |
| <u>Lands Beyond The Nine</u> .....      | 77  | <u>Further Reading</u> .....         | 122 |
| <i>Brudanian-Fatra</i> .....            | 77  | <u>Contact Brian McClellan</u> ....  | 123 |
| <i>The People</i> .....                 | 78  | <u>Character Sheet</u> .....         | 125 |
| <i>History</i> .....                    | 78  | <u>Index</u> .....                   | 126 |
| <i>Presence in the Nine</i> .....       | 79  |                                      |     |
| <i>Dynize</i> .....                     | 80  |                                      |     |
| <i>The People</i> .....                 | 80  |                                      |     |
| <i>History</i> .....                    | 80  |                                      |     |
| <i>Presence in the Nine</i> .....       | 81  |                                      |     |
| <i>Fatrasta</i> .....                   | 82  |                                      |     |
| <i>The People</i> .....                 | 82  |                                      |     |
| <i>History</i> .....                    | 84  |                                      |     |
| <i>Presence in the Nine</i> .....       | 86  |                                      |     |
| <i>Gurla</i> .....                      | 88  |                                      |     |
| <i>The People</i> .....                 | 88  |                                      |     |
| <i>History</i> .....                    | 89  |                                      |     |
| <i>Presence in the Nine</i> .....       | 91  |                                      |     |
| <i>Strenland</i> .....                  | 92  |                                      |     |
| <i>The People</i> .....                 | 92  |                                      |     |
| <i>The History</i> .....                | 93  |                                      |     |
| <i>Presence in the Nine</i> .....       | 94  |                                      |     |
| <u>A Brief History of the Nine</u> .... | 95  |                                      |     |
| <u>Sorcery</u> .....                    | 98  |                                      |     |
| <i>Privileged</i> .....                 | 99  |                                      |     |
| <i>Knacked</i> .....                    | 101 |                                      |     |
| <i>Powder Mages</i> .....               | 102 |                                      |     |
| <i>Other Sorcery</i> .....              | 104 |                                      |     |





# BRIAN'S INTRODUCTION

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I will be the first person to acknowledge that I am functionally illiterate when it comes to RPGs. They contain a vast universe of adventure and storytelling that, for most of my life, I've been unable to access due to hobby conflicts, periods of disinterest, or simply not having the right group of local friends to run a serious campaign. That being said, I am not wholly inexperienced.

Some of my fondest memories of high school are getting together with my friends for a weekend at someone's house to play through a campaign that one of us created during study hall. We had a giant stack of old Dungeons & Dragons manuals and a bucket of dice that rotated among houses. I remember that the rules were wildly in-depth and confusing—taking hours just to create new characters—and that often we'd throw out most of those rules in exchange for ease of play and a heightened fun factor. My friend Kevin once ran a campaign where each of us picked an intelligent beast out of the Monster Manual to roleplay. Another campaign, run by my buddy Drew, was a world entirely from scratch: a modern-day, crime-infested city where we each played gangsters, hit men, and dirty cops climbing the ladders of underworld organizations.

It was a relatively short period of my life, but it had a huge effect on who I was as a person. It fueled a creativity that took my love of storytelling from a hobby to a drive to succeed in a creative field. Thirteen years later, and I'm a full-time fantasy author with five books and a whole pile of short fiction under my belt.

A lot of people enjoy roleplaying because it gives them a new world to play in, including a set of very specific rules for that world. To me, the rules meant far less than simply having fun with my friends. It gave me a social outlet—a place I could forget schoolyard dramas, homework anxieties, and family kerfuffles.

My goal for the Powder Mage RPG is to provide the very same for everyone who picks it up. I hope that it gives them a new world to escape to; that they come away from it daydreaming about their characters and adventures; that it brings them a measure of joy in a world that can be, at times, very stressful.

Please have fun.

—Brian McClellan

# ALAN'S INTRODUCTION

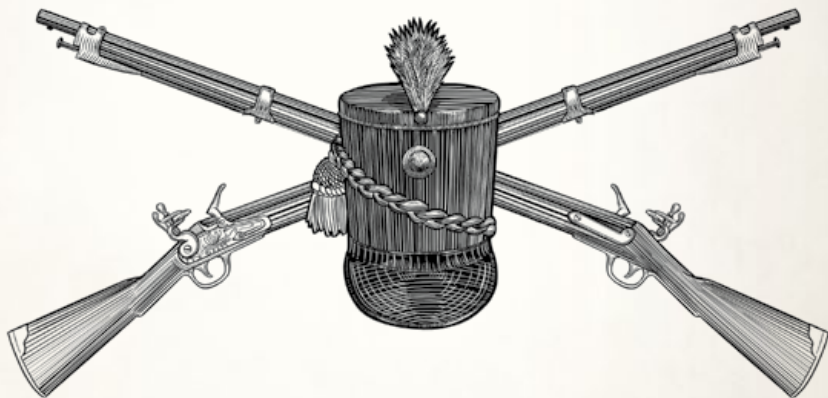
Simply put, I love roleplaying games. I also love reading fantasy fiction. I cut my teeth on David Gemmell, J. R. R. Tolkien, Robert Jordan, Mercedes Lackey, and so many more. However, I never found a fantasy series that captured my love of Napoleonic/Revolutionary-era musket lines until I read *Promise of Blood*.

Little did I know that Brian and I shared mutual friends who would introduce us one GenCon. After that, it was simply a matter of time as I wore him down for a Powder Mage roleplaying game. Of course, working to adapt the Powder Mage universe to the Savage Worlds ruleset has been a great joy for me.

Combining my love of literature, my love of Savage Worlds, and my love of the gaming community into one game is a joy for me. This game is a work of passion and an earnest attempt to provide something the fans of the book would like!

Thanks to all our supporters and backers who helped us out! I can't wait to hear about your adventures in the Nine!

—Alan Bahr





# GAME MASTER INTRODUCTION TO THE POWDER MAGE ROLEPLAYING GAME

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Being the game master (GM) of a group for the Powder Mage Roleplaying Game is a very rewarding experience, but it's also very difficult.

The Savage Worlds core rulebook has lots of good advice for game mastering, the different types of stories you might tell, and the other technical and social parts of being a GM, so we're going to focus on game mastering in the Powder Mage universe.

## 1) Understanding the Powder Mage Universe

The first task you have to undertake is becoming familiar with the Powder Mage universe. You might have picked up this RPG because you're already a fan of Brian's fiction, but maybe you just thought it looked cool (the cover is pretty cool, if we do say so ourselves).

If you're already familiar with the universe, great!

If not, this book serves as a great introduction to the various factions, politics, nationalities, and religions of the lands of the Nine. Reviewing the sections on the different nationalities and their outlooks will be your first step. The Powder Mage world is driven by national conflicts in which cultural identity is very important to the citizens. Long histories, replete with wars and aggressions, inform the outlook of the inhabitants of the world.

That's not to say the place is always at war! Peace is as vital to the world as conflict, and it influences those who live in the Nine as much as conflict does. How a population embraces peace will tell you a lot about the average citizen there.

Leverage this when you create your story. Roleplaying games thrive on action scenes and conflict, so let the history of the setting inform that conflict—by both playing to and against expectations. Let peacetime politics help you tell a story with social tension.

## SOCIAL CONTRACT?

A gaming group is a social contract. When you all sit down at the table, the players agree to be entertained and to contribute to the game (via entertainment, attentiveness, and positive behavior). The GM agrees to provide a fun and safe structure for the entertainment (ample provisions of snacks, comfy seats, and a big table may be helpful here). A game is a collaborative and engaged effort. You're all in it together, so remember that.



Before the game, talk to your players. If they haven't read the books and don't know the universe, encourage them to read the books (it's worth it!) or fill them in. Broad strokes are usually enough to inspire a character.

Explain your idea for the campaign or session and remind everyone of the social contract you all enter into when you sit down together.

If all the players understand your basic idea for a campaign, you'll enable them to create characters that will fit into the story naturally and provide interesting possibilities for the future. Their goal should be to insert the most interesting individual possible into an exciting story.

The better you know the universe and can explain how your story ties in, the more players will buy into the campaign you're proposing. That means you'll have more fun and you'll be able to tell a better story together.

## 2) Understanding the Rules (of the Game and the World)

As the GM, part of your job is to adjudicate the rules and help players understand their characters. It's possible you'll have to teach some players the basics of roleplaying, such as terminology that old-timers take as common. Be patient. Remember that roleplaying is a complex and complicated process, and everyone learns it at their own speed.

While the game rules are your responsibility, educating your players on the rules of the Powder Mage universe is equally important. The multiple types of magic will naturally engender questions about what characters can do. It's your responsibility to make sure the Powder Mage RPG plays consistently. The rules we've written will help, but it's inevitable that your players will eventually throw you a curveball, and you'll have to decide on the fly how something works (perhaps some unique interaction of powder and magic or a variation on Privileged gloves).

During those times, remember to look at how the universe is constructed and make your decisions based on the information you have. Powder Mages should not be able to channel energy from gunpowder into



punches and kicks (without a very good reason), and Knacked shouldn't have more than one power or ability.

In the end, the goal of any roleplaying session is to have fun. It's important to remember that the rules of the game are tools we give you to help you do that—but if the rules are getting in the way of your fun, it's okay to make necessary changes!

The X-Card is created by John Stavropoulos. More information can be found here:

<http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>



### 3) The X-Card

We strongly recommend you use the X-Card (especially for groups who doesn't know one other well, such as at a con game or in a similar situation).

Human beings are a varied and complicated lot, and there's no way for us to cover all the permutations of advice we wish we could give you. The X-Card does a wonderful job of handling that for us while filling in any gaps we might miss.

The X-Card is an optional tool created by John Stavropoulos that allows anyone in your game (including you) to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we won't know what will happen until it happens, it's possible the game will go in a direction that people don't want. The X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise.

To use the X-Card, at the start of your game, draw an X on an index card, place it at the center of the table, and say:

"I'd like your help to make this game fun for everyone. If anything makes anyone uncomfortable in any way, just lift this card up or simply tap it. You don't have to explain why. It doesn't matter why. When we lift or tap this card, we simply edit out anything X-Carded. And if there is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break, and we can talk privately. I know it sounds funny, but it will help us play an amazing game together. And usually, I'm the one who uses the X-Card to protect myself from all of you! Please help make this game fun for everyone. Thank you!"

The X-Card speech above can sometimes be more useful than the X-Card itself. It makes it clear that all the players, including the GM, are in this together, will help one another, and that the people playing are more important than the game.





Use the X-Card early, even on yourself, to lead by example and model the behavior.

The X-Card does not have to be a tool of last resort. The less special it feels, the more players will use it, and the more likely someone will use it when it really is badly needed.

The X-Card is not a replacement for conversation. If you prefer to talk about an issue that comes up instead of using the X-Card, please do. Just because the X-Card is available does not mean it has to be used. But when it is used, respect the person who uses it and don't ask why or start a conversation about the issue.

The X-Card is a safety net, but not everyone will feel comfortable using it in all situations. If a player had a problem with the game and wants to talk to you about it afterward, please listen. It is not okay to use "but you didn't use the X-Card" as a defense. Don't use the X-Card offensively. Listen and talk it out.

If you aren't sure what was X-Carded, call for a break and talk with the person in private.

Don't use the X-Card as an excuse to push boundaries. It's not a safe word.

Some GMs (usually those who haven't used the X-Card) fear that the X-Card will limit their creativity. Many GMs who use the X-Card find the opposite is true. Since the GM doesn't have to be a magical mind reader, it frees up their energy to focus on other elements of GMing.

The X-Card is not an excuse to try to get back to the game as soon as possible. People matter more than the game. If you need to take a break, take a break.

While we have referred to triggers in the past, we have moved away from using that term. There is a lot of misunderstanding over what a trigger is and isn't. Additionally, X-Cards can be useful in situations unrelated to triggers and PTSD.

#### **4) HAVE FUN & Communicate**

Remember, this is a game! The whole goal is to share a good time with your friends and have fun. When in doubt, make your decisions with that in mind, and you'll be okay.

If issues arise at your table, always communicate. Talk about any problems that may occur. Be proactive, and treat everyone as a human being (which they are!), and you'll do great.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POWDER MAGE UNIVERSE



Welcome to the Nine Nations, a continent of the most advanced peoples in the world. It is the height of the age of gunpowder. Cannons and flintlock muskets reign supreme on the battlefield. Revolutions, both industrial and political, ignite all across the known world while the most powerful nations attempt to keep hold of their borders, their colonial holdings, and even their own people.

Sorcery, while still a potent weapon for the Nine Nations, has declined. Privileged sorcerers have suffered immense casualties during the great wars of the last few centuries and scramble to admit anyone with sorcerous talent into their previously exclusive cabals. Their dominance on the battlefield has been replaced by the sharpshooting powder mages, and their political strength wanes in the face of enlightened ideas spreading across the globe.

It is the time of the common man. Knacked peasants use their minor sorceries to leverage great family fortunes or attach themselves to a royal entourage. Government militaries follow the Adran example of rank by merit or else find themselves destroyed by smaller armies with better-trained soldiers and more capable officers. Even Privileged sorcerers strike out on their own to look for the fame and fortune previously offered only by the cabals.

The world has become a melting pot more than at any other time in history. The “lesser peoples” of other continents flock to the Nine, where they lend their talents to local struggles or simply acquire an education and take it back to their own people. Rumors of strange blood sorceries come out of the far west while new religions take hold in the southeast.

Everything is in turmoil, and it is the perfect time for men and women with even the slightest talent to forge their own destinies. Join a cabal or take over a trading company. Become a mercenary or make a bid for an unstable crown. The world is in your hands.

## An Overview of the Setting, Peoples, and Magic

The Powder Mage RPG takes place in the Nine Nations, a Europe-like collection of political entities with the approximate technological level of Napoleonic France. Like that era in our own history, a recent series of major wars has destabilized the region and caused a ripple of revolutions across the entire world.

The peoples of the Nine include the industrious Adrans, the distant Bakashkans, the power-hungry Brudanians, the honorable Deliv, the prolific Kez, the spiritual Novi, the gruff Rosveleans, the knowledge-seeking Starlish, and the wandering Uni.

The Nine is also home, in fewer numbers, to people from all over the world. Large numbers of Gurlish have come from Gurla, bringing with them mala dens and prostitution. Smaller numbers of their southern cousins, the Stren of Strenland, have immigrated too, mostly with the desire to spread their odd religions. The occasional curious Palo savages arrive from Fatrasta as merchantmen sailors or mercenary hires. It is even becoming more common to see Fatrastan “freed men” from Brudanian-Fatra as servants among the great merchant families of Brudania. The Dynize, however, are entirely closed off to the world.

Despite advancing technology, sorcery is still a major part of everyday life in the Nine. Privileged sorcerers use their elemental magic to scour battlefields and back up their massive political power. Powder mages have climbed in the public esteem since the rise of Field Marshal Tamas, becoming widely known as soldiers, mercenaries, and strategists. Knacked common folk form the basis of most societies, using their unique sorceries for personal profit and public good. Even magebreakers have become more common in the recent wars as a way to counter Privileged magic.

It is currently 1487 AK (After Kresimir) according to the Kressian calendar, which is based upon what scholars believe is the date that Kresimir and his siblings first returned to this world in order to establish the Nine. The Kez Civil War has been underway since the end of the Adran-Kez War in 1483.

The economy of the Nine is based mostly on the Adran krana, which has been the most stable currency in the world for almost half a century. Local currencies do exist, and there is still a vibrant barter economy in the less populated regions of the Nine. The krana, however, is accepted everywhere—even in the heart of royalist Kez.

# CHARACTER CREATION

The following steps will guide you through the process of creating characters in the Powder Mage universe using the Savage Worlds ruleset.

## 1) Race and Culture

All characters in the Powder Mage Roleplaying Game are human and follow the standard human rules in the Savage Worlds core rulebook.

However, as an extra step, each player must select a cultural background from the list below. This list will provide two bonus skills to each character to represent the differences among the nations.

You can find more information on the Nations on [page 27](#).

**Adran:** Start with a d4 in Shooting and a d4 in any one Smarts skill of the player's choice.

**Bakashkan:** Start with a d4 in Notice and d4 in Streetwise.

**Brudanian:** Start with a d4 in Knowledge: Commerce and a d4 in Persuasion.

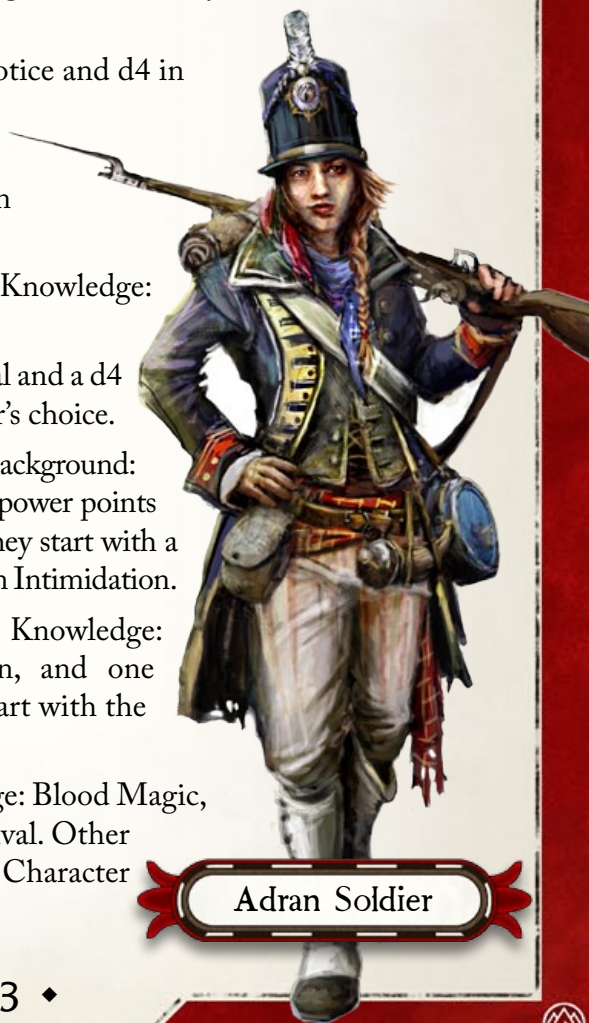
**Deliv:** Start with a d4 in Knowledge: Commerce and d4 in Stealth.

**Gurlish:** Start with a d4 in Survival and a d4 in any Knowledge skill of the player's choice.

**Kez:** If a Kez takes the Arcane Background: Privileged, they start with five extra power points and one extra power. If they don't, they start with a d4 in Knowledge: Religions and d4 in Intimidation.

**Novi:** Start with a d4 in Knowledge: Religions, Knowledge: Persuasion, and one other Knowledge skill. All Novi start with the Pacifism (Minor) Hindrance.

**Palo:** Start with a d4 in Knowledge: Blood Magic, a d4 in Fighting, and a d4 in Survival. Other Knowledge skills cost double at Character Creation.



Adran Soldier

**Rosveleans:** If a Rosvelean takes the Arcane Background: Privileged, they start with five extra power points and one extra power. If they do not, they gain a d4 in Investigate and a d4 in one Knowledge skill of the player's choice.

**Starlish:** Start with +2" to Pace and a d4 in any Knowledge skill of the player's choice.

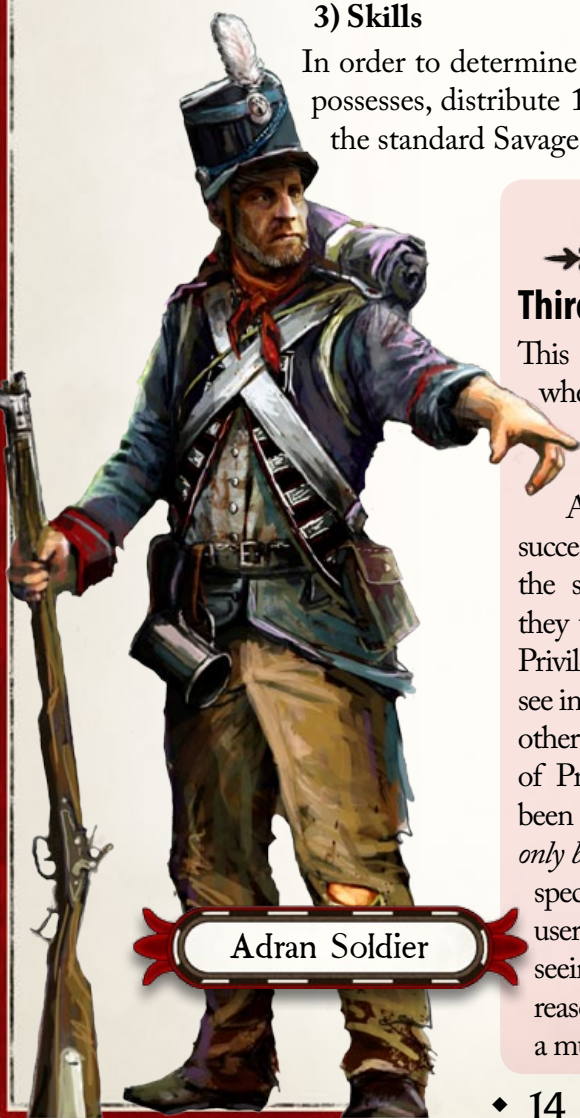
**Unice:** Start with a d4 in Knowledge: Religions.

## 2) Attributes

In order to determine your character's five Attributes, simply use the standard Savage Worlds rules. Each Attribute starts with a d4, and you have 5 points with which to raise the type of die up to d12.

## 3) Skills

In order to determine the starting skills your character possesses, distribute 15 points among them following the standard Savage Worlds rules.



## New Skill

### Third Eye (Smarts)

This skill can be used to determine whether other characters have the traits Arcane Background (Privilege), Power Edge (Magebreaker), or Arcane Background (Knacked). A success on this Skill Roll will identify the sorcerer and what type of magic they use. Knacked, Powder Mages, and Privileged can open their Third Eyes to see into the Else, allowing them to detect other magic users and see the evidence of Privileged sorcery that has recently been used nearby. *Note: powder mages can only be sensed by other powder mages.* This special sight puts an aura around magic users but does not prevent the user from seeing other visuals. If, for whatever reason, the user would not normally see a mundane person, they do not.

## Prohibited Skills

Driving and Piloting are not available for use in this setting. In order to drive a wagon or carriage, use the Riding skill.

### 4) Edges and Hindrances

Your character can take up to one Major and two Minor Hindrances and use the points according to the Savage Worlds rules in order to improve Attributes or Skills, to get new Edges, or to start the game with more money. If you want, you can choose more Hindrances for roleplaying purposes, but you do not get more points.

### 5) Gear

Your character has 500 krana to buy starting gear.

### 6) Derived Statistics

Calculate your character's derived statistics using the following:

- ♦ **Charisma** is 0 unless modified by Edges or Hindrances;
- ♦ **Pace** is 6" unless modified by Edges or Hindrances;
- ♦ **Parry** is 2 plus half the Fighting die value;
- ♦ **Toughness** is 2 plus half the Vigor die value.

### 7) Finishing Touches

Finish your character by giving them a name, devising their background, and developing some of their characteristics (greatest fears, hopes, dreams, goals, and more.) Ask yourself how your character achieves their goals and what steps they take to do so.

### ON NAMING CONVENTIONS:

Naming conventions in the Powder Mage universe don't follow a ton of rules, but I'll try to lay out the ones I do have as well as I can for those who prefer to follow them.

In most countries, the lower classes only have one name (like Tamas, Taniel, or Adamat). If you need to specify the person, they might be referred to as "son of" or "daughter of" their mother or father. More commonly, adults are known by a title they have earned during their lifetime (Inspector Adamat, Field Marshal Tamas). Among the rising middle class, it has become more and more common to adopt a second name (Ricard Tumbler) or even purchase a land-held title.

Two names are far more common (but not ubiquitous) among the nobility. These usually include a first name given by a character's parents and a second name attached to the family land they are meant to inherit (e.g., Erika je Leorne). A major exception is a country's king, who always has one name (e.g., King Ipille of Kez, King Liva II of Brudania). Members of the royal families always have a given name followed by "of their father." For example, in Kez, the children of the king are named "je Ipille" (feminine) or "ja Ipille" (masculine).

I took the majority of my naming inspirations from Central and Eastern Europe. Adro, in particular, gets a lot of its people and place names from Hungarian conventions (Adopest, Tamas, etc.). Rather than sticking to a strict set of rules, I wanted to give each country a loose "feeling" of something real-world that the reader could relate to. As players in this world, feel free to take liberties with your naming (but try not to break immersion too much).



## Background Edges



### Arcane Background (Powder Mage)

**Arcane Skill:** Ingest (Vigor)

**Starting Power Points:** Special, see below.

**Starting Powers:** Special, see below.

**Spell List:** See below

**Mechanics:** Powder Mages are powered by ingesting gunpowder.

- ◆ All powder mages gain the Addiction (Gunpowder) hindrance at a minor level.
- ◆ Powder Mages start with 0 power points (also called Powder Points).
- ◆ Each dose of Gunpowder they ingest (an action) grants them 3 Powder Points. After each action in which the Powder Mage ingests Powder, they must make a successful Vigor test or be Shaken.
- ◆ After a Powder Mage has any Powder Points, they count their Strength and Agility dice as one higher, they gain +2” to Pace, and +2 to Notice tests.
- ◆ If a Powder Mage ever has 6 or more Powder Points, after they return to 0 they are automatically Fatigued, and must make a Spirit test. If they fail, they permanently gain the Major Hindrance: Addiction (Gunpowder).
- ◆ Powder Points fall off at the rate of 1 point per ten minutes.
- ◆ Powder Points can be spent for the following effects:
  - 1 Powder Point to double the range of a Firearm. Multiple Powder Points increase this, but the cost increases double each time. (For example, 1 Powder Point to double range, 2 more to quadruple range, 4 more to octuple range).
  - 2 Powder Points to add +1d6 to the damage of a Firearm.
  - 2 Powder Points to reduce damage from a Firearm by -1d6.
  - 2 Powder Points to add +2 to a Shooting Roll.
  - 4 Powder Points to make a container with Gunpowder in it explode as per the Burst Power.

Spending a Powder Point is a Free Action, except for causing stores of Gunpowder to explode (which is a Normal Action.)

**Trappings:** Gunpowder and Flame



## Arcane Background (Privileged)

**Arcane Skill:** Privilege (Smarts)

**Starting Power Points:** 15

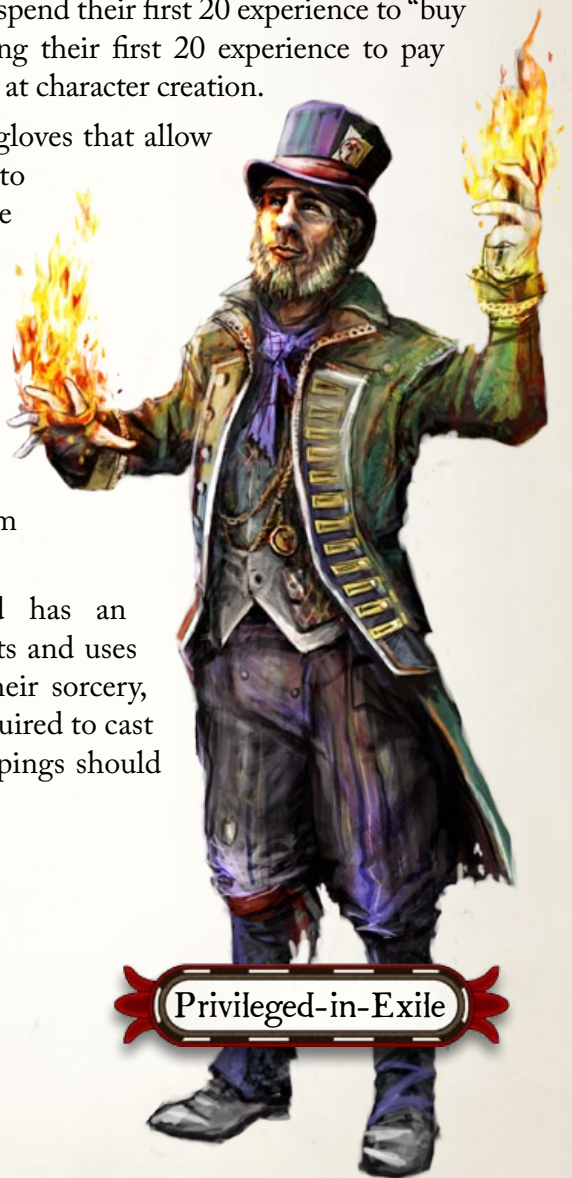
**Starting Powers:** Blast and 1 other power.

**Spell List:** All except Healing and Greater Healing.

**Mechanics:** You start the game at Seasoned rank. Make your character as a Novice, then give them 20 experience to advance, following the Advancement rules in *Savage Worlds Deluxe*. In exchange for the higher starting Rank, Privileged must spend their first 20 experience to “buy off” this Edge, effectively losing their first 20 experience to pay down the debt they’ve incurred at character creation.

All Privileged gain a pair of gloves that allow them to reach into the Else to summon magic. These gloves are automatically granted upon taking this Edge. Without these gloves, if a Privileged spends Power Points, they take an automatic wound and are Shaken. Spare or replacement gloves may be purchased for 500 krana from specialty vendors.

**Trappings:** Every Privileged has an affinity for one of the elements and uses it more than the others in their sorcery, though a mastery of all are required to cast spells on a regular basis. Trappings should reflect this.



Privileged-in-Exile



## ON SKIN COLOR AND RACIAL TENSIONS:

Race is something that I didn't focus on too much in the Powder Mage Trilogy. You'll note, for instance, that skin color ranges from black (Deliv) to olive (southern Uni) to white (Adro), and it is commented on very little within the world. Racial tension exists, but it has far more to do with cultural perceptions than skin color. For instance, a Deliv who is a second-generation Adran citizen would be trusted as a neighbor, while a first-generation Kez immigrant would be regarded suspiciously.

Kressians, the people who hail from one of the Nine Nations, tend to be casually racist toward those they consider "lesser peoples." Among these are Fatrastan, Palo, Dynize, Gurlish, Stren, and pretty much anyone who wasn't born in or doesn't have ancestry in the Nine. Again, these opinions rarely have anything to do with skin color but are more often justified by technological gaps, religious differences, or simply because Kressians will use any excuse to take the lands of people they conquer.

While this attitude is common, it is by no means the rule. Bakashkans think far more of the Stren than they do any of their fellow Kressians. The Deliv, being relative newcomers to the Nine, tend to be far more open-minded toward the rest of the world. Adrans are considered fairly open-minded as well, though the word "savage" is still considered an apt description of people from tribal societies.



## Arcane Background (Knacked)

**Arcane Skill:** None

**Starting Power Points:** None

**Starting Powers:** None

**Spell List:** None

**Mechanics:** All Knacked possess a single, unique mystical power. Players may pick one benefit from the following list of examples or, with the GM's guidance, create one of their own. A character may never have more than one Knacked ability. Knacked are much like exceptionally talented humans, but they are a class of their own because of their ability to see the Else and access their Third Eye. Knacked abilities are always on and require no roll or power points to activate.

- ◆ Charmer: +2 Charisma.
- ◆ Darkvision: Character can see in the dark as though it were daytime.
- ◆ Dowser: The character always knows where the nearest source of water is.
- ◆ Eidetic Memory: The character has the ability to recall memories in clear, sharp detail.
- ◆ Foresight: Able to see ranged attacks before they happen. +1 to the Target Number when you are shot at.
- ◆ Giant: The character is not truly a giant, but is larger than a normal man. +1 Size (+1 Size grants +1 to Toughness)
- ◆ Gifted: +1 dice type to a single trait.
- ◆ Ironhide: Skin is subtly metallic. +2 Armor.
- ◆ Lightning Reflexes: Able to see melee attacks before they happen. +1 Parry.

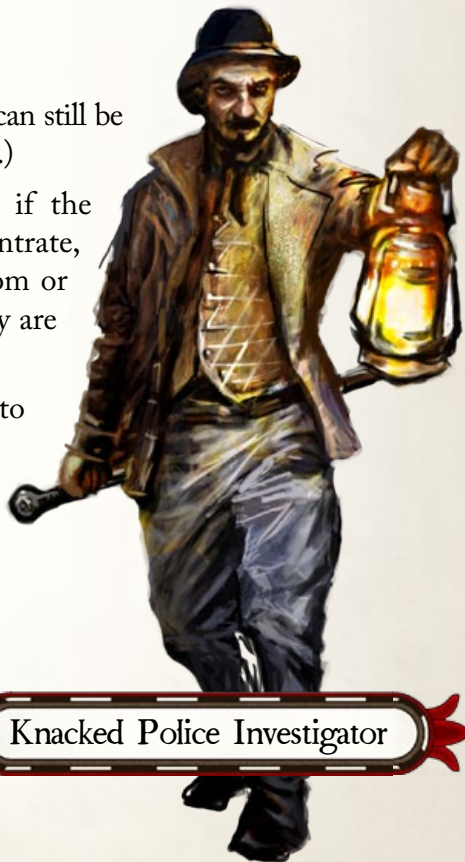
- ◆ **Lucky:** If you spend a bennie for a reroll and fail, you may reroll the failed test. If it fails the second time, you must accept the failure.
- ◆ **Oxen-tough:** The character may ignore 1 point of wound penalties (effectively lowering all penalties from wounds by 1).
- ◆ **Polygraph:** Always know when someone is lying to you.
- ◆ **Preternaturally Tough:** +1 Toughness.
- ◆ **Relentless:** Ignore all effects of Fatigue.
- ◆ **Resilient Blood:** Character is immune to disease and poison.
- ◆ **Rock Skin:** The character is immune to the effects of inclement weather. +4 to Resist Environmental Effects (cold, heat, pressure, etc.).
- ◆ **Runner:** The character is exceptionally fast. Base Pace is 10".
- ◆ **Sharp Senses:** +4 on Notice rolls.
- ◆ **Sleepless:** Never need to sleep. (You can still be put to sleep by arcane effects or drugs.)
- ◆ **Steady-handed:** Once per round, if the character does nothing but concentrate, he or she can remove a wound from or cure Shaken status for a target they are touching.
- ◆ **Unshakeable:** +2 when testing to remove the Shaken condition.

Creating new Knacked abilities is easy. Simply find an ability that fits what you want and attach it to an Arcane Background. There is no limit to the styles and types of Knacked there are, and the above examples are only that: examples.

**Trappings:** None.

The Powder Mage Roleplaying Game uses the Multiple Languages Setting rules in the Savage Worlds corebook.

Each Nation has their own language. Characters normally speak their native tongue, as well as Adran, which is the most common language of business.



**Knacked Police Investigator**

## POWER EDGE: Magebreaker

**Requirements:** Arcane Background (Any)

**Mechanics:** A Magebreaker is a magician who has forsaken their magic in order to prevent other Privileged from using their sorcery. They lose all Power Points, and any arcane skill they have is converted into a new skill named Breaking. The Breaking skill is not linked to any Attribute. They may never use powers or spend Power Points and can never take another Power Edge.

At each level, the Magebreaker can prevent the expenditure of Power Points within a certain range. A target that wishes to spend Power Points must make a successful opposed check using their Arcane skill versus the Magebreaker's Arcane skill before Power Points can be spent.

A Magebreaker automatically gains the following advantages as they increase in rank, and these effects are always on:

- ◆ At Novice, the Magebreaker must be touching the target to prevent them from spending Power Points.
- ◆ At Seasoned, no one may spend power points within 6" of a Magebreaker without a successful test.
- ◆ At Veteran, the range increases to 12".
- ◆ At Heroic, the range remains at 12" and the Magebreaker gains +2 on the test.
- ◆ At Legendary, the range remains at 12" and the Magebreaker gains +4 on the test.

**Trappings:** None.



Rosvelean Magebreaker

## Setting Rules

### CHANGES TO SHAKEN RULES

Shaken in the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook is changed to the following:

To remove the Shaken condition, a target must succeed on a Spirit roll. If they are successful, they may act normally. If they fail, they may act as though they had already taken an action this turn (essentially, failing to un-Shake counts as an action). This change represents the training and nature of the soldiers and resilient folks who make up this game.

### Equipment Changes:

With any black powder weapon, if the Wild die and the Shooting die both come up showing 1s, the weapon jams until an action is spent to clear it.

Air weapons do not require black powder.

### Black Powder Weapons:

| Type                             | Range    | Damage                                  | RoF | Cost | Weight | Shots | Min Str |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------|-----|------|--------|-------|---------|
| Flintlock Pistol                 | 5/10/20  | 2d6+1                                   | 1   | 150  | 3      | -     | -       |
| Flintlock Rifle                  | 15/30/60 | 2d8                                     | 1   | 300  | 8      | -     | d6      |
| Emberly<br>Flintlock Pistol      | 10/20/30 | 2d6+2                                   | 1   | 600  | 4      | -     | -       |
| Flintlock<br>Longrifle           | 20/40/80 | 2d8                                     | 1   | 400  | 9      | -     | d6      |
| Flintlock<br>Grenade<br>Launcher | 3/6/12   | 4d8,<br>Small Burst<br>Template,<br>AP2 | 1   | 1200 | 8      | -     | d6      |

### ON GENDER ROLES:

Gender does not have quite the same lopsided history in the Powder Mage universe as it does in our own. Referring to women as "the weaker sex" just doesn't have much bite to it when a female Privileged can turn you into a pretzel with the flick of her fingers or a female Knacked can leverage her sorcerous ability into a family fortune. From the beginning, it was my intention to make sorcery a great leveler.

Women own land, inherit kingdoms, create businesses, and generally do whatever they want. The sexism that does exist tends to be personal disposition rather than cultural, and therefor cuts both directions.



## Non-Powder Ranged Weapons:

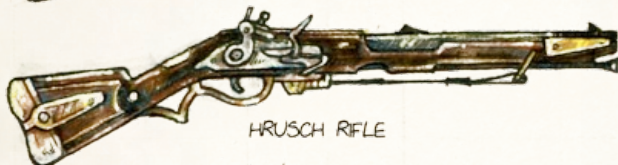
| Type               | Range    | Damage                                  | RoF | Cost | Weight | Shots | Min Str |
|--------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------|-----|------|--------|-------|---------|
| Crossbow           | 15/30/60 | 2d6<br>AP 2, One<br>Action to<br>Reload | 1   | 500  | 10     | -     | d6      |
| Hunting<br>Longbow | 15/30/60 | 2d6+1                                   | 1   | 300  | 5      | -     | d8      |
| Air Pistol         | 5/10/20  | 2d6-1                                   | 1   | 450  | 5      | 6     | d6      |
| Air Rifle          | 15/30/60 | 2d8-1                                   | 1   | 900  | 10     | 6     | d6      |

## Melee Weapons:

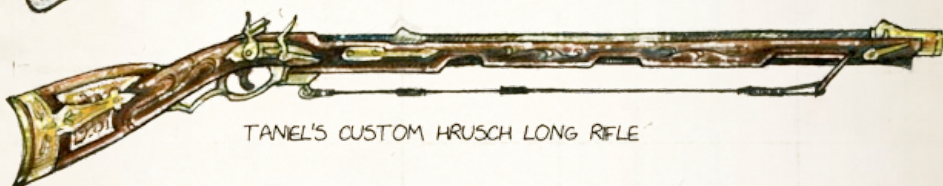
| Type              | Damage   | Cost | Weight | Notes                                                   |
|-------------------|----------|------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Dagger            | Str+d4   | 25   | 1      | -                                                       |
| Hunting Longknife | Str+d4+1 | 100  | 2      | AP1                                                     |
| Short Sword       | Str+d6   | 200  | 4      | -                                                       |
| Rapier            | Str+d4   | 150  | 3      | Parry+1                                                 |
| Long Sword        | Str+d8   | 300  | 8      | -                                                       |
| Dueling Blade     | Str+d6+2 | 1000 | 6      | AP2                                                     |
| Great Sword       | Str+d10  | 400  | 12     | Parry -1, Two Hands                                     |
| Main Gauche       | Str+d4   | 100  | 3      | Parry +1 when the user is<br>wielding two melee weapons |
| Axe               | Str+d6   | 200  | 2      | -                                                       |
| Battle Axe        | Str+d8   | 300  | 10     | -                                                       |
| Great Axe         | Str+d10  | 500  | 15     | AP1, Parry -1, Two Hands                                |
| Sledgehammer      | Str+d6+1 | 350  | 8      | AP1                                                     |
| Pike              | Str+d8   | 400  | 25     | Reach 2, Two Hands                                      |
| Spear             | Str+d6   | 100  | 5      | Parry +1, Reach 1, Two Hands                            |



STANDARD MUSKET



HRUSCH RIFLE



TANEL'S CUSTOM HRUSCH LONG RIFLE



TRIANGULAR BAYONET



SWORD BAYONET



AIR RIFLE



SMALL SWORD



CAVALRY SABER



PISTOL

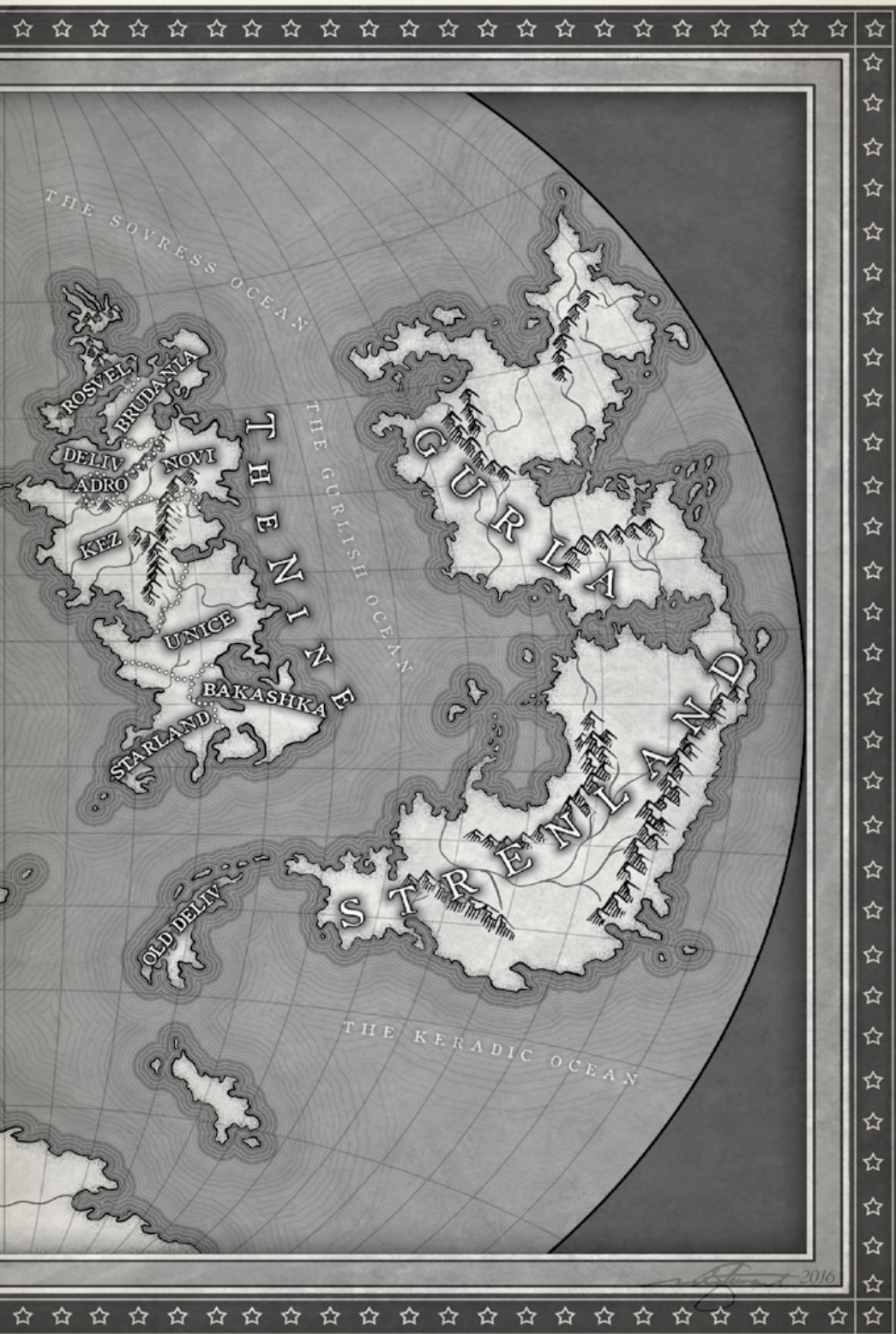


FLINTLOCK  
GRENADE LAUNCHER



# World Map





# THE NINE



# NATIONS OF THE NINE

*The Nine Nations. Like the gods that formed them, they are a squabbling collection of entities bound together by a shared history and religion. They are at once loyal and competitive, and though they bicker, at the end of the day they see themselves as a shining beacon of modernity—Nine Nations against a world that has yet to see the light.*

*—King Sulem IX of Deliv commenting on the rising tensions within the Nine at the beginning of his reign.*

*The following consists of excerpts from A Common Man's Guide to the World by Ambassador Adamat of Adro.*



*If the Nine could be said to have a heart, it is Adro. Her mountain passes are the arteries, and her culture, politics, and industry are the lifeblood. Many have sought to possess her, and all have failed. They will continue to do so as long as I am alive.*

*—from the private memoirs of Field Marshal Tamas*

Adro is an industrial nation located in the heart of the Nine Nations. It is the oldest nation of the Nine, claiming a heritage that predates the return of Kresimir by almost seven hundred years and borders that have remained more or less consistent during that entire time. During the Time of Kresimir, it was claimed by the god Adom, who has remained its patron saint ever since.



## The People

Adrans are predominantly light skinned, though intermarriage with Deliv and Rosveleans is common. They tend to be industrious, inventive, and stubborn, while the proud militaristic histories of the Adran Army and the Mountainwatch have created a martial people who don't flinch in the face of war.

## Recent History

### **Adran Coup**

Though the Adran Coup took place less than five years ago, it is already considered by scholars to be one of the defining moments of the modern era. The facts, as have been released by the Adran government, are that Field Marshal Tamas and a council of important Adran figures overthrew King Manhouch XII. The king and most of the nation's nobility were sent to the guillotine.

This was not a revolution of passion, as many have claimed in the years since. Measures were immediately put into place to pass on the mantle of government to an elected set of ministers. Field Marshal Tamas maintained order after the initial riots and denied any interest in taking power himself. By the end of the year and despite a short, bloody war

with Kez, Ricard Tumbler was elected as First Minister of Adro.

### **Adran-Kez War**

The Adran Coup would not have been as significant an event had it not set into motion a series of events that destabilized large parts of the civilized world. The Adran Coup is blamed for riots throughout the Nine as well as colonial uprisings and is directly responsible for the Adran-Kez War. The plan of King Ipille of Kez to name



*Portrait of Field Marshal Tamas  
from the Adran National Gallery*



Adro as a vassal nation was ruined by the coup, and he decided to take the smaller country by force.

On paper, such an invasion seems ludicrously one-sided. The Kez army outnumbered the Adran army by as much as ten to one, and though both countries were still recovering from the recent famines, the Kez had little problem mobilizing an immense force. The Kez were also united beneath Ipille's flag and backed by the mighty Kez royal cabal, while Adro was still reeling from the recent coup and had only a handful of powder mages.

In reality, Adro was well-equipped to deal with the superior Kez numbers. Their Mountainwatch held all the strategic passes through the Adran Mountains, and their army was both better trained and better equipped. On the open field of battle, powder mages nullified the royal cabal, and Field Marshal Tamas and his generals were the strategic superiors of the Kez officer corps in every way. Despite several betrayals within and losing the high ground in the mountain passes, the Adran army and its allies crushed the Kez and forced a surrender that ended the war.

## Reconstruction

It is difficult to examine the postwar era of Adro without the lens of time, as it has been only about four years since the war ended. Adro has been officially at peace since, quickly rebuilding the areas of Adopest and Budwiel that were destroyed in the war and redoubling the defenses of the Mountainwatch, lest the Kez Civil War threaten to swing north.

The economy remains strong, and the First Minister and his cabinet have done everything they can to reassure their wary monarchical neighbors that they have no intention of exporting republican revolution. Though the Adran army was much reduced by the war with Kez and many of their best and brightest died in the conflict, they are led by a young tier of generals who were personally trained by Field Marshal Tamas. Three brigades of Adran troops are currently serving in the south, fighting for the upstart Kez prince, Beon ja Ipille.



# Important Institutions

## Military

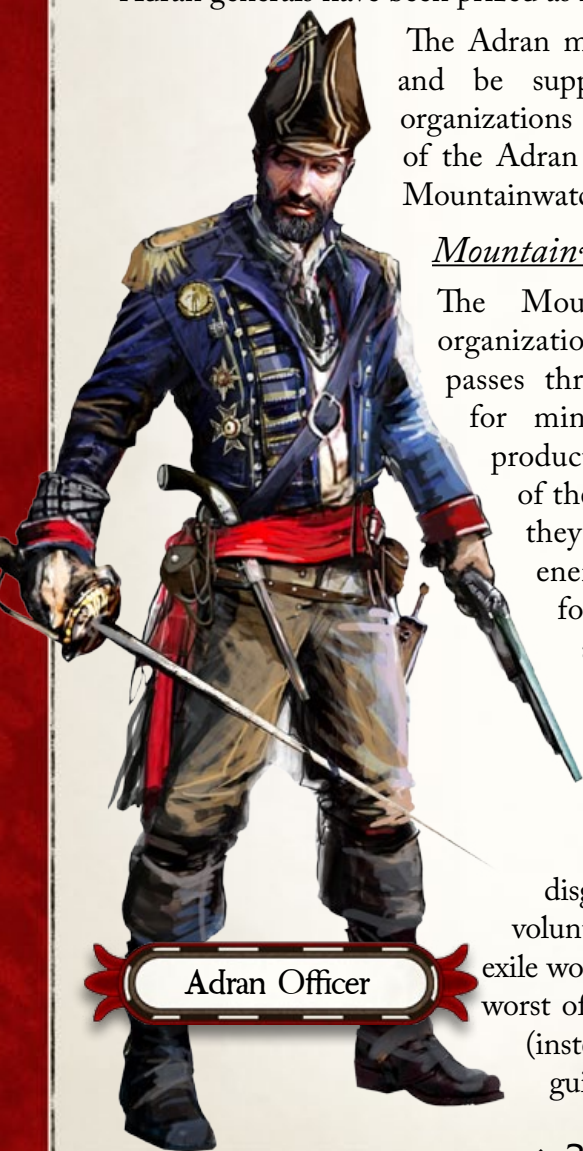
Though smaller than those of their more populous neighbors, the Adran military is widely accepted as the best-trained and best-equipped force in the world. This is largely attributed to Field Marshal Tamas's modernization of the military, including his ban on purchasing rank. The Adran army proved its mettle in both the Gurlish Wars and the Adran-Kez War. Even after losses suffered during both those conflicts, it contains some of the brightest military minds of the Nine. Retired Adran generals have been prized as foreign consultants for decades.

The Adran military is known to supplement—and be supplemented by—several domestic organizations that aren't, strictly speaking, part of the Adran army. Chief among these are the Mountainwatch and the Wings of Adom.

### Mountainwatch

The Mountainwatch is a paramilitary organization that manages the mountain passes throughout Adro. It is responsible for mining, road maintenance, timber production, and anything else required of them by the state. Most importantly, they are the first line of defense against enemy invasion. The Mountainwatch fortress of Shouldercrown was almost exclusively responsible for pushing back the initial Kez invasion at the beginning of the Adran-Kez War.

The Mountainwatch is unique in that it is made up of convicts, disgraced soldiers, debtors, and volunteers who spend their sentences of exile working in the high places. Giving the worst of humanity a chance at redemption (instead of a cold cell or a trip to the guillotine) is an Adran tradition going



Adran Officer



back almost a thousand years. The Mountainwatch is rarely a lifelong sentence, and former members are known to find employment throughout the Nine as industry consultants and military officers.

### *The Wings of Adom*

The Wings of Adom is a mercenary company founded by Henri Wincslav during the reign of the Iron King. Initially comprised of soldiers who'd finished their terms of service during the Gurlish Wars and wanted to make a better living with their skills, the charter included terms that the Wings would never fight against the Adran army and that they'd be prepared to defend Adro in the case of an enemy invasion. The Wings saw combat in Gurla, Fatrasta, and Strenland and were so successful that Wincslav bought an Adran dukedom.

Currently run by the old duke's widow, Lady Wincslav, the Wings were much reduced during the Adran-Kez War and have spent the last few years trying to return to their former numbers.

## **Sorcery**

The Adran royal cabal was once known as the most powerful cabal in the Nine Nations. They had a tumultuous history, reaching the height of their power under the Iron King before being brought to heel through a number of reforms that included the rise of Field Marshal Tamas, a famous powder mage and strategic genius who usurped their favor with the king.

Even with Tamas's reforms and the subsequent losses during the Gurlish Wars, the cabal was still an incredibly powerful institution. They began to claw back their influence after the Iron King's death, ignoring direct orders from the weaker Manhouch XII. Some scholars think that the disastrous Accords was Manhouch's attempt to regain control of his cabal by making them subservient to Ipille.

The cabal was utterly destroyed the same night that Field Marshal Tamas overthrew Manhouch. Little is known of that night, but Tamas managed to assassinate over a hundred Privileged in the course of a few hours, catching them in their sleep. This event is often glossed over during discussions of the coup, but is important in illustrating that Tamas was as dangerous in person as he was politically and strategically.

Tamas's powder cabal came about in a time when powder mages were still almost universally reviled. Though Adro was historically more lenient toward powder mages than any of the other nations of the Nine, the country





still considered them third-class citizens. It was only Tamas's rise within the army and the Iron King's need to rein in his Privileged that changed this.

Tamas proved the usefulness of powder mages during the Gurlish Wars, and the Iron King allowed him to begin training other mages—including many refugees from neighboring Kez, where powder magic was a death sentence. The powder cabal grew in size, and it was this group that accompanied Tamas to dispatch the royal cabal on the fateful night of the coup.

The powder cabal was nearly destroyed during the Adran-Kez War. The few survivors reorganized under Tamas's adopted daughter, General Vlora. Together with the only surviving member of the Adran royal cabal, Privileged Borbador, Vlora formed the Adran Republic Cabal. The two have spent the years since recruiting and training Privileged and powder mages to restore the strength of Adran sorcery.

## Industrialism

Industrialization has dominated the Adran life for over fifty years. Though it would be fair to say the modern Industrial Era actually began in Deliv, Adran engineers refined the techniques and machinery, and Adran thinkers propelled adoption forward despite resistance similar to that seen in other countries of the Nine.

It began with early reforms by Manhouch XI, the Iron King, which resulted in rapid mechanization throughout the cities of Adro. Workshops turned into factories, and small businesses gave way to large ones. Simultaneous advancements in agriculture helped fuel a population boom, eventually supplying manpower to the growing factories of the Adran industrial districts.

Despite being landlocked, Adro quickly became the manufacturing center of the civilized world. Machinery, guns, textiles, and raw materials were sent over the mountains into neighboring countries—especially to the port city of Whalen, which has been leased wholesale from the Deliv government since early in the Iron King's reign. From Whalen, Adran goods are shipped all around the world.

Adran industrial dominance is now being challenged by several nations throughout the Nine, but the construction of the King Manhouch Canal has effectively linked Adopest and the Pelos Ocean. The canal was initially commissioned by the Iron King—a massive undertaking to provide water passage over the Charwood Pile Mountain Range. It was finished at the end

of the Adran-Kez War. As long as relations remain good between Adro and Deliv and the lease on Whalen is not revoked, Adro is a seafaring nation.

Industrialization, and the vast mills and factories that accompanied it, also brought about the workers' unions. Heavily opposed by the aristocracy of almost every country, unions have pushed modern societal advancements like better pay, better hours, the weekend, and a general increase in the quality of living for the lower classes. The biggest and most successful union is the Holy Warriors of Labor, started under Manhouch XII by the eventual First Minister of Adro, Ricard Tumblar.

## Geography

Adro shares borders with Novi, Deliv, and Kez. It is the only member of the Nine Nations that is completely landlocked and is by far the smallest by area. Adro has a temperate climate.

The capital of Adro is Adopest, located near the geographic center of the country at the convergence of the Ad River and the Adsea, the third-largest lake in the Nine. It is considered an ultramodern city, with an immense factory district and docks that govern trade, fishing, and transportation around the Adsea. Adopest has over 1.5 million people.





The second-largest city in Adro is Budwiel, occupying the entirety of the largest pass from Adro into Kez. Because of the canyon walls around it, Budwiel spends much of the day in shade, making it an ideal residence during the summer and bitterly cold during the winter. Though the population was much reduced during its brief time in the hands of the Kez, it has rebounded into a thriving military city of almost seven hundred thousand people.

## VIPs

Ricard Tumblar, 52, is the current First Minister of Adro and the first person to hold such an office. He has served in that capacity since the end of the Adran-Kez War and is widely considered a hardworking, capable leader. He is known for his weakness for women and his hands-on approach to government. But the Tumblar ministry is not without its critics. Many say he shows the unions too much preference and that he is too close to both the military and the Adran Republic Cabal. He has answered these criticisms by distancing himself from old friends in the military and selling his personal stakes in the Adran newspapers in an attempt to increase the openness of his government.

General Vlora Flint, 24, is the current leader of the Adran peacekeeping mission in Kez, a powder mage, and the cohead of the Adran Republic Cabal. Though she is very young and stands in the shadow of her predecessor, Field Marshal Tamas, she has proved herself a brilliant field commander. Coolheaded under fire, she is easily provoked by politicians and prefers to be at the head of an army rather than in an office in the capital.



Magus Borbador, 26, is the only Privileged to survive from the old monarchy, which is said to be due to his close relationship with Tamas and Tamas's son, Taniel. Borbador now coheads the Adran Republic Cabal. He is charming, levelheaded, and thoughtful, though he does his best to avoid any real work when possible. He is married to Privileged Nila, a mysterious young sorcerer who came out of the Adran-Kez War, though it is rumored they both take multiple lovers.

Delia Snowbound, 38, is a politician from the north of Adro. Most of her extended family was killed during the coup, and all but a small portion of her family lands were confiscated. Delia survived by being out of the country during the events of the coup and then forsaking all claim to her old family titles. Since her return, she has become a permanent fixture in Adran politics, clawing back the power that once belonged to her family.

Charlemund, 56, is the head of the Adran See of the Kresim Church. Originally one of the group that helped Field Marshal Tamas overthrow the king, Charlemund was accused of treachery at the beginning of the Adran-Kez War and imprisoned. He was released not long after, and the circumstances of his imprisonment were never disclosed to the public. Since his release, however, his character has changed dramatically. Once an acclaimed duelist and athlete, he is now morbidly obese and has a penchant for fine foods and cooking. Once the prime example of the excess of the Kresim Church, he has opened his manors to the poor and become known as the most generous philanthropist in the Nine.

## Current Schemes

Though Magus Borbador is said to have gathered the mighty wealth of the extinct Adran royal cabal for his own use, the cabal left behind millions in secret reserves of cash, jewels, art, and spices. One such cache is rumored to have surfaced in Budwiel, where hundreds of treasure seekers have gathered to search the caverns beneath the city's mountains.

With ministerial elections coming up next year, wannabe politicians have crawled out of the woodwork in droves. While some aim to fill the cabinet, others shoot for the very top—hoping to take Ricard Tumbler's job after the next election. Foremost among these is Delia Snowbound, who is said to harbor a deep hatred for Ricard and his role in the coup that killed her family. Ricard, however, is prepared for a political duel with his rival—no matter how underhanded it becomes.



# Bakashka

*Sometimes I think that the average Bakashkan wishes he'd been born on a different continent, like the middle child who is never understood by his siblings and longs to belong to another family.*

—Lord Claremonte, during a board meeting of the BGTC

Bakashka is a country located in the southeastern corner of the Nine and ruled by King Wallach VI from the Sand Palace in Telav. It was founded in 74 TK by the god Banasher, who is said to have chosen the most distant spot in the Nine in order to get away from his siblings.

## The People

Bakashkans are a light-skinned people, but intermarriage and children born to Gurlish slaves have made tawny-colored skin much more common. The average Bakashkan has very little education; their society emphasizes physical labor and service toward the noble class.

The nobility of Bakashka loathe the very possibility of modernization or social reform. Their middle class is tiny, with the vast majority of their population belonging to an untouchable caste of uneducated laborers who are owned, ostensibly, by the royal household. They are the only country in the Nine that still practices open slavery on their home soil. Most of these slaves are Gurlish.

## Recent History

### The Gurlish Wars

Bakashka was the first member of the Nine to make a serious effort at colonial expansion in modern Gurla. Their invasion of the southern half of the continent in 1405 AK kicked off what would later be known as the Gurlish Wars—a series of conflicts that some scholars would argue are still going on today.





This invasion created a colonial rush, and within a few years every nation of the Nine had mobilized in some way in an attempt to snatch up even the most useless slices of desert. While the Nine managed to avoid conflicts at home, proxy wars were fought across Gurla, with alliances shifting from year to year. Professional Kressian armies, flush with cheap manpower conscripted from the locals, have clashed with one other and the major powers of the continent ever since.

Bakashka's early land grab rewarded them with huge swaths of Gurla and, later, Strenland. It was estimated at one point that Bakashka owned almost eighteen percent of the world's arable land. This caused major contention between Bakashka and the rest of the Nine. Brudania turned on them, and then Kez did. Starland and Unice followed, and soon Bakashka was fighting proxy wars with all eight of her sister countries.

Over the decades, Bakashka fought a colonial war of attrition. Their acceptance of local religion seems to have balanced out the brutality of their original conquest, and they were able to guard their holdings against invasion and insurrection with more competence than the rest of the Nine. Even after fighting a war against what amounted to the rest of the civilized world, they manage to keep impressive stretches of colonial land to this day.

## Important Institutions

### **The Ruling Class**

Wallach is a weak and ineffectual king who prefers to spend his time among his extensive collection of foreign concubines than have anything to do with the actual rule of the country. When he does make appearances in his own court, he is bullied and cajoled by nearly two dozen powerful noble families that effectively rule Bakashka in his stead. It is said that creating a royal decree in Bakashka is as easy as setting a paper in front of the king and asking him to sign it. Rumor is that he cannot read.

Despite so many families constantly vying for power in the absence of a strong king, the Bakashkan nobility has managed to hold their government together with far more competence than their northern neighbor, Unice, and against far more difficult trials. Power is balanced carefully, with a cultural emphasis on keeping the status quo. Internal strife is avoided at all costs. This creates a sort of game among the nobility, and the only pieces allowed are the vast colonial holdings in Gurla and Strenland.





This internal power balance is maintained in part by an order of government eunuchs called Faceless, which handles much of the bureaucracy. The Faceless exist outside the traditional power structure and are so integral to the running of the empire that their words are held in as high esteem as any nobleman's. They are tacitly supported by the might of the strongest noble family, the western-dwelling Dori.

## Religion

The Bakashkan people are unique among the Nine in that the Kressian-based religions are a minority. Much of the population is openly atheist, with even more of them adhering to heretical worship of two religions imported from Gurla and Strenland long before Bakashka had invaded either of those countries. Several attempts by the Kresim Church have been made to drive out these foreign religions, including a full-scale inquisition, but they have only succeeded in pushing Bakashka further from Kez and the rest of the Nine.

The larger of the two foreign religions is called Solenpan, which originated from southern Gurla. Solenpan is a multifaced god of sun, fire, and the desert. Adherents to Solenpan bathe themselves by scrubbing their bodies with fine sand. When possible, they avoid water as sustenance, preferring to drink fermented plant-based beverages in the belief that they drink the essence of the sun.

The second foreign religion, Gerosh, comes from the east coast of Strenland. It is the worship of the bones of a dead god whose name has been lost to the centuries. The Gerosh god is simply called the Dead One, and worship revolves around ceremonial interaction with spirits and fetishization of life force. Scholars suspect that this religion is influenced by the blood sorcery of the Dynize, though there is no hard proof, as neither Gerosh nor blood sorcery has been studied in any depth.

## Military

The Bakashkan military is a large but outdated force. It consists of a core of six brigades of professional soldiers known as the King's Division. These are made up exclusively of foreigners imported from Bakashkan colonial holdings. They are supported by a much larger body of conscripts from the general populace that can be called upon at any time. Bakashkan generals claim that they can field an army of half a million in less than two months. Military theorists do not contest this number but are quick to point out



the lack of proper weaponry and training available to the conscripted army. Half a million farmers equipped with matchlock muskets, for instance, would be cut to pieces by a professional modern army a tenth that number.

The Bakashkan navy is made up almost entirely of colonial sailors commanded by Bakashkan officers. With a few exceptions, their capital ships and frigates are antiquated vessels mostly used for domestic pomp and intimidating their less-advanced colonial shorelines.

## Sorcery

Bakashka's once-powerful royal cabal was all but wiped out during the Gurlish Wars, leaving Bakashka with just a handful of Privileged sorcerers. The ruling classes have embraced this change, and Privileged have lost most of the prestige and power they once held in the political realm and are now relegated to little more than tools of the state. Respect for sorcery has waned among the general populace while distrust has increased. This has led to a mass exodus of Knacked. Powder mages are not thought of as any better or worse than any other sorcerer, and rumor has it that several Bakashkan noble families employ powder mages as bodyguards.

## Geography

Bakashka is a hilly, tropical country. The long coastline is mostly clear-cut, home to Bakashka's largest cities and an extensive network of terraced farms. The inner part of the country consists mostly of dense jungle dotted with large slave plantations that harvest cocoa, rubber, and other native species for export to the colonies and the rest of the Nine. Bakashka shares a border with Unice and Starland.

The capital of Bakashka is Telav, located on Banner Point, the northernmost piece of land in the country. Telav is a rocky, inhospitable place with a population of around six hundred thousand people. It was chosen as the Bakashkan capital for its fine harbor rather than access to arable land or easy comforts. It is hot, bug ridden, and exposed to the elements.

Vedior is the second-most-important city and the most populated, with well over a million people. It is located on the east coast, and legend claims that the gods Banasher and Solenpan met there in person in 317 AK and agreed to share the people of Bakashka and grant them dominion over Gurla and Stren. It is a holy city, the capital of the Solenpan and Gerosh religions on this continent. It is here that the priests of Solenpan purchase the release of thousands of slaves during the winter solstice every year.



## VIPs

Bieru Dori, 59, is the matriarch of the esteemed Dori family of Telav and one of the true powers behind the throne of Bakashka—a position secured by selling seven of her own granddaughters into the harem of Wallach VI. A brutal politician, she allied herself with the Faceless eunuchs in a bid to destroy the strength of the royal cabal. Her family owns well over a million slaves, and she publicly criticizes the Solenpan priests for their yearly freeing festival.

Grundin, 33, is a Faceless eunuch and personal servant to Wallach VI. Outside of Wallach's overly influential concubines, Grundin is said to be the only person to truly hold the king's ear. Grundin often acts as a go-between for Wallach and the nobility. Quiet but ambitious, Grundin is easily bribed by anyone with the power or money to approach him.

The Dead Priestess (age unknown) is the mouthpiece of the Gerosh religion in Bakashka. Residing in the Gerosh Chapel Complex in Vedior, she wears a mask made from the skull of her predecessor and issues decrees from a throne of bones. Rumors have it that she is a Privileged, but she has never been seen to wear gloves.

## Current Schemes

The Kresim Church has been losing power in this region for hundreds of years, and the local arch-diocel wants more than anything to prove the mortality of the Dead Priestess. After several failed assassination attempts, his hatred of her has become almost a joke within the city. But that doesn't stop him from trying to kill her again and again.

Grundin and his Faceless companions have become more powerful with each passing year that the influence of the royal cabal wanes. Despite their reduced status, the Bakashkan Privileged still hold several key palaces within Telav, which occupy the best land and are filled with riches. Grundin would like these palaces destroyed.



## Brudania

*Greed? Greed has nothing to do with it. Brudanians are born with an innate sense that the world belongs to them. For every bit of competition crushed, for every customer swindled, a Brudanian genuinely believes they are taking another step toward the restoration of all that is good and natural.*

—Ambassador Cestosko, from the Novi delegation to the Brudanian court

Brudania is a mercantile nation located on the northeastern corner of the continent of the Nine Nations. It shares a border with Deliv, Novi, and Rosvel. They have a rich tradition in seafaring and have, for well over one hundred years, been the undisputed masters of the oceans of the world. While the northern ports are ice locked for most of winter, their southern ports funnel a fantastic portion of the world's wealth through them every year. Their patron is the two-faced god Brude, associated with the luck and fickleness of a coin toss.

### The People

Brudanians tend to have light olive skin, though their pallor (or lack thereof) can often indicate their chosen profession, with laborers and sailors having bronzed skin and bureaucrats tending toward pale. The literacy rate is surprisingly low, and a sort of written shorthand is used by most traders.

Because of the extensive influence of the Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company, or BGTC, Brudania is a nation of traders. Haggling is taught in every school at a young age, and arithmetic is valued above art, science, engineering, or philosophy. Experts in the latter fields are imported extensively from other countries—the fact that the best shipbuilders in the country are Rosvelean and Deliv expatriates is considered a shameful secret by the Brudanian elites.

Brudania is a surprisingly progressive nation. Their aristocracy is made up of far more merchants than nobility, and hereditary titles are all but extinct. A peasant may purchase the highest office in the land—if they can acquire the necessary fortune—and then die penniless once that wealth is exhausted. Neither race nor religion mean much to the average Brudanian, though like all Kressians they tend to look down on foreigners, and some favor is shown to the Kresim Church.



Despite their class mobility, the vast majority of Brudania's citizenship is made of basic laborers, sailors, and minor bureaucrats, with most of the wealth held by a relatively small handful of the citizenry. Slavery is outlawed within the borders of Brudania but is used extensively in their colonial holdings. Indentured servitude, however, is not outlawed and in fact provides most of the sailors that man the immense Brudanian fleets.

## Recent History

The former chairman of the BGTC, Lord Claremonte, involved the company and a large part of the royal cabal in the Adran-Kez War. While they entered the country under the pretense of a relief army on behalf of the Adrans, they quickly attacked the Adran capital for reasons still unknown. Lord Claremonte, several brigades of soldiers, and dozens of members of the Brudanian royal cabal were killed in a battle in Adopest. Even more were lost in an unexplained sorcerous conflagration that followed.

It was a disaster that would have destroyed a lesser entity, and it hit the BGTC with a blow that may take it decades to recover from. The BGTC lost much of its leverage over the Brudanian king as well as lucrative contracts with the governments of Deliv, Novi, and Adro, and its reputation has suffered worldwide. Postwar recompense paid to the governments of Adro and Deliv is said to be in the range of hundreds of millions of krana. What's more, both Rosvel and Deliv have stepped up their naval and mercantile power in the years since the Adran-Kez War in a bid to dethrone BGTC dominance. While the company still hoards immense wealth gained from their colonies, only time will tell if the BGTC will ever return to the dominance they once held.



## Important Institutions

### **The Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company**

It is impossible to speak of Brudania without discussing, at length, the Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company (BGTC). Originally founded in 1349 AK as a small shipbuilding company in a nameless village off the Straight of Pyre, the BGTC grew to be the largest merchant company in the world. By conservative estimates, 67 percent of all shipping worldwide is conducted through the company, though that number has certainly fallen in recent years.

The BGTC is headquartered in the city of Pyre, located on the coastline where they were originally founded. Pyre is the largest and most influential city in Brudania, with an estimated population of 1.3 million—most of whom are, in some way or another, employed by the company. With harbors protected by the land on either side of the strait, Pyre has calm, sunny, ideal weather for shipping, and its inhabitants take great advantage of this fact. The Brudanian elite consider Bruden a bit of a backwater, and anyone with power resides in Pyre, within a short distance of the headquarters of the BGTC.

### *Internal Politics*

Though the king and his Royal Bank ostensibly rule Brudania, it is common knowledge that Liva II rules very little beyond a few petty personal holdings, and the Royal Bank has been a glorified money-laundering front for the BGTC for three or four decades. Even the royal cabal serves two masters—it's unknown whether the cabal reports directly



*Headquarters of the Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company*





to the board of the BGTC, but they have been used in many company endeavors. Several members of the royal cabal also sit on the board of the BGTC, suggesting a comingling of the great wealth of the company and the traditionally extensive holdings of the royal cabal.

### Foreign Relations

In relation to their neighbors in the Nine, Brudania has always been a bit of a loner nation. Alliances are made and broken when necessary, always predicated on the potential profit margins of the BGTC. Historical grievances, as well as friendships, are easily set aside if an extra krana is to be made, which makes Brudanian politics unpredictable. The only constants when dealing with Brudania diplomatically are these: their hatred of Rosvelean privateers; their irritation that the Adran Mountainwatch controls the heart of the Nine; and the nation's total dependence on both Adran industry and Kez agriculture.

Brudania, thanks to the BGTC, became one of the most extensive colonial powers in the world during the latter half of the last century. Their holdings in Gurla, Strenland, and Brudanian-Fatra are the most extensive of any of the Nine, barely exceeding those of Bakashka. Much of their significant military power goes toward preserving these holdings.

### **Military**

The military power of Brudania is incredibly difficult to ascertain because of how intertwined the government and the BGTC are in both domestic and international affairs. Even the royal cabal fights battles on behalf of the BGTC.

Taking the government and the BGTC as a single entity, they have the largest and best-equipped navy in the world. Their army has always been a secondary concern and is made up of foreign mercenaries and handful of brigades of domestic troops, about two-thirds of which are employed directly by the BGTC.

### **Sorcery**

Though the Brudanian royal cabal disastrously lost almost half their members during the Adran-Kez War, they are still a formidable organization. Their partial ownership of the BGTC, as well as the weakness of their king, has allowed them to weather that disaster politically, and they are openly combing Brudanian colonies for Privileged to bring back to Brudania to recoup their numbers.



An unsubstantiated rumor has it that the Brudanians are developing a powder cabal similar to the one created by Field Marshal Tamas in Adro. Government representatives deny this rumor vehemently.

## Geography

Brudania is located in the northeast corner of the continent of the Nine, bordering Rosvel, Deliv, and Novi. Their climate is mostly temperate, though the northern coasts become ice locked during the winter.

The capital of Brudania is the city of Bruden, located on the eastern coast of the nation off the Gulf of Ferdal. It is the seat of King Liva II and his famous Royal Bank of Brudania. Bruden is home to roughly half a million souls and is renowned for the old-growth forests that still stand within sight of the king's palace.

Bornia is the second-largest city. Located on the west coast of the country, it uses its access to the western hemisphere to run most of the BGTC's winter trade. It is colloquially known as the "Western Bruden." The population is roughly the same size as its sister city's, but Bornia is far more heavily defended because of its proximity to Rosvel and her pirate fleets.

## VIPs

Lord Syk, 49, has been the chairman of the BGTC since Lord Claremonte's disappearance at the end of the Adran-Kez War. Many see him as a weak leader, ridiculing the BGTC's loss of market share beneath his guidance, while others claim that only his guiding hand has kept the BGTC from bankruptcy in the wake of Claremonte's disastrous foray into Adro. Syk is a bald, sickly man with thick spectacles and an aversion to sunlight. He is considered a business guru and a political dunce.

King Liva II, 74, is still, despite his age, a vigorous and just ruler. Bullied for most of his life by his royal cabal and the chairmen of the BGTC, he seems to have found a second wind at witnessing the near ruin of both entities. Since the end of the Adran-Kez War, he has taken a renewed interest in the day-to-day running of his country and passed multiple laws to renew the strength of the once-vital Royal Bank.

Micenth Follin, 32, is the sole heir to the great Follin merchant family, one of the original founders of the BGTC. She was born and raised in Brudanian-Fatra and has recently arrived in Brudania in order to advocate for slave rights in the land of her birth. Only after she grew close to King Liva at a charity ball was it revealed that she was a powder mage—a fact

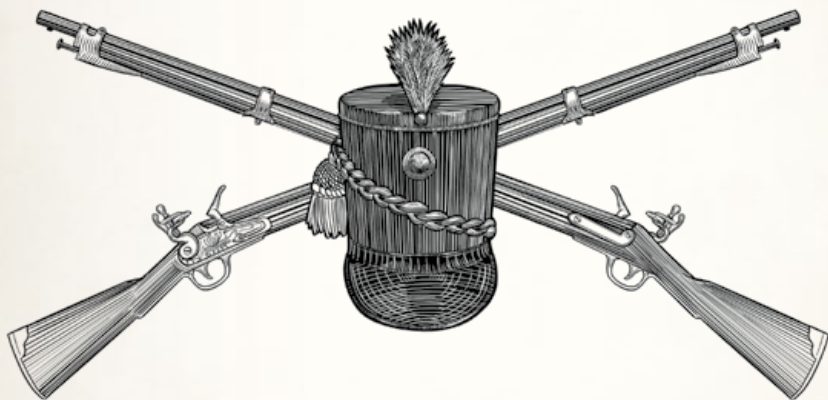


that intrigued and scandalized most of Brudania. Rumors have been spread that she is half Fatran which, if true, is a scandal in-the-making with unforeseeable repercussions.

## Current Schemes

King Liva II has made no secret of the fact that he is attempting to wrestle control of his country's economy and military away from the BGTC. Certain board members of the BGTC also happen to be in the royal cabal, and the king is willing to pay a high price for accidents to happen to any or all of them.

Micenth Follin has used her identity as a powder mage—and the public scandal that it caused—to cover up the fact that her family fortune was all but destroyed by Lord Claremonte. While she publicly advocates for slave rights and is happy to do so, her primary reason for returning to Brudania is to rob the great BGTC storehouse in Bornia. She even has ships standing by to load the cargo.



## Deliv

*The Deliv are the most straightforward people I've ever met. In their entire history, they've never started a war without giving their enemy at least a month's notice. Incredibly naïve, of course, but I've spent half my life playing at the intrigues of a royal cabal, and even I avoid using their openness against them. Sneaking around behind a Deliv is taking your life in your hands.*

—Magus Borbador, head of the Adran Republic Cabal

Deliv is a proud, militaristic nation. They are descended from a flotilla of exiles from Vorinnia (today known as Old Deliv) that sailed up the west coast of the continent and landed near present-day Del. They have an early history of territorial expansion known as the Vorinnian Wars, in which they defied Kresimir himself. Myth has it that they would have been destroyed if Kresimir's brother, Deliv, had not admired their bravery and offered them his protection.

### The People

The Deliv are a very dark-skinned people who originally came from a large island off the southwestern coast of Strenland. They tend to be organized and militaristic, with a straightforward manner and a tendency to see the world in black and white. Loyalty and fair play are held in high regard at all levels of society, from the king and his nobles all the way down to the lowest citizen.

Despite their history, modern Deliv has had amicable relations with their neighbors for the last few hundred years. They are especially close to Adro and Novi and have bonded with Rosvel over their mutual hatred of the BGTC. Their relationship with Kez is more strained. During the Gurlish Wars, the Deliv often fought the Kez for territory. More recently, the events of the Adran-Kez War drove a new wedge between Kez and Deliv that will take some time to mend.



## Recent History

The original borders of Deliv were quite small. The country sided with three of the Predeii during the Bleakening, warring with neighbors for several centuries. Rosvel, Brudania, Novi, Adro, and Kez all felt the wrath of the Deliv armies. Those armies took territory from Brudania and Novi to create their modern-day borders, and only a coalition of the rest of those countries managed to stop them there.

## **The Adran-Kez War**

Despite being staunch allies with Adro, the Deliv hesitated to involve themselves in the Adran-Kez War. Like many of his fellow monarchs, King Sulem IX of Deliv saw Field Marshal Tamas's coup as an affront against god and the monarchies of the Nine. He mobilized his armies but decided to sit on the sidelines and see how things played out.

Sulem's hand was forced when a member of the Kez royal cabal took an army north to the Deliv city of Alvation. He captured the city and attempted to destroy it in a bid to frame the Adran army and force Deliv into the war on the Kez side. This attempt was foiled by an army led by Field Marshal Tamas. The city suffered large civilian casualties but was ultimately saved. Sulem immediately entered Adro with his armies and royal cabal in order to throw the Kez troops back.

The short involvement of the Deliv army is often understated in discussions of the Adran-Kez War. Sulem invaded northern Kez from Alvation, forcing the Kez to split their forces. Within Adro, the Deliv managed to intercept a large Kez army, countering the Kez Privileged, and helped Tamas push the Kez back to the border. Further north, they helped mop up the Brudanian army after their betrayal in Adopest. Without the intervention of the Deliv army, it is not likely that Adro would have won the war.

## Important Institutions

### **Military**

Deliv has always been considered one of the great military powers of the Nine. While their current forces are somewhat outdated, they have a long tradition of mandatory military service. Every man and woman over the age of sixteen has at least some training, and in a time of emergency, Deliv could, in theory, mobilize most of its adult population.

The Deliv navy is also outdated, but like their army it is backed up by a proud seafaring tradition that dates back to the Bleakening and their emigration from Old Deliv. Using reparation funds from both Kez and Brudania obtained in the peace talks after the Adran-Kez War, King Sulem IX has made an ambitious bid to modernize both army and navy. His government has brazenly hired Rosvelean shipbuilders away from the BGTC and brought in consultants from all over the Nine.

## Sorcery

The Deliv royal cabal was never a large cabal, and it suffered smarting losses in the Gurlish Wars and the Adran-Kez War. After the Adran-Kez War, Sulem requested the guidance of Adran consultants in integrating his cabal, installing three powder mages as part of royal sorcery reform. Every powder mage, Privileged, and even Knacked are now considered wards of the state and are granted responsibilities and privileges according to their station.

## Geography

Deliv shares borders with Brudania, Novi, Adro, and Kez and is separated from the coast of Rosvel by just a few hundred miles of ocean. It has a mountainous eastern and southern border, with the rest of the country being largely fertile, arable land. It has a temperate climate.

The capital of Deliv is Del, located on the northern coast of Deliv in the Gulf of Velia, not far from the Brudanian border. It is a city of just over a million people and is the seat of King Sulem IX. Del is known for its magnificent fishing grounds just off the coast as well as its unusually good weather.



Whalen is, technically, an Adran city on Deliv soil. It sits upon the river outlet that connects Adro with the ocean via the King Manhouch Canal. While boasting a population of only about three hundred thousand, Whalen is a bustling trade center that will soon rival Bruden in terms of cargo shipped each year.

## VIPs

King Sulem IX, 68, is the current king of Deliv. After spending much of his early reign overseas involved with the Gurlish Wars, he has become a reformist in his old age and is convinced that embracing the modern era is the best way to respect Deliv's rich militaristic and naval history. His reforms have met with popular support among the lower and middle classes but are not welcomed by the nobility.

Osem III, 51, is the head of a major Deliv family and Duke of the great Osem holdings in eastern Deliv. A vocal opponent of Sulem's recent reforms, Osem is a natural schemer whose family fortune kept him from seeing personal service during the Gurlish Wars. While far from a fighter, he is a keen horseman and owns some of the finest stables in the northern half of the Nine.

## Current Schemes

King Sulem's reforms have bothered more than a few of Deliv's elite. Whispers tell that his great opponent, Duke Osem, seeks to assassinate not just Sulem but his sons and daughters as well, hoping that in the chaos that follows he can swoop in and claim the crown.

Deliv has avoided involving itself in the Kez Civil War despite aggressive lobbying by both sides. The rebel king, Beon ja Ipille, is rumored to be in Del in secret in the hopes of securing an audience with King Sulem. Beon's capture would derail the rebel cause and fetch a hefty reward from the Kez king.





*Forgive me, my love, but is it possible to describe a whole people as punchable? Perhaps that's being unfair. The people themselves are largely innocent, as much a victim of the Kez aristocracy as anyone else. Kez is a giant, unknowing and uncaring of who it crushes beneath its unwieldy feet. In my mind, that makes it all the more important to cut them down to size. Please don't repeat these words to your father. I consider him one of the good ones.*

—Field Marshal Tamas, in a letter to his wife during the Gurlish Wars

Kez is an immense agricultural country often referred to as the breadbasket of the Nine. Its unrivaled tracts of arable land have resulted in a population boom, making it by far the most populous country on the continent. Kez is the ancestral residence of Kresimir, its patron saint, and its capital, Prishta, is the seat of the Kresim Church.

## The People

The Kez are predominantly white skinned, though the southerners tend to have bronzed tones from the tropical weather. While there are notable Kez progressives, they are a nation that believes in knowing your place. This applies to the relationships from one class level to another as well as within those classes, with an unskilled laborer showing deference to a skilled laborer, who would show deference to an accountant, and so on up the chain.

## Recent History

### **The Fatrastan War for Independence**

Over the last thirty years, the Kressian-owned parts of Fatrasta were cajoled, purchased, or conquered by the Kez until they had one large, mostly united colony entirely under the rule of King Ipille. Hard-headed policy in governing this





immense colonial state led to what is now known as the Fatrastan War for Independence.

Historians do not agree on what, exactly, triggered the Fatrastan War. Some scholars point toward a massacre conducted by Kez soldiers during a peaceful tax protest. Others claim that the final straw was the ceding of Adran holdings over to Kez rule, and still more expand upon that idea to suggest that a melting pot of Kressian cultures was the perfect trigger once a bull-headed king half the world away decided to impose martial law.

Regardless of the cause, the Fatrastan War was a bloody, two-year conflict. Kressian settlers united under the rule of a brilliant young governor-turned-freedom fighter named Lindet. With the help of foreign financial aid, mercenary companies, and even Palo natives, Fatrasta was able to throw back the colonial armies of Kez. Some military philosophers suggest that it was this loss that crippled the confidence of the Kez leadership and caused King Ipille to embroil himself in the Adran-Kez conflict in an attempt to regain face.

## **The Adran-Kez War**

Kez has had a historically antagonistic relationship with its neighbors, preferring to bully others through threat of military might rather than engage in political barter. Their primary rival has, for several hundred years, been the nation of Adro. Although Adro borders only a small part of northern Kez, the Kez kings have always considered it the proverbial thorn in the side. The Adran Mountainwatch controls most of the overland trade routes between the Nine and holds military chokepoints that make it next to impossible for Kez to cajole either Deliv or Novi. Border disputes under the reign of King Manhouch IX along the Adran Mountains left Adro in control of vast tracts of hardwood forests and lucrative coal and silver mines that the Kez monarchy has coveted ever since.

Adro expanded the Mountainwatch under the rule of Manhouch XI until they controlled almost all the mountains between Kez and Adro. The Iron King of Adro pursued an aggressive policy both at home and in Adran colonies, which left King Ipille on his toes until Manhouch's death. Unfortunately for Adro, Manhouch XII was a weak and ineffectual ruler who delegated almost all aspects of both administration and war to his advisors. He lost most of the Adran colonial holdings and nearly bankrupted the country, and he was prepared to sign a set of accords that would turn Adro into a vassal of Kez.



*A Mountainwatch Fort Guarding a Pass Between Adro and Kez*

Before the accords could be signed, Field Marshal Tamas overthrew Manhouch XII in a stunning coup and sent the whole nobility of Adro to the guillotine. He refused to sign the accords, and Kez declared war on the new government of Adro. King Ipille invaded Adro with one of the biggest armies in history.

The war lasted less than a year, but it was the bloodiest conflict within the borders of the Nine since the Bleakening. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers died—mostly on the Kez side. Deliv eventually entered the war on behalf of the Adrans, while the Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company disrupted peace talks to distract all three armies and attempted to take Adopest for themselves.

The Kez army was finally defeated at Budwiel. King Ipille was murdered in the chaos of the attack, and his eldest son, Florian, sued for peace to end the war.

## **The Kez Civil War**

After peace talks with Adro, the Kez army pulled back into their territory and immediately split when accusations arose that Florian had murdered his father. Officers and their men streamed to the banner of Florian's accuser—his younger brother, the much-liked Beon.

Florian left his armies to wrestle with his upstart younger brother and immediately headed to Prishta, where he was crowned by an arch-diocel of the Kresim Church as Florian I. Beon, however, won several battles in the north, and Florian enacted a conscription of the Kez populace



to raise troops. This was the fourth conscription in just two years, and it immediately led to riots throughout more than a dozen Kez cities, including the capital. Florian's response was swift and brutal. Thousands of public executions were carried out to put down the insurrection. This slaughter served only to inflame the populace, and as the year went by, Beon's popular support rose ever higher.

Such was Florian's brutality that several important members of the Kez government publicly begged Adro to help secure Beon's hold on the north. General Vlora and four brigades of hardened Adran soldiers were sent over the mountains as a peacekeeping force the next year. The north was secured for Beon, and the arch-diocel of the Adran See of the Kresim Church crowned him King Beon III.

In the two years since, the fighting has carried on with no sign of letting up. Several cities in the Kez Midlands have traded hands between the two factions. Beon was captured, nearly executed, and escaped. At this very moment, a coalition of Kez Counter-Royalists and Adran soldiers is marching on Prishta with the reduced, but still vast, armies of the Kez Royalists standing in their way.

Kez itself is a mere shadow of what it once was. They have sold (or lost to revolution) most of their colonies. The BGTC reports that Kez agricultural exports are down 81 percent from the beginning of the decade. Over the past fifteen years,





war, famine, and emigration have resulted in a net loss of over two million of the Kez population. Their royal cabal was all but destroyed in the Adran-Kez War. The nobility is split and scattered, and despite great victories on both sides of the civil war, there is no sign that the bloodshed will stop soon.

## Important Institutions

### **The Kresim Church**

The Kez See is the largest and most powerful of the districts of the vast Kresim Church. It is headquartered in Prishta, within sight of the palace of the Kez king. The Council of Kresimir is held every four years in Prishta, during which new dioceses are mapped, arch-diocels are voted into position, and church doctrine is debated and refined.

The arch-diocel of the Kez See, Syni Aramia, is often said to be a leader among equals. Her vote is the tiebreaker during the Council of Kresimir, and her personal wealth is said to exceed the entire yearly production of Rosvel.

Proximity between the arch-diocel of the Kez See and the king of Kez lends a certain prestige and power to the country. The king has the ear of the arch-diocel at all times and has been known to influence church policy over the objections of other rulers. This political current flows both directions, however, and it is not unheard of for the Kez king to treat church politics with a light touch—even when it's clear he should step in.

### **Sorcery**

The Kez royal cabal was all but destroyed by their conflicts in Gurla, Fatrasta, and Adro. The handful of Privileged who survived have sided mostly with Florian in the civil war but spend almost all their time hiding from Adran powder mages. Much of the wealth of the cabal was confiscated by Florian to support the war effort.

To regain their numbers, the royal cabal has lowered its standards for Privileged initiates. Now, individuals with much less sorcerous power are being actively recruited. Florian made the unprecedented move to name the royal mage hunters (known more widely as Longdogs) as part of the royal cabal. These mage hunters lack sorcery (with the exception of a few Knacked and imprisoned powder mages), but they have a long history of searching out and eliminating powder mages. Florian wishes to use these skills against the powder mages in the Adran peacekeeping force.





The lack of powerful Privileged in the Kez cabal seems to have stopped—or at least significantly slowed—the creation of Wardens. However, these sorcery-twisted human beings are still a hallmark of the Kez royal cabal. They spread terror wherever Kez wishes to project its influence.

## Geography

Kez shares borders with Unice, Novi, Adro, and Deliv. It has the largest geographical area of any country in the Nine, as well as the largest population. The climate ranges from temperate in the north to tropical in the south. Most of Kez lands are well suited to growing grain or grazing cattle.

The capital of Kez is Prishta, located on the western coast. It is the seat of power of Florian I and the Kresim Church and is known throughout the Nine for its majestic marble cathedrals, immense coliseums, and the four-hundred-mile-long aqueduct that feeds the city. It has a population of nearly two million people, and visitors who can pull their eyes off the grandeur of the ancient buildings will note that it is a disgusting city filled with garbage and beggars.

Storious was once the second-largest city in Kez, located at the foot of the Spine Mountains in western Kez. Now reduced to a few hundred thousand people, it was the victim of a massive plague early in Ipille's reign. A young King Ipille ordered the gates closed and the people cut off from the world. Sacks of grain were delivered with old-fashioned catapults, and anyone who tried to escape was shot. The city was thus quarantined for eight years before court physicians declared it plague-free, and the survivors harbor a hatred of Ipille's family to this day.

## VIPs

Florian I, 46, the eldest son of the late King Ipille. Generally known as an ambitious fop in the court of his father, rumors swirled for years that he would be passed over in favor of his younger brother, Beon. When Ipille was assassinated during the Battle of Budwiel, Florian immediately claimed the crown. Florian is impulsive, reckless, and prone to alternating fury and malaise. He hates his younger brother with a burning passion.

Beon III, 32, the favored son of the late King Ipille. Beon is a talented cavalry commander whose time in the army earned him the loyalty of the younger generation of Kez officers. Beon was captured by Field



Marshal Tamas during the Adran-Kez War. During his short time with the Adrans, he became friends with several of their officers and, rumor has it, even attempted to court General Vlora. Despite his relatively liberal leanings, he was quite fond of Ipille and never once doubted the rumors that Florian held the sword that killed their father. He has sworn revenge.

Theopholis ja Krin, 38, is the head of the royal mage hunters of Kez, colloquially known as the Longdogs. Tasked with hunting down and eliminating all powder mages within the nation's borders, Theopholis treats his occupation as a higher calling. He is answerable only to the king and is said to play off of Florian's furies to sate his own cruel appetites.

Syni Aramia, 25, is the recently elected head of the Kez See of the Kresim Church. By all accounts a shy, timid girl, Syni is reportedly a compromise candidate who should have never made it to the last round of voting, let alone to the most powerful office in the Kresim Church. Bullied by Florian and his nobility, Syni meets regularly for council with the head of the Adran See, Charlemund, who has taken her under his wing and is pushing for an end to hostilities in Kez.

## Current Schemes

Theopholis ja Krin is running short on manpower as the Kez Civil War drags on and is willing to deputize anyone who will proudly wear the badge of the Longdogs. His greatest interest lies in the powder mages of the Adran cabal who march with the rebel king. The ear of General Vlora or one of her underlings would fetch a mighty price.

The rebel king's spies infiltrate even the center of Prishta. Seeking to further destabilize his brother's precarious hold, Beon's agents are plotting every sort of theft and assassination they can think of against Florian's supporters among the Kez nobility.





# Novi

*I love the Novi. They are a thoughtful, gentle people with more faith than most of the curs in this very city. I only wish they would come to their senses. We have tried for centuries to guide them through guile, love, and even force. It is time we allow them to drift away to their damnation.*

—Arch-diocel Syni Aramia of the Kez See, writing from her palace in Prishta

Novi is a religious country founded by the goddess of the same name. Known for her spirituality, it was Novi who urged her brother Kresimir to answer the Predeii's summons to return to this world and end the chaos that gripped the continent. It is said she chose her territory to be close to her brother and instilled a piece of her own spirituality in the Novi people when she departed.

## The People

The Novi tend to be tall and slender, with skin just a little lighter than the Delivs'. Even the poorest citizens tend to dabble in the arts, from painting to sculpture to writing, and implements for such hobbies are a major source of internal trade. Novi art is exported heavily to the Nine and the rest of the world. Largely thanks to Queen Sasha's efforts, it is genuinely difficult to find true poverty in Novi. The country has a small aristocracy and a small middle

class, and social mobility is almost nonexistent.

Most Novi are educated by the state-and-church-sponsored schools, and a shockingly large number of those go on to attend monastic universities. This education is free, though educated citizens are expected to pay higher taxes.





## Recent History

There is very little to be said about the recent history of Novi. Once a great empire that conquered all of Gurla long before any of its cousins had colonial ambitions, Novi's global power waned with the fall of their last Gurlish outpost in 1256 AK. Novi's king at the time declared a period of national contemplation that still continues to this day. Their participation in the land grab of the Gurlish Wars was half-hearted, and they refused to involve themselves with the Adran-Kez War despite a very warm relationship with Adro.

## Important Institutions

### **The Monarchy**

Queen Sasha I is a pious, stubborn woman. With the mysterious death of her husband just months after their wedding thirty-seven years ago, she became the first queen to sit on the Marble Throne in two hundred and fifty years. She has clung to that throne despite public calls for her to pass the crown to one of her many male cousins. She has never remarried, and rumor has it that she is barren. There is no heir apparent to the Novi throne, but several of Sasha's female relatives have been groomed for leadership in the event of her death.

Queen Sasha has worked closely with the Kresim Reform Church for much of her reign, conducting a crusade against poverty in the form of a monumental redistribution of land ownership and physical wealth. Sasha led her crusade by example, donating the extensive holdings of the crown to the good of the people and keeping only a modest stipend for the use of the royal house. Even the Fist of Novi, her famous palace filled with the wealth of the defunct Novi Empire, is open to commoners, who may wander its halls and view its vast art collection at will.

### **The Kresim Reform Church**

The official state religion of Novi, the Kresim Reform Church, is the largest offshoot of the Kresim Church and by far the most successful. Formed by a doctrinal schism during the height of Novi imperial power, the Reform Church has spent much of its history at war with the Kresim Church, fighting through colonial and mercenary proxies across half the world. It's only in the last fifty years that the Kresim Church has finally allowed its upstart younger sibling to exist in peace.





The Reform Church has taken advantage of that peace to begin an immense monastic and proselyting effort. They have missionaries in almost every major country around the globe, and their monasteries are renowned places of introspection that dot the mountaintops of Novi, Adro, Deliv, Rosvel, Unice, and Bakashka. This effort is supported by Queen Sasha and tacitly approved by the sympathetic governments of Adro, Rosvel, and Deliv.

The Reform Church is most noted for its loud criticism toward displays of wealth by the Kresim Church. They strongly object to materialism but embrace carnal pleasures like food, sex, and drink as natural impulses of the human spirit. The Reform Church is also a great supporter of the arts and sciences.

## **Military**

Novi has a small but competent military supplemented by conscripts from monastic orders all over the country. Great effort has been made to keep both army and navy up-to-date with the most modern of weapons. These forces are largely defensive in nature, used as a deterrent against their more aggressive Brudanian neighbors and to protect Novi waters from pirates and privateers.

## **Sorcery**

The Novi royal cabal consists of around sixty Privileged. They are not used, as is often the case in other countries, as a means of force projection for their ruler. Rather, the royal cabal works closely with Queen Sasha and the Reform Church to use both wealth and sorcery for the public good. They carve roads through mountains, till farmland, dredge ports, and rebuild and reinforce the marble buildings of the capital. These mundane uses of their sorcery are universally despised by the cabals of the Nine but have ingratiated them with the people of Novi.

## **Geography**

Novi is located on the eastern shores of the Nine. It shares borders with Kez, Brudania, Deliv, and Adro. It is a medium-sized country with a mountainous center and a relatively small population.

The capital of Novi is Novengrad, located on the shores of the mighty Risle River. It is home to about half a million people and is the seat of the Queen Sasha I. Novengrad is often called the City of Marble, and



it contains some of the most breathtaking architecture in all the Nine. Most of the buildings were constructed during the height of Novi power almost half a millennium ago and are a testament to a nation that once ruled the majority of Gurla. The immense palace known as the Fist of Novi houses the royal family and contains art dating back to the Time of Kresimir.

## VIPs

Queen Sasha I, 56, is a forceful woman renowned for her generosity and close relationship with the Reform Church. Constantly underestimated, she has never balked at taking a firm hand with her enemies within or without the country. Though many of her cousins have schemed for her throne, none have managed to take it from her. Considering how much she is loved by the people, doing so might cause a mass revolution.

Alexei the Voice, 43, is the head of the Reform Church's global missionary efforts. Highly educated and intelligent, he is a quiet voice for reason within both government and church hierarchies. He is known for his bookish appearance, which belies his rather unorthodox participation in international boxing competitions.

## Current Schemes

A Brudanian merchant claiming the name of Lorial recently arrived in Novengrad and is planning to steal three particularly valuable paintings from the collection at the Fist of Novi. It will be a dangerous job with an incredibly high payout.

Several years ago, a young Kez noble disappeared from Florian's court in Prishta. He has recently surfaced in Novengrad, working as a missionary beneath Alexei the Voice and claiming that he has renounced his worldly wealth and wants nothing to do with his family in Kez. His family, on the other hand, would like him returned quickly and unharmed—by force, if need be.

A Novi duchess named Cournia has designs to put her pliable son on the throne of Novi. The first step in this plot is a daring attempt on the life of Sasha I while the queen visits an isolated monastery in the mountains. The queen, being no fool, has hired extra bodyguards from trusted families.



# Rosvel

*Give a Rosvelean a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach him to fish, and he'll steal your boat and use it to plunder Brudanian merchantmen all over Pelos. Oh, stop your protestations! It was only a joke.*

*—King Liva II of Brudania, in a public, drunken row with the Rosvelean ambassador.*

Rosvel is a mountainous country on the northwestern tip of the Nine founded by the hermit god, Rosvel. Its people are descended from a mix of the original, mountain-dwelling natives and the occupants of early Deliv military colonies that eventually split off from their southern neighbors.

## The People

Rosveleans tend to be larger, dusky-skinned people. They have a reputation for being quick to anger and even quicker to forgive—if an offender is truly penitent. The Rosveleans are a passionate, deeply spiritual people, though religious scholars claim that their spiritualism does not make them particularly religious.

Rosvelean fashion is closely knit with the nation's fur trade, resulting in a people who take great pride in their clothes. Furs are cared for lovingly, passed down from generation to generation, and even named. It is not

uncommon for a Rosvelean to have a scrap of beaver or bearskin in their pocket—all that remains of a fur worn in their family for two hundred years. Despite recent competition from trappers working the pristine northern forests of Fatrasta, Rosvelean fur is still considered the finest in the world and is prized in fashion throughout the aristocracies of the Nine.





## Recent History

The recent history of Rosvel is dominated by a series of squabbles with Brudania that have barely avoided escalating into full-blown war. Rosvel is considered the backwater of the Nine, with few colonial holdings and little of value to offer their neighbors. This has, essentially, taken them off the map in terms of modern politics, with one exception: the sinking of the BGTC Eighth Merchantman Fleet in 1476 AK by the notorious Rosvelean privateer Gorgantis. The wealth stolen from the fleet is rumored to be worth three times the annual production of Rosvel. While much of it was gifted to the royal family of Rosvel, huge amounts of treasure remain unaccounted for, and this attracts treasure hunters from all over the Nine to Rosvelean shores.

## Important Institutions

### **Politics**

Rosvel has been ruled by a joint king and queen for most of remembered history. The nobility is made up of an extended ruling family spread out across hundreds of small fiefdoms. It is one of the only places in the Nine where true feudalism still exists, though that has been slowly changing as the current ruling family pushes to modernize. There is a tiny middle class, mostly of self-made privateers rich from plundering Brudanian merchantmen.

Rosvel has a long and contentious relationship with Brudania. A few hundred years ago they were close allies, but the Brudanians took advantage of a poorly worded landshare treaty to strip much of mainland Rosvel of its forests in order to build their fleets. Full-scale war was only avoided through the intervention of Novi and Deliv politicians, and to this day the Brudanian government pays Rosvel a small stipend.

With neither the manpower nor resources to compete directly with Brudania on the ocean, Rosvel resorts to bold theft. Small, fast Rosvelean frigates ply the waters of the Sovress and northern Pelos and loot, capture, or sink any ship flying the flag of the BGTC. The BGTC pretends this is a minor annoyance that isn't worth their time—a statement contradicted by the largely unsuccessful pirate-hunting fleets that escort many of their merchantmen. For their part, the Rosvelean government denies any knowledge of this piracy, though it's an open secret that privateers are welcomed with open arms in the Rosvelean court.





Rosvel has a good relationship with Deliv, and the two countries leave each other's ships largely unmolested thanks to a mutual dislike of the BGTC. Many members of the Rosvelean nobility spend their winters in southern Deliv as perennial guests of the Deliv court, and Deliv and Rosvelean shipwrights work together closely to modernize both navies.

Relations with Adro are also positive. Adran consultants are in high demand in the Rosvelean court, as they help the royal family move toward modernizing their mining and wool industries as well as their military. Novi also has a large presence in Rosvel, thanks to their monastic work. Largely because of distance, Rosvel has an almost nonexistent relationship with the southern nations of the Nine, though they do trade heavily with Kez.

## **Military**

It's said that the only reason Rosvel hasn't been conquered outright by one of their neighbors is that they have absolutely nothing anyone else could want. Recent discoveries of gold, silver, and coal in the mountains may change this in the very near future—and probably account for the royal family's desperate bid to modernize.

The Rosvelean military—what little there is—is an archaic institution made up of fief militias reporting to whatever member of the nobility happens to own the land. They are badly trained, poorly equipped, and generally unorganized. Historically, the very best soldiers leave for warmer climates to join mercenary companies or the foreign legions of Deliv, Novi, or Kez. Much of Rosvel's national defense strategy depends on a frigid, inhospitable climate and mountainous terrain. Their biggest cities are all defended by outdated—but still dangerous—artillery platforms.

Their navy is far more competent but still disorganized and underequipped. Much of their strength depends on the privateers who have been given free rein to attack BGTC ships in exchange for a tax and a promise to sail to Rosvel's aid if their motherland needs them. A strong naval tradition means that most Rosveleans have spent at least some time at sea and know their way around a ship just as well as they do the mountains. If the Rosvelean navy does manage to modernize, the country has the manpower to become a force to be reckoned with by the end of the next decade.



## Sorcery

While competent, the Rosvel royal cabal has fewer than twenty members. It is considered rather cash poor by the standards of their cousin cabals, but their strength has not been diminished by the endless colonial wars of nations like Brudania or Kez. They boast that a single member of their cabal is worth three of any other—a claim that, even if true, still does not give them overwhelming sorcerous strength.

The royal family has been open about the prospect of creating a powder cabal in imitation of Adro, going so far as to court General Vlora of the Adran army with offers of untold wealth to train a generation of Rosvelean powder mages. Vlora turned down this offer, but rumor has it that at least one Adran powder mage has been loaned to the Rosvelean government in secret.

## Geography

Rosvel shares a border with Brudania. It includes a single region that is attached to the mainland of the Nine and one large, mountainous island in the north stretching into the arctic. The Rosvelean economy is powered by goats, pigs, whaling, mining, piracy, and the fur trade. While the southern reaches of Rosvel are temperate, the country has even less arable land than Adro, and hence has the smallest population of the Nine.

The capital of Rosvel is Soderhelm, which is located on the southernmost tip of the large island that shares its name. It boasts a population of less than a quarter of a million and is one of just a few large ports in the country that is not ice locked during the winter. Soderhelm is the seat of King Saffle and Queen Avenist, who rule Rosvel jointly from the Ice Palace on the shores of the northern Pelos Ocean.

## VIPs

Gorgantis, age unknown, is a renowned privateer in the employ of the royal family of Rosvel. Ostensibly, he plies the seas with a royal decree to destroy pirates in Rosvelean territorial waters, but in reality he is as much a pirate as those he claims to hunt. He targets BGTC merchantmen and attacks entire fleets without hesitation, overwhelming the best BGTC mercenaries with his superior seamanship.

Privileged Josashin, 27, is a member of the Rosvelean royal cabal. As a boy, his parents were murdered by the BGTC when their fishing boat was attached by a Brudanian captain who claimed they were pirates.



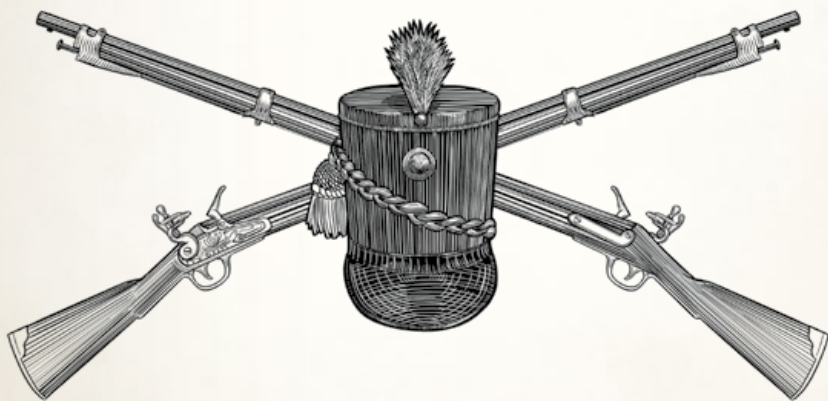
This has given Josashin a dogmatic hatred of Brudanians, and it's said he uses all his wiles to poison the royal family against any Brudanian overtures of peace.

Delia Hampt, 42, is the Brudanian ambassador to Rosvel. She is said to be the hardest-working and least-appreciated ambassador in the Nine. For almost twenty years, it has been her job to keep the two countries from going to war. Married to a Rosvelean shipwright, she has sympathies toward Rosvel, but she still faithfully reports everything she can glean from the Rosvelean court to her masters back in Brudania.

## Current Schemes

Gorgantis has recently popped up in a sleepy fishing village on the north coast. As is his custom, he sweeps into the village for a week of shore leave and spreads his wealth thick among the local population to win their affection. But in this case, he is unaware of the BGTC agent who owns the village's largest tavern. This agent is willing to pay a high price for anyone willing to slaughter Gorgantis's crew and take the pirate, alive, to Brudania for trial.

The Brudanian ambassador, Delia Hampt, has had several assassination attempts against her in the recent months. Bodyguards have become increasingly difficult for her to find, so she's gone straight to a local mercenary guild to hire someone to find the source of the assassins and do away with her unseen enemy.



## Starland

*Most people think of school as a boring necessity on their way to some higher calling. For the Starlish, education is that higher calling. Offer a Starlish the choice between a duchy and the knowledge contained in a single library, and he will always choose the latter.*

—Vita ja Ron, Kez biographer of Queen Audren II

Starland is a country on the southern end of the Nine originally founded by the god Ishtari by accident. Legend has it that Ishtari had no interest in founding a country like his siblings. Instead, he created a school on the site of what is now modern-day Wellens. People flocked from all over the Nine to hear the god lecture on mathematics, astronomy, literature, and any number of other topics. When Ishtari left with his siblings, the people of Wellens became an independent city-state. By the end of the Bleakening, that state had grown into an entire country.

### The People

The Starlish, like Adrans, tend toward white skin with a lot of mixing from other nationalities. They are highly educated and are regarded as generally well-spoken people with an emphasis on social niceties. They prefer to fit in wherever they might be, so their cultural norms are based more on fashion, trend, and imported traditions rather than a definite heritage of their own.

### Recent History

Starland has recently come into contention with Brudania over the treatment of the native peoples of Brudanian-Fatra. While Brudanian-Fatra is owned almost entirely by the BGTC, Starland has a sizable sliver of the southeast coast, where they have abolished slavery and have even set up schools for the Fatrans. The BGTC continues to treat





the Fatrans appallingly, and rumor has it that abolitionist causes within the Starlish government funnel a significant amount of money into anti-Brudanian groups on the continent.

Starland's fair treatment of their holdings in Gurla has also brought them into conflict with Bakashka, the government of which has openly called for Starland to treat their "lesser" citizens with a heavier hand.

## Important Institutions

### **Politics**

It is often said that Starland has a politically dual nature. On the one hand, the monarchy has long been content that Starland keeps to itself, with very little direct meddling in the affairs of the Nine. They project just enough power to secure their colonial holdings and trade routes. On the other hand, Starlish consultants and advisers are valued all over the world for their education and general trustworthiness, and it is rare to find a nation without half a dozen Starlish in key positions. While the Starlish government has never leveraged this fact, it makes a lot of political philosophers very nervous.

Internationally, Starland trades extensively with the northern members of the Nine as well as with their holdings across the world. They have especially amicable relationships with Adro, Brudania, and Rosvel. They refused to get involved in the Adran-Kez War on any level, even going so far as to pull several prominent Starlish expatriates out of both governments. Starland does not get on well with Bakashka and is openly dismissive of Unice as an uncivilized backwater.

### **Education**

Starland values education above all else. It has the highest literacy rate in the Nine and expects even the poorest children to finish basic schooling by the age of twelve. The cost of schooling is supplemented by the state until the age of sixteen, at which point private families and institutions cover the cost of higher education in exchange for the loyalty of their wards.

When it comes to education, class means very little. Money certainly opens doors for the scions of wealthy families—but with limits. Collegiate teachers have no compunction against flunking an idiot nobleman, while the intelligent daughter of a ditch digger will have private organizations fighting over the privilege of paying to further her education.

### The Fountain Academy

The Fountain Academy is not well-known outside of Starland, and even within the country it is rarely mentioned outside the upper class. A finishing school of sorts, it is located just outside of Wellens, though it has campuses all over the country. Unlike most schools, it is not sought for the education it provides to one's children, but rather for the graduates that it produces.

Students begin as children or early teens and are quickly weeded out based on looks, intelligence, charisma, athleticism, and dozens of other strict requirements. The training is rigorous, the dropout rate is abysmal, and students are expected to finish twenty years of courses by the time they graduate. They are trained in combat, seduction, memory retention, etiquette, mathematics, science, business, and philosophy and are exposed to every major school of thought in the known world.

The Fountain Academy works on the basis of an indentured servitude that is illegal in most of the Nine. Upon entering, a student's life, body, and mind all belong to the Academy. This continues until graduation, whereupon the Academy will arrange for the sale of the student to a wealthy patron, who will pay upward of thirty million krana and can expect to be obeyed without question for as many as three decades.

The Fountain graduate belongs to their new master for the term of the contract, at the end of which they are released under a vow of confidence and given half the sum collected by the Academy upon their sale. Aside from the secrets they must take to the grave, the freed graduate's life is now his or her own. Fountain graduates, both active and retirees, can be found in some of the highest echelons of government, religion, and business throughout the world.

It should be noted that even Fountain dropouts—of which there are many—are highly valued employees after just a few years of schooling.

### **Modernization**

Starland was the second country in the Nine, after Adro, to earnestly industrialize. Starland lacks the natural resources of Adro but has much better access to shipping and trade. Their emphasis on education has also been a major boon, providing them with brilliant engineers and inventors who consult and study all over the Nine. Starland is constantly retooling and upgrading every mill and factory in the nation as technology improves.



## Colonization

Starland is one of the few remaining major colonial powers. They own land in Brudanian-Fatra, Strenland, and Gurla. Under the rule of Queen Audren VI, their colonial approach has become more enlightened, and they are slowly moving toward a vassalage system that grants limited autonomy to their colonies while still providing trade and taxes to Starland in exchange for military protection. This move is heavily criticized by Bakashka—more than likely out of fear that their own colonial holdings will expect the same sort of treatment.

## Military

The Starlish military is a governmental balancing act. As mentioned before, they only project enough land and sea power to protect their shores, colonies, and trade routes. This is significant because most military theorists suspect that Starland could afford an army on par with Kez and a navy to rival the BGTC—if they had any interest in escalating tensions with any of their neighbors. Though the Starlish government denies having attempted to spark such tensions, border raids by suspiciously well-organized militias have been looting Unice towns for two years now.

## Sorcery

Starland has a medium-sized royal cabal. Even among other cabals, the Starlish Privileged are considered arrogant and enamored of their own power. They prefer a life of study and training rather than active participation in the politics or the wars of their country. Rumor has it that the Starlish royal cabal and Queen Audren have a cold relationship and that the queen has commissioned a special bodyguard of powder mages. It is unknown whether this bodyguard is a response to a threat from her own cabal or if it is just a practical modernization in emulation of the Adrans.

## Geography

Starland sits on the southwestern edge of the Nine. It shares borders with Bakashka and Unice. It has a tropical climate in the north, with temperate islands off the southern coast. It is said to have the best weather in the Nine. Starlish territory includes the large island of Stewart just off the coast of the mainland.

The capital of Starland is Wellens, which is located on the western coast of the Nine at the mouth of the Ish River. It is a bustling trading



city of one and a quarter million people, renowned for its immense schools, which include Starland College, Harrington University, and the mysterious Fountain Academy. Starland is ruled by Queen Audren VI from the Glittering Isle off the coast of Wellens.

Stewart, the largest city on the island of the same name, is the second-biggest city in Starland and includes several university campuses as well as an immense trading port and a bustling tourist economy that includes nobility from almost every country attempting to escape the harsh winters or blistering summers of their own lands.

## VIPs

Danie Wellen, 57, is the longstanding Minister of Education. Perhaps the second most powerful person in Starland, Danie is descended from the family for which the capital city is named. She is studious, careful, and competent. She's also publicly an ex-lover of Queen Audren, a fact that creates quite a lot of tension in the Starlish government.

Michallo Forbis, 41, is the newly elected dean of Fountain Academy. Most people think he is a mildly successful merchant in Wellens, and his real name and occupation are known to only a few. Michallo is wildly ambitious and is rumored to have murdered the former dean to take his spot. His enemies among the university heads of Starland are numerous, and those who know him well consider him too volatile to hold his position for long.

Kormere, 38, is the Starlish ambassador to Bakashka. Kormere is an utterly incompetent woman whose sole purpose (unbeknownst to her) is to convince the Bakashkan government that Starland thinks itself too good for Bakashkan land. Her bumbling conceals Starlish provocations on the Bakashkan border.

## Current Schemes

The dean of Harrington University suspects that Michallo Forbis murdered his way to the top seat at Fountain Academy. Believing that such a powerful position should not be in the hands of someone of dubious character, she has hired a group of heroes to investigate the former dean's death and come up with conclusive proof of the murder.

Danie Wellen has information of a wagon train of the queen's gold heading through the streets of Wellens in one week's time. The gold is slated for freedom fighters in Brudanian-Fatra, and Danie would like it used . . . elsewhere. She will pay richly for the gold to be delivered to her country estate outside the city.



# Unice

*The Uni are a peculiar people. I wouldn't call them unpleasant, nor do I think of them as particularly likeable. Maybe it's that they never seem content where they are—always wanting to head toward the next stop on an endless journey not even they have mapped out. Now that I think about it, I've never actually met a happy Uni.*

*—From the journal of an unknown Starlish merchant*

Unice is a large country in the center of the Nine founded by the god Unice. Not particularly bright, but possessing a character prone to action, Unice claimed an immense portion of the center of the continent early in Kresimir's reign and set about "domesticating" the native population.

## The People

The Uni range from dark olive-skinned in the south to white-skinned in the north, with a lot of variety between. Even the poorest members of society tend to travel, leaving them a very large vagrant population that survives by offering unskilled labor. Their literacy rate is not very high, and education is considered an unnecessary luxury by most of the population.

## Recent History

Internationally, Unice has too much going on inside her borders to actually get anything done. The last twenty years have seen the deaths of no fewer than eleven baron-kings by natural causes, accident, or assassination. Constant shifts in power between the mighty noble families leave even foreign ambassadors unsure of who is actually in charge at any given moment.

## **Famine**

The famines that have plagued most of the Nine in the last decade managed to hit Unice harder than anywhere else. The government has kept official numbers hidden, but it's said that millions have died of starvation. Baron-King Osmen's mother was torn apart during a bread riot in Ebstan, and Baron-King Siirt lost two sons when their coastal barge was sunk by hungry rebels. Only aid from Novi, Kez, and Adro kept the deaths from escalating further. Relationships with those three countries cooled significantly when the Unice government refused to acknowledge the aid, pretending, in the words of Kaysi, that "everything in our gorgeous nation is fine."

The famine was accompanied by widespread economic collapse. Unice defaulted on several debts, and their local currency plummeted, forcing



them to adopt the Adran krana in order to save the central banks. The Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company stepped in and bought up huge swaths of land throughout the country, including millions of acres of coast and desert. There was even talk of Unice becoming a vassal state to Kez until the Adran-Kez War began.

## Important Institutions

### **The Baron-Kings**

Unice is ruled by a trio of baron-kings, a hereditary title passed down to the firstborn of three ancient families. This arrangement is said to date back to the Time of Kresimir, when a group of triplets could not decide which of them should claim the throne. In theory, it creates a system in which no one man or woman has enough power to ruin the country on their own. In practice, the baron-kings are a group of squabbling inbreds who barely have a brain between them. The country is mostly run by a parliament of landed lords supported by a royal cabal more interested in fighting among themselves than leading the nation.

The current baron-kings of Unice include the elderly, half-mad Kaysi. She was once considered a capable statesman, but her mental health has declined rapidly in recent years with no sign of deterioration of the body, so most scholars suspect she'll continue to rule for another decade unless she's assassinated. Her cousin, Siirt of Bannen, is a bloated, middle-aged frog of a man whose recent conversion to the Reform Church has caused much strife in the government. He's since delved into gastronomical impulses that would make even the finest chef blush. The final baron-king is the seventeen-year-old Osmen. By all accounts an effeminate, moderately intelligent young man, he is Unice's best hope for any real progress in the near future.



## Politics

Unice is a longtime ally of both Kez and Novi. They are a moderately religious people who have spent several centuries trying to end the schism between the Kresim Church and the Reform Church with little success. They have strong cultural dislike of the Starlish, considering them to be a stuck-up, overcivilized people, and their relationship with bordering Bakashka runs the gamut from lukewarm to heated, depending on the current trio of baron-kings. Despite these longtime enmities and alliances, the government of Unice gets so little done that they rarely involve themselves in the affairs of others. They have almost no colonial presence.

Most scholars consider Unice's impact on the world stage to be negligible despite their large population. They are known only for their horses, which are bred in the deserts of central Unice and sold throughout the Nine. The horses are small, but very beautiful and quick, and they are prized by racers, nobility, and dragoons. It's said that the average Uni horse sees more of the world than the average Uni nobleman.

## Military

The Unice military, such as it is, consists of an entirely conscripted corps of infantry separated into northern and southern divisions. Ranks are static, with very little advancement, resulting in tired, aged senior officers surrounded by lackadaisical junior officers waiting around for their elders to expire.

The pride of the Unice military is a small but highly effective trio of light cavalry brigades, each of which reports directly to one of the baron-kings. They are called the High-Baron Horses and are known worldwide for their skill in the saddle. Unfortunately, the military experience of both light cavalry and conscripted infantry is limited to small-scale interventions in Strenland and border skirmishes with Bakashka. It is generally expected that they would collapse under the pressure of a real war, and military philosophers throughout the Nine hold their breath for the day when Starland decides to test that theory.





## Sorcery

The Unice royal cabal is over a hundred members strong, making them the largest cabal left in the Nine. The training and power of their sorcery has often been brought into question, as they are largely untested against real-world enemies. The cabal passes its time engaging in the petty politics of the Unice government, fighting among themselves for prestige, and engaging in consequenceless duels.

Although untested, the sheer size of the cabal would allow for significant power projection if one of the baron-kings managed to consolidate power and organize his Privileged.



## Geography

Unice shares borders with Kez, Bakashka, and Starland. Its borders also include both coasts of the Nine, and it has the second-largest population on the continent. Unice is a tropical country, containing some rainforest in the north and vast deserts in the midlands. It has almost no mountains and only a few hilly regions of any note. Most of the population lives in the north or the very far south, leaving the deserts to be ruled by tribal shepherds who operate outside the confines of modern law.

The capital of Unice changes seasonally. In the winter, it is located in the city of Den on the east coast, right next to the border with Bakashka. In the summer, it is located far to the north, in Ebstan, on the very tip of the Cape of Uni. Because of this odd phenomenon, the Unice government is said to be always on the move, conducting more business in the cabins of their luxurious coastal barges than in their actual halls of administration.



## VIPs

Hentriet Jors, 67, is the aged admiral of the government armada, which consists of the coastal barges and their escort, that moves the political class between Den and Ebstan throughout the year. She is rumored to be involved in no fewer than five of the baron-kings' "accidental" deaths. Despite circumstantial evidence supporting these rumors, she has not been removed from her post.

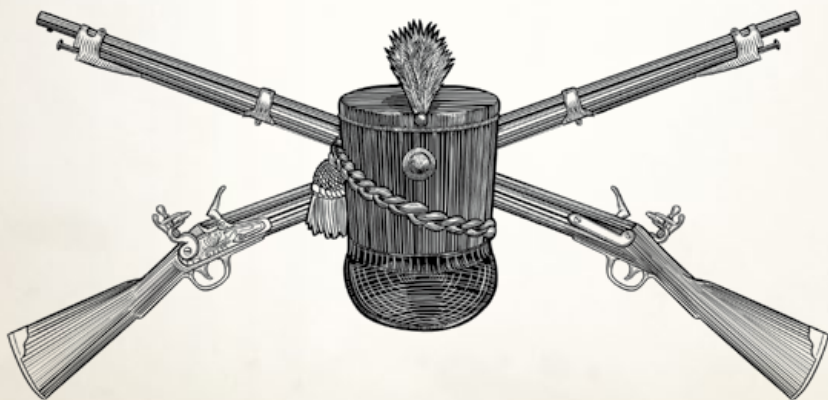
Osmen, 17, is the youngest of the baron-kings, and is considered the best chance for Unice to advance to the modern age with any amount of dignity. Handsome, kind, and at least a little bit clever, he is well-liked by the officers of his High-Baron Horse brigade and so watched closely to guard against assassination.

Emila Blackrat, 32, is a colonel in the High-Baron Horse of Baron-King Kaysi. Despite being the niece of Kaysi, she has earned her position by displaying competence in command rather than simple nepotism. She has an influence in both capitals that far outshines her station, probably because of her natural wit, charm, and martial proclivities.

## Current Schemes

A man claiming to represent the Starlish government has offered a large bounty for the death of Siirt of Bannen. Arrangements have been made for a number of assassins to be snuck onboard Siirt's private barge when it sets sail for Den next week.

Parties from the court of Baron-King Osmen wish to see Admiral Jors retire by the end of the year. So far, Jors has refused requests that she pass on her mantle, but she may be persuaded if her favorite grandson is kidnapped.



# LANDS BEYOND THE NINE

*The world outside the Nine is populated by uncivilized little beasties. Either we must ignore them or subjugate them entirely. Nothing in between is acceptable.*

*—King Manhouch XII's statement on Adran colonialism, just days before being overthrown by Field Marshal Tamas*

## Brudanian-Fatra

*Brudanian-Fatra is a resource. The land, the minerals, the forests, even the people—they belong to us. We will squeeze it until everything on that continent is dead, barren rock. Then—and only then—will we cut it loose.*

*—Lord Grenalford, when asked if the BGTC would support Brudanian-Fatran independence*

Brudanian-Fatra is a landmass on the western side of the Pelos Ocean. It is within a relatively easy ship ride of both Fatrasta and Dynize and is thought to have once been part of the Dynize Empire, which spanned the continents of the western hemisphere. Brudanian-Fatra, otherwise known as Fatra for short, is mostly owned by the Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company.

The largest city is New Pyre, located on the western corner of what cartographers call the Arrowhead of Fatra. It is a major port, rivaled in this part of the world only by Landfall in terms of sheer volume. New Pyre is ostensibly a semi-independent city-state vassal of the Brudanian crown, but it is owned and operated almost entirely by the BGTC.





## The People

Before colonization by the Nine, Fatra was originally home to hundreds of independent tribes and warlord-ruled territories. The largest of these tribes was called the Fatra, but they have long since been wiped out by colonial-minded Kressians. Their legacy remains in lending their name to the continents of Brudanian-Fatra and Fatrasta and to the enslaved natives all across the former.

The Fatra, like their distant cousins in Dynize and Fatrasta, are predominantly red haired, with white skin covered by dense, ashen freckles. They are small in stature and sickly, though anthropologists believe that this is entirely due to nearly a century of poor treatment at the hands of the BGTC.

## History

Very little is known about the pre-Kressian era of Brudanian-Fatra history. Archeological evidence suggests that it was once ruled by the vast Dynize Empire. Written history has been all but destroyed by the BGTC and oral history suppressed, leaving modern scholars with next to nothing with which to study the continent and its people.

Brudanian-Fatra was discovered by Rosvelean explorers roughly seven hundred years ago, though it wasn't settled by Kressians for another couple of centuries, after which it was victim to a brutal and thorough colonial expansion by countries of the Nine. Tracts of land have been exchanged through war and trade deals ever since, though the majority of the Brudanian-Fatra is now controlled by the BGTC, with a few minor Starlish holdings.

## **The Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company**

Fatra is the largest single land holding of the BGTC and has been for almost six decades. The trading company rules Fatra with little to no government oversight and has enslaved the populace with a brutality that increasingly concerns the nations of the Nine. They are completely unopposed, with one exception: there are substantiated rumors that a single large tribe still rules the center of the continent. They live in the jungle-covered mountains of the interior, pillaging plantations and providing a safe haven for runaway slaves. Through guerrilla warfare, they



have destroyed every army sent to conquer them. The BGTC suppresses information regarding their presence, though rumors abound in Kressian newspapers. It's said their knowledge of BGTC tactics suggest outside help—most likely from the Starlish. The Starlish government has made no official comment on the matter.

## Sorcery

As with the rest of the history of Brudanian-Fatra, little is known about sorcery on the continent. Early colonial records indicate solitary examples of tribal Privileged, though nothing as organized as the royal cabals ever existed there. There are also early mentions of blood sorcery. Today, all magic aside from Knacked has been exterminated by Kressian powers.

## Religion

Nothing is known of the original Fatra religion. It has been ground to dust in the Kressian occupation and is likely lost to history forever. The occupiers are ostensibly members of the Kresim Church, but the Reform Church has made substantial efforts to convert the slave population in the last few decades.

## Presence in the Nine

It is relatively rare to see a Fatra in the Nine. Slavery is illegal in most of the Nine, so any Fatra brought over is, in theory, legally freed. This has created several scandals and court cases all over the Nine with mixed results, so the BGTC has gone to great pains to keep most Fatra from leaving the continent.

In a strange twist of fashion, it has become trendy among upper-class Brudanians to have a household “freemen” Fatra acting as footmen or bodyguards at their residence in Brudania. A freeman is legally a free person but often has a family members back home who are held in thrall to ensure continued loyalty.

Most Fatra, even these freemen, are often regarded as stupid savages, though anthropologists are quick to point out that if provided with a healthy upbringing and education, the Fatra are the physical and mental equal of any Kressian.



# Dynize

*I don't trust the Dynize. I don't trust their silence. No entity that calls itself an empire will be content with its own shores. Someday their isolationism will end, and Fatrasta will be the first to suffer.*

*—Lady Chancellor Lindet of Fatrasta, in a private letter to Ricard Tumbler, First Minister of Adro*

The Dynize continent, located between Fatrasta and Gurla and north of the Keradic Ocean, is the home of the Dynize Empire, a mysterious nation that once ruled over the entirety of the western hemisphere.

The Dynize Empire has been isolationist since its contact with the Nine. Interaction between the civilizations has been minimal, with only a handful of open port cities accepting foreign traders and dignitaries, who were always relegated to local Kressian districts and prevented from traveling inland. These ports have since been closed to outsiders.

## The People

The Dynize people are red haired with pale skin and ashen freckles. They are militaristic, thriving on order and organization. They have a rigid caste system, which is best described by a credo that translates, “Every Dynize citizen is equal. Some are more equal than others.”

## History

Almost nothing is known of Dynize history. Unlike Fatra history—records of which were actively stamped out by Kressian occupiers—Dynize history has been intentionally withheld due to the nation's isolationism.

It is known that the Dynize Empire has been around in some form or another for longer than any nation in the world. It existed before the Bleakening, though it had its own world-shaking event during that time that forced it to withdraw from the continents now known as Fatrasta and Brudanian-Fatra.

Kressian contact with the Dynize Empire first occurred roughly seven hundred years ago. When Kressians landed on Dynize shores, they expected a splintered, tribal society like those found on Fatrasta and Brudanian-Fatra. Instead, they discovered a country almost as big as Gurla unified under a single banner. There were a handful of bloody, disastrous wars, after which an uneasy peace was established and the aforementioned isolationist foreign policy and Kressian districts were established in Dynize port cities.



Little changed until a century ago, when an internal cataclysm—the details of which are still unknown—caused the Dynize to expel all outsiders and withdraw in on themselves. No contact has been made since, and the borders are still closed.

## Sorcery

The Dynize developed their own cabal system of Privileged sorcerers that allowed them to counter early Kressian forces. The power of the Dynize cabal is not currently known, nor do scholars know if they ever developed their own policy toward powder mages.

The Dynize blood sorcerers, known as bone-eyes, have been a source of mystery and speculation for centuries. It's known that the bone-eyes enjoy a high rank within the Dynize government, either equal or above Privileged, but no one is certain what they actually do. None were ever captured in battle or studied, and scholars have been forced to assume that the blood sorcerers are a phenomenon of the western hemisphere.

There is an unsubstantiated theory among sorcerous scholars that powder mages are a phenomenon of the eastern hemisphere as the bone-eyes are of the west. This theory makes many claims about how this proves the independent evolution of magic, but it remains publicly ignored by the cabals of the Nine.

## Religion

Like the rest of the country, Dynize religion is shrouded in mystery. Some claim that a living god still exists in Dynize, worshiped by the people and only addressed personally by the emperor. Others claim that the Dynize never had a real god to begin with and that the emperor is their god, reincarnated with each new generation. There is even speculation that the bone-eyes are priests to a living—though comatose—god that is kept alive through blood sacrifices.

It is all hearsay.

## Presence in the Nine

There is currently no known Dynize presence in the Nine. It's rumored that a woman named Ka-poel, companion of the Adran hero Taniel Two-shot, was actually a powerful Dynize bone-eye. However, Ka-poel perished with Taniel at the end of the Adran-Kez War, making confirmation of such rumors impossible.





# Fatrasta



*Fatrasta is like no place I've ever been. The coastal cities teem with all the technology and luxuries of modern life, yet just a few hundred miles inland, and you will come across Palo who have never seen a gun or a ship or a lantern. There are rumors about an entire country deep in the interior. I am determined to find them and bring them into the light.*

*—Alen ja Bahr, explorer and missionary, in a letter written just before the disappearance of his expedition over the Ironhook Mountains*

Fatrasta is an immense continent in the western hemisphere that was once part of the Dynize Empire. It is home to thousands of tribal societies scattered across the biggest unexplored wilderness remaining in the world. It is also home to a nation of the same name—an independent country formed by Kressian immigrants on the southeast edge of the continent.

The capital of the Fatrastan nation is Landfall, which rivals New Pyre in size and export volume. Fatrasta is ruled by Lady Chancellor Lindet and is populated by races from every continent in the world (with the possible exception of Dynize).

## The People

The Fatrastan people can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of immigrants from across the world. Most of these are Kressians from the Nine Nations, but they also include Fatra slaves, Gurlish, and Stren. Most immigrants came to Fatrasta seeking work, land, or riches. Some, however, were brought in as labor for the countless plantations and mines found across the continent.

The second group are native-born Fatrastans of foreign descent. These are people whose ancestors came to Fatrasta for the above reasons. Fatrastans differentiate themselves from Kressians, proudly claiming their new heritage as members of the world's youngest nation-state. They are welcoming to immigrants as long as those immigrants are willing to put aside their cultural histories to become part of this new world.

The third group are the Palo. These are the native people of Fatrasta. Like their cousins on Dynize and Brudanian-Fatra, they are fair skinned with ashen freckles and red hair. As with the Fatra, "Palo" is just a word used to describe a people who have hundreds of different tribes and cultures with their own histories, religions, and ways of life. Unlike the Fatra, the Palo have not been entirely subjugated.





While the Palo are regarded as second-class citizens within Fatrasta, and often as savages by those in the Nine, they are spread out across an enormous continent. Perhaps the most infamous are the Palo of the Tristan Basin, an enormous swamp in southwestern Fatrasta. These Palo gave the Kez, and now the Fatrastan government, endless trouble. They raid towns and forts and even attack passing armies, then fade back into a swamp that has proved almost impenetrable. This phenomenon is actually a problem across the continent, as Palo tribes have proved troublesome in any rough terrain, including jungles, mountains, and forests. Lady Chancellor Lindet has begun a campaign by the Fatrastan armies to “tame the frontier,” which has so far proved slow going.

“City Palo” is the term used to describe Palo who have given up their tribal heritage. They often work as laborers throughout the Fatrastan nation. While slavery is not legal in the same way it is in Brudanian-Fatra, the city Palo are often treated poorly compared to their Kressian counterparts.

Rumors abound among explorers of a country existing in Northern Fatrasta that calls itself the Palo Nation. Very little is known about them, but explorers tell tales of a cohesive state that has rejected tribalism and forcibly united their neighbors. These rumors speak of large-scale modernization that includes a study of Kressian philosophy and a widespread pursuit of education. If this nation really exists, it does so in the interior of the continent and has made no effort to make contact with Kressian powers or even the government of Fatrasta.

## History

Fatrasta was once part of the vast Dynize Empire. Only oral history and a few written records exist from that time period, but it seems that a Fatrastan Empire remained for several hundred years after the withdrawal of the Dynize. This empire eventually gave way to civil wars and a series of terrible plagues that destroyed much of the population. Communication lines disappeared and technology was lost, and the people broke into hundreds of tribes, each of which created their own unique—but often similar—culture over the course of the next thousand years.

Fatrasta was discovered about seven hundred years ago by Rosvelean explorers. It was originally thought to be part of Brudanian-Fatra and only later discovered to be a wholly separate—and much larger—landmass.



While Fatrasta has been the target of Kressian colonial aggression since its discovery, it was not subjugated with nearly as much ferocity as Gurla or Brudanian-Fatra. Some scholars claim that this is because of the continent's dense swamps and jungles, while others point to the forbidding Ironhook Mountains that protect the route into the interior.

Regardless of the reason, most of the continent remains untamed and even unexplored to this day, while the southeastern edge of the continent has been heavily settled and provides the nation of Fatrasta with immense exports from farms, plantations, and mines.

The nation itself is a recent creation. The continent was divided into a number of colonial holdings that were, over time, consolidated under Kez rule. The Kez governed Fatrasta with a heavy hand, stirring a rebellion led by a young provincial governor named Lindet. The rebellion gained ground until it grew into a full-blown war that taxed Kez resources to a stalemate and eventual loss. Just five years ago, King Ipille of Kez regretfully surrendered all Kez territory on the continent, giving birth to the nation of Fatrasta under the leadership of Lady Chancellor Lindet.

## Sorcery

The nation of Fatrasta has a modern approach to sorcery very much like that of the Nine. Lady Chancellor Lindet has a private cabal that serves at her whim. Most of its members were coerced over from the Kez cabal during the Fatrastan War of Independence, though some appear to have come from the immigrant population. Rumor has it that Lindet would like to create her own powder cabal but has had a hard time finding powder mages in Fatrasta.



*Fatrastan War Hero Ben Styke*





Very little is known about Palo sorcery. Knacked appear to exist in roughly equal numbers among the Palo as they do in the Nine, while Palo Privileged seem to be very rare, with only a handful left in the deepest Palo enclaves.

The Palo relationship with blood magic seems to be different than the Dynize bone-eyes'. While bone-eyes appear to exist in most tribes, it is an honorary title of a matron or patron of the tribe rather than a title linked to sorcery. This has caused much confusion among scholars attempting to study blood magic, and it's unknown whether bone-eyes with real sorcerous ability exist in Fatrasta.

## Religion

A religious study of Fatrasta could fill a library's worth of books. Between the ancestral faiths of the immigrants and the differing traditions of the Palo tribes, religion on the continent is so varied that no one religion has particular preeminence. A respected religious scholar recently claimed that Fatrasta was a land of all gods and no gods.

In general terms, most Kressian immigrants have some sort of attachment to the Kresim Church, as immigrants from Stren and Gurla do to their respective religions. Palo tribes vary from monotheism to shamanism and seemingly everything in between, with rumors that there are groups in the far north who have eschewed religion altogether.

## Presence in the Nine

Fatrasta has open trade with every nation in the Nine, even going so far as to provide goods to both sides of the Kez Civil War. They have a contentious relationship with the BGTC, as Lindet does not give them special treatment over other big trading companies in regards to government contracts.

Since the nation's war for independence and subsequent opening of trade, Palo have become more common throughout the Nine. They are often household servants, bodyguards, or sailors with the big merchantmen that hail from Fatrasta's ports. It seems to have become a fashion for Palo communities to pool their resources to send one bright young son or daughter to the Nine for a Kressian education. There are even a handful of permanent immigrants who have come by their own means.



# Gurla

*I have now spent a significant portion of my life in Gurla. During that time, I have come to both love and hate this rugged, unfriendly land. I wish the opportunity to explore it on my own, rather than march across it at the head of an army. Perhaps when Taniel is older and I have retired from the military, we can tour the continent at our leisure.*

—Field Marshal Tamas, in a letter to his wife during the Gurlish Wars

Gurla is a continent on the eastern side of the Gurlish Ocean. It is east of the Nine, north of Strenland, and west of Dynize. It has many large cities that all claim to be the capital of the continent. There is Sept, seat of the Septofel Empire, in the north; Nevgrad, the ancient capital of the now defunct Novi Empire, in the west; and Bakshen, the power base of Bakashkan colonial power, in the south.

Gurla has a predominantly dry climate, with hundreds of separate deserts, mostly concentrated in the south. Populations tend to be centered on the large rivers that bisect the continent, though there is a strong nomadic tradition.

## The People

The people of Gurla are collectively known as Gurlish, but they are hardly a cohesive ethnic group. The term includes the Septofel in the cold northwest mountains, as well as the various equatorial nomads. Most of the latter groups are wary of outsiders and content with bickering among themselves. But taken together, they control the inhospitable Stren Sea, the desert that surrounds it, and the land bridge between Gurla and Stren.

Gurlish are thought of as brown-skinned (though lighter in color than Deliv),





tall, and thin. This description is best associated with the northern Gurlish—the Septofel—and many Kressians would be surprised to find Gurlish as white as Adrans living as nomads in the south and as dark as Deliv scratching out a living in the central mountains. In short, referring to the people of Gurla with one collective term is a vast oversimplification of a continent full of ethnically diverse peoples.

## History

Gurla does not exist as a single nation. Rather, it contains a number of small states that have changed drastically over the last two thousand years due to internal strife and colonial aggression on the part of the Nine.

The best-known and longest-standing Gurlish power is the Septofel in northwestern Gurla. Records there go back to the beginning of the written word. At one point, the Septofel Empire ruled almost the entire continent. They were conquered about six hundred years ago during a long war with Novi in which Novi effectively supplanted them as the rulers of Gurla.

Over the centuries, Novi power eroded in the region until it was just a shadow of its former self, and the Septofel Empire reemerged and reconquered the northern half of the continent. Novi then pulled out of the region entirely, leaving a power vacuum that began what came to be known as the Gurlish Wars.

Bakashka was the first to invade, seeing Gurla as a ripe fruit whose resources could kick-start modernization. What they found instead was a series of wars and the beginning of a colonial period that eventually involved the entirety of the Nine.

Bakashka swiftly conquered almost all of Gurla and parts of Strenland. The rest of the Nine Nations, envious of Gurlish riches, then seized land both from the natives and Bakashka. Soon, proxy wars were being fought all across the continent. Alliances shifted from year to year, entire wars were fought with little real gain, and slices of Gurla bigger than most Kressian countries have changed hands more times than one can easily count.

The Septofel Empire, fighting back against Bakashka, was almost entirely contained by an unlikely alliance between Adro and Kez. The rise of Field Marshal Tamas coincided with the peak of Adran colonial power until an unexpected illness put the Iron King of Adro on his deathbed and his armies were recalled. The Kez, then confronted with rising unrest in Fatrasta, were caught off guard, and they, too, abandoned much of their territory.





Today, the remaining colonial powers of the Nine continue to maintain a strong presence on Gurla, albeit with mixed success. The Septofel Empire has regained no small amount of strength, and rumors say that a little-known queen has been uniting the nomads of the south. Bakashka still holds immense swaths of land, with other members of the Nine each attempting to keep some holdings there.

## Sorcery

Historically, Gurlish sorcery is considered substandard when compared to the cabals of the Nine. Though the Gurlish have a higher proportion of Privileged in their populations than the Nine do, their Privileged tend to have far less raw power than the Privileged of the Kressian nations. This has resulted in many odd power imbalances during the wars of the colonial period, most of which depended entirely on how well the Gurlish Privileged were able to organize and work together. Much of the recent success of the Septofel Empire can be traced to the organization of its Privileged into a genuine cabal.

Knacked are also found at a higher rate among the people of Gurla. On a cultural level, they are not given the same kind of deference that a Knacked might find in the Nine, but they still often rise to positions of preeminence in diverse fields of work and study across the continent.

Powder mages have been found in Gurla, but they are very rare. Some scholars suggest that this is another instance of sorcerous evolution at work, while others believe that Kez pogroms exterminated many of the powder mage bloodlines in the early colonial period.

## Religion

Gurlish religion varies from region to region in small, isolated groups of vaguely related pantheons, with one large exception: Solenpan. Solenpan is a multifaced god of sun, fire, and the desert. His worship is thought to originate from the southern nomads, who bathe themselves by scrubbing their bodies with fine sand. They avoid water as sustenance, preferring to drink fermented, plant-based beverages, which they believe hold the essence of the sun.

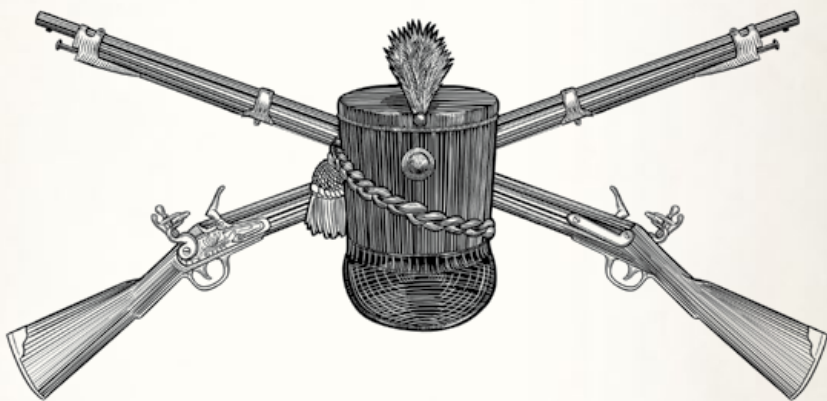
Solenpan does not have active missionaries; the religion spreads entirely by word of mouth. It has even crossed the ocean and taken root in Bakashka—one of the only foreign religions to ever have a serious following in the Nine.



One strange event should be noted when mentioning the Gurlish religion: supposedly, a young Gurlish god was murdered by an alliance of Kressian cabals sometime during the Gurlish Wars. Nothing is known about this god—whether he was Solenpan or the deity of some other religion—and the Kressian cabals all scoff at these reports, claiming it to be hearsay. The only records of it come from the journals of the soldiers who were at the battle, and these are dismissed as a mass hallucination.

## Presence in the Nine

A large population of Gurlish live within the Nine. The earliest group was brought over as slaves by the Novi during the height of their empire, while the most recent are immigrants who have fled Gurla for the relative stability of the Nine. These immigrants are almost always treated as second-rate citizens, though some of them are educated in Gurlish universities and able to find work in the upper echelons of Kressian society.



# Strenland

*Are you joking? I love the Stren. They're kind to missionaries, they pay their taxes on time, and they don't travel enough to cause international incidents. A city in the Stren Republic is the best colonial vassal a ruler could ask for, and I wouldn't upset that balance for any political gain.*

*—a prominent Bakashkan nobleman on whether the Stren Republic should be dissolved*

Strenland is a continent attached to the southern edge of Gurla by a narrow land bridge. It contains a loose coalition of ancient city-states that call themselves the Stren Republic.

The city of Qarshez, located on the west coast of the continent, has been the capital of the Stren Republic for almost eighteen hundred years. It is a dual city straddling the points of the Bay of Ko'lean. It is ruled by the Stren Senate, which is a governing body made up of elected representatives from every city in the Republic. The largest city is Atastan, which is located on the southwest tip of the continent.

## The People

The Stren are a proud, thoughtful people whose cultural emphasis on philosophy has led to a relatively peaceful history—the Stren Republic can count in centuries the time since their last major internal war. The Stren tend to be quiet, hardworking, and prone to melancholy. Their schools have recently begun to acquire no small fame among the Nine, and their scholars are often invited as teachers and guest lecturers in Kressian universities.

Most Kressians find the Stren physically indistinguishable from the Gurlish, and often mistake the Stren for their northern cousins. The two continents do share a common ethnic heritage thought to originate from the shores of the Stren Sea that divides them.

As a whole, the Stren are a more cohesive people than the Gurlish; there is free travel across the entire continent, and the common language has far fewer regional dialects than Gurlish.



## The History

The records of the Stren Republic go back to roughly 200 TK and begin with a small alliance of city-states on the western coast of the country. This alliance soon spread to include neighboring city-states, continuing outward until most of the continent considered themselves a unified force of independent cities that lived, fought, and worshiped under one banner.

The thousand years since the formation of the Stren Republic is considered by many scholars to be a golden age of philosophy and a period of remarkable peace, broken by only the occasional intercitty war of disagreement. Less impressed scholars might tell you that this was the most boring millennia that any country has ever had and are quick to point out that there were few government changes, little technological advancement, and absolutely no social mobility. The Stren Republic, they conclude, became fat and static under their own lack of ambition.

Neutral scholars will admit that it is somewhat surprising how little of this structure has changed during the Kressian colonial expansion. This expansion first reached Strenland through the Brudanian fleets about the same time as Bakashka was conquering Gurla.

In a radical experiment, Brudania began to replace Stren senators with puppets of their own while leaving almost everything else about the government and culture largely intact. It worked remarkably well, and Bakashka and eventually the rest of the Nine followed suit, carving up the Stren Republic on their own maps while the Republic itself barely seemed to notice.

The colonial expansion of the Nine did bring war back to Stren soil via the proxy wars fought by the Nine. Hundreds of thousands of Stren were conscripted from the mainland to fight in Gurla, while an influx of Kressian immigrants created tensions between cities that had not existed before. These trends continue to this day, and many scholars predict that the cultural stoicism that holds the Stren Republic together will one day collapse in a very sudden and violent way—though whether this will happen in one year or fifty, no one is willing to say.

## Sorcery

Among the Stren, sorcery is considered a national oddity. Privileged, Knacked, and even powder mages are relegated to the edges of society rather than the center, and often form the core of the traveling circuses that are so wildly popular across the Republic. Kressian cabals have actively recruited Stren Privileged for hundreds of years, but the cultural idea of sorcery for entertainment, rather than war or power plays, is so deeply ingrained in the Stren that this recruitment is rarely successful.



## Religion

The largest religion in Strenland is Gerosh, the worship of the bones of a long-dead god. The god is referred to as the Dead One, and his bones reside within a massive stone temple in the capital city, where worshipers are expected to travel on a pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime.

Followers of the Dead One believe that they can interact with their ancestral spirits, who guide them through their lives in subtle ways and protect them from harm, depending on their ability to please those ancient spirits. Involved in this is the fetishization of life force; Goresk believers are convinced of the sorcerous power of all living creatures and plants and that it can be harnessed to increase the strength of an individual or even affect the fate of a whole city. Recently, scholars have made claims that this belief comes from Dynize blood sorcery, though there is very little known contact between Stren and Dynize.

The second-largest religion in Stren is Solenpan—believed to have originated from Gurla—followed closely by the Kresim Church imported by Kressian conquerors.

## Presence in the Nine

Many Stren cities remain, on paper, colonial vassals of the Nine, though it's hard to tell if the average citizen of a Stren city even knows this is the case. The oddity of Stren culture, combined with the strange manner in which they were conquered, leaves both Kressians and Stren with a relatively amicable relationship. Stren do not tend to travel overseas very much, and when they do, they are often mistaken for Gurlish and treated worse than they might otherwise be. The Stren travelers themselves seem to take this in stride, extracting themselves from bad situations with an almost baffling politeness.

Stren expatriates are almost exclusively scholars who have been brought over to lecture at Kressian universities, or they are members of that scholar's household. These scholars tend to be known as such and are often valued members of a community.



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NINE

## Before the Time of Kresimir (BK)

- ◆ Kresimir's original reign in the Nine (dates unknown).
- ◆ The Gathering of Gods; Kresimir assembles his siblings from across the world (dates unknown).
- ◆ 1580 BK: Kresimir and his siblings depart to explore the cosmos.
- ◆ 691 BK: The founding of Adopest and formation of the Adran nation.
- ◆ 41 BK: The Council of Adopest meets to address a series of destructive wars sweeping the Nine. An agreement is made among the Predeii and the greatest rulers of the Nine to attempt to summon Kresimir.
- ◆ 38 BK: The first attempt to summon Kresimir. Millions die by sorcery.
- ◆ 22 BK: The second attempt to summon Kresimir. Half of the ancient sorcerers known as Predeii are wiped out in the sorcerous backlash.
- ◆ 1 BK: The final attempt to summon Kresimir. Success.

## The Time of Kresimir (TK)—approximately 374 years

- ◆ 0 TK: The return of Kresimir.
- ◆ 0–90 TK: Kresimir's siblings return to this world at their brother's behest.
- ◆ 1 TK: The founding of Kresim Kurga, the great mountain kingdom of Kresimir.
- ◆ 4 TK: Founding of Unice.
- ◆ 12 TK: Founding of Novi.
- ◆ 14 TK: Founding of Kez.
- ◆ 13 TK: Founding of Brudania.
- ◆ 74 TK: Founding of Bakashka.
- ◆ 93 TK: Founding of Wellens, the future capital of Starland.
- ◆ 112 TK: The arrival of the Vorinnian Flotilla, ancestors of the modern-day Deliv.
- ◆ 112–127 TK: The Vorinnian Wars between the Vorinnians and the rest of the Nine.
- ◆ 127 TK: The adoption of the Vorinnians by the god Deliv. Founding of the Deliv nation.
- ◆ 156 TK: Founding of Rosvel.

After Kresimir (AK)

***Note:** dates are very difficult to pin down during the Bleakening. The current system (AK) was agreed upon by Kressian scholars in 1032 AK.*

- ◆ 0 AK: Disappearance of Kresimir and his siblings.
- ◆ 11 AK: War breaks out between Starland and Unice. This is the official beginning of the Bleakening.
- ◆ 11–301 AK: The Bleakening: a war between the new monarchies of the Nine and the Predeii.
- ◆ 98 AK: The Council of Prishta results in the founding of the Kresim Church.
- ◆ 104 AK: The city-state of Wellens becomes the nation of Starland.
- ◆ 301 AK: The last of the Predeii, Julene, is defeated in Rosvel. Her allies are scattered, and she is thought killed in the sorcerous firestorm that accompanied the battle.
- ◆ 643 AK: Discovery of Brudanian-Fatra and Fatrasta by Rosvelean sailors.
- ◆ 731 AK: Discovery of Dynize by Brudanian sailors.
- ◆ 812 AK: The beginning of the Novi conquest of Gurla.
- ◆ 874 AK: The formation of the Novi Empire.
- ◆ 952 AK: Founding of the Kresim Reform Church.
- ◆ 987 AK: First major settlement in Fatrasta, consisting of Adrans and Kez.
- ◆ 1001 AK: First major settlement in Brudanian-Fatra, consisting of Starlish.
- ◆ 1256 AK: Official fall of the Novi Empire.
- ◆ 1270 AK: Brudania strips Rosvelean forests under the infamous Red Dolphin Treaty.
- ◆ 1349 AK: The founding of the BGTC.
- ◆ 1380 AK: Dynize closes all ports and borders to international trade.
- ◆ 1405 AK: Bakashkan invasion of Gurla begins the Gurlish Wars.
- ◆ 1405–1478 AK: The Gurlish Wars.
- ◆ 1421–1429 AK: The Kresim Inquisition of Bakashka.
- ◆ 1430 AK: The power loom is invented in Del, kicking off the Industrial Era.

- ◆ 1454 AK: The Plague of Storious.
- ◆ 1471–1482 AK: Inclement weather creates widespread famine across the globe.
- ◆ 1476 AK: Sinking of the Eighth Merchantman Fleet by the pirate Gorgantis.
- ◆ 1480–1483 AK: The Fatrastan War of Independence.
- ◆ 1483 AK: The Adran-Kez War; BGTC involvement leads to the Adran Disaster.
- ◆ 1484–Ongoing: The Kez Civil War.

PRESENT DAY: 1487 AK



# SORCERY

*Excerpts from Your Friend's Guide to Sorcery by an unknown author. Published in 1485 and publicly decried as nonsense by almost every major cabal. Lauded by sorcerous historians for its accuracy.*

## The Else

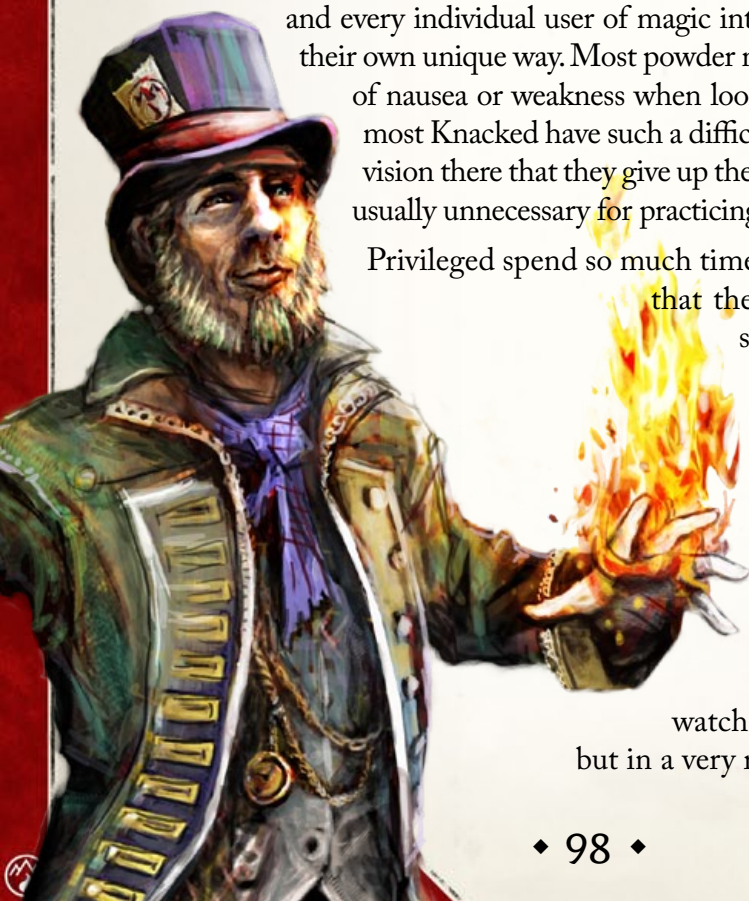
The Else is a mirror world from which sorcery originates. The ability to look into the Else using the Third Eye is shared by all magical talents, but only the Privileged can actually touch the Else—and only while wearing gloves specifically runed to keep them from burning their hands.

Looking into the Else is often described as looking at our own world through special tinted glasses. It is flat and colorless except where sorcery is actively occurring or has recently occurred. Active sorceries look like trails of vibrant pastels, while recent magics resemble deep stains upon the landscape.

Each sorcerous talent has a different relationship with the Else, and every individual user of magic interacts with the Else in their own unique way. Most powder mages report some level of nausea or weakness when looking into the Else, and most Knacked have such a difficult time achieving clear vision there that they give up the practice entirely, as it is usually unnecessary for practicing their particular talent.

Privileged spend so much time looking into the Else that they often overcome the side effects entirely.

It is absolutely vital for their practice of sorcery. Remarkably, functioning natural eyes are necessary to see the Else. It is said that a blind Privileged is about as useful as a deaf watchman—still functional, but in a very reduced capacity.





## Privileged

Privileged sorcerers form the backbone of almost every world power. Their mysterious cabals are one of the three traditional pillars of a strong monarchy (the others being the king and the nobility). This political power comes from the sheer strength of their sorcery rather than the wealth of land holdings. They often accompany armies on campaigns and advise their king in all matters.

## History

Modern cabals are descendants of the first sorcerous organizations formed during the Bleakening and used by governments to fight against the Predeii, who had attempted to seize power once Kresimir left this world. Membership in these early cabals was not optional; if a person with sorcerous ability was found within a nation's borders, they either joined the fight against the Predeii or were executed outright.

Once the Predeii were killed or driven into hiding, the cabals enforced these traditions for well over a thousand years. Only recently has their power begun to wane enough for Privileged to strike out on their own without fear of retaliation from the cabal of their birth country.

## Powers

Privileged are able to manipulate matter by utilizing the power of the Else. While wearing runed gloves, they pull sorcery into this world using their fingers and then direct that sorcery via hand gestures. Each of a Privileged's fingers corresponds to one of the elements: fire, earth, water, air, and aether. The finger used corresponds to that Privileged's strength in that element, with the thumb being the strongest and the pinky the weakest.

Particular strength in fire, earth, water, and air is more or less equally represented across any given sampling of Privileged. Aether is by far the least common and is used to bind the other four elements together. Aether is associated with the abilities of healing and creating extremely complex spells. Complexity, talent, and practice combine to determine the power of a Privileged.

Complexity has to do with the needed elements. A fireball, for instance, requires fire, air, and a tiny bit of aether to bind it. A spike of granite requires earth, air, and aether. A spike of ice is more complex, requiring all five elements because fire will be used inversely to remove the heat from the water. Most Privileged consider ice to be flashy, as it's very difficult to master. Generally, the more talent a Privileged has in aether, the easier time they have combining the elements. Most Privileged summon aether with their pinky—their weakest finger—and anything above that is considered a natural advantage.





Talent, on the other hand, is the raw power that a Privileged brings to the table. It is often measured in scale. Across Privileged, this runs the entire gamut: for instance, a Privileged with a propensity for fire might be able to light a candle, a fireplace, a fireball, or a company of soldiers. The ability to create fire and then to sustain it indicates a higher level of talent and is often sought out by the magus seekers. Obviously, each discipline has its own challenges. Fire is easier to create than ice but harder to sustain. Earth takes less practice to manipulate, but being much heavier than fire, takes more raw power. Aether is by far the most difficult to master.

Practice is simply the amount of time a Privileged has spent mastering interactions with the Else. All the talent in the world is useless without practice; you can't light a candle without learning how to reach into the Else, nor throw a fireball without learning how to bind the elements. The more a Privileged practices, the more complex the sorceries he or she can weave. This means that older Privileged—even weak ones—should not be underestimated. Privileged often focus their practice on their strongest element so that, in time, they can manipulate it without any effort at all.

## **Perception, Lies, and Secrets**

Privileged cabals have had centuries to build up their own legends, and most people consider them so powerful that they wouldn't even dream of facing down a Privileged. In reality, Privileged are fragile human beings like anyone else. Catch them on a day when their fingers are numb, and you could stab one through the eye before they could get off a spell.

Runed gloves are the key to Privileged sorcery. Without the gloves, Privileged cannot touch the Else without destroying their hands.

Kez Privileged are responsible for the creation of Wardens—sorcery-twisted humans created specifically to counter powder mages. The method of their creation is unknown even to the other cabals, but Wardens tend to be enormous in size and wildly strong. Their flesh and bones are mangled and strengthened to make them next to impossible to kill. They feel little pain and are able to keep fighting even after suffering wounds that would incapacitate any regular person.

There are rumors of Black Wardens—Wardens made out of powder mages—created during the Adran-Kez War by Kresimir himself. These rumors are unsubstantiated. If any Black Wardens do exist (and if they existed at all), they have gone into hiding or are being reserved by the Kez cabal for their moment of utmost need.



## Knacked

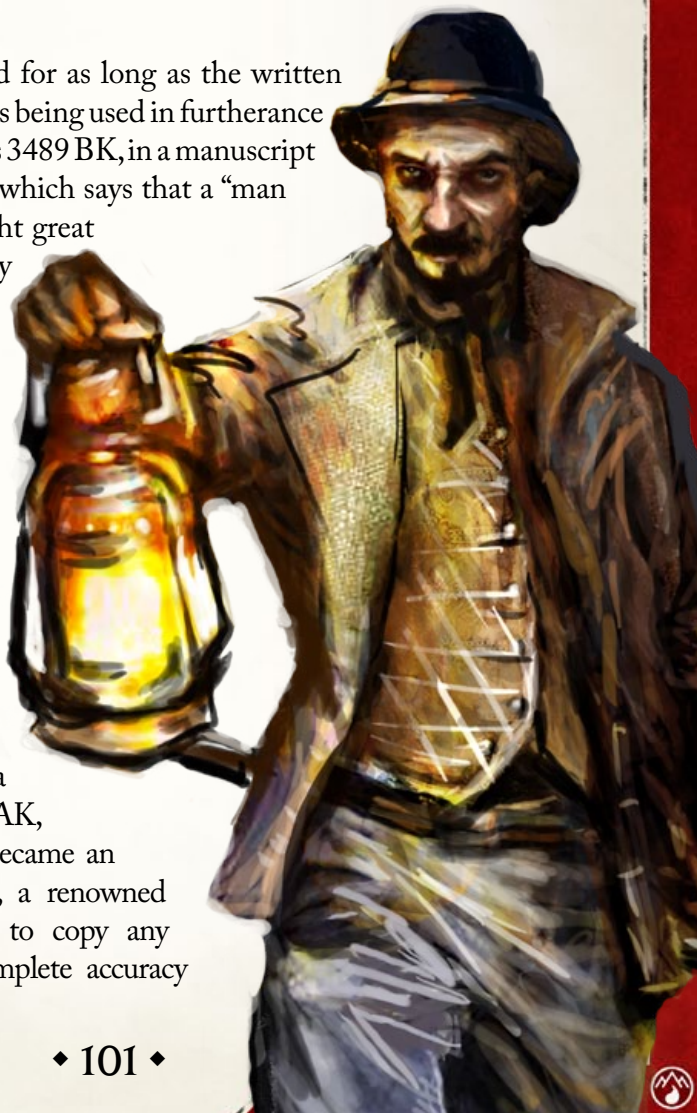
Knacked are the most common type of sorcery user throughout the world and also the most difficult to understand. A Knack is nothing more than a single talent. Some of these are very minor, like being able to count any number of objects at a glance, while a few have been as wildly powerful as being able to control the weather with a mere thought.

Sorcerous scholars are at a loss to say what, exactly, causes a Knack to manifest. There is seemingly no rhyme or reason for a child to be born with a Knack or for what their particular power might be. Some scholars claim that Knacked are the result of the same natural sorcerous mutations that created powder mages, but they have no explanation as to why powder sorcery diverged so sharply from the normal pattern of manifestations.

## History

Knacked have been around for as long as the written word. Record of their talents being used in furtherance of the state comes as early as 3489 BK, in a manuscript from the Septofel Empire which says that a “man of sorcerous talents” brought great riches to the kingdom. By staring at a field, he could cause wheat to grow from seed to maturity in a matter of minutes.

While most powerful Knacked have, throughout history, been used as extensions of the state (much like Privileged), there are several famous instances of people with Knacks utilizing their power to create a family fortune. In 537 AK, the daughter of a farmer became an infamous forger and, later, a renowned mapmaker. She was able to copy any drawing by hand with complete accuracy and in under an hour.





## Powers

Many people will flippantly say that no two Knacks are alike. This is, however, patently false. Anyone who studies sorcerous history will see that certain identical Knacks appear dozens, sometimes hundreds of times throughout time. The most common and valued of these (and often the most unappreciated historically) include Knacks of great physical strength or alacrity; Knacks involving memory, copying, or other skills useful in bookkeeping; and Knacks that involve the ability to predict the near future.

## Perception, Lies, and Secrets

Very little is secret when it comes to Knacks. Because they are so common and often useful, Knacked have never been suppressed like powder mages or universally conscripted like Privileged. A Knack manifesting itself in a family member or neighbor is often regarded as a stroke of good luck.

## Powder Mages

Powder mages, often known colloquially as “Marked,” are the wielders of a modern sorcery whose power comes from common black gunpowder.

## History

The first recorded instance of a powder mage was a Starlish peasant by the name of Floris in 921 AK. History doesn't say what happened to her, only that she showed an “affinity for manipulating gunpowder” and that most people at the time thought she was a simple Knacked. The concept of powder mages wasn't actually put forward as a common, separate sorcery until 1043 AK.

The history of powder mages is a history of suppression. Once powder mages were recognized as practicing an altogether different type of sorcery, they were initially sought out to become part of the royal cabals. That came to a quick stop when a powder mage killed the head of the Kez royal cabal with a matchlock firearm in 1062 AK. The danger that powder mages presented to traditional Privileged was immediately realized, and the Kez royal cabal led the charge in painting them as dangerous, even subhuman users of sorcery.

This perception of powder mages as something heretical was supported by the Kresim Church until the late 1300s, when the classification was quietly dropped. In 1391, the current Adran queen was the first monarch to decriminalize the existence of powder mages, recognizing that they had no control over being born with their powers and that they might one day



prove valuable tools of the state. Even still, they were considered second-class citizens and sorcery users until the 1450s.

The emergence of powder mages onto the worldwide stage coincides directly with the rise of Field Marshal Tamas, a powerful mage and tactical genius who rose to be one of the most powerful men in Adro under the rein of the eminently practical Iron King. Tamas was the first to utilize powder mages to their fullest extent, in the Gurlish Wars. He became a hero of the people and even created his own powder cabal to secretly push back against the overreaching power of the Adran royal cabal.

Today, powder mages have been formally recognized in every nation of the Nine except for Kez, where they are still considered subhuman criminals. Many of the royal cabals of the Nine have begun to integrate powder mages over the objection of their more conservative Privileged.

## **Powers**

Powder mages gain their powers by imbibing common gunpowder. This is often done by snorting or eating the powder, though some have been known to cut themselves so they can press the powder directly into the bloodstream. Imbibed, the powder makes them faster and stronger than regular people. Their senses are enhanced by an incredible degree, to the point where they can see details, hear whispers, and even catch scents from great distances.

Powder mages are also able to manipulate gunpowder. They can detonate it from a distance—usually no more than a few dozen yards, but sometimes as far as a mile away—and they can burn additional powder on their person to float a bullet over an entire battlefield. The most talented in this ability was Taniel Two-shot, who could fire two bullets at once and keep them in the air long enough to strike separate targets as far as four miles away.

## **Perception, Lies, and Secrets**

Until recently, powder mages were deeply demonized by the royal cabals of the Nine. Their sorcery was said to make them especially violent. They were compared to rabid dogs—in need of restraint or euthanizing in order to keep the moral fabric of society in one piece.

Field Marshal Tamas almost single-handedly dispelled this notion among the common people of the Nine. Though still distrusted in more rural areas (and within Kez), powder mages are widely accepted as powerful, respectable sorcerers in their own right.



One interesting tidbit to come out of the records of the Kez royal cabal is that powder sorcery can be suppressed by the introduction of gold into the bloodstream of a powder mage. This is often done as nothing more than a convenient way to sorcerously castrate a powder mage until they can be executed.

## Other Sorcery

### Magebreakers

Magebreakers are Privileged who have willed away their ability to touch the Else. This is a major loss to most Privileged, especially experienced ones, and is usually only undertaken by Privileged who are too weak to join a royal cabal or who have committed a crime egregious enough that their cabal forces them to undergo the transformation.

Magebreakers are able to null magic around them. For most, this ability extends just a few feet, forcing them to get close to a Privileged in order to block their sorcery. A powerful Privileged-turned-magebreaker, however, might be able to blanket a large part of a battlefield in their aura. It should be noted that their ability affects only Privileged, not powder mages or Knacked.

### Bone-eyes

The blood sorcery of Dynize and Fatrasta is a much-speculated topic in sorcerous circles of the Nine. Truth be told, almost nothing is known about bone-eyes, and that isn't likely to change until the Dynize Empire once again opens its borders. When that will happen is anyone's guess.



# PREGENERATED CHARACTERS

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**Name:** (Powder Mage)

**Rank:** Novice

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

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Healing d6, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4

**Charisma:** 0

**Pace:** 6"

**Parry:** 5

**Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Loyal (to his military compatriots), Greedy (Minor), Overconfident, Habit (Minor, Gunpowder)

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Powder Mage)

**Gear:** Flintlock rifle. Flintlock pistol. 30 bullets and powder horn (30 doses of powder). Uniform. Knife. 10 pre-prepared powder charges.

**Background:**

**Name:** (Knacked Bodyguard)

**Rank:** Novice

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

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidate d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

**Charisma:** -2

**Pace:** 6"

**Parry:** 6

**Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** Cautious, Mean, Bad Luck

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Knacked—Relentless: You ignore the effects of Fatigue on you), Liquid Courage, Martial Artist

**Gear:** Flintlock pistol. 10 bullets and powder horn (30 doses of powder). Knife. Club.

**Background:**



**Name:** (Mundane Politician)

**Rank:** Novice

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

**Skills:** Gambling d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge: Politics d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6"

**Parry:** 2

**Toughness:** 4

**Hindrances:** Pacifist (Minor), Yellow, Stubborn

**Edges:** Noble, Natural Leader, Command

**Gear:** Fancy clothing. Walking Cane. Paper.

**Background:**



**Name:** (Military Doctor)

**Rank:** Novice

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

**Skills:** Healing d8, Investigation d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d4, Survival d8

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6"

**Parry:** 2

**Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Pacifist (Minor), Code of Honor (help sick and hurt), Enemy (Political Enemy wants to dismantle the free clinic)

**Edges:** Luck, Rich, Healer

**Gear:** Medical Bag with tools. Book of anatomy. Nice clothing. Horse.

**Background:**



**Name:** (Privileged)

**Rank:** Seasoned

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

**Skills:** Notice d8, Investigation d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d4, Knowledge d8, Third Eye d8

**Charisma:** +0

**Pace:** 6"

**Parry:** 2

**Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** Cautious, Arrogant, All Thumbs

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Privileged), New Power (Armor), Power Points

**Power Points:** 20

**Powers:** Blast, Burst, Armor

**Gear:** Two pairs of Privileged gloves. Nice clothing. Extra 500 krana.

**Background:**





# ADVENTURES

The following pages consist of a number of pregenerated adventures. These are a good way for a new GM to get comfortable with the world and play system or for any GM to whip up a quick setting for an impromptu game night. Feel free to use bits and pieces of any of these adventures to create your own.

You may have also noticed that each nation of the Nine has several VIPs and important schemes at the bottom of its section. If you'd like to create your own adventure but want to use something that is already going on within the world (and may have far-reaching consequences!), feel free to use those people and their schemes as part of your adventure.



## PREGENERATED ADVENTURE: BLOOD IN THE ALLEY

Prominent nobleman Errol Gorloin has been murdered in an alley! Is it a horrible accident, or is there a more sinister secret at play here? Gorloin was on his way home from Constance's Carnival of Cacophony, a traveling musical event that purports to meld music from all over the Nine. Gorloin's sister, the Lady Kathleen, has hired our heroes to discover exactly what happened to her brother.

### WHAT THEY KNOW

Lady Kathleen is a weeping, sobbing mess at the loss of her brother, but she is able to divulge the following information to the investigators:

- ♦ Gorloin was found knifed to death in an alley.
- ♦ His coin purse was missing, but it was found a few streets away, money still in it.
- ♦ Only Gorloin's family knew that Gorloin was a Knacked—but Kathleen won't divulge his ability.

At the outset, the investigators have two options: retracing the steps of Lord Gorloin or questioning members of the Carnival.

## FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

### Retracing the Steps

Kathleen's information takes the investigators to the alley where Gorloin's body was found. It's a dark, grim slot of a passage not easily viewable from the street—the perfect stage for a murder.

It's obvious where Gorloin's body was found, as there is still a pool of dried blood crusting the gutter.

**Call for a Notice check.** On a success, the investigator notices streaks of blood that would indicate Gorloin's body was dragged here. On a raise, they'll notice that the blood streaks subtly indicate the body was dragged from the alley on the other side of the main road!

If the players investigate that alley, it quickly becomes apparent that there was a murder here, as the blood trail leads to a crate.

A bloody knife is hidden in the crate (it's easy to follow the blood trail here) and a successful Knowledge: Common check will tell the players the knife is very finely made (nobleman quality).

**Call for a Notice Check.** On a success, the investigators discover that they are being watched. On a raise, they realize the watcher is in a room above the alley. This watcher is **Kapli**, who is noted in the **KAPLI** section.

## INTERVIEWING THE CARNIVAL

The carnival is run by a charming and personable woman named Constance. Constance will brightly agree to answer any questions the Investigators might have. As the questioning is occurring, **call for a Notice check.** On a success, the Investigator notices they're being watched. On a raise, they noticed the watching is coming from the Adran contingent of the carnival.

When the investigators go to find out who was watching them, they are greeted by the sight of the fleeing peeper leaping into a stagecoach.

At this point, several things can happen, depending on what choices the players make. They may decide to pursue the stagecoach using nearby carnival horses, in which case a **Riding check** would be called for. Alternatively, a powder mage character might decide to try shooting off one of the stagecoach's wheels, and in order to do so would have to pass a **Shooting check** as well as use the appropriate equipment and sorcerous power. In all cases, the GM should be sure to encourage players' creativity. This can require some quick thinking, but it's well worth it in terms of fun.

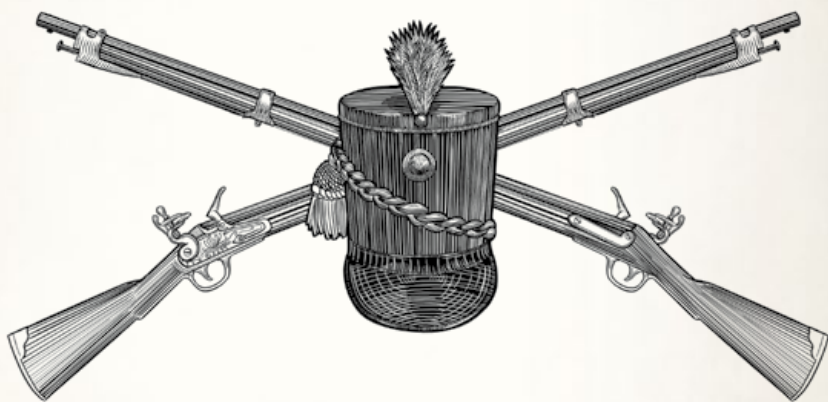


If the players manage to catch the stagecoach, they find a trembling servant inside. When questioned, this servant reveals that his name is Jean-David and that he was on his way to warn his master about the investigators.

If the investigators have already inspected the alley, they may decide to show Jean-David the knife they found. If they do, Jean-David will exclaim that it belonged to his former master, Errol Gorloin. At that point, he'll lead them to his new master, a Carnival performer named **Kapli** who has retained his services.

If they have not found the knife, Jean-David will plead with the investigators to let him go. If they do, he'll flee to warn his master. They will then have to follow by passing a **Smarts check**.

In all of these instances, a wise GM will have a backup plan to allow the story to progress even if the characters fail a skill check or two. Knowing the strengths of the party members is key in designing backup plans that provide exactly the right level of challenge for players.



## KAPLI

Kapli is in his apartment, and when the investigators confront him, he'll evade or dodge all their questions. If they present the knife found in the second alley, Kapli will get defensive, and if anyone tries to lay a hand on him, he will turn violent.

If Kapli is subdued (physically or diplomatically), upon questioning, he'll eventually reveal that he is Gorloin, and his Knacked ability allowed him to assume the identity of Kapli while forcing Kapli to look like Gorloin.

Kapli/Gorloin will claim that Kathleen has been poisoning him in an attempt to control the family fortune and weapons trade, and rather than die, he decided to fake his death and escape.

Now all that remains is for the investigators and Gorloin to confront Kathleen...

*The GM should allow this final scene to unfold in a dramatic manner.*

### Kapli Pregenerated Character Sheet for GM:

**Name:** Kapli

**Rank:** Seasoned

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

**Skills:** Gambling d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge: Politics d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6

**Charisma:** +2

**Pace:** 6"

**Parry:** 2

**Toughness:** 4

**Hindrances:** Pacifist (Minor), Yellow, Stubborn

**Edges:** Noble, Natural Leader, Command, Knacked (can copy appearance of anyone)

**Gear:** Fancy clothing. Walking Cane. Paper.



## PREGENERATED ADVENTURE: CARAVAN GUARDS

The intrepid heroes of our band have been hired to guard a caravan of weapons that are being moved to the front. Previous caravans have been attacked and gone missing, so our heroes need to be prepared. The GM should select a conflict to be the setting here, such as the Kez Civil War—but preferably one with some personal ties to the players.

Weapons merchant Jaradan Westinmarch has been supplying weapons to the front, and his last five caravans have been ambushed and robbed! The heroes have been hired to find out what's going on and ensure the safe delivery of the latest shipment.

### AMBUSH!

It's a one-week ride through a mountain pass to the front, and the first two days go uneventfully. On the early morning of the third day, the caravan is high up in the mountains, in a small valley framed by scrubby evergreens.

**Call for a Notice Roll.** Everyone can see that the road up ahead is blocked by a fallen tree, but success tells the alert hero that the tree is rigged. A raise will allow that hero to detect the ambush before it's sprung.

Immediately after the Notice roll, gunfire erupts! The heroes are caught in crossfire from the mountains.

The attackers are extras with a Shooting of d6, and their rifles deal d10 damage. There are three attackers on each side of the pass. The last attacker will surrender if all their allies go down.

Any player who passes a Notice check during the combat will see that the caravan is being ambushed by younger children (late childhood/early teenage years).

In questioning the children, the heroes will learn that the children have escaped from a nearby work camp, where they're being forced to tunnel a secret pass into the mountain so a surprise attack can be made on the army the players are sympathetic to.

The children have been robbing the caravans so they can gather enough supplies to free their friends who are still stuck at the work camp.

If the heroes want to go help the children (they should!), **call for a Persuasion check**. On a success, the children agree. On a raise, the children will also provide the players with more ammunition from their stock.





## TREACHEROUS TRAVERSE

To get the party to a good point to survey the camp and lead the ambush, **call for a Climbing check**. On a success, the players can find a good vantage point to ambush the work camp. On a raise, the players can get even higher and provide good covering fire for those who will need to assault the camp (functionally giving them a +2 to shooting rolls).

The children in the camp are chained to prevent their escape, and there are a number of guards at the camp (the number of players + 4). At least one hero will need to enter the camp to free the children.

Give the players a few moments to devise a plan.

## THE RESCUE

The guards are extras with Shooting d8 and Fighting d6, and their carbines deal d8+1 damage. There is a single Wild Card guard (the chief jailer) with the same stats.

When the players attack, the guards will immediately take cover to protect themselves and return fire. Two guards will make a break to get to a horse to escape and get help. If they're successful, d3 guards will show up in d12 turns, with d3 more coming every 3 turns after that.

Freeing the children requires passing a **Strength check** (with a -2 penalty) to break the chains or a **Lockpicking check**. There are three groups of children that are chained, so three successful checks will have to be made to free all the children.

The guards will not pursue the heroes or any freed children if the players decide to retreat. Instead, they will go back to their camp to warn their commander that their plan has been discovered.

After the children are rescued, they will return all the weapons they stole, allowing the players to get the caravan (and some extra guns) to the front!

The children can be safely handed off to the military, who will ensure they reach home, and the friendly army will send guards to patrol the area the enemy was trying to tunnel through.



## PREGENERATED ADVENTURE: SWASHING THE BUCKLE

Our heroes have been contracted to provide security for a party! However, someone is intent on ruining the debut of the newest fashion icon of the city.

A recently arrived noble, Lady Justina le Carre, is throwing an elaborate masquerade ball to introduce herself and her entourage to the social scene in the city (the GM should pick a city that makes sense given the player characters' nationalities). However, there have been some threats, and Justina wants to ensure her guests (and herself!) are protected.

### WHAT THEY KNOW

Here's what the players know going in:

- ◆ Justina has invited some of the most important nobles in the city to this party.
- ◆ A week before, Justina received a threat against her life, stating she'd be killed at the party.
- ◆ While there are normal guards, the players are being hired to infiltrate the party under the guise of guests.

### THE PARTY

As the heroes arrive, they're provided appropriate clothing in their size (information Justina gathered in advance), and they're asked to choose from the following masks:

- ◆ Peacock
- ◆ Tiger
- ◆ Wolf
- ◆ Stag
- ◆ Fish
- ◆ Rooster

The party will last for four hours.



## THE FIRST HOUR

At the start of the first hour, guests filter in, and the heroes will mingle, looking for suspicious folks. **Call for a Notice check.** On a success, the heroes notice a suspicious individual in a dragon mask loitering by the serving staff and food a bit too much. On a raise, they also discover a suspicious individual wearing a lion mask loitering near Justina.

If the players move to approach the dragon, she will blend into the crowd. A player can tail the dragon, watching as she interacts with folks, but every time they approach, the dragon will continue to evade them.

If the players move to approach the lion, she will attempt to move into a hallway or room, but they can intercept and block her. If they do so, she will select the most attractive hero (highest Charisma) and dance with them. If there is a dance, **make an Agility Check.** Success indicates the lion is impressed and continues to dance with the character. A raise indicates the lion will converse freely, indicating she is an agent for another noble who heard about the threats and wanted to ensure Justina is protected. Her name is Miliea. If a player attempts to find out, Miliea is a Privileged.

The first hour passes uneventfully otherwise.

## THE SECOND HOUR

At the start of the second hour, a scream rings out, along with a loud crash. A servant has dropped a tray of food and is hurriedly moving to pick it up as another cry rings out. A woman in a dragon mask has drawn a blade and is attempting to gut Justina!

The heroes will have to react dramatically, but before they can close with the dragon, a blast of elemental energy lifts the dragon off her feet, hurling her through a window behind Justina and out into the garden!

As the guests start to panic, a dozen armed men burst into the ball.

Thugs: Extras, Fighting d8, Strength d6, Shortswords.

There are d3 thugs per hero, and they're attempting to get to Justina. The players will have to run interference, protecting Justina as they usher her to a safe space. (Justina can suggest several in the house: the cellar, her chambers, the library, etc.)

As the guests flee, a masked vigilante enters the ball after his henchmen. Renard, the Bandit King, has arrived.



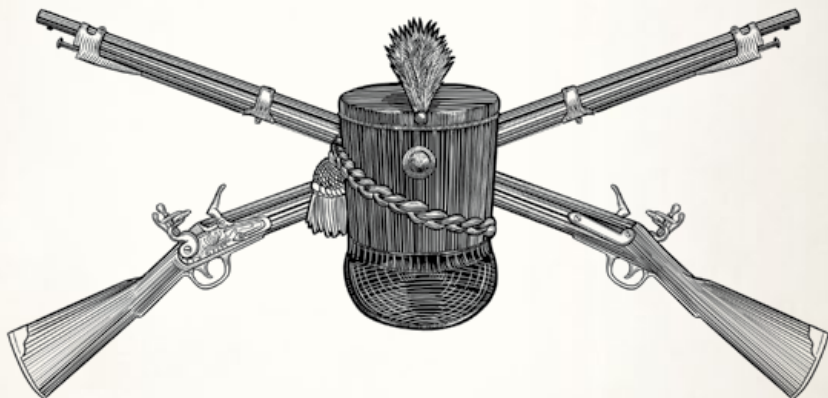
Renard can't catch the players in time, but once they're barricaded in a safe room, he'll have his men set up outside and continually taunt the heroes.

## UNDER SIEGE

The bandits have trapped our heroes and Justina in a room in the mansion and are waiting to gut them!

At this point, the rest of the narrative is up to the GM, but here are some suggestions:

- ♦ Renard wants something from Justina (a jeweled necklace, a book of some valuable secrets, or something similar). He will leave if he gets it.
- ♦ Justina is a plant. The lion-masked lady, Miliea, is actually the noble of the house, and "Justina" is just a body double. A secret passage out of the mansion might prove the players' escape!
- ♦ Or another solution! The GM can run rampant with ideas, but swashbuckling heroism is the best way out of this problem. If your players leave feeling like the solution evoked *The Three Musketeers*, you're spot-on!



## PREGENERATED ADVENTURE: BETRAYAL?!

Unlike the rest of the small adventures in the Powder Mage Roleplaying Game, Betrayal will strain the cohesion of a group, as a claim of betrayal indicts an ally. Note: This scenario is best inserted into the middle of an already-existing and planned-out campaign.

### STARTING WITH A BANG

Our heroes have been hired for a job, and they're on their way to complete it, returning to their employer with verification of their success.

As they arrive at their employer's abode, a massive explosion rocks them, hurling all the heroes to the ground as flaming debris scatters around them.

Quite clearly, their employer is dead, as are their hopes of getting paid.

**Call for a Notice Check** with a -2 penalty. Upon success, they see someone dart off into an alleyway. With a raise, they can make out two glinting pistols on his hips—very well-crafted pistols forged by the master craftsman Emberly.

### THE CHASE

Of course our heroes will want to chase this assailant. This is a difficult chase across rooftops, and it will take some effort to catch him.

**The Bomber:** Agility d8, Pace 8", Climbing d8, Jumping d8.

This should be a dynamic chase, as the Bomber scales buildings, leaping from rooftop to rooftop. His movements and erratic speed will impose a -4 on all ranged attacks against him, as he's very difficult to pin down.

Every round, describe where the Bomber runs, giving each player a **Climbing** or **Jumping Check**, as appropriate, to keep up. Success allows them to keep up; a raise allows them to gain. A failure erases a gain. Once a hero has gained three times, they may attempt a **Fighting roll** to tackle the Bomber and bring him down. If they fail, their gains are reset to zero, and they must try again.

If they successfully tackle the Bomber, he'll attempt to fight them off.

**The Bomber:** Soak 8 (hidden leather armor), Parry 7, Fighting d8, Shooting d10, Wild Card.

The Bomber can shoot twice per turn, ignoring multiaction penalties for his shots. Additionally, he'll attempt to escape at any opportunity. However, if he is incapacitated, he'll agree to sell out the blackguard who hired him—at which point he'll point to one of the heroes, calling that hero by name.

*“Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ hired me to kill your employer! You were all supposed to get caught in the blast, and we'd already ransacked the place, so the money was ours.”*

Obviously, the accused hero will deny this. At this point, the Bomber will produce a letter in the hero's hand, verifying what the bomber has said.

There are two ways this could go:

- ◆ First, the hero's allies believe the hero, deal with the Bomber, and put this behind them. If they do that, make sure to call out the possibility of betrayal with actions and subtle hints for a while afterward before letting it subside.
- ◆ Secondly, they ask the hero to verify the truth (this could be magic, such as finding a Knacker who always tells the truth).

## THE TWIST

The heroes' employer who was “blown up” is alive and well, having hired the Bomber and framed the hero who was accused in an attempt to get out of payment!

This employer will continue to harass and attack the heroes from the shadows, attempting to eliminate them and secure his ill-gotten wealth. Eventually the employer will slip up and make themselves known to the heroes, who can then deal with the problem.

It should go without being said, but be sure to not let this devolve into intraparty conflict. The game is about tension and suspicion in this adventure, not attacking your friends or causing real-life issues.



Property of the Atlas Army



# Further Reading in the Powder Mage Universe

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## The Powder Mage Trilogy

*Promise of Blood*

Orbit, April 2013

*The Crimson Campaign*

Orbit, May 2014

*The Autumn Republic*

Orbit, February 2015

## Gods of Blood and Powder

*Sins of Empire*

Orbit, March 2017

*Wrath of Empire*

Orbit, May 2018

*Blood of Empire*

Orbit, 2019

## Novellas and Stories

*Forsworn*

January 2014

*Servant of the Crown*

June 2014

*Murder at the Kinnen Hotel*

November 2014

*In the Field Marshal's Shadow*

November 2015

*Ghosts of the Tristan Basin*

February 2016

*The Mad Lancers*

September 2017

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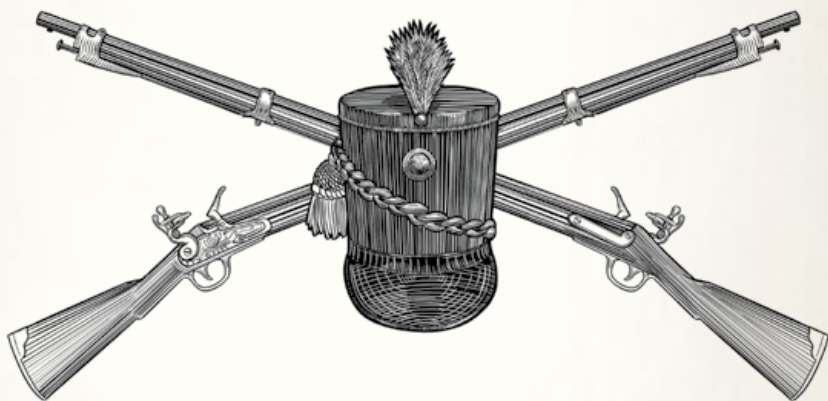
**Website:** [www.BrianMcClellan.com](http://www.BrianMcClellan.com)

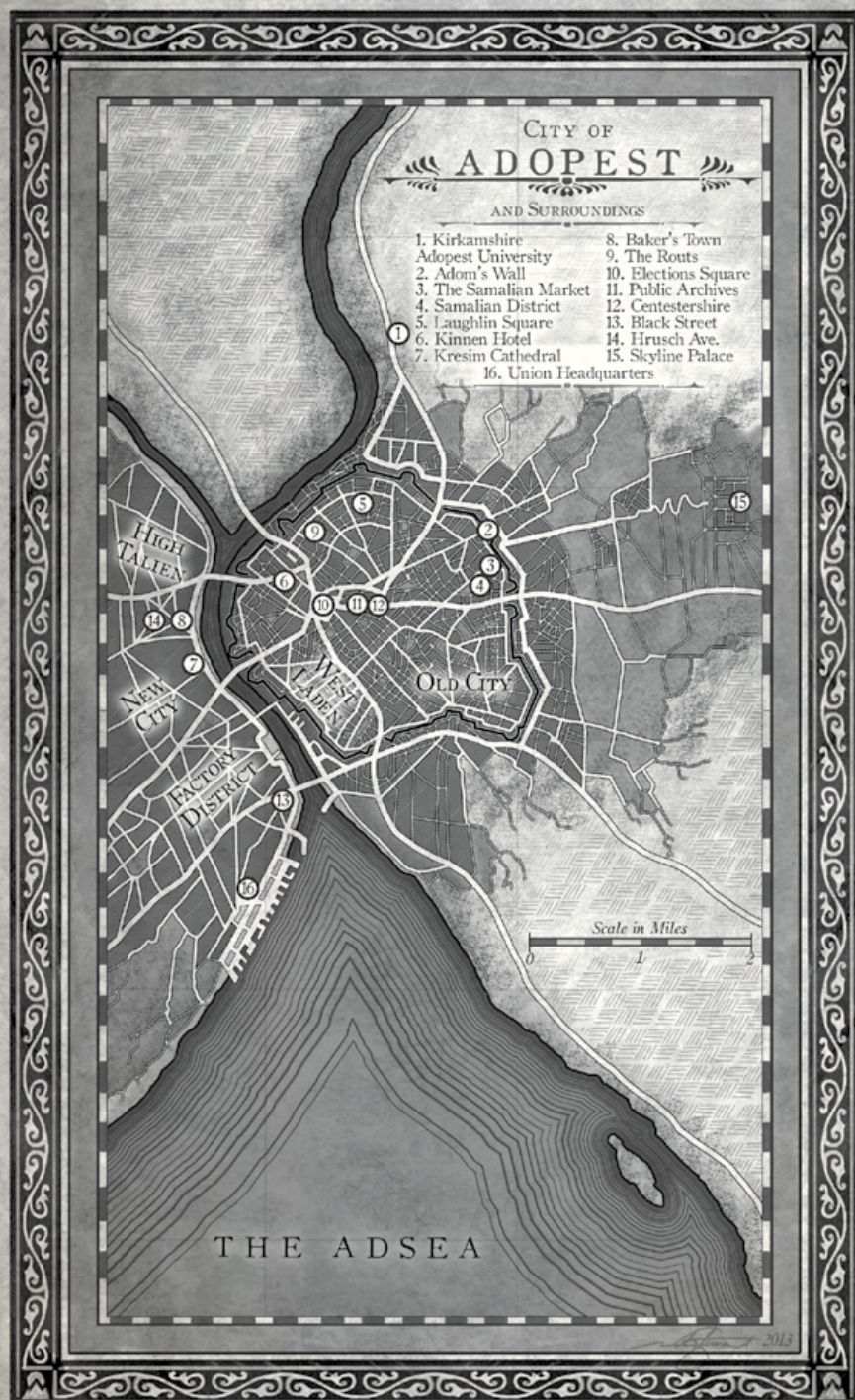
**Twitter:** [@briantmcclellan](https://twitter.com/briantmcclellan)

**Facebook:** [www.Facebook.com/briantmcclellan](https://www.Facebook.com/briantmcclellan)

**Goodreads:** [www.goodreads.com/author/show/6524620.Brian\\_McClellan](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/6524620.Brian_McClellan)

To receive announcements, coupons, news, and more regarding the Powder Mage Universe and the work of Brian McClellan, [sign up for his newsletter!](#)





# Powder Mage RPG



## AGILITY



- BOATING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- DRIVING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- FIGHTING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- PILOTING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- RIDING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- SHOOTING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- STEALTH ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- SWIMMING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- THROWING ☐☐☐☐☐☐

## SMARTS



- GAMBLING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- HEALING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- INVESTIGATE ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- KN ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- KN ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- KN ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- LOCKPICKING ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- NOTICE ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- REPAIR ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- STREETWISE ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- SURVIVAL ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- TAUNT ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- TRACKING ☐☐☐☐☐☐

## SPIRIT



- GUTS ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- INTIMIDATION ☐☐☐☐☐☐
- PERSUASION ☐☐☐☐☐☐

## STRENGTH



- CLIMBING ☐☐☐☐☐☐

## VIGOR



- ☐☐☐☐☐☐

## EVAL SHEET

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

RACE/CULTURE: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONALITY: \_\_\_\_\_

FEATURES: \_\_\_\_\_

CLOTHING: \_\_\_\_\_

## DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

- ☐ BENNIES ☐ PACE +
- ☐ CHARISMA ☐ TOUGHNESS (Half Vigor +2)
- ☐ PARRY (Half Fighting +2) ☐ ARMOR (Toughness + Chest Armor)

## ARMOR

PROT. \_\_\_\_\_ WT. \_\_\_\_\_

## SHIELD

CLOSE/RANGED / WT. \_\_\_\_\_

## INJURIES

\_\_\_\_\_

## WOUNDS

\_\_\_\_\_

## FATIGUE

\_\_\_\_\_

## GEAR

\_\_\_\_\_

WT. \_\_\_\_\_

WT. \_\_\_\_\_

## ENCUMBRANCE

TOTAL WEIGHT CARRIED: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ 0 STR X 5
- ☐ -1 STR X 10
- ☐ -2 STR X 15
- ☐ -3 STR X 20
- ☐ BASICALLY TOO HEAVY STR X 25

## POWERS



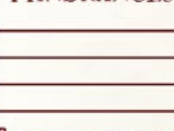
## ATTACKS

|       | RANGE | ROF   | SHOTS | DMG   | WT    |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | / /   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | / /   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | / /   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | / /   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
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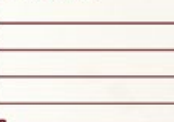
## COMBAT NOTES:



## HINDRANCES



## EDGES



## ADVANCES

- 0000 ☐ 5
- 0000 ☐ 10
- 0000 ☐ 15
- 0000 ☐ 20
- 0000 ☐ 25
- 0000 ☐ 30
- 0000 ☐ 35
- 0000 ☐ 40
- 0000 ☐ 45
- 0000 ☐ 50
- 0000 ☐ 55
- 0000 ☐ 60
- 0000 ☐ 65
- 0000 ☐ 70
- 0000 ☐ 75
- 0000 ☐ 80
- 0000 ☐ 90
- 0000 ☐ 100
- 0000 ☐ 110
- 0000 ☐ 120

## MONEY:



Notes:

AMMO PP

# Index

## A

|                                |                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adopest . . . . .              | 15, 29, 32, 33, 42, 48, 53, 95                                                    |
| Adran Coup . . . . .           | 28                                                                                |
| Adran-Kez War . . . . .        | 12, 28, 30, 32, 35, 42, 44,<br>45, 48, 49, 52, 55, 57, 59, 68, 73, 81, 97,<br>100 |
| Adran Republic Cabal . . . . . | 32, 34                                                                            |
| Alexei the Voice . . . . .     | 61                                                                                |

## B

|                                           |                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Background Edges . . . . .                | 16                                                                           |
| Knacked . . . . .                         | 18                                                                           |
| Privileged . . . . .                      | 17                                                                           |
| Baron-King Kaysi . . . . .                | 72, 73, 76                                                                   |
| Baron-King Osmen . . . . .                | 72, 76                                                                       |
| Baron-King Siirt . . . . .                | 72, 73, 76                                                                   |
| Battle of Budwiel . . . . .               | 56                                                                           |
| Beon III. . . . .                         | 56                                                                           |
| Beon ja Ipille . . . . .                  | 29, 50                                                                       |
| Bieru Dori . . . . .                      | 40                                                                           |
| Black Powder Weapons . . . . .            | 21                                                                           |
| Bone-eyes . . . . .                       | 81, 86, 104                                                                  |
| Bornia . . . . .                          | 45                                                                           |
| Brudanian-Fatra . . . . .                 | 77                                                                           |
| Brudanian-Gurla Trading Company . . . . . | 36,<br>41, 42, 45, 47, 49, 53, 54, 63, 65, 67, 70,<br>73, 77, 78, 86, 96, 97 |
| Bruden . . . . .                          | 45                                                                           |

## C

|                                        |        |
|----------------------------------------|--------|
| Character Creation . . . . .           | 13     |
| Attributes . . . . .                   | 14     |
| Derived Statistics . . . . .           | 15     |
| Edges . . . . .                        | 15     |
| Gear . . . . .                         | 15     |
| Hindrances . . . . .                   | 15     |
| Race and Culture . . . . .             | 13     |
| Skills . . . . .                       | 14     |
| Prohibited Skills . . . . .            | 15     |
| Third Eye . . . . .                    | 14     |
| Charisma . . . . .                     | 15     |
| Charlemund . . . . .                   | 35, 57 |
| Charwood Pile Mountain Range . . . . . | 32     |

## D

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Danie Wellen . . . . . | 71 |
| Del . . . . .          | 49 |
| Delia Hampt . . . . .  | 66 |

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Delia Snowbound . . . . . | 35 |
| Dynize . . . . .          | 80 |
| Dynize Empire . . . . .   | 84 |

## E

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| Emila Blackrat . . . . . | 76 |
|--------------------------|----|

## F

|                               |                                                        |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Fatrasta . . . . .            | 82                                                     |
| Fatrastan War . . . . .       | 51, 52, 85, 97                                         |
| Field Marshal Tamas . . . . . | 12, 15, 28, 30, 34, 45,<br>48, 51, 53, 56, 77, 88, 103 |
| Florian I . . . . .           | 56                                                     |
| Fontain Academy . . . . .     | 69, 71                                                 |

## G

|                            |                                                    |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Gender Roles . . . . .     | 21                                                 |
| General Vlora . . . . .    | 32, 34, 54, 57, 65                                 |
| Gods . . . . .             |                                                    |
| <i>Adom</i> . . . . .      | 27, 30, 31                                         |
| <i>Banasher</i> . . . . .  | 36, 39                                             |
| <i>Brude</i> . . . . .     | 41                                                 |
| <i>Ishtari</i> . . . . .   | 67                                                 |
| <i>Kresimir</i> . . . . .  | 12, 27, 47, 51, 55, 58, 61, 72, 95,<br>96, 99, 100 |
| <i>Novi</i> . . . . .      | 58                                                 |
| <i>Rosvel</i> . . . . .    | 62                                                 |
| <i>Gorgantis</i> . . . . . | 63, 65, 97                                         |
| <i>Grundin</i> . . . . .   | 40                                                 |
| <i>Gurla</i> . . . . .     | 88                                                 |
| Gurlish Wars . . . . .     | 30, 32, 36, 39, 47, 49, 50, 59,<br>88, 91, 96, 103 |

## H

|                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| Henri Wincelav . . . . .         | 31     |
| Hentriet Jors . . . . .          | 76     |
| High-Baron Horses . . . . .      | 74, 76 |
| History . . . . .                | 95     |
| Holy Warriors of Labor . . . . . | 33     |

## I

|                             |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Industrialization . . . . . | 32, 36, 64, 69 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|

## K

|                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Ka-poel . . . . .            | 81                 |
| Kez Civil War . . . . .      | 12, 29, 53, 86     |
| King Ipille of Kez . . . . . | 15, 28, 52, 85     |
| King Liva II. . . . .        | 15, 43, 45, 46, 62 |
| King Manhouch XII . . . . .  | 28, 77             |
| King Saffle . . . . .        | 65                 |
| King Sulem IX . . . . .      | 27, 48, 49, 50     |



King Wallach VI . . . . .36  
 Knacked. . . . .101  
 Knacked Abilities . . . . .18  
 Kormere. . . . .71  
 krana (money) . . . . .12

## L

Lady Chancellor Lindet . . . . .85  
 Lord Claremonte. . . . .42  
 Lord Syk . . . . .45

## M

Magebreaker . . . . .20, 104  
 Magus Borbador . . . . .35, 47  
 Micenth Follin. . . . .45  
 Michallo Forbis . . . . .71  
 Mountainwatch . . . . .28, 30, 44, 52

## N

Naming Conventions . . . . .15  
 Novengrad. . . . .60

## P

Pace . . . . .15  
 Palo . . . . .82  
 Parry . . . . .15  
 Powder Cabal . . . . .31, 32, 45, 65, 85, 103  
 Powder Mages. . . . .102  
 Power Edge . . . . .20  
 Predeii . . . . .48, 58, 95, 96, 99  
 Prishta . . . . .56  
 Privileged . . . . .99  
 Privileged Borbador. . . . .32  
 Privileged cabals . . . . .100  
 Privileged Josashin. . . . .65  
 Pyre . . . . .43

## Q

Qarshez . . . . .92  
 Queen Audren. . . . .71  
 Queen Avenist. . . . .65  
 Queen Sasha . . . . .58, 59, 60, 61

## R

Racial Tensions . . . . .18  
 Religion. . . . .  
   *Gerosh* . . . . .38, 40, 94  
   *Kresim Church* . . .35, 38, 40, 41, 51, 53, 55,  
     57, 59, 74, 79, 86, 94, 96, 102  
   *Kresim Reform Church* . . . . .59, 96  
   *Solenpan* . . . . .38, 40, 90, 94

Ricard Tumbler . . . . .15, 28, 33, 34, 80  
 Royal Cabal . . .29, 31, 32, 35, 39, 40, 42, 43,  
     44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 55, 56, 60, 65, 70,  
     73, 75, 99, 102, 103, 104

## S

Setting Rules . . . . .21  
 Slavery. . . . .36, 39, 40, 42, 78, 79, 82, 91  
 Social Contract . . . . .8  
 Soderhelm . . . . .65  
 Sorcery. 11, 31, 39, 44, 49, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75,  
     79, 81, 85, 90, 93, 98, 104  
 Strenland . . . . .92  
 Stren Republic. . . . .92  
 Syni Aramia. . . . .57

## T

Taniel Two-shot . . . . .81, 103  
 Telav . . . . .36, 39  
 The Baron-Kings. . . . .73  
 The Bleakening . . .48, 49, 53, 67, 80, 96, 99  
 The Dead Priestess . . . . .40  
 The Else. . . . .98  
 The Faceless. . . . .38, 40  
 The Nine Nations . . . . .12, 27  
   *Adro* . . . . .27  
   *Bakashka*. . . . .36  
   *Brudania*. . . . .41  
   *Deliv*. . . . .47  
   *Novi* . . . . .58  
   *Rosvel* . . . . .62  
   *Starland* . . . . .67  
   *Unice*. . . . .72  
 Theopholis ja Krin . . . . .57  
 The Wings of Adom . . . . .31  
 Toughness . . . . .15

## V

Vedior . . . . .39  
 Vorinnian Wars . . . . .47, 95

## W

Wardens. . . . .56, 100  
 Weapons . . . . .21, 22  
 Wellens . . . . .70  
 World Map . . . . .24

## X

X-Card . . . . .9



# Kickstarter Backers

## THANK YOU!

### Digital Powder

\_Journeyman\_

Adam 'Rolo' Rolan

Adam S

adumbratus

Alexander Bauer

Alexander R. Corbett

Alok Baikadi

Andreas Sleipnes

Andrew Wilson

Arttu Mikael Seppi

Benjamin Paul Kelly

BRADLEY CLARK

Brandon Cassady

Caitlin Jane Hughes

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## Explore the World of the Award-Winning Powder Mage Universe

Set four years after the end of the Adran-Kez War as recounted in *The Autumn Republic*, the Powder Mage RPG outlines a world in the upheaval of political, social, and technological revolution. It makes use of the Savage Worlds game system to allow for a versatile and easy-to-learn rule set, fast character creation, and the ability to set out on an adventure within minutes. It also includes previously unpublished information about the countries, people, and history of the Powder Mage Universe.

Players can throw themselves into conflicts throughout the Nine Nations, from the power struggles within the budding republic of Adro to the unstable intrigue of the migrating courts of the baron-kings of Unice. To do so, they can take on any number of roles: a humble Knacked trying to create a family fortune, a Privileged sorcerer out to change the world, or even a powder mage bent on revenge for past slights.

