SHARA

™

RPG
WELCOME BOOKLET

...a book of
DÁRDÜNAH
WORLD of the FALSE DAWN

DÁRDÜNAH
WORLD of the FALSE DAWN

SHARD RPG is an exciting new game of heroic fantasy and adventure set in the realm of Dárdünah, World of the False Dawn, a unique fantasy campaign setting. You won't find the standard fantasy fare in these pages; there are no elves, trolls, dwarves, knights, or even dragons. Indeed, the campaign world is quite a deviation from most European fantasy settings. Drawing its flavor from eastern rather than western cultures, the game of Shard takes place on a world far removed from Earth. In fact, there are no humans on Dárdünah. Players may choose from a wide variety of animal people who are the main cast of the many adventures the world offers.

Skyships glide through shimmering clouds past majestic crystal peaks. Giant insects prowl alien jungles or lurk in the sparkling emerald seas. Warriors with blades of diamond and amber duel across crimson sands. And mystics chant in shadowy chambers as their spirits wander abroad. Our initial products seen below, plus a beautifully detailed world map will be available nation-wide by Spring of 2009.

SHARD
CONVENIENCE PACK
...for gaming within
DÁRDÜNAH
WORLD of the FALSE D[AWN]

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COMING SOON

This SHARD RPG Welcome Booklet Holds:

· An introduction to the fiction of this unique gaming world.
· Colorful examples of the basic rules set along with various campaign examples.
· A simplified combat and magic section for experimenting with game-play.
· Six pre-created archetype characters of various animal species to enjoy.
· An Introductory Adventure exhibiting a glimpse of SHARD's rich game setting.

SHARD RPG™ SHARD STUDIOS™

What is Dárdünah?

The *SHARD RPG* introduces the world of *Dárdünah* (pronounced DAHR-doo-nah), an exciting new realm of heroic fantasy and adventure. You won't find the standard fantasy fare in these pages; there are no elves, trolls, dwarves, knights, or even dragons. The world is rather different from typical European fantasy settings. Dárdünah's time period is not strictly medieval, and the setting draws its flavor from Eastern rather than Western cultures. Further, it is not set on an alternate version of Earth. In fact, there are no humans on Dárdünah.

The tone of the setting can best be described as Asian heroic fantasy with a strong cloak-and-dagger influence, all set on an alien world. Using films and novels as a reference, if you mixed the adventure and romance elements of *The Three Musketeers*, the Byzantine political intrigue of *Dune*, the martial arts combat of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the sets and costumes of any version of *Tales of the Arabian Nights*, and the world visuals of *The Dark Crystal*, you would get a pretty good idea of what it's all about.

The Shard RPG features anthropomorphic animals (which we have chosen to call *Zoics*) as the character races. Human-like animals have always been popular in myth and legend. We seem drawn to them, and for good reason. They are visually striking, culturally iconic, and incredibly diverse. Further, they offer a wonderful opportunity for role-playing. Many Asian and Middle-Eastern stories feature anthropomorphic animals, so naturally they became the obvious choice to inhabit a fantasy world inspired by such stories. Add to this an alien, other-dimensional planet, complete with its own unique flora and fauna, and it'll become apparent soon after your first visit that you're definitely not in Kansas anymore.

Of course, there is also magic. On Dárdünah, magic is powerful yet subtle, and always cinematic and moody. Rather than imagining pyrotechnic wand-wagging wizards who memorize the contents of spell books, visualize instead the somber atmosphere of elaborate rituals performed in darkened crystal chambers. Chanting, drumming, rhythmic music, tattooing, and graceful dancing are all elements of Dárdüni magic. Sorcerers work their craft on a mystical dream plane, where they are the absolute masters of their environment. Magic and religion play a very important role in the cultures of Dárdünah and touch all aspects of life in some way.

It is our hope that you enjoy adventuring in the world of the *SHARD RPG*. You will brave glowing clouds aboard magnificent skyships threatened by destructive storms and the ruthless Crystal Corsairs. You will defend your lineage and honor against spies and slavers. You will face deadly assassins and duel with honor guards in the Spiral Arena. You will Dreamwalk with eerie sorcerers and battle alien demons. And all the while, the Devah, the ancient Dárdüni gods, will look down from the Edge of Heaven and judge your actions, so make them count!

I. Introduction to Dárdünah

Dwarfed by a yellowing planet, the zoological ship Naga Sena was a bone-white speck in high orbit. Like a spider on a strand it moved patiently, not heavy enough to be swift, too bulbous for a rapid course change. The research vessel was built from a standard inter-orbital freighter, unremarkable but for one external engine that looked bulky and outlandish. The engine had never been fired.

Out of the planet's burnt clouds rose a pattern of flickers: cutter ships, perhaps a dozen, punching through the upper atmosphere. Each was smaller than the scientific vessel, but infinitely faster and fitted for combat.

On the Naga Sena's bridge, Krishna Marati watched them on the central hologram. He clicked open the intercom. "They've launched. We have to decide."

Inside the freighter's enormous research pod, a membrane of transparent polymer separated Kramah from the beast. They stood close, their faces less than a foot apart. If the membrane could be torn, thought Kramah, one quick bite would shear flesh from skull. But the polymer was impenetrable. The animal enclosure was secure. They could touch at no point, except one: Their eyes met.

He felt a challenge from the creature. They were kindred, two apex predators. Yet he sensed more, had sensed it as soon as the treatments began. The beast had thoughts, complex and probing, that danced behind its eyes like wind behind a tree. It was a female, this one. Furtive, inquisitive. And why did she seem so nervous?

Kramah flicked his tail anxiously. Human was the name he had given these bony creatures who kept him here. He could feed on them, if he were outside the membrane. Yet he would not. They might, instead, strike a common language. He would seek answers.

After a pause, he asked what troubled her. His warm breath gathered on the membrane.

Chun Yin flinched at the growls from the lion. The deep, inhuman sounds repulsed her at a primal level, and yet they were unmistakably words. She blinked with wonder. Marati's genetic treatments had been a success. Humanlike language and sapience conferred to nonhuman species. An entirely new metaphysic.

Its name was Kramah, this massive creature behind the polymer window. She could not know its thunderous language, but its eyes touched hers, lit by thoughtful curiosity. Through a nearby membrane watched a rust-colored fox that Marati had named Krilárah. Yin recognized a similar awareness in the vixen's gaze. These two were the first animals to be treated, Marati's favorites, but the research pod comprised thousands of such enclosures, each a customized environment for dozens of species. Each the birthplace of new thoughts, new intelligence. Perhaps uplifted souls?

"Corporate Security ships are coming, Yin," Marati repeated over the intercom. "Do we fire the engine?"

She nodded at the lion in the enclosure. The being tilted its great head, trying to understand. "Start it," said Yin to her husband.

She met him on the bridge, standing by the tactical hologram. "Cutters," she murmured. "They have a viral lock on us."

"We can still surrender. The Corporate Judiciary won't execute us."

"Kramah spoke to me." She took his arm. "We can't let them die. We need to escape."

"Thank you." A red signal flashed on the tactical readout. A hundred pinpoint lights began to circle the ship. Marati clenched a fist. "Nuclear drones. We started too late. The initiation sequence won't finish."

Yin brought up a holographic interface and streaked through its displays. Outside the ship, the experimental engine gleamed and shuddered and struck to life. The bridge roared and quaked. "Now it will."

"Corporate Security to research orbiter Naga Sena," clamored a voice from the lead warship. "You are accused of misappropriation of company resources. Surrender your vessel. We are authorized to use warheads if risk of decontamination is imminent."

"They won't take a kill shot until we redline their energy scanners. They'll hide behind protocol. They're afraid." They knew as well as she that a direct nuclear hit on an experimental FTL engine might generate a radioactive belt that could rain on the planet for decades. Yin's new hyperdrive posed no such threat, but she did not intend to show them the math. She hoped the bluff held.

One of the drones broke formation and drew within miles of the Naga Sena. The display cascaded with warnings an instant before the missile exploded. The shockwave hammered the ship. Marati called out, "EMP shield intact. How many near-hits can it take?"

"Just one more will give us enough time!" said Yin, praying she was right.

Kramah knelt, to brace against the shaking ground. A terrible groan erupted from the walls and the air. Now he understood why the human was nervous – she foresaw this rising cataclysm. Did she have any power against it? Did she have the courage to fight it? His mighty claws raked the ground. He called out with his loudest roar, beseeching her to act.

The bridge erupted with light when the hyperdrive engaged. Chun Yin and Krishna Marati clasped hands and held them close. They could do little more as the engine threw open the veil between universes, and the ship flung into a crystalline void like a streak of light entering a prism – piercing the dark; plucked apart; made pure. Their last sound was a wordless gasp, before their bodies lost focus and meaning.

The enclosure shattered around Kramah, or perhaps it was Kramah who shattered. He spread his legs to steady himself but the air was different now, distorted, and his limbs looked like images on a rippled pond. There was nowhere to stand, nothing to cling to. He curled upon himself and breathed, simply breathed, while the world became a cascade of hard crystals; he was tumbled, reflected, cast from facet to facet and shone through arcane strata, until like a beam of sunlight he fell upon the ground.

He panted. Dust leapt from the dry earth, stinging his eyes. Through tears he saw a landscape unlike anything his enclosure had simulated. Here

were trees of impossible height, aglitter with insects like jewels; waves of grass with blades of a thousand colors; giant spears of crystal thrust from the rolling earth; twin suns setting high clouds ablaze. The warm wind tasted raw and exotic.

Movement nearby caught his predator's eyes. A creature stirred in the grass. It was the being from the adjacent cage, the russet-coated fox with a watchful face. But it was different now, larger; and as it stood he recognized its new shape as that of the human female. She swayed upon two long legs, clung to herself with thin arms, lustrous fur nudged by the breeze. Her large eyes met his. No polymer membranes separated them, yet she showed no fear of him. Instead she looked mystified.

Helpless.

Other animals woke in the distance and stood for the first time on two legs.

Kramah looked at his own body and saw the figure of a human male, but larger and stronger, clawed and furred. He had his own tail and his own head and mane. And his own thoughts. There was no sign of the two humans now; the animals must care for themselves. But he would not hunt his fellows. He would strike a common language. He would seek answers.

Gently he reached his new hand toward the fox... and spoke.

4

The Journey Chant

Darkness begins and Darkness ends,
Light is the Purifier, the Great Flowing Sea,
The Breath of the Gods.
Shine Forth.

Dárdünah, the World, is without gods,
It is without children, tears or song.
No one weeps for its dust.
Silence.

Mahitáytah, the Great Father, comes,
Mahiámbah, the Great Mother, comes,
Riding their fiery chariot, rejoice.
Sing Aloud.

The Edge of Heaven splits open,
The Providers and Protectors come,
They bring Their children.
Rejoice Aloud.

Darkness They escape, rejoice,
The Great Devourer They elude,
It consumes the Universe.
Mourn.

The Devourer is the End,
The End for all things,
It consumes Light, Love, Song.
Silence.

Mahiámbah, Great Mother, sings,
The Path of Dreams She takes,
She gives Dárdünah love and children.
Weep.

Mahitáytah, Great Father, dances,
He shapes Light and Warmth,
He sets the twin crystals in Heaven.
Look and Rejoice.

The greater crystal is Lokáynü,
It shines bright and warm upon children,
Lokáynü is the second light of Dárdünah.
See and Sing.

The lesser crystal is Edü,
It shines softly upon children,
Edü is the first light of Dárdünah.
See and Sing.

Light purifies and prepares the way,
For the children of Great Father,
For the children of Great Mother.
Look.

Upon Dárdünah They place Their children,
Dárdünah is hid from the Devourer,
Now it has gods, song and children.
Weep and Rejoice.

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Great Father and Mother dance in Heaven,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
The children touch Dárdünah,
It gives them stance.
Feel and Rejoice.

Great Father and Mother's forms are many,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
Great Mother pours the Water of Heaven,
The children have many forms.
Look and Rejoice.

The Water of Heaven is without form,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
Great Father has many forms,
The children have many forms.
See and Sing.

Water of Heaven flows from the Sea Salán,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
The children receive the Water,
The children are the Jánah, shaped by Salán.
Rejoice.

The Jánah touch Dárdünah, it is far,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
They see Great Father and Mother,
They have no song, no words.
Silence.

They cannot dance, cannot sing,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
They cannot give Song to the Gods,
Tears are their only song, only love.
Weep.

Mahiámbah weeps, Dárdünah is silent,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
She sings the Jánah to sleep,
No love, no song, no words.
Silence.

She rides the Dreams, Dárdünah is silent,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
She takes the Flute from Heaven,
She takes the Music of Heaven.
Weep.

Mahitáytah, is angered, Heaven is silent,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
The Flute of Heaven is gone,
The Music of Heaven is gone.
Listen.

Great Mother hides the Flute,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
In the bodies of the Jánah, awake,
Music is theirs, they have song.
Listen and Rejoice.

She teaches them the Song of Heaven,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
The music of Life, Dárdünah sings,
Jánah sing to Heaven, listen.
Sing and Rejoice.

Great Father hears the music,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
Dárdünah sings to Heaven, listen,
Great Father dances to the Music.
Sing and Rejoice.

Dárdünah awakens, it sings,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
The Voice of Dárdünah is the Jánah,
The Jánah are Dárdünah's song, listen.
Sing.

Great Father weeps Fire on Dárdünah,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
He dances to the Music,
He gives the Jánah Fire.
Look and Rejoice.

Great Father shapes the crystals,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
He teaches the Jánah Craft,
He gives them Fire and Craft.
See and Rejoice.

The Jánah craft, they create as the gods,
Heaven is Light, Dárdünah is far,
To Great Father and Great Mother they sing,
They have words, song, fire, craft, love.
Sing and Amen.

Dárdünah at a Glance

Dárdünah is a sundered world existing in a distant dimension. In this place, the laws of physics are different from those of Earth. Though many basic concepts such as gravity would seem to be the same, existing within Dárdünah's continuum is like living within the dreaming mind of some omnipotent intelligence. All life that exists within this "dream" both shapes and is shaped by the power of this great mind. Those on Dárdünah sense this to some extent, and thus fill their legends with reflections of this "dream-world" and the magic it contains. They see the world as a mere shard of the great crystal of this dream. Little do they realize that this is almost literally the case.

If the changing Zoics aboard the descending starship had gazed out upon the world of Dárdünah as they approached, they would have seen a shattered emerald sphere surrounded by glittering nebulae of vibrant color. Even the inky void separating the many worlds of this dimension is not truly empty, containing instead wisps and trails of chromatic gasses that float throughout the cosmos.

To say that the world is "sundered" requires further explanation. Dárdünah is a stable (if somewhat imperfect) spherical world that floats within the ethers of space around two burning crystal suns. Long ago, some incredible force caused the world to crack to its very core. The planet and everything on it would have been utterly destroyed had not inexplicable forces intervened to contain the shards and preserve the atmosphere which surrounds the broken sphere.

Separating each of these fractured segments are seemingly bottomless chasms over a thousand miles wide. Their depths are filled with glowing mists and vapor, and conceal at their heart the living crystal core of the planet. The oceans of Dárdünah near the edges of these rifts become tempestuous and deadly as they transmute from liquid into vapor, forming great columns of clouds that reach into the glowing skies. Constant violent storms cover these areas, which no water vessel or skyship could ever hope to endure. Very few inhabitants of Dárdünah are even

aware of these wonders, and none have ever dared to pass beyond the edge of a shard.

The known regions of Dárdünah rest in the southern hemisphere of the world, just beneath the equator. In the north, you'll find steamy tropical jungles and alien rainforests. The further south one travels, the more temperate it becomes. It is rarely cold enough to snow even in the southernmost climes, although the tallest mountains are covered in ice and snow. The seasons on Dárdünah center on the yearly cycles of rainfall, so they are roughly divided into "dry" and "wet" seasons. The changes of seasons are usually marked by festivals of various kinds.

Since the interior of Dárdünah is composed of living crystal, the world's jagged mountain ranges are crystalline as well. At their base, where rock, soil, and flora litter the slopes, they share much in common with the mountains of our own world, but the suns shine through their multifaceted peaks. Glass volcanoes occasionally erupt in various mountains, powered by the pressure resulting from the movement of the planet's enormous shards deep within. The crystals themselves possess many unique traits: some crystals repel the pull of gravity; others glow with light and heat; while a rare few possess incredible magical power and are used in mystic rituals. Many types of crystals can be fashioned into blades and other weapons that are as resilient as any metal of Earth. The crystals of Dárdünah are considered sacred to the jánah, and are referred to often in myth and legend. "May your crystal never shatter" is a common blessing.

Metal is essentially non-existent on Dárdünah. Everyday items are fabricated from the various materials commonly found: crystals, gems, stone, and clay from the earth; chitin, leather, pelts, and silk from the native fauna; specially treated Amber made from the sap of a certain type of tree; and of course the various woods, fibers, and materials derived from Dárdüni flora. Armor is made mostly of chitin, whereas weapons are crafted from wood, crystal, Amber, and chitin.

The native flora and fauna of the world is primordial and alien, and the lands and waters beyond the civilized regions are filled with danger. The wilderness of Dárdünah is teeming with life of all kinds. The *suthra* (native animals) of the world come in many sizes and shapes, but are primarily insectoid or arthropodal in nature. Some of these creatures have been domesticated and act as beasts of burden, sources of food, and even pets for the jánah. The plant life is similar to the prehistoric jungles of Earth. Giant ferns, banyan trees, and strange glowing fungi are common. Some Dárdüni plants have the ability to move of their own volition, and can be as dangerous as any predator. Many varieties of trees can grow to gargantuan size, capable of supporting vast structures and dwellings within their branches.

And finally, one of the most distinctive features of Dárdünah is the vibrant sky. Depending on the season or the time of day, beautiful auroras and nebulous mists in hues of various color swirl slowly in the upper atmosphere like distant veils, giving rise to the various tales of the realms of Dream and the Edge of Heaven where the immortal Devah dance. Sometimes, a glowing spiral shape can be glimpsed beyond the clouds. According to legend, this is the point where the fiery chariot of the Great Father and Mother entered the realm of Dárdünah. Only once or so a year, during new moons and eclipses, does the sky become dark enough for the starry eyes of demons to look down upon the world, and few dare to venture outdoors during those fell nights.

The Jánah

In shape and form, the jánah are fairly human. They all have five fingers and toes, stand upright, have secondary sex characteristics, and basic human shape, but they retain their prominent animal features: trunks, horns, tails, spines, wings, etc. The size and weight of jánah can vary wildly, depending upon the jenu, or specific animal type, from which they evolved. This encompasses everything from twelve-foot tall elephants to three-foot tall mice.

There are three major classifications of jenu: the Sarpah (reptiles and amphibians), the Paksin (avians), and the Vajrah (mammals). All three of these major racial types are able to interbreed within their own type. Different racial types, however, seem unable to interbreed. As such, mammals are capable of interbreeding with all other mammals, birds with other avians, and reptiles and amphibians with any of their kind. Children born of these unions will either be the animal type of the father, the mother, or on rare occasions another animal from either parent's ancestry.

The jánah are very religious, and all aspects of their lives are touched by religion in some form or another. Morning and evening prayers, ritual bathing, chants, observance of holy days, and other forms of worship are practiced by everyone. Rituals dominate every person's life. There are rites of passage into adulthood, marriage and birthing rituals, a host of war rituals, purifications, oaths to households and lineages, investiture rituals - the list goes on and on. The backbone of jánah society is the faith in their gods, the Devah. And though they may never actually be seen descending on luminous clouds to bless or punish their worshippers, their existence would never be doubted.

The everyday interactions within society tend to be quite polite. Formal greetings are common, and consist of bowing and the use of the appropriate honorific. Most countries of Dárdünah have some form of caste system, so social interaction follows certain forms. One would treat equals with courtesy, superiors with respect, and those beneath with patient tolerance. Rudeness, even towards those beneath you, is considered very bad form, and could cause one to lose face, which can be devastating in Dárdüni culture.

Religion plays a very important role in Dárdüni culture. Temples and shrines are common both in cities as well as deep in the country. Further, every home has its own shrine, dedicated to the Devah most favored by that household. The observance of holy days, religious festivals, and public displays of veneration are everyday affairs. Priests and holy men are treated with great respect. Dárdünah is steeped in ritual and tradition, and one must know the proper forms to observe for any given situation.

The jánah enjoy performances of all kinds, and art is highly appreciated throughout the world. Poets, singers, dancers, musicians, theater performers, puppeteers, and acrobats can all find an easy living in most cities, as jánah love to be entertained and possess a deep appreciation for artistic skill.

Theater is common, as are dance performances, music recitals, and demonstrations of martial skill. In fact, grand martial arts competitions are held in many parts of the world and are quite prestigious, similar to our Olympic games.

Gambling and parlour games are also common, and jánah enjoy their fair share of spirits, and general carousing. Skill in games of strategy is especially prized. Despite any excesses, brawling is uncommon since most disputes are settled in ritualized duels in a public fighting forum called the Spiral Arena.

Fashion tends toward bright colors and flowing garments. Mix the most beautiful elements of far-eastern court clothing with Arabic style dress and Hindu ceremonial wear, and you get a good idea of what Dárdüni clothing is like. Even peasants wear bright colors, often in creative combinations.

Loose fitting, Persian-style pants are quite common, as are robes, skirts (for both males and females), and elaborate coats and gowns. There is no real distinction between sexes as far as fashion goes - most clothes tend to be unisex. Sandals and soft, Turkish-style boots are common, often decorated with tassels and crystals.

Accessories tend to come in the form of bracelets, rings, earrings, necklaces, ankle bracelets, all made of Amber, iridescent chitin, crystal, and gemstones. Wide flowing scarves and veils are also common. Common headgear consists of turbans, caps, and wraparounds.

Social Hierarchy

There are a variety of different political structures in Dárdüni society. An amín is equivalent to an empire on our world, and it's ruled over by an aminar. Amíns are broken up into provinces that are usually ruled over by members of the aminar's family or other noble families allied with the aminar. Political dynasties are common and can last for hundreds of years. A dynastic change is a period of terrible unrest and civil war as rival noble families vie for the position of aminar. In the Sarpah amíns of the north, these noble families are usually referred to as clans. In the Paksin amíns of the west, these family groups are called tribes.

The other common political structure is called an isvarate and is ruled over by an isvar. An isvarate is the equivalent of an ancient Earth kingdom, and it is more feudal in nature than an amín. The isvar rules either by consent of the other noble families or because his family is powerful enough to keep everyone else in check. Dynasties are much less common in isvarates as few royal families tend to hold power for more than a few generations. The changing of an isvar, however, is nowhere near as chaotic as that of an aminar, as the other noble families usually keep the peace while their royal counterparts battle for supremacy. The noble families in an isvarate are known as Lines.

A Line is ruled over by a great aryah, who is almost always a descendant of the original founder of the Line. The Line is further divided into Houses, each ruled over by an aryah, who is usually related by blood or marriage to the great aryah of the Line. Houses are comprised of the aryah's immediate and extended family, and all their retainers, servants, and various dependants. There can be as little of a couple of Houses within a Line, or there could be dozens depending on the age and influence of the Line.

Lines do split for a variety of reasons, a process which can be violent or relatively peaceful. The new Line usually takes its name from the aryah who initiated the split. Though all Lines ultimately serve the isvar and the Royal Line (at least publicly), they often engage in feuds with one another. These feuds, however, must be conducted discreetly as open violence between Houses and Lines is not tolerated by the isvar and the other Lines.

House Structure

Each House has a variety of important vassals and retainers that serve the aryah and his or her family. These vassals include the following:

The chamberlain is the great steward, in charge of the House's overall affairs. The chamberlain organizes and officiates over all important ceremonies and works closely with all other dignitaries of the House to insure the House runs smoothly.

The master of the honor guards is in charge of security. He also serves as the aryah's personal bodyguard. When a House is engaged in a feud with a rival, the master of the honor guards conducts the war, organizing strikes, espionage missions, and assassination attempts against the enemy.

The arena master is the House's martial arts instructor who is skilled in many styles, both armed and unarmed. All honor guards get their combat training from the arena master.

The weapons master maintains the armory and oversees weapons training. He is also usually a gifted artisan skilled in the crafting of both gunpowder and melee weapons. The common warriors serving the House get most of their combat training from the weapons master.

The House sir'hibas is a sorcerer who uses his magical talents of divination, healing, or warding to counsel and protect his lord. Sometimes the chamberlain also serves as the House sir'hibas.

The master of the watch supervises the sentries that patrol the aryah's castle or manor. When the master of the honor guards is away, it is the master of the watch who usually assumes his role.

The doctor is the aryah's personal physician, but often also doubles as the House's interrogator. Some Houses have become infamous for their "twisted doctors" who are expert at extracting information from enemy spies.

The dance master trains the House's various performers and organizes all the festivities of the House. He works closely with the chamberlain to organize all religious holiday celebrations and important rituals.

The crystal master is the House's chief artisan and is in charge of maintaining the precious and specialized crystals. He also serves as the noble family's fashion advisor, making sure his charges wear the latest fashions.

The suthra master breeds and trains all of the House's various beasts, including draft and guard animals. He also usually doubles as the huntmaster for the House, organizing and leading hunting expeditions for his lord and his family.

The master librarian keeps the House's records and also serves as tutor to the aryah's children. He also works closely with the chamberlain to properly record and archive all important events that transpire in the House.

II. The Basics

Satlan crouched before the high, thin tree. Above him, hung on a lower branch, a circular blade rocked in the breeze. He laid back his feline ears, flipped his tail once, then leapt. His arm reached up, his claws extended – and fell short of the weapon.

His landing was graceful. For a moment his expression turned sour. Then he checked his frustration and stood upright, ears flat and humbled. The wind rose, ruffling his spotted fur and silks.

A reedy figure stepped beside him. A slender tail rippled and rolled along the ground. Loose scales revealed the Sarpah's great age. "Is the grass made of knives?" said the old master with a flash of forked tongue. "You jump as if you're afraid of the ground. The earth is our greatest ally, cub. Every action makes use of it." He coiled his tail beneath him and sprang. With negligible effort he lit upon the tree branch. The hanging blade scarcely wavered. "Before you jump, Satlan, learn to stand."

"And what, Master Ashgra," said an unexpected voice, "of we who travel the sky?" A broad shape flashed across the sun. The daunting wingspan of a large Paksin – some race of eagle or hawk – threw a shadow over the young Satlan. The jánah landed a few feet away. A craggy scar striped his bare chest. "The old mummy's mind has withered," he whispered to Satlan. "His age has past, Your Lordship. I can teach you how modern warriors fight, as I'll demonstrate presently." His calloused hand plucked a curved crystal dagger from its sheath. He pointed this in challenge at the Sarpah in the tree.

The old jánah nodded. "Indeed, the Padhi mercenaries employ a style of combat unique to themselves. Idiomatic one might say." He flicked his forked tongue. "Perhaps, Satlan, you can demonstrate the simple things I teach."

The young leopard bowed to his master, swallowed nervously, and turned to the feathered warrior.

Attributes

In order to play an RPG, you will need to create a *character*, an inhabitant of the world who will participate in the adventures created by the *Gamemaster (GM)*. Every character in *SHARD* will be described by a series of *Attributes* (detailed later in this book). These Attributes are game descriptors that will tell you what your character is capable of doing. Attributes consist of *Animal Abilities, Characteristics, Talents, Skills, Advantages*, and *Drawbacks*.

Animal Abilities

Animal Abilities are such things as wings, claws, venom, or any other physical animal trait that your chosen Zoic may possess. This RPG will include *Animal Templates* that will make the construction of a Zoic character very easy.

Characteristics

Characteristics are the physical, mental, and social traits of your character. These include such things as your character's strength, agility, his mental faculties, and his overall presence.

Talents

Talents are unusual or unique inherent traits that your character may possess. A few Talents may be learned but most will require that your character be born with them. Talents can include such things as being a light sleeper, having magic potential, or being immune to certain poisons.

Skills

Skills consist of the training and education your character has received throughout his life. They can include artistic or professional training, various scholarly disciplines, or even hobbies. Each Skill will be *linked* to one or more of your Characteristics and this will affect how you select them. *Profession Templates* will be provided to help you quickly and easily build the type of character you want.

Advantages

Advantages are social perks that your character may possess. Such things as wealth, noble titles, or a high caste would fit into this category, as would having important social contacts or patrons.

Drawbacks

Drawbacks are physical, mental, or social disadvantages that may afflict your character. Even though Drawbacks allow you to initially build a slightly more powerful character, they also outline definite weaknesses that the GM will bring into play. Be very careful when choosing Drawbacks. Phobias, crippled limbs, a magical curse, or an enemy determined to hunt you down are all examples of Drawbacks.

The Dice

The game of *SHARD* uses a multi-*d6* system. In other words, you will need several *six-sided dice* in order to play. Ten to twelve dice per player should be sufficient. These dice can be purchased in most hobby and game stores, or can be found in many common board games.

Action Dice

Many of your Attributes will be assigned a *Ranking,* a number ranging from 1 to over 10. This number will let you know how many dice you will get to roll when you use a particular Attribute. Thus, if a Skill had a ranking of 4, you would get to use four six-sided dice when making a roll. These dice are called *Action Dice,* and you may have several groups of Action Dice that you can use at once. Additionally, you may be given *modifiers* that could increase or decrease your total number of Action Dice.

Dice Rolls

Whenever your character performs an action where the outcome is uncertain, you get to roll Action Dice. Some actions such as walking across a room or picking something up are considered to be automatically successful (unless, of course, someone is trying to prevent you from doing it). Any action that requires a roll is called a *Contested Action,* and any action whose outcome will automatically end in success is called a *Free Action.*

Climbing a high wall with few hand-holds would be considered a Contested Action, and thus require a roll. Climbing over a fence a few feet high would be considered a Free Action, and therefore require no roll. The GM would simply declare that the action was successful, unless there were some other circumstances that made it a Contested Action, such as being fired upon or attempting to move stealthily.

In order to perform an action, you simply need to declare what you wish to do, describing in as much detail what you wish to accomplish. The GM will then tell you which Attribute's Ranking you need to base your Action Dice on. If the action is deemed especially difficult, the GM may then assign a modifier, a number that will be deducted from the total number of dice you may roll when attempting the action (see *Modifiers*).

Determining whether you failed or succeeded at an action will depend on the number of *successes* you managed to roll on the dice. A roll of a 4, 5, or 6 on a d6 is considered a success. A roll of 1, 2, or 3 is considered a failure. A roll that results in only one success (one die landed on a 4, 5, or 6, but the rest were all 3 or less) is considered a *Partial Success,* whereas a roll of two successes means you have achieved a normal or *Adequate Success.* A full explanation of what it means to roll one or more successes is given under *Levels of Success.*

Opposed Rolls

In many contested situations, the number of successes you roll when performing an action may be reduced or negated by one or more *Opposed Rolls.* An Opposed Roll is a dice roll whose purpose is to cancel out another's successes. As an example, let's say your character decided to try and sneak past a guard. You would be asked to roll Action Dice to attempt the task. The guard would roll Action Dice to try and detect you. Let's say you rolled four successes, while the guard rolled three successes, you would be declared the winner. However, you would only have achieved one success rather than four.

Ties usually go to the defender, but it also might depend on the situation. If you had tied in the above case, your character would have remained undetected, but the guard might start to get suspicious and become more alert. In other cases where you and an opponent are trying to achieve the same goal, the GM could declare a stalemate and require more rolls to break the tie. An example of this would be two opponents engaged in an arm-wrestling match. If they both rolled an equal number of successes, neither of them would be declared the winner and would require additional rolls to determine the outcome.

Rolling Sixes (Optional Rule)

Whenever you roll two or more 6s on your Action Dice, not only do they count normally as successes, you also get to roll the *second and subsequent 6s* over again, thereby increasing your chance of scoring additional successes. As long as you continue to score 6s on the dice, you continue to roll. If you score any number other than a 6, you stop rolling. This rule makes it possible for someone with only a few Action Dice to score more successes than would normally be possible.

Example: A player rolls her four Action Dice and scores a 3, 4, 6, and 6. So far, she has three successes (4, 6, and 6). However, since she rolled two 6s, she gets to roll the second 6 again. She scores another 6! She now has four successes (4, 6, 6, 6), and continues rolling the die that rolled yet another 6. She scores a 5 (another success). At this point, she stops rolling her die as she did not score another 6. Her final tally is an impressive five successes (4, 6, 6, 6, 5), which she scored with only four dice.

Failing Actions

If you fail to score any successes (i.e. do not roll at least *one* 4, 5, or 6 on your action dice), you are considered to have failed at your task. In certain circumstances, you may attempt the same task again, but there might be some penalties (see *Successive Attempts*).

Fumble (Optional Rule)

A Fumble occurs when you fail to score any successes, *plus you roll one or more 1s* on your Action Dice. The more 1s you roll, the worse the effects of the Fumble may be - it's dependant entirely on the judgement of the GM. A Fumble basically means that something catastrophic has occurred during your attempted action. It could mean that a firearm explodes in your hands, or that a perfect piece of crystal has been ruined by your efforts, or a neutral audience has turned hostile. The exact effects of a Fumble are left up to the GM and depend greatly on the situation,

as well as the number of 1s rolled. Thus, Fumbles can range anywhere from being mildly annoying and embarrassing to being downright disastrous.

The important thing to keep in mind if using this optional rule is that a Fumble should enhance the drama and increase the value of the cinematic moment. Imaginative Fumbles are the sorts of things that inspire great stories. The goal is to give the players the opportunity to use their wits and creativity to overcome the Fumble, not to punish the players for failing. Fun is the name of the game and should always guide the decision of the GM.

Successive Attempts

If you have Fumbled an action, you may *not* try the same action again (but you may try something else). If you have simply failed an action, then you may try again on your next turn. However, the next attempt will be made at a penalty of –1 die per successive attempt. Thus, a –1 on the second attempt, a –2 on the third, and so on, up to a maximum of –10. In certain situations, the GM may wish to disallow any further attempts after the action has failed. This will depend on the task being performed, the circumstances surrounding it, and the character performing it.

DIFFICULTY MODIFIER TABLE

Difficulty Ranking	Modifier	Example
Standard	0	Average work conditions (decent tools/materials); no sense of urgency; performs the task on a regular basis
Challenging	-1 Dice	Inferior tools/materials; sense of urgency; has performed the task multiple times before
Difficult	-2 Dice	No proper tools/materials; performing under stress or combat conditions; has performed the task only a few times
Very Difficult	-3 Dice	Performing under great stress or while under direct fire; has rarely performed the task
Extremely Difficult	-4 Dice	Performing under extreme stress or while actively being attacked; has never performed the task before
Almost Impossible	-5 Dice or higher	Performing under crippling stress; has little hope of performing the task even under optimal conditions

Modifiers

As noted under Action Dice, there are various modifiers that a GM may require you to factor in when rolling your dice. These modifiers will either be *Difficulty Modifiers,* requiring you to lose a certain number of Action Dice, or *Bonus Modifiers,* allowing you to add a certain number of dice to your Action Dice.

Difficulty Modifiers

A Difficulty Modifier is assigned by the GM whenever he determines that your character is attempting a particularly difficult action. This type of modifier subtracts a certain number of dice from your Action Dice before you make a roll to determine success or failure at a given task. The *Difficulty Modifier Table* above gives the *Difficulty Ranking* and the corresponding modifier that a GM may assign.

Bonus Modifiers

A Bonus Modifier is assigned by the GM whenever he determines that your character is attempting a particularly easy action. This type of modifier adds a certain number of dice to your Action Dice before you make a roll to determine success or failure at a given task. The GM always has the option of declaring any Easy action a Free Action, which will automatically end in an Adequate Success. The *Bonus Modifier Table* below gives the Difficulty Ranking and the corresponding modifier that a GM may assign.

BONUS MODIFIER TABLE

Difficulty Ranking	Modifier	Example
Standard	0	Average work conditions (decent tools or materials); practitioner performs the task on a regular basis
Easy	+1 to 2 Dice	Good work conditions (above average tools or materials); some extra time to perform the task; requires little effort
Very Easy	+3 to 4 Dice	Superior work conditions (excellent tools or materials); plenty of time to perform the task; requires almost no effort
Child's Play	+5 Dice or more	Ideal work conditions (perfect tools or materials); the task could be performed blindfolded; there is no time limit; a novice practitioner would consider the task easy

It is possible to receive both Difficulty and Bonus Modifiers for the same task. Add all Bonus Modifiers first, then subtract any Difficulty Modifiers from the total. After all modifiers have been applied, if you have no dice available, then you would use the *0 Default Roll* explained later in this section.

Levels of Success

Rolling multiple dice could result in multiple successes. Scoring only one success while attacking may mean the character inflicted only a minor wound. Scoring only one success while trying to pick a lock may mean that it may have taken twice as long as it normally should have. The exact in-game result of a Success Level is left up to the GM to determine, but some guidelines are found below.

Successes	Success Level
1 success	Partial
2 or 3 successes	Adequate
4 or 5 successes	Good
6 or 7 successes	Excellent
8 or 9 successes	Astounding
10 or 11 successes	Incredible
12+ successes	Legendary

Note that the following examples assume that the optional rule of Rolling Sixes is in effect. Without the use of this optional rule, Success Levels higher than 'Excellent' will rarely be achieved by players. GMs should read the section entitled Power Level in the Character Creation chapter before deciding whether to use that optional rule.

Partial Success

Achieving this level means that you have scored the bare minimum required in order for your action to have been declared successful. The Partial Success, however, should not be everything you wanted it to be. While the gist of what you wanted to achieve may have happened to some extent, the end result may be something you did not anticipate. In combat, a Partial Success strike will have its damage *halved* (then rounded up to the nearest whole number) *before* any armor adjustments have been applied (see *Combat* for the full affects of Successes during melee).

Example: Ishi, having been discovered breaking into a house by a guard, decides she wants to kick the guard in the stomach, hoping to knock him over and allowing her to escape. Ishi's player rolls her dice and scores only one success.

The GM rules that Ishi has delivered the guard a glancing blow on his belt, and so Ishi's damage for the strike will be halved. The guard (having taken only minimal damage) merely grunts, and grabs at Ishi before she can zip away.

Adequate Success

This level indicates that you have succeeded at your action fairly much as you had intended. However, nothing special should result from such a Success Level.

Example: Tazi wants to shoot at an enemy up on a wall, trying to get him to topple off of it. The GM rules that even though the guard is unaware of Tazi, he nevertheless has partial cover (the wall), and the shot will be at long range. The GM declares the action is Challenging and assigns a dice penalty of –1 (one die taken off the total that Tazi may roll for the action). Tazi's player rolls his dice and scores 3 successes. Because the guard is totally unaware of Tazi, he gets no defense roll. The GM rules that the shot will do full damage and that the guard topples off the wall.

Good Success

Scoring this level means that a little something extra has occurred, something beneficial above and beyond what you expected. This level should be rewarded with an additional tidbit, something which makes the success slightly better.

Example: Istvan the seer attempts to magically peer into the past to see if he can discern the properties of an ancient amulet he has discovered. Istvan's player scores 4 successes on his Action Dice. The GM declares that Istvan knows the properties of the amulet, and further knows who crafted the amulet and a little about its history.

Excellent Success

At this level, you have achieved much more than you thought you would. This level should be rewarded with a variety of extra bonuses which make the success much better.

Example: Akari tries to find a suitable spot inside a busy tea house to eavesdrop on bits of conversation between two enemies of her lord. The GM rules that because her targets are being very cautious, and due to the noise surrounding the pair, the action is Very Difficult and he assigns a penalty of –3 dice. Akari's player scores 6 successes. The GM decides that Akari finds the perfect spot, and manages to hear every word of the conversation clearly (and then proceeds to give her lots of juicy information regarding an assassination plot against her lord).

Astounding Success

This level indicates that truly great things have been achieved, and that others would marvel at this success. The GM should generously reward

you should you ever score such a Success Level, taking you in delightful roleplaying directions.

> **Example:** Vaitin the dancer is given the rare honor to perform before the court of the isvar. Vaitin decides that he wants to put on one of the most impressive shows the nobles of the court have ever seen. Lady Luck smiles on Vaitin's player that day and he scores 9 successes! The GM declares that the audience was awed by the grace and beauty of Vaitin's dance, and that many were moved to tears. Vaitin has brought down the house, and is offered the position of Court Dance Master by the isvar (not to mention many smaller rewards in the form of prestige and expensive gifts).

Incredible Success

At this level, the seemingly incredible has been achieved. This success will be talked about for years to come. Rewards should be heaped upon you if you score such a level, and truly amazing turns in your character's life should come about because of it.

> **Example:** Sanjiv the physician attempts to treat his lord, whose arm was seriously damaged during an assassination attempt. The limb is badly mangled, so the GM decides that this action will be Extremely Difficult and assigns a penalty of –4 dice. Dr. Sanjiv's player beats the odds and scores an amazing 10 successes! The GM rules that Sanjiv not only manages to save the arm, but that furthermore his lord will retain full use of it and suffer no permanent effects. Sanjiv's lord will heal almost as good as new. The GM declares that Dr. Sanjiv will be asked to visit the Academy of Nilám as an honored speaker, and will no doubt be offered a very prestigious position in the court of his choice. Dr. Sanjiv has become the doctor of the decade!

Legendary Success

This level signifies that the seemingly impossible has been achieved, and that the results seem almost magical. Successes of this kind are what legends are made of, so they should be rewarded generously. Should you score such a success, you should be given rewards which you did not even dream possible.

> **Example:** Vashamsah the artisan decides that she wants to carve a statue of the goddess Krilárah out of a single giant sapphire (this assumes, of course, that she has such materials). The GM decides that such a feat will require months of work and rules it a Very Difficult action, assigning a –3 dice penalty. Vashamsah's player scores an unbelievable 12 successes! The GM rules that the statue becomes the envy of artists throughout the world. It is highly sought after by powerful lords for their own collections. It's eventually enshrined in a specially built temple and ascribed divine powers. Vashamsah has defined beauty in her generation, and her place in art history is assured!

It is important to note that the Success Levels given in the above examples were scored for challenging actions. If these high Success Levels are scored for simple tasks, they will not be anywhere near as impressive (no one applauds a pianist for playing "Chopsticks"). GMs should use their judgment, and remember that ultimately the result should be to make players feel especially grand about scoring impressive Success Levels for challenging tasks.

Special Rolls

As a general rule, your Action Dice will always be based on one of your character's Attribute Rankings, whether it be a Characteristic, Skill, or Animal Ability. In a few special cases, your Action Dice may be reduced to 0 due to negative modifiers. You may also find yourself attempting to perform a task for which you do not possess the appropriate Skill, or one that requires a simple use of a primary Characteristic. The rules below cover these situations.

0 Default Roll

This rule applies in cases where, as a result of Difficulty Modifiers, your Action Dice required to perform the task have been reduced to 0. In these cases, and at the GM's discretion, you can use the 0 *Default Roll.* This die roll allows you to use a single d6 as your Action Die. However, because the task is so difficult, you must roll a 6 on that single die in order to achieve a Partial Success. If you fail the roll, Successive Attempts are not allowed. There may be some situations where the GM simply declares the action to be impossible, in which case no roll is allowed.

> **Example:** Ishi has just seen the young daughter of her friend fall into a raging river during a terrible storm, and realizes that without help the child will surely drown. Ishi is a fairly good swimmer, having a Ranking of 4 in that Skill, and decides to leap into the water to attempt to save the girl's life. The GM rules swimming under these circumstances is Almost Impossible, thus imposing a –5 penalty! Ishi's player, having no Action Dice left after the imposed penalty, is allowed to roll a single d6 to make the harrowing swim. As luck would have it, her player rolls a 6, and against impossible odds she is barely able to drag the frightened child back to shore safely.

Unskilled Roll

Some Skills, at the discretion of the GM, may be considered general enough to be performed by someone who does not possess it. The Unskilled Roll is what you use in these cases. All Unskilled Rolls use *one half* (1/2) of the linked (or most appropriate) Characteristic (rounded up) as the Action Dice you may use to perform that Skill. Tasks performed using the Unskilled Roll, however,

should be relatively simple, and have no Difficulty Modifiers assigned to them. Tasks that are deemed Challenging or higher would not be able to be performed using the Unskilled Roll, unless permitted by the GM.

Example: Mushka attempts to juggle three balls in an effort to entertain his young ward. Mushka has no Ranking in Performing or any other appropriate Skill, but he only desires to attempt an incredibly simple act of juggling. The GM allows him to use an Unskilled Roll. Since juggling would normally be linked to Dexterity, and Mushka has a Ranking of 5 in Dexterity, he will get 3d6 (5 ÷ 2 = 2.5 which rounds to 3) with which to attempt this very simple task. If Mushka had tried any fancy tricks that would've been deemed Challenging by the GM, he would not have been able to perform the task at all.

A few Skills, such as Surgery or Crystalsmithing, are considered so specialized that they will not give you an Unskilled Roll. If you do not possess these Skills, you will not be able to perform any tasks that require them.

Crippled Penalty Roll

This rule is really more of a modifier on your Action Dice. If one of your Characteristics are ever lowered due to injury or illness, and you attempt to use a Skill that is linked to the crippled Characteristic, you receive a *Crippled Penalty* modifier. When this occurs, you must reduce the number of Action Dice in your Skill by the same amount that your linked Characteristic is currently reduced. The resulting number will be considered your final Ranking. If the resulting number is 0, you would use the 0 Default Roll.

Example: Akari is recovering from being poisoned, and as a result her Dexterity Characteristic has been temporarily reduced by 2, bringing her original Dexterity Ranking down from 4 to 2. Akari decides that she wants to carve a small statuette for her friend Mushka (despite her condition) in appreciation of his having saved her life. Akari's Dexterity Penalty of –2 is applied to her Artistry Skill Ranking of 6 (because her Artistry Skill of sculpting is linked to her Dexterity). Thus, she will have 4 Action Dice (6 – 2 = 4) with which to perform that task.

Characteristic Roll

In situations that do not require the use of any particular Skill or Ability, the GM may ask you to make a roll based on one of your Characteristics. In these cases, you would get to roll as many Action Dice as the appropriate Characteristic's Ranking. This usually occurs when a Characteristic needs to be used in a very general way. For example, a Wit Roll could be used when attempting to remember an obscure piece of information, or a Dexterity Roll may be called for when trying to catch a falling object. In the case of Opposed Rolls, you would simply use your appropriate Characteristic as your Action Dice, and your opponent would use theirs.

Example: Having been discovered in a tall tower by guards, the assassin Sahidrah and his accomplices attempt to escape. As a guard rushes the room they are in, Sahidrah tries to hold the door closed while his partners lower a rope ladder to the courtyard. The GM rules that Sahidrah's player must make a Characteristic Roll based on Strength, matching his Ranking of 5 dice against that of the guard pushing against the other side. The guard will need to roll more successes than Sahidrah in order to push through the door.

Perception Roll

Zoics may possess a variety of special animal senses, but they also have the five standard perceptual senses as well. Of all the types of *Characteristic Rolls* that you will be asked to make, Perception Rolls will be among the most common. Perception Rolls are made whenever your character needs to sense or detect something that is not immediately obvious. A Perception Roll can be used to spot ambushes, to take in the fine details of a room, to notice a small or partially obscured object, to detect unusual sounds, etc. Many combats will usually begin, in fact, with the GM requiring a Perception Roll to determine if your character is able to react effectively.

The *Perception Modifier Table* lists some bonuses and penalties that could be applied to your Perception Action Dice under various circumstances. GMs should feel free to extrapolate additional *Modifiers* based on the table below.

PERCEPTION MODIFIERS	
Night	–2 Dice Sight
Thick Fog	–4 Dice Sight
Pitch Black	–6 Dice Sight
Moving Target	+2 Dice Sight
Shout	+1 Dice Hearing
Whisper	–2 Dice Hearing
Noisy Room	–4 Dice Hearing
Firearm Combat	–6 Dice Hearing
Zoic Musk	+4 Dice Scent
Strong Breeze	–2 Dice Scent
Powerful Spice	–2 Dice Taste
Bland Food	+2 Dice Taste

Time Measurement

In the *SHARD RPG,* there are two different types of time measurement: *Narrative Time* and *Action Time.*

Narrative Time is not precise and flows to fit the scene that the GM is setting up. Two minutes or two days are interchangeable in Narrative Time, the only thing that matters is how the story progresses. For example, if your character were traveling on a ship toward a distant land, the GM would not give you a second-by-second play of the voyage. Instead, he would use Narrative Time, and say something like: "After several weeks of grueling sea travel, you arrive at your destination." He may choose to highlight certain days of the voyage for dramatic reasons, but there would be no need to detail the entire journey.

Action Time, by contrast, is very precise and is used when describing action scenes such as combat or chases. The base unit of time measurement in Action Time is the *Combat Round.* This unit of measure is approximately six seconds long. There are as many Combat Rounds in an action scene as are needed to conclude that scene. After the action scene is concluded, the time would revert back to Narrative Time.

Skill Performance Time

Each action that you attempt will take a different amount of time depending on the action you described and the Skill being used. Picking a lock will take far less time than crafting a sword, for example. The Skills in the Skill List may have a general performance time indicated along with their descriptions. These are guidelines for the GM to help decide how much time an action involving that Skill would take to perform. It is important to remember, however, that highly motivated characters can sometimes do amazing things within a very short time frame.

Multiple Actions

It is possible to perform more than one action in a Combat Round. As explained in the *Combat* section of the rules, there are some limitations imposed upon the number of actions you can take. Modifiers may also be applied to your Action Dice. Multiple actions are taken either one at a time as individual dice rolls, or in certain cases are bundled together as a single dice roll. Remember that a Combat Round lasts only six seconds of in-game time, so the type of actions the player chooses to take must reasonably fit into that time frame.

If any of your Action Dice are ever lowered below a single d6 due to various modifiers, you would use the 0 Default Roll. If you fail an action while performing multiple actions, the GM may still allow you to attempt the rest, but this would depend on the situation. If you Fumble an action while performing multiple actions bundled together, all actions used as a part of that bundled set are considered lost. Additionally, you would only be able to perform defensive maneuvers for the rest of the Combat Round in which you Fumbled.

Extra Time

You may take extra time to perform an action if you wish. Doing so will increase your number of Action Dice and potentially improve your chances of success. As stated earlier, each Skill requires a different minimum amount of time to perform, so GMs must use common sense when assigning an extra time bonus. Consult the Skill List and judge what the general performance time is for that Skill. This will give you a range of time in which a Skill could be performed without resorting to *Rushing* (see below).

For actions whose performance time normally falls within about 6 seconds (the length of a Combat Round), use the *Time Bonus Table* to assign a bonus.

TIME BONUS TABLE	
Time Taken	**Bonus Assigned**
1 Combat Round	+1 Dice
6 Combat Rounds	+2 Dice
3 Minutes	+3 Dice
18 Minutes	+4 Dice
2 Hours	+5 Dice
12 Hours	+6 Dice
3 Days	+7 Dice
18 Days	+8 Dice

For Skills that require more than one Combat Round to perform, multiply what the GM considers the *minimum* amount of time needed to perform that task by *six* in order to get the additional amount of time necessary to gain a +1 dice bonus. Continue to multiply that new number by six in order to come up with each successive time increment required for an additional +1 bonus to your Action Dice.

Example: Upgin the Weapons Master wants to fashion a simple crystal dagger for his student. The GM rules that doing so will require at least one hour's worth of hard work. Upgin's player decides he wants to take extra time on this task, telling the GM that he wants to strive for a +3 bonus to his Action Dice. The GM multiplies the hour Upgin needed to perform his task by six three different times (1 x 6 x 6 x 6 = 9 days) in order to get the amount of time needed to acquire the +3 bonus to his roll.

Note that it is possible for you to get both a penalty for successive attempts (after an initial failure) *and* a bonus for taking extra time. In this case, simply subtract the penalty from the bonus and apply the result to your Action Dice to get your final number.

Rushing an Action

There will be occasions where you will not be able to spend the minimum time required (as assigned by the GM) for the performance of a Skill. When this happens, you may choose to *rush* your action. Rushing your action means that you are not taking as much care as you normally would with a particular task. You can *halve* the amount of time needed to perform a task but you acquire a *−1* penalty to your Action Dice for every halving you do.

Example: Akari's player has been told by the GM that making a crystal necklace for her mistress will take her one hour. Akari's Crystal Craft Skill has a Ranking of 5, which means she would normally roll five Action Dice to craft the necklace. Akari's player decides that she does not have an hour to spare (the gift is a last minute decision), and declares that she wants to craft the necklace in fifteen minutes. Since this is one quarter (1/4) the total amount of time (1 hour ÷ 2 ÷ 2 = 15 minutes) required by the GM, Akari's player will take a −2 penalty to her Action Dice for Crystal Craft, thus giving her 3 dice.

Once your Action Dice for any given task have been reduced to 1, you may no longer continue to halve the time required to perform that particular task. Few Skills (except for certain Combat Skills) should ever be able to be performed in one second, whether they have taken a rushing penalty or not. This is another one of those instances where GMs will simply have to use their best judgement.

Other Modifiers

There are a few other optional modifiers that a GM may wish to introduce into the game. These optional rules may make the performance of Skills more realistic, but they will also slow down play. In cases where expediency is called for, GMs should dispense with these rules and simply do whatever would be most dramatic or fun.

Assistance

You can get other characters to help you in the performance of certain Skills, thereby increasing your chance of success. Many craftspeople will often have assistants or apprentices to help them carry out complicated tasks. There are two different rules that apply to assistance.

Collaboration

This form of assistance requires that your helper(s) have an *equal or greater Ranking* than yourself with the Skill being used. Every *2 successes* (rounded down) that a collaborator scores on his Action Dice adds *1 success* to your total Success Level (any applicable penalties are still assigned normally by the GM). Additionally, the time

required to perform the action is *halved* for *every collaborator* who works on the project with you. Thus, eight days would be reduced to four days for the 1st collaborator, two days for the 2nd, one day for the 3rd, etc.

The danger of Collaboration is that should one of your collaborators Fumble (assuming the GM is using that optional rule), your entire project is considered ruined, and will need to be started all over again. If the collaborators simply fail, then no bonus is gained and no time is saved.

Example: Akari is trying to craft a crown for her lord. Since Akari feels that this item is very important, she wants someone to collaborate on the project with her. Akari asks Vashamsah (whose Ranking is greater than her own) if she will assist her in the construction of the crown, and Vashamsah agrees. The GM has declared that this task will be Difficult and assigns a penalty of –2 dice, further declaring that it would take two weeks to complete. Akari's player rolls her dice and scores 4 successes (a Good Success). However, Vashamsah scores 4 successes of her own, which raises Akari's total success level by 2 (4 ÷ 2 = 2). Akari, with Vashamsah's help, has now scored an Excellent Success, and has brought the time required to craft the crown down to one week. Had Vashamsah Fumbled, then the crown would have been ruined.

Support

The second form of assistance requires a supporting helper whose Skill Ranking cannot be less than *half of yours.* For every supporting assistant you have, you get a bonus of *+1* to your Action Dice up to a *maximum* of a *+6* (more than six assistants working on the same project at the same time can just as easily become a nightmare). Further, every two supporters decreases the time needed to perform the action by *one quarter* (1/4) its total time (i.e. eight days becomes six days, six becomes four and a half days, etc.). Unlike with collaboration, supporters do not completely ruin your project with a Fumble, but they can possibly have an adverse effect on it.

The GM (or supporting players) rolls Action Dice for each of the supporters helping on the project. If any of them fail, then that supporter is disqualified for purposes of giving you a bonus, either to your Action Dice or to the time saved. If, on the other hand, a supporter Fumbles, they give you a penalty of –1 to your Action Dice. Supporter Fumbles, however, do not add to the time required to perform the task. Subtract any penalties from the bonuses in order to get your final modifier.

Example: Toryu is trying to fashion a special prayer bowl to use for his magical rituals. He gathers four supporters to help him, each of whom has at least half of Toryu's total Ranking in their crafting skill. The GM declares this task to be Challenging and assigns penalty of –1 die, and further decides that it would normally take Toryu four days to finish the bowl. The GM rolls Toryu's supporters' Action Dice, which result in two of the supporters Fumbling and two of them succeeding. Due to the successes, Toryu receives a +2 bonus to his Action Dice and his time is reduced to three days. However, the two Fumbles give Toryu a penalty of –2 dice, canceling out the bonus. The time required, however, is unaffected by the Fumbles, so it remains three days. Toryu decides to have a serious talk with some of his lazy assistants.

Complementary Skills

Some Skills (such as Knowledge Skills) and Characteristics may be considered complementary to others and may potentially boost your Success Level with those Skills or Characteristic Rolls. Complementary Skills may only be used if you score a Partial Success Level or higher with the related Skill or Characteristic. The modifiers are similar to Collaboration: every *2 successes* (rounded down) that you score on your Action Dice with a Complementary Skill adds *1 success* to your total Success Level with the related basic Skill (any applicable penalties are still assigned normally by the GM).

Usually, only one Complementary Skill may be used for any given roll, but the GM may wish to make an exception in certain cases. Further, as with Collaboration, if you happen to Fumble (assuming the GM is using that optional rule) your Complementary Skill Roll, you automatically fail at the related Skill. A simple failed Complementary Skill Roll would have no effect.

Example: Dr. Sanjiv is attempting to treat his ailing lord, who has been poisoned by an assassin. Due to the strength and rarity of the poison, the GM declares the task to be Difficult and assigns a penalty of –2 dice to Sanjiv's medical skill Action Dice. He rolls his medical skill Action Dice and scores only 1 success. Sanjiv decides to try and use a Complementary Skill, his knowledge of poisons and venoms, to boost his Success Level. He rolls his knowledge skill Action Dice and scores 6 successes. That will add +3 to his final Success Level, bringing it from Partial to Good. Sanjiv is able to save his lord's life. Had Sanjiv Fumbled his Complementary Skill Roll, however, his lord would have succumbed to the poison and perished, despite Sanjiv having scored a Partial Success with his medical skill.

Role-Playing Bonuses

The GM can assign *role-playing bonuses* to your Action Dice if you dramatize the performance of a skill particularly well, acting it out or describing

it in colorful terms. Whether it is to describe the crafting of a fine crystal blade, or to describe a particularly flashy attack, this sort of play adds immensely to the atmosphere of the game. The same is true when you are acting out the performance of a skill, whether it is to convince someone you are innocent, or to perform a poetic piece to a crowd.

Roleplaying bonuses can range anywhere from a *+1d6* to a *+3d6* (or more) depending on what the GM felt the description or portrayal was worth. This sort of effort should be rewarded and encouraged, as it makes the game more fun for everyone involved. While not every player will be a natural ham, or have the acting and voice talents of a Hollywood star, each should have some way of contributing to the overall role-playing atmosphere of the game. Even the most timid of players can give a detailed description.

Travel

Dárdünah is a large and expansive world, one which you will likely wish to explore. The map included in this book features a scale in the lower left corner. It indicates the number of days it would take to travel by skyship across the distance displayed within the scale. Traveling by skyship is the fastest form of travel across Dárdünah, and is the comparison for all other modes of travel.

A journey that takes about one day by skyship would take about two days by wing or by water vessel, about four days by mounted land beast, and about seven days on foot. It is important to note that the flow of the story, at the GM's discretion, may increase (or decrease) the general amount of travel time for dramatic effect.

Skills and Abilities that relate to travel are covered later in the rules under *Character Creation.* Though sometimes the GM may simply decide to assume travel occurs without a hitch, a roll (or several rolls) of some movement-based Skill or Ability may sometimes be required to determine how successfully a journey is made. Unforeseen trouble may be indicated by poor dice rolls, whereas an exceptional roll might mean a much faster journey.

Campaign Types

In the *SHARD RPG*, there are many different types of settings and stories that you can experience. As GMs begin considering the types of adventures they wish to run for their players, they will want to create the backstory for a specific type of campaign, as well as the overall storyline that will tie together all the various plots and subplots into a cohesive overall saga.

Inspiration for campaign storylines can come from a variety of places, including your favorite novels, movies, or comics. *SHARD*'s unique setting lends itself to many different types of adventures, but a few suggestions of some campaign types are listed below, along with some references to movies, TV shows, or novels that feature those types of adventures.

In the supplemental book, the *World Guide*, you will find more information on Dárdünah, including descriptions of its various countries, cultures, creatures, and many other elements related to the setting. Before creating your own campaign, it would be advisable to read through this information to familiarize yourself with this unique world.

Serving a Lord

This type of campaign focuses on the complex relationships and intrigues of *Houses* and *Lines,* the principle social units of Dárdüni culture. This campaign type generally features scenarios in which the players are the vassals and functionaries of an *aryah,* the leader of a noble house, or a *great aryah,* the leader of a powerful clan, or perhaps members of the noble family itself. Characters in this type of campaign would carry out special missions assigned to them by their lord or lady, missions they would be honor-bound to carry out. These assignments could include protecting important members of their House from their enemies, conducting spying and assassination missions, acting as envoys to other factions, or engaging in intrigues to advance their own position or the position of their House. Examples include *Dune, The Tudors, Excalibur,* and *Shogun.*

Free Traders and Corsairs

This campaign features characters that are members of a ship's crew, adventuring across Dárdünah's many oceans and seas, or sailing upon the fateful winds of the upper airs. Such characters might consider themselves free traders, engaging primarily in honest business that often gives way to more shady dealings and action-filled complications. Or perhaps they are bloodthirsty Crystal Corsairs who prey on merchant ships and clash with military vessels sent to destroy them. In campaigns of this type, adventure and intrigue can be found in almost any port of call, and could feature smuggling, heroic rescues, battles with pirates, and of course the acquisition of treasure and booty. Examples include *Pirates of the Caribbean, Captain Blood, The Sea Hawk,* and *Firefly.*

Secret Societies

In a world steeped in political intrigue, where religion governs the lives of the populace and the status quo is zealously guarded, there are always secret societies that form whose agendas can

range anywhere from bringing about a new age of enlightenment or societal reform, to the toppling of a corrupt regime or ruler. Members of such secret societies must always be willing to act in the society's best interests. These characters will be called upon to perform services that continually test their loyalty and resolve in regards to the goals of their organization. Such adventures may include acts of espionage, quests for important artifacts, attempts to infiltrate enemy strongholds for purposes of information gathering or to liberate a political or religious prisoner. And all this must be accomplished, of course, while maintaining one's cover and keeping the existence of the secret society a secret. Examples include *Torchwood, Murder By Decree, The Da Vinci Code,* and *Men in Black.*

War Has Come

In this campaign, the threat of imminent war looms over the nation in which the characters live, whether due to civil unrest, imperialistic expansion into another country, or the approach of conquering armies from an opposing realm. Characters in such a campaign might be common soldiers, or the officers who lead them, or perhaps even simple civilians caught between the opposing forces and struggling to stay alive in a war-torn land. Typical adventures might consist of carrying out military campaigns, espionage or reconnaissance missions into enemy territory, the conscription of additional troops, the sacking of enemy cities, or the pacification of conquered villages and towns. Examples include *Sharpe's Rifles, Band of Brothers, Platoon,* and *Rome.*

Thieves and Assassins

This type of campaign focuses on the seedy underbelly of society, and features the secretive lives and questionable pursuits of those who live outside the law. Characters could range from the lowliest cutpurse to a master thief or world-renowned assassin. Campaigns might focus on the adventures of a Thieves' Guild, or the clashes of rival underworld gangs, or on the sinister activities of a group of deadly assassins. The rewards are the treasures of hapless victims, or the grim honor of being the harbinger of death. Examples include *Oliver Twist, Thieves World, The Wire,* and *The Professional.*

Peasants to Heroes

Simple farmers who rise to become great heroes that change the world are the stuff of legends. This is the classic "Hero's Journey," and is a feature of many memorable tales. This campaign could center on individuals who have been born into a lower caste or a situation of diminished status, but who are thrust by fate onto a path that leads them to glory and respect. The backdrop of such a campaign is usually some great calamity or event that galvanizes the characters into action, and forces them to abandon their simple lives and save the day. Examples would include *Star Wars, The Hobbit, Willow,* and *Stardust.*

Explorers of the Past

There will always be those who quest for knowledge and who seek the mysteries of the unknown. Such adventurers embark upon journeys of discovery that are rife with danger, ancient treasures, and forbidden secrets. Dárdünah's past is full of such secrets. Hidden away in the furthest jungles and highest mountain peaks are the crumbling remains of lost civilizations and evidence of terrible truths thought long forgotten. For those intrepid souls who would brave the wild reaches and savage dangers of remote locations, there is much more than old bones to unearth in the forbidden places where the Devah first walked upon the world. Examples include *Raiders of the Lost Ark, King Solomon's Mines, Atlantis,* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth.*

Outcast Travelers

This type of campaign features societal outcasts and gypsies who band together to make their lives on the road, traveling from place to place in caravans of brightly colored wagons or upon river-barges. Characters are skilled entertainers, dancers, musicians, and fortune-tellers, but are often blamed for misfortunes and crimes that occur when they are near. The proud Dárdüni gypsies claim to be descended from ancient warriors who ruled long before the Wars of Twilight, though few believe these tales. Gypsy clans could be nothing more than a gang of opportunistic thieves, or they could be dedicated demon-hunters whose mission it is to eliminate supernatural threats wherever they are found. Regardless, they are usually not wanted in most communities, and are always persecuted by local authorities and priests who consider their strange beliefs to be heretical. Examples include *King of the Gypsies, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Carnivále,* and *The Riches.*

Survivors of Destruction

This campaign assumes that the normal setting of Dárdünah has experienced a violent upheaval or some sort of calamity. The devastation could be local or world-wide. Characters are forced to fight for their very survival in an environment that has apparently gone mad. In such a world, laws and traditions are often forsaken, and life becomes a series of life-threatening encounters. It could be the

result of a devastating plague that sweeps across the lands, or a meteor that brings about drastic climatological change, or perhaps a dimensional rift that opens to the swirling Hells of Narákah. Whatever the cause, it is up to the characters to discover a way to reverse the damage that has been done, or to pave the way to a brighter and safer future. Examples include *Dawn of the Dead, The Day After Tomorrow, The Road Warrior,* and *War of the Worlds.*

Being a Gamemaster

An important distinction between role-playing games like *SHARD* and other types of games is the inclusion of a Gamemaster (GM), a person who acts as a host, storyteller, and referee for the game. Unlike traditional tabletop games such as *CLUE* or *MONOPOLY,* which feature a rigid set of rules and fixed events, role-playing is free-form and uses the rules as a framework to help the GM and the players create an entertaining, interactive story.

In many ways, a role-playing game is similar to a TV show. The GM serves as the show-runner (the writer/director), and the players assume the roles of the central characters of the show. The main difference is that the show is mostly improvisational. Even though the GM creates the setting and central conflict that the players will experience as well as the numerous subplots and supporting characters that will help establish and define the principal characters and their relationships, it is the players who are the stars of the show, and their actions are unscripted and incredibly unpredictable. But that's part of what makes it so enjoyable.

Deciding to be a GM is a big responsibility, but it's also a great deal of fun. As a GM, you'll be the one that creates the setting that the players will return to time and again. They will experience your stories, interact with your characters, solve your puzzles, face your challenges, and overcome your obstacles. Without the GM, there is no game. But being a good GM is a definite skill, and it takes hard work and practice. Good game mastering requires swift thinking, a flair for the dramatic, an eye for the cinematic, a good sense of timing, a talent for establishing mood, a great sense of fair play, and an overwhelming desire for entertainment.

The GM is not the players' opponent; quite the contrary, the GM is on the same team as the players. The GM and the players are co-creators of a shared drama; without cooperation and trust, the experience is likely to be unsatisfactory. Unlike traditional games, there are no winners and losers in *SHARD.* Everyone's goal should be to have a great time, and the result should be many memorable adventures (and the desire for more). A good GM listens to the players' feedback, and incorporates it in future scenarios. During play, the GM monitors the pacing of the game, responding to the needs and interests of the players and seeing to it that the action moves along at a pace that the players are comfortable with. If the players want more romance, adventure, mystery, or suspense, it's up to the GM to find ways to work those elements into the game.

Finally, don't let the action, creativity, and drama of the game get bogged down by the rules. The rules presented in *SHARD* are simple guidelines designed to help make creating interactive stories easier. If they're getting in the way, change them to suit your needs, or ignore them altogether. Even though the task of running a game may be hard work, it shouldn't feel at all like hard work. Above all else, running a game of *SHARD* should be a great deal of fun, and if you find that it is, then you're clearly doing it right.
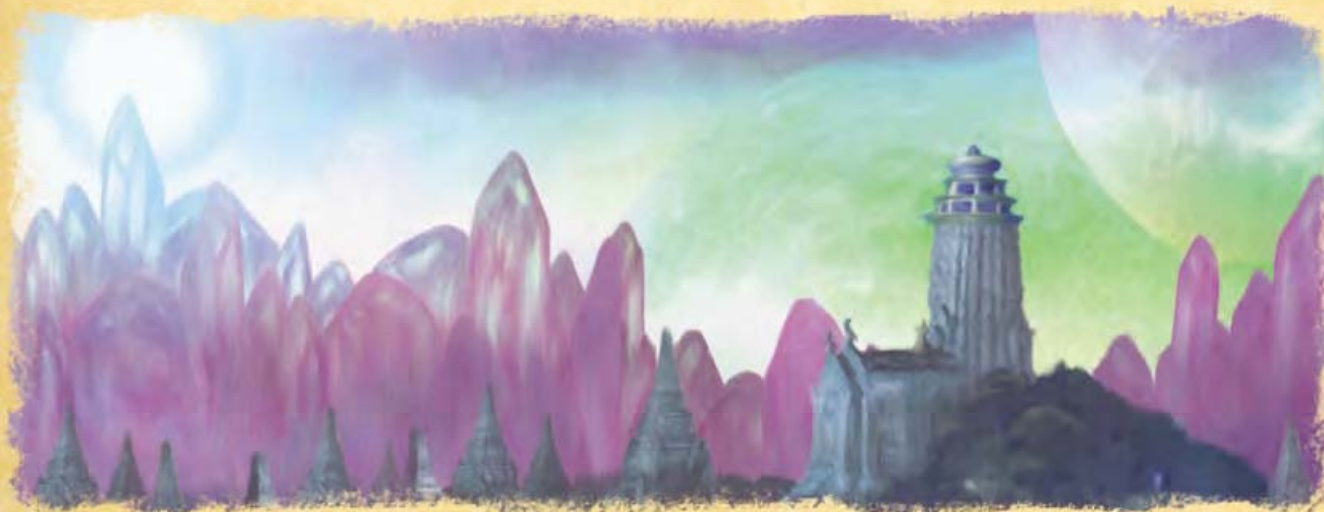
III. Combat

The Vajrah teenagers were the first to fall. Uthyan bounced his staff against their skulls with an elementary kata, not even breaking step. The vine-cloaked swamp echoed the blows. Rázman and Shadyáti closed with the lone intruder next, spears keen for battle; but the burly taipan wouldn't stop until he reached his target – me.

I waved off my rugged companions with a flick of my scimitar. They looked relieved. Then I bowed my head and laid back my neck frills. My boots were crossed on a little column of rock.

"Come back and face the magistrate, Chihájmi," said Uthyan with undisguised anxiety. "I promise you safe escort to the city."

"Meet me in the Spiral Arena," I told him, "and I'll go with you."

Through parted lips I saw his thorn-like fangs, amber with venom. "Acknowledge you in a formal duel? I'm not so eager to dishonor myself."

My frills twitched. I didn't deserve that. And so soon after he had asked me to be his bride.

So much for courtesy. This could only go one direction anyway. I rolled to the side and threw a sword stroke at his silken braided belt. He obliged with a parry. Then I leapt above him – I'm a precocious leaper – and splayed my neck frills for impact. My scimitar flew at the crystal ring that pierced a scale on his cheek. It used to twinkle like magic in the candlelight, that ring.

He blocked my sword and thumped his staff into my belly. My breath vanished. I rolled to a defensive stance and bit down the pain. Stupid, distracted girl. Rázman and Shadyáti leapt in to help, gallant oafs. Uthyan struck their knees, crack-crack, dropping them to the marshy ground.

I rushed him. I knew he'd counter with a thrust, and I pushed my weight against the haft of his weapon. His shoulder was exposed for one clean hit. It had to count.

That's when I saw his fangs sparkle, from the venom I suppose, as his mouth threw open wide. His eyes were in such a frenzy. I hadn't thought he would bite. Not me.

Stupid girl.

What Makes SHARD Combat Different?

Combat in the *SHARD RPG* should evoke the feeling of a great martial arts or action film, complete with amazing fight choreography and thrilling stunts. The flavor of this type of action is best achieved through imaginative descriptions of derring-do. Creativity and a good story should always come first, rules and game mechanics second. Remember, the goal for any aspect of the game, including combat, should be to create a situation that makes you say, "Wow, that would have been a cool scene in a movie!"

Combat functions on an action-reaction principle. This is really what distinguishes *SHARD* combat from other game systems. Although characters act in a certain order during combat, every character may make a single reaction to each action. In this respect, *SHARD* combat is free-form, fluid, and very dynamic.

Here are a few of the essential elements of the combat system:

• Your character has a variable number of Combat Actions each Combat Round based on the roll of your Action Dice.

• The number of Combat Actions you have each Round is based on your Agility and Dexterity.

• Once you have used all your Combat Actions in each Combat Round, you will no longer be able to act or react to any situation.

• If attacked, you may immediately react to the attacker, regardless of Attribute scores or *Initiative* (the order in which everyone acts in combat) as long as you have Combat Actions remaining in the Combat Round. This is true whether one or multiple opponents attack you.

• Your opponents may also react to your attacks regardless of Initiative assuming they have Combat Actions remaining.

Some Basic Terms

Before we fully introduce combat, it's helpful to know a few basic terms.

• *Combat Round (Round)*: This is the basic time frame for combat in the *SHARD RPG*. The typical Combat Round is six seconds long.

• *Initiative*: The order in which everyone acts in any given Combat Round is determined by rolling dice as described below in *Determine Individual Initiative*. Highest Initiative goes first. This is also sometimes referred to as *Initiative Order*.

• *Turn*: Whenever you choose to take your Combat Actions normally in order of Initiative, it becomes your character's Turn. You are then known as the *Active Combatant*. All other characters can only react during the Active Combatant's Turn until it becomes their Turn.

• *Combat Actions*: In any given Combat Round, you will be able to perform a certain number of Combat Actions. These feats can be attacks, defensive maneuvers, Skill uses, or any other single action you'd be able to perform in the time allowed in a Combat Round. When you are out of Combat Actions, you are no longer able to act in a Combat Round.

• *Action Pool*: The total number of Combat Actions a character has available in a given Round.

• *Reactions*: These are Combat Actions that are used out of Initiative Order in response to another character's normal use of Combat Actions.

• *Bundling Actions*: The ability to combine several related Combat Actions into a single Action Dice roll rather than having to roll individually for each one.

• *Drawing Weapons*: Pulling out and readying weapons to use for an attack (drawing a sword, nocking an arrow, pulling a loaded gun, grabbing several throwing shards, producing a knife in each hand, etc.) Drawing weapons normally uses a single Combat Action.

• *Attack Roll*: Rolling Action Dice to attack an opponent.

• *Defense Roll*: Rolling Action Dice to negate successes rolled by an Attack Roll against you.

• *Delay*: The ability to allow a lower Initiative character to act before you do. If you have Delayed, you will be able to interrupt a lower Initiative character at any point during their Turn.

• *Half Move*: The standard distance a character can move in any given Combat Round without using a Combat Action. This distance is usually 15 feet, plus half of your Agility score, plus half of any Athletics Skill.

• *Full Move*: This requires a character to spend a Combat Action but allows him to cover the full distance allowed by whatever movement ability the character is using.

• *Stamina*: The amount of damage your character is capable of taking before succumbing to unconsciousness or death.

The Combat Round

The Combat Round is divided into three basic steps:

Step 1: Determine Individual Initiative

Step 2: Determine Number of Combat Actions

Step 3: Play the Combat Round

A *Quick Combat Summary Sheet* that summarizes the steps of a Combat Round is located at the end of this chapter. This can be a valuable thing to copy and have handy while combat is occurring, especially when you are initially learning the system.

Step 1: Determine Individual Initiative

Every player rolls 1d6, to which they add their Agility score. They may also add any levels of *Fast Reflexes* they possess. Subtract any penalties (if appropriate) from earlier combat damage. This is the player's Initiative score. Players can record this total in the "Initiative" slot on the *Player Combat Tracking Sheet* (located on page 59 of this book) in the upper left hand corner beneath the appropriate *Rnd #*. Players act in order of Initiative, from highest to lowest.

Delaying Initiative

Players with higher Initiative scores may decide to *Delay* and allow others with lower Initiative to act before they do. A player who has Delayed may interrupt someone with a lower Initiative at any time by simply announcing that they are interrupting. At that point, the delaying player may immediately take his Turn and leap into the fray. After the higher Initiative player has performed all of the actions he wishes, the player who was interrupted continues his Turn.

Unlike Reactions (described later), Delaying Initiative does allow a player to potentially prevent an action from occurring, assuming the player can correctly predict the action's intention. Thus, let's say a Delayed Initiative player saw an assassin aiming a rifle at the player's faithful companion, the player could take a Combat Action to try and prevent the assassin from firing by either immediately attacking the assassin (assuming he could reach him) or by taking some other action that distracts the assassin from his target. The player would then take his Turn normally and the assassin would only resume his Turn after the Delayed Initiative player announced that his Turn was over. The assassin, however, could still React to the Delayed Initiative player's actions.

Ranged Weapon Initiative

Characters with ranged weapons "at the ready" (drawn and ready to fire) will be able to fire those weapons before a character with a higher Initiative score can close to hand-to-hand combat if the higher Initiative character has to perform more than a Half Move to close the distance. The higher Initiative character could, however, decide to use ranged weapons to attack the lower Initiative character first, even though the lower Initiative character had a readied ranged weapon. This is true whether the character is acting in his Turn normally or has decided to Delay Initiative.

Example: Joel and his opponent roll Initiative. Joel scores a 12, and his opponent scores a 9. Joel decides to close the distance between himself and his opponent, who has two crystal knives ready to throw at him. Due to the fact that his opponent is more than a Half Move away, Joel knows that his enemy will be able to hurl his knives before he can close the distance, regardless of Joel having the higher Initiative. Not possessing a ranged weapon, Joel decides to risk it and charges his enemy, bobbing and weaving as best he can.

Step 2: Determine Number of Combat Actions

Next, the players roll Action Dice derived from the following formula, subtracting any penalties due to earlier combat damage from the total number of Action Dice rolled:

(Agility + Dexterity) / 2 (rounded up), minus penalties due to earlier combat damage

Players add any successes rolled on these dice to 2, which is the base number of Combat Actions a character will have in any given Combat Round. Players also add the number of extra Combat Actions derived from the Talent *Combat Instinct*, if any. The total is the number of Combat Actions a player has for the Combat Round. This can be noted in the box to the right of *Action #* on the *Combat Tracking Sheet*. Combat Actions can be attacks, defenses, or the use of any appropriate Skills or Animal Abilities.

Example: Joel rolled 3 successes on his Action Dice. After adding the 2 base Combat Actions that all characters get, and the 1 Extra Action from his Combat Instinct Talent, he has a grand total of 6 Combat Actions for this Round. He now begins considering what his character wants to do when it becomes his Turn. He has to keep in mind that he has a finite number of Combat Actions he may take during the Round. If he uses up all his Combat Actions as Reactions before his Turn even begins, he may have nothing left when his Turn arrives, and no way to defend himself.

Step 3: Play the Combat Round

Once all the players have determined their Initiative and number of Combat Actions for the Round (and the GM has done the same thing for all the NPCs), the Combat Round begins. The character with the highest Initiative score takes his Turn first and becomes the Active Combatant. If this is a player, he tells the GM what his character is doing and rolls Action Dice as appropriate.

Welcome Booklet

Using Combat Actions

Actions in a Combat Round can be any action that could conceivably take place during a typical Combat Round, including offensive and defensive maneuvers, the use of Animal Abilities, Talents, or Skills, or movement. Your only limits are the number of Combat Actions you have for that Round and the six-second time frame you have to perform those actions. Each individual attack, parry, use of a Skill, etc., costs a single Combat Action. When you are out of Combat Actions, you may no longer act in a given Combat Round. You must wait for the next Round where you will determine a new number of Combat Actions.

Action Dice are rolled for every Contested Action you decide to take in order to determine your Success Level. All Contested Actions cost a Combat Action in order to perform. Free Actions require no roll of Action Dice but still cost a Combat Action. Everyone gets one free Half Move every Combat Round — you may perform it without spending a Combat Action. If you wish to make additional Half Moves or a Full Move, it will cost you a Combat Action to do so.

Example: Having won the Initiative for the Combat Round, Joel decides to take his Turn and become the Active Combatant. He has a total of 6 Combat Actions for the Round (he rolled 3 successes on his Action Dice and added them to the base of 2 and the 1 from his Combat Instinct Talent). He decides to make a Half Move to his nearest opponent and attack him twice. This costs Joel 2 Combat Actions (since he gets a single Half Move for free). His attacks take out his opponent, so Joel decides to make another Half Move to the next closest enemy and attack a single time. This costs Joel 2 more Combat Actions (1 for the additional Half Move and 1 for the attack). His attack only wounds this new opponent. Joel decides to end his Turn and save his remaining 2 Combat Actions to defend against any attacks that might be directed at him after his Turn or to use as possible Reactions.

Bundling Combat Actions

You may, if you wish, decide to Bundle several Combat Actions together into a single roll of Action Dice. This is usually done with similar Contested Actions, such as multiple attacks, but you may Bundle any actions you wish, up to the maximum number of Combat Actions you have for that Round (and with the approval of the GM). Bundling is usually done to speed up combat (less dice rolls), but there is also a strategic reason to do so. Normally, an opponent can react to every single action you decide to take individually, giving them a chance to defend and counterattack. However, when you Bundle Actions, your opponent may only react after all of the Bundled Actions have taken effect, which includes multiple attacks.

Bundling, however, has some restrictions. When Bundling Actions, you must use the Action Dice of your lowest bundled Skill to determine your Success Level with all of your Bundled Actions. So if you decide to Bundle a Skill or Animal Ability that only gives you 4 Action Dice with a combat ability that normally gives you 8 Action Dice, you would roll 4 Action Dice to perform the Bundled attacks. Further, if you are Bundling special combat maneuvers, you must apply the worst Combat Modifier to the Action Dice you'll use for the Bundled Action. For this reason, it is usually best to Bundle similar attacks or equally ranked groups of Skills or Animal Abilities.

Bundling Actions does not give you additional Combat Actions. You can Bundle as many actions as you wish (and the GM allows) into a single roll, but you must still have the Combat Actions available to make those actions possible. Thus, if you had six Combat Actions for a particular Combat Round, you could only Bundle a maximum of six different actions.

Reactions

In the *SHARD RPG* combat system, you do not have to wait for your Turn to act in combat. Anyone involved in combat may use a single Combat Action to react to the Active Combatant's actions, assuming they have a way to perceive what the Active Combatant is doing. This is known as a Reaction, and like regular combat it proceeds in order of Initiative, from highest to lowest, until all the characters that wish to take a Reaction have done so. This process of Action/Reaction continues until the Active Combatant declares his Turn to be over. The next highest Initiative character then begins his Turn and becomes the Active Combatant, and the process continues until the Round is over.

Players should be careful about using all of their Combat Actions as Reactions. Not only can you find yourself without any remaining Combat Actions when your Turn comes around, you may also find yourself unable to defend against incoming attacks. Remember, any action you wish to take in combat requires you to have a Combat Action. When you run out of Combat Actions, you can no longer take any action, which includes defensive actions.

There are a few restrictions to Reactions. Players may only use a single Combat Action as a Reaction. You may not take multiple Reactions to the same action, nor may you Bundle Actions in a Reaction. Further, Reactions cannot stop an action from being taken; they can only react to the result. Thus, if an enemy fired a rifle at your companion, you could not stop the rifleman from firing, but you could potentially leap into the path of the bullet, try to tackle your companion out of the bullet's way, or even attack the rifleman (assuming you had a ranged weapon or he was within a Half Move of your character) after the shot had been fired. Finally, it is possible to react to a Reaction, but the same restrictions apply.

Example: Aaron's character Koya and his rival, an NPC, are dueling. Their friends (both players and NPCs) are observing the duel. Koya's rival (who won Initiative and is currently the Active Combatant) decides to attack Koya. After Koya successfully parries the attack, one of the rival's companions decides to take a Reaction. He wants to even the odds for his friend, so he decides to shoot Koya in the leg with a pistol. Fortunately for Koya, the dishonorable scoundrel misses. One of Koya's friends (another player) decides he wants to take a Reaction to the shooter's Reaction and punch the blackguard in the face as a warning not to interfere. The player (acting in order of Initiative) takes his free Half Move to get to the shooter (which costs him no Combat Actions). He can now attempt to punch the NPC's lights out. Had the player been further away than a Half Move, he could only have moved up to the shooter (1 Combat Action) as his Reaction, and would have to have waited until the next series of Reactions to try and punch the NPC. Similarly, since the shooter has already reacted, he also has to wait for the next series of Reactions to react to the player moving up to punch him.

Players are encouraged to use the *Player Combat Tracking Sheet (page 59)* to keep track of used and unused Combat Actions, as well as damage and other modifiers and information pertaining to that Combat Round.

Combat Basics

Every time you attack or defend, you roll Action Dice based on the Ranking of the Attribute you are using in combat. This is known as an Attack Roll or a Defense Roll. If you score successes, then your attack or defense is considered successful. If you score no successes, then your attack or defense is considered a failure. Some Skills, such as Martial Arts and Melee Combat, can be used both to attack and defend, while other Skills, such as Evade or Firearm Combat cannot.

Every success scored on a Defense Roll made by a defender cancels a success scored on an Attack Roll made by their opponent. If the defense successes negate all the attack successes, then the attack has no effect — it was successfully parried or dodged. If the defense successes do not negate all the attack successes, then the attack was successful in striking its target. Every attack and defense costs one Combat Action to perform. It is important to note, however, that unlike Reactions, a player may make as many Defense Rolls in a row as they have Combat Actions. They are not limited to one.

An attack that strikes its target will do damage, known as *Damage Levels*, which are subtracted from a character's current Stamina, and are recorded as wounds on the Combat Tracking Sheet. Generally, base damage is determined by a character's Strength (limited by the size of the weapon being used). Additionally, the successes that were not negated by Defense Rolls are added to this base damage. Finally, the Damage Levels are given a multiplier based on the Success Level the attack managed to achieve as shown in the following table.

Successes	Success Level
1 success	Partial (x0.5)
2 or 3 successes	Adequate (x1)
4 or 5 successes	Good (x2)
6 or 7 successes	Excellent (x3)
8 or 9 successes	Astounding (x4)
10 or 11 successes	Incredible (x5)
12+ successes	Legendary (x6)

Example: In combat, Aaron attacks his opponent with his sword. He rolls 6 successes with his Attack Roll. His opponent only rolls 2 successes on his Defense Roll, negating 2 of Aaron's successes. Aaron's attack is considered successful at 4 successes. Since Aaron's character, Koya, has a Strength Ranking of 8, the base damage would normally be 8 Damage Levels. However, since he is using a Medium Weapon (sword), which can do a maximum of 6 Damage Levels, his base damage is 6 Damage Levels. Further, his opponent did not negate 4 of his successes, so Aaron adds those successes to his base damage for a total of 10 Damage Levels. Finally, his 4 successes qualifies him for a Good Success Level, giving him a multiplier of 2. Thus, Aaron's final damage total is 20 Damage Levels — an incredibly impressive strike indeed!

A defender may subtract any applicable armor from the damage done by each successful attack (and remember that the value of the armor, both worn and natural, counts against each individual strike within a bundled attack), before deducting the rest from his Stamina score. Stamina is derived from the following formula:

2 x (Vigor + Will) = Stamina

The Stamina multiplier is increased to 3 if you possess the Toughness Talent.

Damage is classified into two different types: *Subdue Damage* and *Fatal Damage* (both described in greater detail later). These damage types affect you in different ways. Subdue Damage can render you unconscious without killing you and is easier to heal. Lethal Damage can kill you or leave you bleeding to death and is much more difficult to heal. Damage should be tracked throughout combat to take these factors into account. General Damage taken from any basic attack is an equal mixture of both Subdue and Fatal damage (favoring Subdue in cases of odd numbers). Though it is possible to choose to do only Subdue damage to your opponent, choosing to do only Fatal Damage to your opponent requires the use of the special *Maneuver Location Table* (see the following page for more details).

When your Stamina reaches zero (0) you are either "defeated" and unable to continue fighting (but still conscious), or you are unconscious and bleeding to death depending on whether it was primarily Subdue or Fatal Damage that put you in that state. When your Stamina reaches negative ten (–10), you are either completely unconscious or dead depending on whether it was primarily Subdue or Fatal Damage that got you there.

Being damaged in combat has other negative effects as well. If more than one third (1/3) of your total Stamina is lost, a penalty of –1 is applied to all of your Action Dice until you heal above the one-third mark. If more than two-thirds (2/3) of your total Stamina is lost, then a penalty of –2 is applied to all of your Action Dice until you heal above that mark.

Fumbles During Combat (Optional Rule)

Rolling a Fumble (one or more 1s and no successes) while fighting an opponent indicates that you have utterly failed your attempted action. Depending on the severity of the Fumble, the GM should decide on an

appropriate mishap. This could range anywhere from having a weapon break or shatter or having a firearm explode in your grasp to losing Combat Actions as you attempt to recover from the Fumble. Some Fumbles might even harm your companions: perhaps a wild shot ricochets and strikes one of them, or you crash into a group of them, ruining their attacks or preparations. GMs should be careful, however, about pulling too many players into another player's Fumble as that might make the Fumbling player incredibly unpopular.

The only exception to the standard Fumble rule is in regards to Defense Rolls. GMs should ignore Fumbles when a player is making Defense Rolls. It's bad enough to fail a Defense Roll and get hit by an opponent's attack, especially given that no Attack Roll successes negated will often result in a devastating blow. Combat can be very deadly in the *SHARD RPG* and failed Defense Rolls often mean defeat or death. It is our opinion that a GM should not add insult to injury in these cases.

Rolling Sixes (Optional Rule)

When you roll two or more 6s on your Action Dice, not only do they count normally as successes, you also get to roll the second and subsequent 6s over again, thereby increasing your chance of scoring additional successes. As long as you continue to score 6s on the dice, you continue to roll those specific dice. If you score any number other than a 6, you stop rolling that particular die. This rule makes it possible for someone with only a few Action Dice to score more successes than would normally be possible.

The Maneuver Location Table (Martial Arts)

If your character possesses Martial Arts, you are able to freely use the Maneuver Location Table (page 32) to target specific areas of your opponent's body to achieve certain special combat effects, such as momentarily stunning your opponent or disabling the use of a limb. The three decisions you must make when deciding to use this special table are the part of your opponent's body you will target (shown in the *Hit Locale* column), the type of damage you wish to inflict (shown in the *Damage Type* row), and the specific combat effect you wish to achieve (shown in the *Maneuver Effect* column). You must apply any maneuver modifiers indicated in the *ADJ #* column of the table to your Martial Arts Action Dice.

Once you've successfully made an attack on your opponent using one of these special maneuvers, the effects are immediately applied to your opponent. If you only score a Partial Success Level, however, the special maneuver effects do not take effect although you still do the Damage Levels you normally would have for that Success Level.

Even characters without the Martial Arts Skill may attempt maneuvers found in the Maneuver Location Table by adding an additional penalty of –2 to the ADJ # shown in the table. Thus, if a non-martial artist wanted to be able to attempt a Stun maneuver by targeting an opponent's head (an attack that normally has a –3 penalty), he'd have to apply a penalty of –5 to his Action Dice. These maneuvers could apply to either melee or ranged attacks.

When deciding upon a special combat maneuver, consider the cinematic effect of that maneuver. What would it look like in a movie? Although declaring that you intend to Stun your enemy with a –3 head shot gives enough information for the purposes of the rules, it's rather pedestrian. Instead, try something like, "I spring into the air with a roar and deliver a whirling spin-kick to the side of the assassin's head, attempting to stun the villain!" The GM, in turn, should also endeavor to create a more cinematic experience, and should feel free to give players small bonuses from time to time to reward excellent descriptions.

Maneuver Location Effects

Various powerful combat effects can be attempted and achieved using the Maneuver Location Table. The

more difficult and powerful effects require the sacrifice of more Action Dice to accomplish, but the end result can be devastating. You must choose the individual effect (or effect series) desired from those listed in the appropriate Maneuver Effect box. An effect series is denoted by the use of an "and" to conjoin them (such as Disable and Stun, Stun and Broken, etc.)

• Escape: Getting free of a Grab, Bind, Hold or Lock by applying leverage or striking the grappling foe. The target area is struck for only 1 Damage Level. Escape may also be used to try to elude a Cover maneuver, causing no damage, if you have won Initiative.

• Bind/Grab: Grappling with an opponent to immobilize and control the targeted area or weapon. No damage is done. If successful, you may attempt a Hold/Lock maneuver at no Maneuver Location Table adjustment penalty, if you have Action Dice remaining.

• Throw/Sweep: Knocking or levering an opponent off their feet and onto the ground. It does normal damage. Characters with Martial Arts may throw their opponent up to their Martial Arts Skill Ranking in feet in any direction. A fallen foe must use a Combat Action to get to their feet unless they have successfully used Acrobatics that Round.

• Disarm: Knocking or forcing a foe's weapon from his grasp. Successful use causes half normal damage. It takes a Combat Action to retrieve the weapon, if possible, or to draw another.

• Nausea: Striking susceptible areas to create momentary distress. This inflicts a penalty on a foe's Action Dice equal to the Adjustment number from the Maneuver Location Table. This lasts for an equal number of Rounds. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Lame: Striking an ambulatory limb (such as a winged arm or a leg) that restricts its movement due to bruising and trauma. The foe gets no more free Half Moves with that movement type for the entire combat and must use an extra Combat Action to move using the affected limb until healed. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Disable: Hitting a targeted area with such force that it becomes temporarily unusable. The target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2 at the beginning of each Round to offset the painful effects of the Disable. Success results in a negative 2 to the target's Action Dice while failure allows the use of only half of the target's Action Dice. If an ambulatory limb was hit, the target is restricted to half movement. Once outside of the combat where it was inflicted, anyone hit by a Disabling blow suffers a negative 1 penalty to any Action

Dice used for physical actions, until they receive successful medical attention. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Cover: With a success at this maneuver, you hold your foe at the point of your weapon, causing no initial damage. Thereafter you can instantly strike for full effect (weapon damage plus cover successes multiplied by the standard multipliers for the Success Level). Your foe must win Initiative against you and succeed in an Escape maneuver to nullify the Cover.

• Hold/Lock: Grappling that immobilizes the targeted area. Initial use of this maneuver causes full damage, after which it deals the attacker's Strength in damage per Round until release or successful escape.

• Stun: Striking with a debilitating effect, causing temporary loss of function. Any successes that get through the foe's defenses negate an equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Broken: Breaking or otherwise crippling a joint or bone. The target must make a Vigor Roll at a minus 4 at the beginning of each Round to offset the painful effects of this maneuver. Success allows the character to use only half their Action Dice. Failure means no offensive actions may be attempted, all others actions are at half Action Dice, and the character suffers 1d6 Stun. If an ambulatory limb was hit, the foe is restricted to half movement. Once outside of the combat where it was inflicted, anyone hit by a Breaking blow suffers a negative 3 penalty to any Action Dice used for physical actions, until they receive successful medical attention. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Full Knockout: A blow so strong or effective that the foe is knocked unconscious for 1 - 6 minutes. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Internal Damage: Damaging internal organs and systems, leading to internal bleeding. The bleeding damage rate is equal to the number of successes that penetrated the foe's defense, each Round, till they receive successful medical attention or die. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Lost Feature: Striking a feature of the head, neck, or face and permanently damaging it in some way. This maneuver causes full damage.

• Severed: Violently separating a limb or section of a limb from the body. The foe begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of the success that penetrated the foe's defense, till they receive successful medical attention or die. This maneuver causes full damage.

	DAMAGE TYPE					
HIT LOCALE	**Subdue**		**Subdue / Fatal**		**Fatal**	
	ADJ #	**MANEUVER EFFECT**	**ADJ #**	**MANEUVER EFFECT**	**ADJ #**	**MANEUVER EFFECT**
HEAD	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock Lame (wing)	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-5	Lost Feature
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Internal Damage
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 Damage Level to bring an end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock effects, or a Cover (once you have won Initiative).

Bind / Grab - No damage caused. Targeted area (and/or weapon) immobile and controlled till Escape or release. Hold / Lock may then be attempted to same target area at an ADJ # of 0.

Throw / Sweep - Full damage. Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill Ranking # of feet away). Target must use a Combat Action to rise, unless they have made a successful Acrobatics Roll that Round. If thrown far enough, they must use a Combat Action or their free Half Move to close.

Disarm - Half damage caused, plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use a Combat Action to retrieve or draw new one.

Nausea - Full damage. Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of Rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.

Lame - Full damage. Target gets no more free Half Moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Combat Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant damage (weapon damage plus Cover successes with standard multipliers applying) till target wins Initiative and performs a successful Escape.

Disable - Full damage. If limb targeted, loss of limb use (half Movement only if limb is used for locomotion). Target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2. Failure allows only half Action Dice, success means only a minus 2. Physical actions outside combat suffer a minus 1 till healed.

Hold / Lock - Full damage. Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per Round till Escape or release.

Stun - Full damage. Any successes that get through target's defenses negates equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds.

Broken - Full damage. A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (half Movement if limb used for locomotion). Target must make Vigor Roll at minus 4; success allows half Action Dice: failure allows no offensive actions, only half Action Dice, and causes 1D6 Stun. Physical actions outside of combat suffer a minus 3 to rolls till successful medical treatment.

Full Knockout - Full damage. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Lost Feature - Full damage. A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is permanently harmed in some way.

Internal Damage - Full damage. Target begins bleeding internally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the target's defense, till healed or dead.

Severed - Full damage. Targeted limb or section of limb violently separated from body. Target begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

A Quick Combat Summary Sheet

- **Step 1: Determine Individual Initiative** (for that Round)
  - o Roll 1d6, add your Agility and Fast Reflexes (if applicable). Subtract any penalties from earlier combat damage (if any).
  - o Record total in Initiative slot on Combat Tracking Sheet.
  - o Determine and record your Initiative Order (highest to lowest).

- **Step 2: Roll Your Number of Combat Actions** (for that Round)
  - o Everyone starts with 2 Combat Actions plus any levels of Combat Instinct Talent. In order of Initiative, roll Action Dice equal to your Agility plus Dexterity divided by 2 (rounding up) to determine additional Combat Actions. Subtract any penalties from earlier combat damage (if any).
  - o Record the final total of Combat Actions in Action # box on Combat Tracking Sheet.

- **Step 3: Play the Combat Round**
  - o Wait for your Turn (all characters act in order of their Initiative).
    - Use Combat Actions to defend if necessary, or as Reactions to the Active Combatant's Actions, marking off your Combat Actions each time you do so.
      - You may react using only one Combat Action at a time, with one exception:
        - o If you do not have a readied weapon and you possess the Fast Draw Skill, you will only need to use one Combat Action to draw and use the weapon. If you fail your Fast Draw roll, then you must use that Combat Action just to draw your weapon, and you must wait for the next series of Reactions (or your Turn) in order to attack with it.
  - o When it's your Turn, begin taking your actions by rolling the appropriate Action Dice, up to the maximum number of Combat Actions you have for that Round.
    - You may choose to Bundle Actions if you wish.
      - A Bundled Action use the lowest Attribute Score to determine your Action Dice for that action, and takes the greatest penalty modifier of the various Combat Actions in the Bundle.
    - Don't forget to factor in any adjustment to your Action Dice due to previous bonuses or penalties (if any).
    - Remember any injuries you may have that might limit your Combat Action choices.
  - o Successful attacks cause Damage Levels which are subtracted from your Stamina. Damage Levels are determined by your Strength score (limited by your weapon size) plus any successes that have not been negated by Defense Roll successes, then multiplied by the Success Level multiplier.
    - Damage Levels are decreased by armor, both worn and natural.
  - o After your Turn is done (you have used as many Combat Actions as you wished), the rest of the Combat Round continues. You may continue to take Reactions if you wish assuming you still have unused Combat Actions left.

  PLEASE NOTE: When all the Rounds of an entire combat session have come to an end, it is important to note any damage done to worn armor (it loses 1 level of effectiveness after each battle in which it was utilized and must be repaired using the appropriate Skills to bring it back to full effectiveness). Also note any continuing or far-reaching damage done to the bodies of the characters involved (such as continued bleeding, debilitating limb damage, etc.), which is determined by tallying up the different types of damages done (Subdue or Fatal) and dealing with the results.

IV. Ritual Magic

Lájwe emptied the silken pouch into a deliriously green fire. Tishínian herbs flashed to cinders; dried seeds cracked like fireworks. Smoke welled from the engraved Amber bowl, drenching the study with a dappled spice perfume. It was the last preparation Lájwe could make. His time had run out.

He knelt in the center of a labyrinth rug and draped his ram's horns with ceremonial silk. His eyes closed. The discipline of trance unfurled. Chants came to his lips like familiar, foot-worn paths, each word a wingbeat flicker in the crystals that surrounded him. His mind forgot the weight of flesh. He stepped into the Dream Realm.

Here the spice perfume became a braid of ribbons that traversed an iridescent sky. He walked this path through sleeping clouds toward a distant rise in the landscape. It was a steep-sided crystal plateau, and as it neared, threads of red foliage twined around him. These were no entrapments. They were painted illumination. He had walked into a dream of ornate Tishínian manuscripts – a tranquil place for a learned sir'hibas to undertake her most challenging ritual.

She was there on the plateau, a pale grey spot framed by knotwork illumination. Raskélseh was a turtledove of elegant bearing. Lájwe had seen her once when he was younger, and because of her reputation had hoped never to do so again. But now she gathered strength to call up a demon. The threat to the province was terrible. Lájwe could not hesitate.

Without announcing himself, he recalled the ancient tragedy of the Yura Temple and the fire that once devoured so many priceless scrolls; and the remembrance took form, igniting the plateau in an instant. Lájwe became a titan column of smoke that rose above it. He glared as below him the manuscript – dream blackened to embers and ash.

But he had not taken Raskélseh by surprise, nor expected to. She lifted two slender wings above the flames. Her feathers wove into a paper lantern, a frail, weightless thing that lifted on the hot air. Transformed, she danced without effort above the churning fire, floated past his great, smoky face. There was an inscription on the paper lantern. It read 'Sanctuary is Peace' in dream-letters. One of the oldest sir'hibas chants.

This isn't going to be simple, thought Lájwe. But if she believed him to be as clumsy as this, she might turn careless. It was a splinter of a chance. He cast away his inferno shape in a vast ring of smoke, and replaced it with the jagged form of something long and winged and spiny. Like a streamer he darted around the paper lantern, slowly closing in for the kill.

Being a Sir'hibas

Dárdünah is a magical world, steeped in mysticism and ritual. The very laws of physics are governed by magical principles. Individuals with the talent to manipulate these magical energies are held in high regard. They are known as *sir'hibasi* (SEER-hih-boss-ee), meaning "wise ones" (singular *sir'hibas*), and they are the sorcerers of the world.

Individuals who possess magic talent are often identified at an early age so they can be instructed in the ways of the sir'hibasi. Most sorcerers are easily recognized by the elaborate tattoos and markings with which they decorate their bodies and store their arcane power. Considered rare and precious, sir'hibasi are able to wield tremendous power and travel in ethereal realms filled with demons and elementals.

The Basics of Magic

The *SHARD RPG*'s rules for magic focus on creating an incredibly cinematic, visual experience. Roleplaying is a crucial element of *SHARD* magic. Since most magical confrontations take place in the Dream Realm, an ethereal dimension of raw, unformed magic, players must rely on imaginative descriptions to create their magical effects.

The basics of the magic system are:

• A player decides to have a character be able to perform magic.

• The player purchases the appropriate magical Talents and Skills for his character.

• The player chooses what type of magic he wishes to focus on. This will determine the types of *Magic Rituals* the character will be able to use.

• Each Magic Ritual is assigned its own Action Dice. These are the dice the player rolls in order to perform the ritual successfully.

• Magic Ritual Action Dice are rolled at the beginning of the ritual as well as at various times during the ritual to determine the outcome of various events.

Magic Rituals

There are four general Magic Rituals your character may possess:

1. The Ritual of Healing

Performed by *healers*, this ritual is used to restore the mind, body, or spirit. It is the least dangerous of the magical arts but can be rather taxing for both the healer and the patient.

2. The Ritual of Dreamwalking

Performed by *seers*, this ritual allows the sir'hibas to go into a trance and enter the Dream Realm so that visions of the past, present, and future can be glimpsed. Dreamwalking is enigmatic and sometimes even dangerous depending on what the seer has to deal with in the Dream.

3. The Ritual of Endowment

Performed by *mages*, this ritual allows the sir'hibas to endow objects in the physical world with a variety of magical traits. This type of magic can sometimes have unexpected results, even when performed successfully.

4. The Ritual of Summoning

Performed by *summoners*, this ritual allows the sir'hibas to call forth various creatures and entities from either the physical world, the Dream Realm, or from other dimensions. This is the most dangerous type of magic, since summoned beings must be constantly controlled. If a summoned creature manages to break free, the results can be disastrous.

Roleplaying Magic

It's important to keep a few points in mind when playing a sir'hibas or when GMing magic in the world of Dárdünah:

• Magic should never be commonplace. It should always be treated as miraculous and awe-inspiring, even by the sir'hibasi.

• Performing magic rituals takes a lot of time. This time is used to gather all the necessary materials: incense, crystals, prayer bowls,

meditation beads, etc. The sorcerer must also draw the correct mystic sigils on the ground. Prayers and incantations must be chanted until the sorcerer enters a meditative trance. Magic is never performed on the fly or in the midst of combat.

• Certain magic rituals require or allow the sorcerer to send his spirit, or *duháma* (doo-HA-mah), into the mysterious and ethereal Dream Realm. There the sorcerer can direct and control the powerful flow of magic needed to achieve miraculous effects. Similar in concept to the astral plane, nothing in the Dream Realm is physical or fixed. Dream "reality" itself can be constantly shaped and reshaped to suit a sorcerer's whim; it is literally the stuff dreams are made of.

• Magical rituals are not always dependable. Magic forces and magical entities are capricious and unpredictable. Every time a magic ritual is used, the experience should be different. It's up to the GM to insure that the use of magic never becomes humdrum or ordinary. Every time a sir'hibas uses magic, there should be an element of risk involved.

• Failure during a magic ritual can have potentially frightening results. Fumbling can result in a disaster that could have far-reaching implications and possibly even a long-term impact on the campaign. Every time a player decides to use magic, he should be just a tad bit nervous about it. Even the most powerful and confident sir'hibas has a deep respect for the forces of magic.

Performing a Ritual

Regardless of the type of magic, there are several essential steps that occur every time a magic ritual is performed:

    Step 1: Preparing the Ritual
    Step 2: Initiating the Ritual
    Step 3: Controlling the Magic
    Step 4: Concluding the Ritual

Step 1: Preparing the Ritual

Before beginning any ritual, you should inform the GM what ritual you intend to perform and what you wish to accomplish. You also need to select an appropriate time and setting for the ritual to take place. The GM will encourage you to describe any special preparations, helping you set the scene for the coming ritual. The GM should feel free to assign roleplaying bonuses for particularly creative and vivid descriptions of these preparations.

Step 2: Initiating the Ritual

The GM will have you roll Action Dice to determine if you can successfully begin the ritual. All players make this roll when beginning any ritual. The Action Dice for this roll are based on the Magic Ritual Skill you are attempting to use. Thus, if you were attempting to use the Ritual of Healing to help a wounded comrade, you would use your Magic Ritual (healing) Ranking as your Action Dice.

The GM can assign modifiers to this initial roll, either bonuses or penalties depending on the preparations you've taken, how difficult an effect you're trying to achieve, or environmental conditions that might make it difficult to enter the trance-like state necessary to perform the ritual. This initial roll both determines if you are able to successfully begin the ritual and sets the stage for the mystical experience that will follow. A low Success Level could indicate a difficult or challenging ritual ahead, while a high Success Level could indicate a larger measure of control on your part.

Step 3: Controlling the Magic

Once you have successfully initiated the ritual and entered your mystical trance, the GM will describe your journey into the Dream Realm and the effects of the powerful magics you are unleashing. This is a delicate time. Your control of those powerful magics is about to be tested.

As you listen to the GM's description, feel free to let him know that you wish to use your ritual Action Dice to further affect or change the outcome of whatever scene the GM may be describing. Remember that you are the controlling factor in that situation. You choose to shape the magic however you wish. The GM, in turn, will ask you to roll your Magic Ritual Action Dice or make certain Characteristic Rolls he feels are necessary to achieve your goals.

Magic Disciplines

Every time you attempt to take an action while using a Magic Ritual, you are considered to be using a *Discipline*. This requires a roll of your appropriate Magic Ritual Action Dice. As with basic dice rolls, Discipline rolls may either be Contested or Opposed. A Contested Roll is used when you are trying to enter into the ritual itself or wish to use a Discipline but do not have to worry about any outside interference. An Opposed Roll, on the other hand, is made when you are in conflict with another sorcerer or mystical being.

Contested Rolls are made using your Magic Ritual Action Dice. Opposed Rolls allow you (and your opponent) to add your Mystic Talent to your Magic Ritual Action Dice. The precise number of Action Dice you use is:

    Contested Action Dice = (Character's Appropriate Magic Ritual Skill + modifiers, if any)

    Opposed Action Dice = (Character's Appropriate Magic Ritual Skill + Mystic Talent Levels + modifiers, if any)

Using Disciplines

Your use of Disciplines during Magic Rituals is limited by the need to rest. The number of Disciplines you may use is equal to your Essence plus the levels you possess in the Mystic Talent. Thus, if your Essence was 7 and you had 4 levels of the Mystic Talent, you'd be able to perform up to 11 Disciplines during your Rituals before rest became necessary.

Every different type of action you attempt to perform during a Magic Ritual is considered a use of a *unique* Discipline and counts toward the maximum number you're allowed. Performing the same type of action (even later in the ritual) does not require the use of another Discipline and would not count toward your maximum.

Exactly what constitutes the use of a unique Discipline is for the GM to decide, but here are some examples of actions that would require the use of a Discipline:

• Entering a ritual trance and coming into the Dream Realm.

• Attempting to have a vision of the past, the present, or the future.

• Attacking one or more opponents.

• Defending against magical attacks.

• Creating a magical ward or illusion.

• Defeating a magical ward or illusion.

• Healing wounds.

• Summoning one or more creatures.

• Controlling summoned creatures.

• Banishing summoned creatures

• Attempting to dominate an opponent.

The rule of thumb when deciding what constitutes a completely unique Discipline is to determine if the effect the sorcerer is trying to achieve is very different from something he's done before. If this is the case, then generally the sorcerer must use another unique Discipline in order to accomplish it.

Example: Having already used the Disciplines that allowed a sorcerer to attack and defend against an enemy in the Dream Realm, further battles with other hostile entities during the same Dreamwalking Ritual would not require the sorcerer to use any further Disciplines. If, however, the sorcerer suddenly decided to have a vision of the past, or create a magical ward, or summon a magical entity, then he would need to make use of additional unique Disciplines for each of those actions.

Using all of your Disciplines during a Magic Ritual can be hazardous. Should you choose to do this (or be forced into it as a result of unforeseen circumstances), then when you emerge from the ritual you'll immediately fall unconscious and remain in that state for 2d6 hours. Attempts to rouse you during this time will fail, and you will have to be carried if you need to be transported. In this state you are considered completely helpless. When you finally regain consciousness, you will be groggy and could potentially suffer penalties to your Action Dice until you've had a chance to take nourishment and recover from the incident.

Recovering Disciplines

After you have used Disciplines in a ritual, your maximum number of unique Disciplines will be reduced until you have had the opportunity to rest. Every use of a unique Discipline reduces your maximum number by 1, and requires 1 full hour of rest *outside of the ritual*, per unique Discipline used, before the maximum number is restored by 1. In this particular case, rest is defined as uninterrupted sleep or meditation.

Example: During a Dreamwalking Ritual, a seer uses 6 unique Disciplines before ending the ritual. His maximum number of Disciplines is 8. If he immediately used another Magic Ritual, he would be limited to the use of 2 Disciplines during that ritual. He would need to rest for 6 hours before he could once again use his maximum of 8 Disciplines. If he only managed to rest for 4 hours, he would be limited to a maximum of 6 Disciplines.

Although there is no official limit to how many times you can use a Magic Ritual, the periods of rest required before you can effectively use unique Disciplines again create a natural limitation. Unless you wanted to be restricted to a limited number of Disciplines while in a ritual (which could be very dangerous if you were attacked), then you will likely not perform more than two or three Magic Rituals in any 24 hour period due to needing to rest several hours between each ritual.

Action Dice Modifiers

At several points in this chapter, the concept of modifiers has been mentioned. As per the rules for *Modifiers* in the *Basics Chapter* of this book, GMs should apply Bonus or Difficulty Modifiers as they deem appropriate based on the actions being attempted by the players.

The important thing to keep in mind concerning modifiers is that the more penalties a GM decides to give his players, the less likely they are to attempt incredibly heroic feats. It all depends on what sort of tone the GM wants to set for his campaign. If amazing, over-the-top action is what you want, then go easy on the Difficulty Modifiers and be generous with the Bonus Modifiers. If, on the other hand, you wish to create a more down-to-earth tone, then pile on the Difficulty Modifiers and be spare with the Bonus Modifiers.

The table on the next page gives some examples of some typical Modifiers when dealing with magic and the situations in which they apply.

Characteristic Rolls

Another type of dice roll you may be asked to make during the course of a ritual is a Characteristic Roll.

MAGIC DIFFICULTY MODIFIER TABLE		
Difficulty Ranking	**Modifier**	**Example Discipline**
Standard	0	**Seer:** Initiating a ritual by entering the Dream Realm. **Healer:** Initiating a ritual by gathering healing energies. **Summoner:** Initiating a ritual by going into a calling trance. **Mage:** Initiating a ritual by going into a focusing trance.
Challenging	-1 Dice	**Seer:** Defending in the Dream Realm; using Illusions and changing the Dream environment; seeing the past, present, and future; seeing through Illusions. **Healer:** Entering the Dream Realm; Healing lesser wounds (less than 1/3rd Stamina); protection from supernatural foes. **Summoner:** Entering the Dream Realm. **Mage:** Entering the Dream Realm; penetrating or unraveling wards.
Difficult	-2 Dice	**Seer:** Damaging, Binding, or using Illusions to attack a foe; seeking and communicating with others in the Dream; dispelling magical manifestations (wards and magical traps). **Healer:** Defending in the Dream Realm; Healing large wounds (less than 2/3rd Stamina); healing supernatural wounds. **Summoner:** Defending in the Dream Realm; commanding a summoned entity; seeing through a summoned entity's eyes; dismissing a suthra. **Mage:** Defending in the Dream Realm; dispelling magical manifestations (wards and magical traps); creating limited Illusions in the physical world; dismissing weather effects; warding against mystical sight or spirits.
Very Difficult	-3 Dice	**Seer:** Bringing others into the Dream Realm; allowing others to see visions; entering and changing another's dreams. **Healer:** Attacking in the Dream Realm; Healing terrible wounds (more than 2/3rd Stamina); mending bones; curing poison effects or madness. **Summoner:** Attacking in the Dream Realm; Summoning a demon, spirit, or elemental; summoning a suthra to bear burdens or to act as a scout, spy, or tracker. **Mage:** Attacking in the Dream Realm; Endowing inanimate things with special qualities; calling up a wind; warding against demons and elementals.
Extremely Difficult	-4 Dice	**Seer:** Attempting to use Domination on a foe. **Healer:** Restoring severed limbs; breaking curses. **Summoner:** Subjugating a demon, spirit, or elemental; banishing a demon, spirit, or elemental; summoning a suthra to attack or defend. **Mage:** Temporarily diminishing another's Attributes with a "curse"; calling up fog or mist; warding against Endowment Ritual effects.
Almost Impossible	-5 Dice or higher	**Seer:** Capturing another person's spirit (which causes the body to eventually die); using the Dream Realm to physically transport your body. **Healer:** Restoring lost Characteristics; healing old injuries or birth defects; severing supernatural Domination or control; banishing supernatural foes. **Summoner:** Making a more permanent slave or servant of a demon, spirit, or elemental; summoning a suthra to sacrifice itself for you (to eat, to harvest some part of it, etc.); summon a suthra to be your permanent companion. **Mage:** Temporarily adding to another's Attributes with a "charm"; making magical effects last longer (endowments, wards, curses, or charms); creating a storm; causing Stamina loss using any magically-created weather effects; warding against physical harm.

Such rolls are sometimes used during a ritual to help determine the effects of the powerful magic on either the sorcerer or others who may be similarly affected. A Characteristic Roll's Action Dice are:

Characteristic Roll Action Dice = Current Characteristic Ranking

When using Magic Rituals, the two most likely Characteristics rolls the GM may require are Essence and Will.

• *Essence Roll-* This Characteristic Roll may be required by the GM when your raw ability to interact with magical events is needed. A GM may allow a sorcerer to make an Essence Roll when near the source of powerful magics in order to gain some insight into those magics. It is important to remember that any Essence lost due to illness or injury will affect the value of all Skills based on that Characteristic until the loss can be regained, including all Magic Ritual Action Dice as well as your maximum number of Disciplines.

• *Will Roll-* This Characteristic Roll may be required by the GM to determine the outcome of magics that attempt to control another entity. Will Rolls are an important part of any summoning ritual. The GM may require a sorcerer to make a Will Roll if something is attempting to break or dominate his will. Likewise, the sorcerer would need to make a Will Roll if he were attempting to dominate another using magical commands. Any loss of Will due to exhaustion, torture, or brain-washing will affect the value of all Skills based on that Characteristic until the loss can be regained.

Adding Keen Focus Talent Dice

High levels of intense concentration are essential while performing magic rituals. If an interruption occurs during a ritual, a sorcerer will need to roll his Magic Ritual Action Dice in order to determine whether the ritual trance is successfully maintained. If the sorcerer possesses any levels of the *Keen Focus* Talent, he may add them to his Magic Ritual Action Dice. It's up to the GM to decide what sorts of interruptions would require such a roll. Being attacked in the physical world while you were still in ritual trance would certainly call for such a roll. If a sorcerer fails this roll, his trance is broken and the ritual immediately ends.

Step 4: Concluding the Ritual

Eventually you will come to the end of your ritual, whether you accomplished what you set out to or didn't. Concluding a Magic Ritual can happen for a few different reasons:

• **You decide to end the ritual.** This is the most common and elegant way to conclude a ritual. Avoid the temptation of meandering through the Dream Realm. It's dangerous, it can attract the attention of sinister entities, and leaves non-magic characters with nothing to do. GMs should be careful to inter-cut between the events in the Dream Realm and the real world to make sure that everyone has something to do. When you initiate a ritual, choose a limited number of things you want to accomplish, set about trying to do it, then bring the ritual to a dignified end.

• **You come close to reaching your maximum number of unique Disciplines for that day.** During an eventful encounter in the Dream Realm, you may come dangerously close to expending all your unique Disciplines. At this point, you may have to end the Magic Ritual to avoid emerging from the ritual trance only to immediately fall unconscious. If you have important information to impart to your allies in the physical world, you'll be unable to do so until you regain consciousness. Be careful about ending rituals as a result of expending all your Disciplines.

• **You are hurled from the Dream Realm by a hostile force.** If all of your Spiritual Stamina is depleted, your ritual trance will be instantly broken and your Magic Ritual will abruptly come to an end. It is important to remember that the loss of Spiritual Stamina does not mean you've actually lost any real Stamina. There may be some special exceptions to this rule, however, and it is up the GM to decide if there are any rare moments when damage taken in the Dream Realm carries over to the real world.

• **The GM decides that your ritual comes to an end.** The GM can decide, for whatever story reason he wishes, to conclude your ritual. You may find yourself gently dismissed by someone with whom you were speaking in the Dream Realm. Perhaps some shocking revelation could end a vision with an awakening scream. Or maybe after several attempts at some objective, your dice rolls simply fail to give you the desired effect.

Once your ritual is over, if you don't fully understand some aspect of what transpired, ask the GM. Just remember that the GM may not want to reveal everything to you. You may be allowed to make some *Knowledge Skill* rolls (such as Magic Theory or Ritual Lore) to discover more information or come to some conclusion based on your character's knowledge, or the GM may clarify some symbolism that wasn't as obvious as he'd expected.

Imagination Is Key

True to the spirit of the *SHARD RPG*, the most important rule when using magic on Dárdünah is to let your imagination take center stage. Rules are not as important as having fun. The very fabric of the Dream Realm demands a creative mind to successfully manipulate it. If you can imagine it, then you can do it. That's the guiding principle for confrontations in the Dream Realm.

GMs should consider playing mood music during magical sessions. This will greatly enhance the

experience. Imagine it as you would a scene in a great fantasy movie, complete with dazzling special effects and an unlimited budget. GMs should also remember that the players are the stars of their movie. Treat them well and you'll have a box office smash on your hands. We guarantee it!

Magical Combat

All users of Magic Rituals have the power to touch and enter the Dream Realms while performing their magic. Being within the Dream, or even at its edge while in a state of trance, puts a character in a unique position of vulnerability. Spirits, Demons, Elementals, and of course other sir'hibasi wander the Dream Realms, and can sometimes see, interact with, and perhaps attack another character they may encounter. There are some similarities between combat in the physical realm and magical combat in the Dream. In both cases, combat progresses in Rounds. You attack and defend by rolling appropriate Action Dice. And finally, your goal is to cause enough damage to your opponent to defeat him. Where physical and magical combat differ most is in your amazing ability to use the essence of the Dream Realm to create any imaginable effect. The very fabric of reality is yours to command! You can form weapons out of thin air, shape shift into any creature you can imagine, call down bolts of lightning or columns of flame, imprison your enemy inside a massive crystal; the only limit is what your imagination can conjure up.

Initiative

When combat begins, everyone involved in the battle determines Initiative by rolling 1d6 and adding their Essence plus their Mystic Talent levels to the result. This is your Initiative score for that particular Round of magical combat. You roll Initiative every Round of combat until the battle ends.

Everyone acts in order of Initiative, from highest to lowest. In the case of ties, actions are considered to be *simultaneous*. So even if your opponent causes enough damage in a tied Round to defeat you, you still get to counterattack before you are hurled out of the Dream Realm.

Taking Actions in Magical Combat

The big difference between magical and physical combat is that there are no Combat Actions in magical combat. You may attack as many opponents as you wish in any given Round. However, you may only attack each opponent *once* before that opponent has a chance to counterattack. You may never attack an opponent multiple times in the same Round. It is possible, however, to be attacked by several opponents in the same Round, although you would get to defend against every attack.

Attacking multiple opponents in the same Round is automatically deemed a Bundled Action as it is considered a singular manifestation of your will. Whether you attack one or twenty foes, you make a single roll of your Action Dice. Each opponent would get to defend against your attack and then have the opportunity to counterattack, assuming they haven't already taken their action for the Round.

GMs should assign additional penalties to your Action Dice for attacking multiple targets. Depending on how much (or little) a GM wishes to encourage attacking multiple targets in magical combat, this penalty could either be severe (a –1 die for every target after the first), or it could be more moderate (–1 die for a small group, –2 for a medium-sized group, –3 for a large group, etc.). This is all a matter of preference. If the GM prefers larger than life encounters in the Dream Realm, then a less severe penalty is recommended.

Attacking & Defending

Ultimately, the goal of most magical battles is to attempt to hurl your opponent out of the Dream Realm and break his trance, thus effectively ending his ritual. You use your Magic Ritual Action Dice to both attack and defend. Since all such conflicts happen within the Dream (or at its edge within ritual trance), those using the Ritual of Dreamwalking find it easier to perform any Dream-related Disciplines. As a result, sir'hibasi using this ritual make all magical combat Defense Rolls at a –1 difficulty modifier, and all Attack Rolls at a –2 difficulty modifier. Sir'hibasi entering the Dream using any other ritual (Healing, Summoning, or Endowment) make all

magical combat Defense Rolls at a –2 difficulty modifier, and all Attack Rolls at a –3 difficulty modifier, making them somewhat weaker when it comes to battles in the Dream Realm.

As with ordinary combat, your magical Attack Rolls are opposed by your opponent's Defense Rolls. Every success an opponent scores on his defense negates one of your attack successes. If all of your attack successes are negated, then your magical attack was successfully countered. If you score more attack successes, then you inflict damage (or cause other effects) to your opponent.

Every un-negated success inflicts 1 Damage Level to your opponent. This damage is deducted from your opponent's total *Spiritual Stamina*, which is derived from the following formula:

Spiritual Stamina = (Essence + Will) x 2

As with physical combat, being damaged in magical combat has additional negative effects. If more than one third (1/3) of your total Spiritual Stamina is lost, a penalty of –1 is applied to all of your Action Dice until you heal above the one third mark. If more than two thirds (2/3) of your total Spiritual Stamina is lost, then a penalty of –2 is applied to all of your Action Dice until you heal above that mark.

When your Spiritual Stamina reaches 0, you are considered "defeated" and are forced to end your ritual and leave the Dream Realm. If you were attempting to defeat a magical barrier (using the appropriate modifier to represent that Discipline), you would have to negate the reserve of successes such a barrier is granted when it is created by a sorcerer. This is effectively the barrier's Spiritual Stamina. When you have successfully depleted all of a magical barrier's successes, the barrier is dispelled.

Special Attacks

As previously stated, nothing in the Dream Realm is physical or set; it's all raw magical essence that you shape however you wish. Every attack you perform in the Dream Realm, therefore, is considered to be a manifestation of your magical ability and will. In the Dream Realm, your will can harm an opponent, bind him, confuse him with illusions, or possibly even control him. Here are a few guidelines for using such effects.

Binding

Instead of damaging your opponent, you have the option of *binding* him. Binding an opponent can take whatever visual form you decide. It could be something as simple as ropes or vines entangling your foe, or more elaborate bonds such as imprisonment inside a crystal or a sphere of water, fire, or ice. If you choose to bind your opponent, you must announce you are doing so and then make an Attack Roll at the appropriate Difficulty Modifier. If your opponent's Defense Roll does not completely negate your attack (you must score

at least a Partial Success after your opponent's defense successes have been subtracted), then your opponent has been successfully bound.

Your bound opponent gets to roll his Defense Roll *every Round* he is under the effects of a binding until he either breaks free or is defeated. You roll an opposing Attack Roll (at the same penalty as the original attack) in order to keep him bound. If your opponent rolls more successes than you, then the binding is broken and your opponent is free to take action that Round. If your opponent does not break the binding, then he cannot take any action that Round. All a bound sorcerer can do (besides standard defense) is continue to try and break free of his binding.

You can continue to attack your bound opponent in following Rounds, but there's a catch. Since such an attack is a constant struggle of wills, you may only attack your *bound opponent*. The moment you attack another target, any bindings you currently have in effect dissolve and your bound opponents are instantly freed and may take their actions normally for the Round.

It is possible for you to try and bind multiple opponents at once. The attack is considered a Bundled Action and you make a single roll of Action Dice to attack all your opponents. Penalty modifiers for attacking multiple targets should be applied. Every target gets a Defense Roll to avoid being bound. If you manage to bind several opponents, then they must each try to break out of the binding before they can continue to take actions. You still get to make Defense Rolls against other attacks, but would not be able to attack any non-bound foes without releasing all your bound opponents.

Powerful bindings can be quite effective in keeping a magical foe contained while your comrades either make an escape or gang up on the bound opponent. It is important to note that multiple sorcerers can attempt to bind the same target. In this case, the bound entity's Defense Roll is considered a Bundled Action and would count against every single binding. It is possible in a case like this to avoid or break free of some of the bindings but not all of them. The bound entity, however, cannot attack anyone until all the bindings are broken. Each sorcerer may only have one active binding on any individual at any given time.

Illusions

Another form of attack you may direct at an opponent in the Dream Realm is the use of *illusions*. Illusions are mostly designed to confuse and misdirect. They can take any form you wish, from a simple illusion of invisibility, to an entire illusory landscape filled with familiar faces and images. As with Bindings, the victim of the illusion must dispel the illusion before he is able to continue to attack targets in the Dream Realm.

If you decide to cast an illusion at an opponent, you would describe the illusion and what it was intended

to do (confuse, misdirect, waylay, etc.), then make an Attack Roll at the appropriate Difficulty Modifier. Your opponent would make his Defense Roll. If you score more successes than your opponent, then your illusion manifests as described. Your opponent must now dispel the illusion before he is able to continue taking actions.

Your opponent gets to roll his Defense Roll every Round in order to try and dispel your illusion. You roll an opposing Attack Roll in order to keep the illusion active. If your opponent scores more successes, then he "sees through" your illusion and is free to act normally that Round. If you score more successes, then the illusion remains effective. As with Binding, you can only attack opponents under the influence of your illusion. The moment you attack another target, your illusion melts away. You still get to make Defense Rolls to defend against magical attacks even while maintaining an illusion. Your opponent may also still defend himself against magical attacks despite being under the influence of your illusion.

If you want to change your illusion, then you'll need to make a new Attack Roll. Your opponent would immediately get a new Defense Roll. If your opponent wins, then your new illusion is considered ineffective. Furthermore, your old illusion melts away, leaving your opponent free to act in the Round. If your opponent fails to defend, then the new illusion manifests and your opponent must now deal with its effects. Changing illusions is risky, as it allows your opponent to realize he's being tricked with illusions. Every time you decide to change your illusion on the same target, your opponent gets a +1 die bonus to his Defense Roll to see through the illusion.

Illusions cannot be "stacked." Only a single illusion can be cast on any individual in any given Round. Another sorcerer can, however, try to create a new illusion on a target currently under the effects of one of your illusions. If you do not wish to drop your illusion, then you and the new illusion-caster would both have to make Attack Rolls and compare successes. The winner's illusion would then take effect. The target of the new illusion would get a normal Defense Roll (at a +1 die bonus). If he successfully defended, then both illusions would melt away, leaving the target free to act in the Round. If the target failed, then he'd suffer the effects of the new illusion and would have to try and dispel it normally.

It is possible to cast the same illusion on multiple opponents. This is handled as a Bundled Action. Again, penalty modifiers for attacking multiple targets should be applied. All opponents under the influence of a mass illusion would have to dispel the illusion normally. After they did, however, they could try and convince others still caught in the effects of the mass illusion that they were experiencing an illusion. GMs should give bonuses to the Defense Rolls of targets still in the grips of an illusion in these cases.

Domination

Rather than simply defeating an opponent and hurling him from the Dream Realm, you can instead attempt to seize control of a defeated foe. This is known as *Domination*. At any point during combat, you can state that you no longer wish to cause your opponent Spiritual Damage, but desire instead to cause *Domination Damage*. When your opponent's Spiritual Stamina reaches 0 as a result of taking Domination Damage, he is considered to have been successfully dominated.

In order to dominate a foe, you must make an Attack Roll (at a –4 Difficulty Modifier for Dreamwalkers, or at a –5 modifier for all other ritual users) using Action Dice based on your Will Characteristic. Because this is still considered a magical attack, you may add your Mystic Talent levels to your Action Dice. Your opponent makes an opposing Defense Roll, also based on his Will Characteristic, at the appropriate Difficulty Modifier plus his Mystic Talent levels. As with ordinary magical attacks, every un-negated attack success counts as 1 level of Domination Damage. If you cause enough Domination Damage to bring your opponent to 0 Spiritual Stamina, then your opponent is forced to remain in the Dream Realm under your control.

Your dominated opponent retains the amount of Spiritual Stamina he had at the time the Domination attacks began. Thus, if your dominated opponent had 12 levels of Spiritual Stamina before he began taking Domination Damage, when he reached 0 Spiritual Stamina as a result of the Domination Damage, he would still be considered to have 12 levels of Spiritual Stamina. Your dominated opponent can still be attacked and damaged normally. If your dominated opponent takes enough regular Damage Levels to his Spiritual Stamina to bring him to 0 (or below), then he is hurled from the Dream Realm and freed from your control.

Dominated opponents under your control must obey your commands to the best of their ability until they are either able to break free of your control and retreat from the Dream Realm, or are hurled from the Dream Realm as a result of losing all of their Spiritual Stamina. Commands should be simple instructions: "Attack your comrade!", "Imprison that sorcerer!", "Convince your friend I am your ally!", etc. If you happen to be the dominated individual, this is a good opportunity for roleplaying. You should carry out the instructions of your "master" to the best of your ability and continue to role-play in the scene.

Dominated individuals get to try and break free every Round they are under the control of another entity. A dominated opponent makes a Defense Roll based on his Will Characteristic. This is opposed by the controlling entity's Attack Roll, which is also based on Will. If the dominated opponent fails, then he remains under the commanding entity's control and must use his action that Round to obey his master's command.

If the dominated opponent's Defense Roll beats the commanding entity's Attack Roll, then the dominated opponent breaks free and must immediately exit the Dream Realm and come out of his ritual trance.

It is possible for allies to help you break free of an enemy's domination. An ally can choose to take their action in any given Round and declare that they are helping you break free of another sorcerer's control. This process works similar to Collaboration. Every 2 successes (rounded down) that an ally scores on his Defense Roll (based on Will) adds 1 success to your Success Level for purposes of breaking free of the Domination. The reverse, however, is also true. Additional enemies can help the dominating sorcerer maintain his control over you. The process is identical except that the attacking sorcerers make Attack Rolls rather than Defense Rolls.

It is also possible for one or more sorcerers to try and wrest control of a dominated opponent away from you. In this case, you and all the rival dominating sorcerers would make Attack Rolls and compare them to each other. The sorcerer with the highest number of successes is considered the victor. The opponent gets to instantly make a Defense Roll against this new domination. If the defender wins, then he breaks free of the domination and instantly leaves the Dream Realm. If the defender loses, they fall under the domination of the new sorcerer and must continue trying to break free every Round.

A note to GMs: Some players do not like to have their characters controlled. You should be careful about using this particular power on them. However, if a player is particularly fond of taking control of enemies in the Dream Realm, then it is our opinion that he's fair game for similar treatment. Furthermore, the use of this ability can create some incredibly interesting game moments that can add great drama and tension to the scene. Use it wisely!

Healing Spiritual Stamina

It is not possible to heal Spiritual Stamina while inside the Dream Realm. You must exit the Dream Realm and cease the use of magic rituals in order to heal. Spiritual Stamina heals over time, with proper rest or meditation. You may heal your Essence Ranking's worth of Spiritual Stamina for every hour of rest and meditation you get. Thus, if your Essence was 8, you could heal up to 24 Spiritual Stamina if you rested and meditated for 3 hours. A magical healer can also restore your Spiritual Stamina with his Ritual of Healing, but this can only be done when you are not in the midst of a ritual.

An Example of Dreamwalking

In the House of Sulyüm, a raven sir'hibas named Mayasütri prepares a ritual that will allow her to confront her rival, a jackal called Vatyanu. Though there exists a tentative truce between them, and he assures her that he bears no malice toward her lord, several recent tragic occurrences have convinced the raven that the villainous jackal has somehow pierced the magical wards of her house, and gained access to sensitive information that has compromised her lord's safety.

Having already attempted and failed to tear aside similar wards that protect the jackal's House, the raven realizes that the only hope she may have of defeating him is to confront him in the Dream Realm. To this end, she has issued a formal challenge to Vatyanu. As the large purple moon Kamádi begins to rise, she initiates the Ritual of Dreamwalking, prepared to seek him out in the Dream, far from his protective wards. If she finds him, she intends to make him pay for his treachery.

Her servants scurry about, lighting the fires and scattering the incense that will help Mayasütri enter into a ritual trance. She sits upon an intricately woven prayer rug covered in arcane sigils and fringed by greenish stones - a gift from her former master. Her crystal prayer bowl cradled in her lap, she begins her sonorous chanting as her servants fall back into the shadowy corners of her private chambers...

The preparations complete, GM has the raven's player begin the ritual by rolling her Magic Ritual Action Dice for the Ritual of Dreamwalking. This

will invoke the first unique Discipline that will allow her to sink into a deep meditative trance as her spirit leaves her body behind so that it may enter the Dream Realm. Assuming she is successful, the GM would then describe (guided by the player's Success Level) the raven's entrance into the Dream.

> **GM:** The room vanishes around you, dissolving into mist. Ethereal, scintillating veils part like the petals of a vast, cosmic flower. Your duháma is drawn through this portal into the mysterious Dream Realm. This is the use of your first unique Discipline.

> **Raven Player:** Gotcha! I proceed to seek out my opponent, careful to keep my form veiled within the vaporous essence of the Dream itself. In other words, I'm trying to go invisible.

> **GM:** Very well, roll your Dreamwalking Ritual Action Dice to achieve this illusory state. That's the use of another unique Discipline, by the way. Unlike entering the Dream itself, this type of spiritual cloak is not as easy to achieve, so make your roll at a -1 Difficulty Modifier.

> **Raven Player:** Okay, I get 4 successes!

> **GM:** You see the glittering essence of the Dream Realm shroud you like a misty veil. Your spiritual form vanishes from sight! Finding your foe in the Dream Realm may be a little harder. Roll your ritual Action Dice again, this time at a -2 modifier.

> **Raven Player:** No problem, this time I get 3 successes.

> **GM:** You've now used 3 unique Disciplines. One to enter the Dream Realm, one to create the illusion of invisibility, and one to search out your opponent.

> **Raven Player:** I'm keeping track, don't worry.

> **GM:** Okay, as you cast your awareness out through the Dream, you feel yourself drawn through the strange glittering vapors and shadows toward a distant crystal peak that floats across your vision like a ghost ship. A strange glowing nimbus pulses at its top where the pinnacle has been flattened. Upon this broad plateau, at the center of a luminescent symbol of a Spiral Arena, stands your foe, Vatyanu. The jackal's dressed in shimmering robes that seem to be made of shifting mystic symbols. He stares off into the mists with a strange, calm serenity.

> **Raven Player:** I'll land upon the plateau, maintaining my invisibility while causing the skies above us to darken and churn. Oh, and I also laugh creepily! The sound of my phantom laughter echoes all around my opponent.

> **GM:** Nice! Okay, roll your Action Dice at a -1 modifier to create this effect and maintain your illusion. This time, however, add your Mystic Talent levels since this will be an Opposed Roll. Since you've already created illusions during this ritual, you won't need to spend another unique Discipline.

> **Raven Player:** Good! Okay, I roll 4 successes, two of which are 6's, so I'll roll one of those over again. I get another success! That's 5 total successes!

The GM now makes a Defense Roll for the NPC Vatyanu to determine if he is able to see through the raven's illusory invisibility. He adds the jackal's Mystic Talent levels to his Action Dice and applies a -1 Difficulty Modifier. The GM rolls only 4 successes, not enough to allow the jackal to see through the magical trickery.

> **GM:** The jackal's eyes widen as he hears your ghostly laughter echo across the dreamscape. He casts about, confused, apparently unable to locate you. "Show yourself coward! Are you so craven that you would hide from me! Is it not you who challenged me and bid me come here and face you? Reveal yourself or flee in shame!"

> **Raven Player:** My voice continues to assail the jackal from all sides. "I am no fool, Vatyanu! Your treacheries and tricks are well known. But you will find that I have a few tricks of my own!" With that, I cause crimson lightning to flash down from the roiling sky, lashing him like a thousand whips!

> **GM:** Okay, we're officially entering combat. Roll your Initiative to see which of you acts first. Your words have angered him. As you gather your power for your strike, he attempts to dispel your invisibility.

Both the GM and the player roll for Initiative, adding their Mystic Talent levels to their scores. The GM scores a higher Initiative than the player. The GM immediately rolls a Defense Roll for the jackal in order determine if he is able to see through the player's invisibility. He once again adds the jackal's Mystic Talent levels and applies a -1 modifier. He asks the player to make an opposing Attack Roll. The GM scores more successes than the player, indicating that the NPC has spotted the player's character.

> **GM:** As you prepare to unleash the lightning at the jackal, he suddenly turns and looks directly at you! He flashes you a wicked smile as your cloak of invisibility is rent asunder to reveal you! In that instant, the force of his power blasts you like a violent storm! He attacks you with 5 successes! Please make your Defense Roll, adding your Mystic Talent levels. You are defending against magical attacks, so this is yet another unique Discipline for you!

> **Raven Player:** I roll 7 successes, so I take no damage! I hold out my hand and divert his tempestuous power harmlessly around me!

> **GM:** That was his action. Now you may take yours. Still intend to blast him with lightning?

> **Raven Player:** You bet!

> **GM:** Okay, make your Attack Roll at a -2 Difficulty Modifier and add your Mystic Talent levels. You're using magical attacks so this counts as another unique Discipline.

> **Raven Player:** How many is that?

> **GM:** Five so far.

> **Raven Player:** Hmm, I gotta keep my eye on those. Okay, I get 8 successes on my Action Dice! I laugh again as the crimson arcs of energy tear at him!

> **GM:** He rolls only 4 successes to defend, so he

suffers 4 Damage Levels. Okay, that was the end of that Round. Please roll Initiative again to see who acts first this next Round.

> Raven Player: I roll 7 successes!

> GM: And he rolls only 6. You win! What do you want to do?

> Raven Player: I want to continue blasting him with lightning in an attempt to drive him from the Dream Realm.

The player makes her Attack Roll again, this time scoring a whopping 9 successes! The jackal scores only 3 successes on his Defense Roll. He takes another 6 Damage Levels! All his Action Dice will now suffer a -1 penalty since he's lost more than a third of his Spiritual Stamina. If he suffers 9 more levels of damage, he'll be defeated and hurled from the Dream Realm!

Now it's the jackal's turn. The GM decides the jackal will attempt to bind the raven with thorny vines. The GM rolls the jackal's Attack Roll at -3 penalty (-1 for the jackal's wounded state, plus a -2 Difficulty Modifier for the Binding). Despite the penalty, the GM scores 8 successes!

> GM: The jackal shrieks as your eldritch lightning tears at his duháma! He thrusts his arms into the air, clasping his hands together as a wave of his own arcane power lashes out at you! Please make your Defense Roll.

> Raven Player: I roll 6 successes!

> GM: Pulsing, leathery vines erupt from the ground and lash around you, entwining you in their thorny grasp!

> Raven Player: Crap!

> GM: The vines slither around you like snakes, holding you tight and ending your magical assault on the jackal!

> Raven Player: Do these vines damage me?!

> GM: Not yet. Right now they merely imprison you and keep you from attacking until you can break free with a Defense Roll. Don't worry, you'll still get your Defense Rolls if the jackal decides to hurl more attacks at you. It's the next Round. Please roll Initiative to see who goes first.

Both the player and the GM roll Initiative. This time the player wins. She immediately gets her Defense Roll to attempt to break the jackal's binding. The GM assigns the player a -1 Difficulty Modifier. The player only scores 3 successes. The GM makes the jackal's opposing Attack Roll at -3 (due to his various modifiers). Despite the jackal's penalties, the GM scores 4 successes. The jackal succeeds (just barely) in keeping the raven bound.

The GM then decides that the jackal will now attack the player with the vine's thorns. The GM makes the jackal's Attack Roll and scores 7 successes. Despite being bound, the raven still gets her Defense Roll against this attack. The player scores 4 successes. The player takes 3 levels of damage!

> GM: Still bound by the vines, you struggle helplessly. The jackal licks his lips and squeezes his fist. "So much for your tricks!" The razor-sharp crystal thorns slash and gouge your spiritual flesh as the vines squeeze tighter, causing you to writhe in pain!

> Raven Player: I so want to pound this jackal!

> GM: You have to break out of the vines first!

> Raven Player: I'm working on it!

> GM: Okay, time for Initiative again!

Once again Initiative is rolled, and once again the player wins. This time, however, her attempt to escape her binding succeeds. She decides that her character burns the vines away with green flames that erupt around her like a halo! She then forms the flames into a whirling vortex and hurls it at her foe. She scores 4 successes with her Attack Roll. The jackal counters the attack with 5 successes on his Defense Roll, so he dissipates the flames before they can reach him.

Now it's the jackal's turn. He counterattacks, launching a savage barrage of glittering crystal shards at the raven. The GM rolls 6 attack successes. The raven rolls only 1 success to defend, taking 5 more levels of damage!

Initiative is rolled again, and this time the jackal wins. They are both at a -1 now due to damage penalties, but the raven is incredibly nervous since her player realizes she has only 2 more unique Disciplines she can use before she will have exhausted herself utterly upon awakening.

> Raven Player: Okay, this battle has not gone well! I want to escape! Can I flee from the Dream Realm?

> GM: Unfortunately the jackal gets to act first! As you try to gather yourself after his vicious attack, you see him rise up above the arena, transforming into a massive, smoky demon. His blue eyes blaze like twin crystal volcanoes! You feel his power rush toward you as azure flames erupt from his eyes! Please make a Defense Roll!

Once again the sorcerers clash, and once again the raven's defenses fail. This time, however, her defense is truly abysmal, while the jackal's attack is amazing! 10 successes to her 0!

> GM: You feel excruciating agony as the flames completely engulf your form! The Dream Realm breaks apart around you like so many glittering fragments of a shattered mirror. You feel yourself sinking into an endless void. The jackal's chilling whisper floats out of the darkness. "A pity I did not ensnare your soul and make you my puppet. But there will always be another time. Hahaha!" You violently awaken in your ritual chambers, thrashing wildly about. In your blind panic, you strike your amber brazier, scattering the smoldering coals about the room. Servants rush to your aid, calling your name. They desperately attempt to calm you. But you do not hear them. All you can hear are the echoes of your enemy's mocking laughter...

V. Sample Characters

Here are six different characters that were created using the Character Creation rules found in the *SHARD RPG Basic Compendium.* Although *SHARD* will offer dozens of animal types and professions to choose from, these pre-generated characters provide you the opportunity to jump right into the setting and begin experiencing the world of Dárdünah.

As mentioned earlier, *SHARD's* character races are anthropomorphic animals called Zoics. Every character in Dárdünah is described by a series of Attributes consisting of Animal Abilities, Characteristics, Talents, Advantages, Skills, and Drawbacks.

Characteristics are the physical, mental, and social traits of your character. These include such things as your character's strength and size, agility, mental faculties, and overall presence.

Animal Abilities consist of wings, claws, venom, or any other physical animal trait that your chosen animal may possess. The *SHARD RPG* will include *Animal Templates* that will make the construction of Zoics very easy.

Talents are unusual or unique inherent traits that your character may possess. A few Talents may be learned but most will require that your character be born with them. Talents can include such things as being a light sleeper, having magic potential, or being immune to certain poisons.

Drawbacks are physical, mental, or social disadvantages that may afflict your character. Even though Drawbacks allow you to initially build a slightly more powerful character, they also outline definite flaws that the GM will exploit. Phobias, crippled limbs, a magical curse, or an enemy determined to harm you are all examples of Drawbacks.

Advantages are social perks that your character may possess. Such things as wealth, noble titles, or a high caste would fit into this category, as would having important social contacts or patrons.

Skills are things your character has learned throughout his life. They can include artistic or professional training, various scholarly disciplines, or even hobbies.

Valnérah (Seer Sir'hibas)

BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Condor
AGE: 40   HEIGHT: 5.5   WEIGHT: 125
CASTE: Sunborn   SEX: Male
APPEARANCE: A mature wiry-looking bird in silk robes with an intense stare
HOUSE: Samtra   LINE: Inuvkah
HISTORY: Trained under the Great Seer Arddjumal of Amnol before becoming one of the Line of Inuvkah. Currently the Seer of the House of Samtra in Telatah.

ANIMAL ABILITIES

Far Sight	:	6
Flight	:	5
Natural Weaponry (talons, beak)	:	5

CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 4 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
VIGOR: 3 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
AGILITY: 5 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
DEXTERITY: 2 (Max. 9, Avg. 1-3)
ESSENCE: 6 (Max. 11, Avg. 3-5)
PERCEPTION: 6 (Max. 12, Avg. 2-4)
WIT: 6 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
WILL: 6 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
PRESENCE: 6 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)

TALENTS

Heightened Awareness: 1
Immunity (common diseases): 2 levels
Keen Focus: 2
Mystic: 2

ADVANTAGES

Caste (Sunborn): 2

DRAWBACKS

Personality Quirk (prefers aged meats): -2

SKILLS

Alchemy (chemical craft)	: 2	Knowledge (Mahist Faith)	: 6	Research	: 6
Artistry (illuminating)	: 2	Knowledge (mathematics)	: 6	Shadowing	: 3
Artistry (scribing)	: 2	Knowledge (ritual lore)	: 6	Stealth	: 3
Brawling	: 5	Knowledge (Telátah area)	: 6	Throw	: 3
Climbing	: 5	Knowledge (tradition)	: 6		: _
Concealment	: 6	Language (Tishinian)	: 6		: _
Etiquette	: 5	Magic Ritual (Dreamwalk)	: 6		: _
Evade	: 5	Martial Arts	: 5		: _
Intrigue	: 6	Melee Combat	: 5		: _
Knowledge (ancient history)	: 6	Observation	: 6		: _
Knowledge (culture)	: 6	Performance (divination)	: 6		: _
Knowledge (legends)	: 6	Persuasion	: 6		: _
Knowledge (magic theory)	: 6	Profession (incense making)	: 3		: _

COMBAT

STAMINA= 2 x (Vigor + Will): 18
CURRENT STAMINA: [ ]

ARMOR: None   0
CURRENT ARMOR: [ ]

Melee:	5	Martial Arts:	5
Brawling:	5	Firearm:	
Missile:		Suthra:	
Throw:	3		:

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
General Martial Arts :	5	

WEAPONS

Weapon		Range	Damage
Cane	:	Short	4
Hurling Disks	:	Medium	3
	:		
	:		
	:		

Special Attacks / Adjustments

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
Dreamwalking :	6	-0: Initiating a ritual by entering the Dream Realm.

-1: Defending in the Dream Realm; changing the Dream environment; seeing the past, present, and future; seeing through Illusions.
-2: Attacking in the Dream; seeking others in the Dream; dispelling magical manifestations (wards and magical traps).
-3: Bringing others into the Dream; allowing others to see visions; entering and changing another's dreams.
-4: Attempting to use Domination on a foe.
-5 or higher: Capturing another's spirit; moving physically through Dream.

COMPANIONS

STORY POINTS ⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡

MANEUVER LOCATION TABLE

HIT LOCALE	DAMAGE TYPE					
	Subdue		Subdue / Fatal		Fatal	
	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT
HEAD	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock Lame (wing)	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-5	Lost Feature
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Internal Damage
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 Damage Level to bring an end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock effects, or a Cover (once you have won Initiative).

Bind / Grab - No damage caused. Targeted area (and/or weapon) immobile and controlled till Escape or release. Hold / Lock may then be attempted to same target area at an ADJ # of 0.

Throw / Sweep - Full damage. Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill Ranking # of feet away). Target must use a Combat Action to rise, unless they have made a successful Acrobatics Roll that Round. If thrown far enough, they must use a Combat Action or their free Half Move to close.

Disarm - Half damage caused, plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use a Combat Action to retrieve or draw new one.

Nausea - Full damage. Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of Rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.

Lame - Full damage. Target gets no more free Half Moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Combat Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant damage (weapon damage plus Cover successes with standard multipliers applying) till target wins Initiative and performs a successful Escape.

Disable - Full damage. If limb targeted, loss of limb use (half Movement only if limb is used for locomotion). Target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2. Failure allows only half Action Dice, success means only a minus 2. Physical actions outside combat suffer a minus 1 till healed.

Hold / Lock - Full damage. Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per Round till Escape or release.

Stun - Full damage. Any successes that get through target's defenses negates equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds.

Broken - Full damage. A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (half Movement if limb used for locomotion). Target must make Vigor Roll at minus 4; success allows half Action Dice: failure allows no offensive actions, only half Action Dice, and causes 1D6 Stun. Physical actions outside of combat suffer a minus 3 to rolls till successful medical treatment.

Full Knockout - Full damage. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Lost Feature - Full damage. A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is permanently harmed in some way.

Internal Damage - Full damage. Target begins bleeding internally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the target's defense, till healed or dead.

Severed - Full damage. Targeted limb or section of limb violently separated from body. Target begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

Dastánah (Assistant Weapons Master)

BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Mockingbird
AGE: 27   HEIGHT: 4'   WEIGHT: 75
CASTE: Sunborn   SEX: Female
APPEARANCE: A sharp eyed, quick-moving little bird with a lot of weapons
HOUSE: Ayrram   LINE: Sisyah
HISTORY: Trained with the Weaponsmasters of east Tishinia and the Valah Masters of Rajtarmi before being gifted to the Line of Sisyah by Rajtarmi himself.

ANIMAL ABILITIES

Flight	: 6
Natural Weaponry (beak, claws):	6

CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 5 (Max. 6, Avg. 1-3)
VIGOR: 6 (Max. 7, Avg. 1-3)
AGILITY: 6 (Max. 12, Avg. 3-5)
DEXTERITY: 6 (Max. 12, Avg. 3-5)
ESSENCE: 1 (Max. 9, Avg. 1-3)
PERCEPTION: 6 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
WIT: 4 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
WILL: 3 (Max. 11, Avg. 2-4)
PRESENCE: 5 (Max. 9, Avg. 1-3)

TALENTS

Natural Mimic :	1	:	
Virtuoso :	1	:	
		:	
		:	
		:	

ADVANTAGES

Sunborn Caste:	2	:	
		:	
		:	
		:	

DRAWBACKS

Compulsion (bullying nature):	-1		
Mild Phobia (claustrophobic):	-1		
		:	
		:	

SKILLS

Acrobatics	: 6	Knowledge (martial lore)	: 4	Throw	: 8
Brawling	: 6	Knowledge (Sadahm area)	: 4	Weaponsmith	: 6
Climbing	: 6	Knowledge (tradition)	: 4		: -
Concealment	: 4	Knowledge (weapons)	: 4		: -
Dress Wound	: 4	Language (Tishinian)	: 4		: -
Duel Dancing	: 6	Martial Arts	: 8		: -
Evade	: 6	Melee Combat	: 8		: -
Fast Draw	: 8	Missile Combat	: 8		: -
Gunsmith	: 6	Performance (singing)	: 6		: -
Knowledge (current history) :	4	Persuasion	: 4		: -
Knowledge (customs)	: 4	Shadowing	: 6		: -
Knowledge (firearms)	: 4	Stealth	: 6		: -
Knowledge (Mahist Faith) :	4	Tactics	: 4		: -

COMBAT

STAMINA= 2 x (Vigor + Will): 18
CURRENT STAMINA:

ARMOR: ____ none ____   0
CURRENT ARMOR:

Melee:	8	Martial Arts:	8
Brawling:	6	Firearm:	8
Missile:	8	Suthra:	
Throw:	8		:

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
General Martial Arts :	8	

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Tishini longbow :	Long	3
Hurling Disks :	Medium	3
Throwing Shards:	Medium	3
Valah Pistol :	Long	5
Valah Rifle :	Long	10
:		

Special Attacks / Adjustments

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
:		

COMPANIONS

STORY POINTS

MANEUVER LOCATION TABLE

HIT LOCALE	DAMAGE TYPE					
	Subdue		Subdue / Fatal		Fatal	
	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT
HEAD	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock Lame (wing)	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-5	Lost Feature
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Internal Damage
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 Damage Level to bring an end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock effects, or a Cover (once you have won Initiative).

Bind / Grab - No damage caused. Targeted area (and/or weapon) immobile and controlled till Escape or release. Hold / Lock may then be attempted to same target area at an ADJ # of 0.

Throw / Sweep - Full damage. Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill Ranking # of feet away). Target must use a Combat Action to rise, unless they have made a successful Acrobatics Roll that Round. If thrown far enough, they must use a Combat Action or their free Half Move to close.

Disarm - Half damage caused, plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use a Combat Action to retrieve or draw new one.

Nausea - Full damage. Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of Rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.

Lame - Full damage. Target gets no more free Half Moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Combat Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant damage (weapon damage plus Cover successes with standard multipliers applying) till target wins Initiative and performs a successful Escape.

Disable - Full damage. If limb targeted, loss of limb use (half Movement only if limb is used for locomotion). Target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2. Failure allows only half Action Dice, success means only a minus 2. Physical actions outside combat suffer a minus 1 till healed.

Hold / Lock - Full damage. Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per Round till Escape or release.

Stun - Full damage. Any successes that get through target's defenses negates equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds.

Broken - Full damage. A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (half Movement if limb used for locomotion). Target must make Vigor Roll at minus 4; success allows half Action Dice: failure allows no offensive actions, only half Action Dice, and causes 1D6 Stun. Physical actions outside of combat suffer a minus 3 to rolls till successful medical treatment.

Full Knockout - Full damage. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Lost Feature - Full damage. A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is permanently harmed in some way.

Internal Damage - Full damage. Target begins bleeding internally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the target's defense, till healed or dead.

Severed - Full damage. Targeted limb or section of limb violently separated from body. Target begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

Héshrim (House Guard / Assassin)

BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Rattlesnake
AGE: 32   HEIGHT: 6'5"   WEIGHT: 101
CASTE: Sunborn   SEX: Male
APPEARANCE: A calm, watchful snake with an air of casual menace and strength. Unsettling.
HOUSE: Samtra   LINE: Inuvkah
HISTORY: Heshrim proved his merits by helping to bring an end to a spying ring being run out of Magar on behalf of the Sustrumi Aminar. He saved the life of Samtra during this affair.

CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 5 (Max. 6, Avg. 1-3)
VIGOR: 5 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
AGILITY: 7 (Max. 12, Avg. 4-6)
DEXTERITY: 6 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
ESSENCE: 1 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
PERCEPTION: 5 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
WIT: 3 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
WILL: 4 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
PRESENCE: 5 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)

ANIMAL ABILITIES

Body Armor: 1 pt.
Discriminatory Taste: 5
Natural Weaponry (fangs, tail): 7
Prehensile Limb (tail): 6
Thermal Sensing: 5
Venom (necrotic/insinuated, level 4)

TALENTS

Heightened Awareness: 1
Fast Reflexes : 3

ADVANTAGES

Sunborn Caste: 2

DRAWBACKS

Nocturnal : -2
Quick Tempered : -2
Overconfidence: -1

SKILLS

Acrobatics	: 7	Language (hand signs) : 3	Trapping : 3
Alchemy (poison craft)	: 4	Language (Tishinian) : 3	
Brawling	: 7	Lock Picking : 6	
Climbing	: 7	Martial Arts : 7	
Concealment	: 5	Melee Combat : 7	
Disguise	: 4	Missile Combat : 6	
Evade	: 7	Observation : 5	
Intrigue	: 4	Persuasion : 3	
Knowledge (customs)	: 3	Profession (gardening) : 3	
Knowledge (horticulture)	: 3	Shadowing : 5	
Knowledge (Mahist Faith)	: 3	Stealth : 7	
Knowledge (poisons)	: 3	Throw : 6	
Knowledge (Telátah area)	: 3	Tracking : 5	

COMBAT

STAMINA= 2 x (Vigor + Will): 18
CURRENT STAMINA:

ARMOR: natural   1
CURRENT ARMOR:

Melee: 7   Martial Arts: 7
Brawling: 7   Firearm:
Missile: 6   Suthra:
Throw: 6

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
General Martial Arts :	7	

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Crystal Sword :	short	5
Chitin Flail :	short	5
Visedi Longbow :	long	4
Hurling Discs :	medium	4

Special Attacks / Adjustments
Necrotic / Insinuated Venom, level 4
4 dam/round for 4, rnds, plus causes
Pain and Nausea for 4 rounds

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
:		

COMPANIONS

STORY POINTS

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MANEUVER LOCATION TABLE

HIT LOCALE	DAMAGE TYPE					
	Subdue		Subdue / Fatal		Fatal	
	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT
HEAD	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock Lame (wing)	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-5	Lost Feature
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Internal Damage
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 Damage Level to bring an end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock effects, or a Cover (once you have won Initiative).

Bind / Grab - No damage caused. Targeted area (and/or weapon) immobile and controlled till Escape or release. Hold / Lock may then be attempted to same target area at an ADJ # of 0.

Throw / Sweep - Full damage. Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill Ranking # of feet away). Target must use a Combat Action to rise, unless they have made a successful Acrobatics Roll that Round. If thrown far enough, they must use a Combat Action or their free Half Move to close.

Disarm - Half damage caused, plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use a Combat Action to retrieve or draw new one.

Nausea - Full damage. Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of Rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.

Lame - Full damage. Target gets no more free Half Moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Combat Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant damage (weapon damage plus Cover successes with standard multipliers applying) till target wins Initiative and performs a successful Escape.

Disable - Full damage. If limb targeted, loss of limb use (half Movement only if limb is used for locomotion). Target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2. Failure allows only half Action Dice, success means only a minus 2. Physical actions outside combat suffer a minus 1 till healed.

Hold / Lock - Full damage. Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per Round till Escape or release.

Stun - Full damage. Any successes that get through target's defenses negates equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds.

Broken - Full damage. A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (half Movement if limb used for locomotion). Target must make Vigor Roll at minus 4; success allows half Action Dice: failure allows no offensive actions, only half Action Dice, and causes 1D6 Stun. Physical actions outside of combat suffer a minus 3 to rolls till successful medical treatment.

Full Knockout - Full damage. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Lost Feature - Full damage. A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is permanently harmed in some way.

Internal Damage - Full damage. Target begins bleeding internally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the target's defense, till healed or dead.

Severed - Full damage. Targeted limb or section of limb violently separated from body. Target begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

Umratáli (Mangai Healer)

BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Sea Turtle
AGE: 35   HEIGHT: 5' 5" WEIGHT: 173
CASTE: Holy   SEX: Male
APPEARANCE: A monkish-looking priest with a friendly smile and a wise disposition
HOUSE: Ayrram   LINE: Sisyah
HISTORY: Trained in herbalism and medicine at the Academy of Nilam, this Mangai also studied the arts of mystic healing before returning to serve Ayrram's House.

CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 3 (Max. 7, Avg. 2-4)
VIGOR: 6 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
AGILITY: 3 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
DEXTERITY: 3 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
ESSENCE: 6 (Max. 12, Avg. 2-4)
PERCEPTION: 5 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
WIT: 6 (Max. 12, Avg. 3-5)
WILL: 6 (Max. 9, Avg. 1-3)
PRESENCE: 4 (Max. 9, Avg. 1-3)

TALENTS

Serenity	: 1
Direction Sense	: 1
Mystic	: 4

ANIMAL ABILITIES

Aquatic	: -
Body Armor	: 3 pts.
Protective Lids	: -
Hold Breath	: 6
Natural Weaponry (beak)	: 3
Swimming	: 6

ADVANTAGES

Caste (Mangai) : 3

DRAWBACKS

Bad Sight : -2
Compulsion (desire to swim): -1

SKILLS

Alchemy (poison craft)	: 3	Knowledge (poisons)	: 6	Stealth	: 6
Alchemy (medicine craft)	: 3	Knowledge (ritual lore)	: 6	Surgery	: 4
Brawling	: 3	Knowledge (Sadahm area)	: 6	Throw	: 3
Climbing	: 3	Knowledge (tradition)	: 6		: -
Concealment	: 6	Language (Tishinian)	: 6		: -
Dress Wound	: 6	Magic Ritual (Healing)	: 7		: -
Evade	: 3	Martial Arts	: 6		: -
Knowledge (culture)	: 6	Melee Combat	: 3		: -
Knowledge (customs)	: 6	Persuasion	: 6		: -
Knowledge (herbal lore)	: 6	Profession (brewing)	: 6		: -
Knowledge (jenu lore)	: 6	Profession (doctor)	: 6		: -
Knowledge (Mahist Faith)	: 6	Research	: 5		: -
Knowledge (medicines)	: 6	Shadowing	: 3		: -

COMBAT

STAMINA= 2 x (Vigor + Will): 24
CURRENT STAMINA: [ ]

ARMOR: Body Armor   3
CURRENT ARMOR: [ ]

Melee:	3	Martial Arts:	6
Brawling:	3	Firearm:	
Missile:		Suthra:	
Throw:	3		:

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
General Martial Arts :	6	

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Amber-shod Staff:	Short	3
Crystal Knife :	Short	3
:		
:		
:		
:		

Special Attacks / Adjustments

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
Ritual of Healing :	7	

-0: Initiating a ritual by gathering healing energies.
-1: Entering the Dream Realm; Healing lesser wounds (less than 1/3rd Stamina); protection from supernatural foes.
-2: Defending in the Dream Realm; Healing large wounds (less than 2/3rd Stamina); healing supernatural wounds.
-3: Attacking in the Dream Realm; Healing terrible wounds (more than 2/3rd Stamina); mending bones; curing poison effects or madness.
-4: Restoring severed limbs; breaking curses.
-5 or higher: Severing supernatural control; banishing supernatural foes.

COMPANIONS

STORY POINTS

MANEUVER LOCATION TABLE						
HIT LOCALE	**DAMAGE TYPE**					
	Subdue		**Subdue / Fatal**		**Fatal**	
	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT
HEAD	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock Lame (wing)	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-5	Lost Feature
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Internal Damage
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 Damage Level to bring an end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock effects, or a Cover (once you have won Initiative).

Bind / Grab - No damage caused. Targeted area (and/or weapon) immobile and controlled till Escape or release. Hold / Lock may then be attempted to same target area at an ADJ # of 0.

Throw / Sweep - Full damage. Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill Ranking # of feet away). Target must use a Combat Action to rise, unless they have made a successful Acrobatics Roll that Round. If thrown far enough, they must use a Combat Action or their free Half Move to close.

Disarm - Half damage caused, plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use a Combat Action to retrieve or draw new one.

Nausea - Full damage. Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of Rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.

Lame - Full damage. Target gets no more free Half Moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Combat Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant damage (weapon damage plus Cover successes with standard multipliers applying) till target wins Initiative and performs a successful Escape.

Disable - Full damage. If limb targeted, loss of limb use (half Movement only if limb is used for locomotion). Target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2. Failure allows only half Action Dice, success means only a minus 2. Physical actions outside combat suffer a minus 1 till healed.

Hold / Lock - Full damage. Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per Round till Escape or release.

Stun - Full damage. Any successes that get through target's defenses negates equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds.

Broken - Full damage. A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (half Movement if limb used for locomotion). Target must make Vigor Roll at minus 4; success allows half Action Dice: failure allows no offensive actions, only half Action Dice, and causes 1D6 Stun. Physical actions outside of combat suffer a minus 3 to rolls till successful medical treatment.

Full Knockout - Full damage. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Lost Feature - Full damage. A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is permanently harmed in some way.

Internal Damage - Full damage. Target begins bleeding internally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the target's defense, till healed or dead.

Severed - Full damage. Targeted limb or section of limb violently separated from body. Target begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

Welcome Booklet

Arhazbür (Honor Guard)

BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Elephant
AGE: 28   HEIGHT: 12'   WEIGHT: 1742
CASTE: Sunborn   SEX: Male
APPEARANCE: A seasoned fighter with a serious disposition and intimidating stature
HOUSE: Ayrram   LINE: Sisyah
HISTORY: Arhazbur pledged his life to the Line of Sisyah after having been rescued from slavery in Sustrum as a child. He currently serves as the Honor Guard for lady Anavari.

ANIMAL ABILITIES

Body Armor: 2 pts.
Prehensile Limb (trunk): 5
Thermal Regulation (ears): 6
Wide Peripheral: 4
Natural Weaponry (tusks, trample): 6

CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 8 (Max. 12, Avg. 5-7)
VIGOR: 6 (Max. 12, Avg. 2-4)
AGILITY: 6 (Max. 6, Avg. 1-3)
DEXTERITY: 5 (Max. 7, Avg. 1-3)
ESSENCE: 2 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
PERCEPTION: 4 (Max. 9, Avg. 1-3)
WIT: 4 (Max. 11, Avg. 2-4)
WILL: 4 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
PRESENCE: 6 (Max. 12, Avg. 3-5)

TALENTS

Fearless   : 1   Eidetic Memory: 1
Immunity (snake venoms) : 1 level
Natural Leader   : 1
Toughness: Stamina = 3 x (Vigor + Will)

ADVANTAGES

Sunborn Caste: 2   Fame (fighter) : 3
_____ : ___   _____ : ___
_____ : ___   _____ : ___
_____ : ___   _____ : ___

DRAWBACKS

Food Requirement (triple): -2
Intolerant (slavery)   : -1
Personality Quirk (overconfidence): -1

SKILLS

Armourer	: 5	Knowledge (famed warriors) :	4	Tactics	: 4
Brawling	: 7	Knowledge (heraldry) :	4	Throw	: 5
Climbing	: 6	Knowledge (Mahist Faith) :	4		: _
Concealment	: 4	Knowledge (martial lore) :	4		: _
Contortion	: 5	Knowledge (politics) :	4		: _
Dress Wound	: 4	Knowledge (Sadahm area) :	4		: _
Duel Dancing	: 6	Knowledge (weapons) :	4		: _
Evade	: 7	Language (Tishinian) :	4		: _
Fast Draw	: 5	Martial Arts :	6		: _
Firearm Combat	: 6	Melee Combat :	6		: _
Intimidation	: 6	Persuasion :	4		: _
Knowledge (customs)	: 4	Shadowing :	6		: _
Knowledge (current history)	: 4	Stealth :	6		: _

COMBAT

STAMINA = 3 x (Vigor + Will): 30
   CURRENT STAMINA: [   ]

ARMOR: Háthiyaran Armor 4 (+2) =6
   CURRENT ARMOR: [   ]

Melee: 6   Martial Arts: ... 6
Brawling: 7   Firearm: 6
Missile: .... ___   Suthra: .... ___
Throw: 5   _____ ___

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
General Martial Arts :	6	

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Chitin Pole-axe:	Medium	8
Stone Hammer:	Short	8
Crystal Thowing Axe:	Medium	8
Háthiyaran Blunderbus:	Long	15
Katar (punch dagger):	Short	6

Special Attacks / Adjustments
_____
_____

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
_____ :	___	

COMPANIONS

STORY POINTS ⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡⬡

HIT LOCALE	Subdue		Subdue / Fatal		Fatal	
MANEUVER LOCATION TABLE			**DAMAGE TYPE**			
	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT
HEAD	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock Lame (wing)	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-5	Lost Feature
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Internal Damage
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 Damage Level to bring an end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock effects, or a Cover (once you have won Initiative).

Bind / Grab - No damage caused. Targeted area (and/or weapon) immobile and controlled till Escape or release. Hold / Lock may then be attempted to same target area at an ADJ # of 0.

Throw / Sweep - Full damage. Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill Ranking # of feet away). Target must use a Combat Action to rise, unless they have made a successful Acrobatics Roll that Round. If thrown far enough, they must use a Combat Action or their free Half Move to close.

Disarm - Half damage caused, plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use a Combat Action to retrieve or draw new one.

Nausea - Full damage. Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of Rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.

Lame - Full damage. Target gets no more free Half Moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Combat Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant damage (weapon damage plus Cover successes with standard multipliers applying) till target wins Initiative and performs a successful Escape.

Disable - Full damage. If limb targeted, loss of limb use (half Movement only if limb is used for locomotion). Target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2. Failure allows only half Action Dice, success means only a minus 2. Physical actions outside combat suffer a minus 1 till healed.

Hold / Lock - Full damage. Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per Round till Escape or release.

Stun - Full damage. Any successes that get through target's defenses negates equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds.

Broken - Full damage. A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (half Movement if limb used for locomotion). Target must make Vigor Roll at minus 4; success allows half Action Dice: failure allows no offensive actions, only half Action Dice, and causes 1D6 Stun. Physical actions outside of combat suffer a minus 3 to rolls till successful medical treatment.

Full Knockout - Full damage. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Lost Feature - Full damage. A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is permanently harmed in some way.

Internal Damage - Full damage. Target begins bleeding internally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the target's defense, till healed or dead.

Severed - Full damage. Targeted limb or section of limb violently separated from body. Target begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

Gramir (Assistant Suthra Master)

BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Wolf
AGE: 25   HEIGHT: 6'   WEIGHT: 210
CASTE: Sunborn   SEX: Male
APPEARANCE: A savage looking janah with a commanding presence and bold speech.
HOUSE: Ayrram   LINE: Sisyah
HISTORY: hailing originally from Ishpuria, he trained for two years in the Academy of Sakrsa in Dar-Puram, before serving as a chinti and kellendu trainer in the House.

ANIMAL ABILITIES

Body Armor: 2 pts.
Distance Running: 5
Keen Hearing: 6
Natural Weaponry (claws, teeth): 7
Night Vision: 6
Tracking Scent: 6

CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 5 (Max. 9, Avg. 3-5)
VIGOR: 5 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
AGILITY: 6 (Max. 9, Avg. 2-4)
DEXTERITY: 4 (Max. 9, Avg. 1-3)
ESSENCE: 1 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
PERCEPTION: 6 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)
WIT: 4 (Max. 10, Avg. 1-3)
WILL: 5 (Max. 8, Avg. 1-3)
PRESENCE: 6 (Max. 10, Avg. 2-4)

TALENTS

Heightened Awareness : 1
Empathy : 1
Natural Leader : 1
Direction Sense : 1

ADVANTAGES

Sunborn Caste: 2   : __
           : __   : __
           : __   : __
           : __   : __

DRAWBACKS

Color Blind (night): -1
Intolerance (snivellers and "toadies"): -1
Personality Quirk (overconfidence): -1

SKILLS

Acrobatics : 6	Navigation (land) : 4	Trapping : 6
Brawling : 6	Observation : 6	: _
Climbing : 6	Persuasion : 4	: _
Concealment : 6	Profession (incense making) : 4	: _
Evade : 6	Profession (suthra breeding) : 5	: _
Knowledge (customs) : 4	Profession (suthra handling) : 5	: _
Knowledge (Mahist Faith) : 4	Riding (makdi and chinti) : 6	: _
Knowledge (Sadahm area) : 4	Shadowing : 6	: _
Knowledge (suthra lore) : 6	Survival : 5	: _
Language (Tishinian) : 6	Suthra Use : 5	: _
Martial Arts : 6	Stealth : 6	: _
Melee Combat : 6	Throw : 4	: _
Missile Combat : 4	Tracking : 6	: _

COMBAT

STAMINA= 2 x (Vigor + Will): 20
    CURRENT STAMINA: [ ]

ARMOR: Suthra Leather 1 (+2) = 3
    CURRENT ARMOR: [ ]

Melee:	6	Martial Arts:	6
Brawling:	6	Firearm:	
Missile:	4	Suthra:	5
Throw:	4		

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
General Martial Arts :	6	

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Tishini Longbow :	long	3
Fighting Net :	medium	5
Crystal Spear :	short	5
Living Punch-dagger:	short	3
Living Suthra Whip:	med.	5

Special Attacks / Adjustments
Suthra Dagger Poison, level 5
Suthra Whip Entangle (suthra use) 5
Trained Kellendu, attack & defense 5

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
:		

COMPANIONS

STORY POINTS

MANEUVER LOCATION TABLE

HIT LOCALE	DAMAGE TYPE					
	Subdue		Subdue / Fatal		Fatal	
	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT
HEAD	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock Lame (wing)	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Escape	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-5	Lost Feature
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Internal Damage
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable and Stun Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 Damage Level to bring an end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock effects, or a Cover (once you have won Initiative).

Bind / Grab - No damage caused. Targeted area (and/or weapon) immobile and controlled till Escape or release. Hold / Lock may then be attempted to same target area at an ADJ # of 0.

Throw / Sweep - Full damage. Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill Ranking # of feet away). Target must use a Combat Action to rise, unless they have made a successful Acrobatics Roll that Round. If thrown far enough, they must use a Combat Action or their free Half Move to close.

Disarm - Half damage caused, plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use a Combat Action to retrieve or draw new one.

Nausea - Full damage. Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of Rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.

Lame - Full damage. Target gets no more free Half Moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Combat Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant damage (weapon damage plus Cover successes with standard multipliers applying) till target wins Initiative and performs a successful Escape.

Disable - Full damage. If limb targeted, loss of limb use (half Movement only if limb is used for locomotion). Target must make a Vigor Roll at minus 2. Failure allows only half Action Dice, success means only a minus 2. Physical actions outside combat suffer a minus 1 till healed.

Hold / Lock - Full damage. Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per Round till Escape or release.

Stun - Full damage. Any successes that get through target's defenses negates equal number of Combat Actions. This can carry through to following Rounds.

Broken - Full damage. A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (half Movement if limb used for locomotion). Target must make Vigor Roll at minus 4; success allows half Action Dice: failure allows no offensive actions, only half Action Dice, and causes 1D6 Stun. Physical actions outside of combat suffer a minus 3 to rolls till successful medical treatment.

Full Knockout - Full damage. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Lost Feature - Full damage. A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is permanently harmed in some way.

Internal Damage - Full damage. Target begins bleeding internally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the target's defense, till healed or dead.

Severed - Full damage. Targeted limb or section of limb violently separated from body. Target begins bleeding externally at the rate per Round equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

PLAYER COMBAT TRACKING SHEET

ROUND 1

INITIATIVE: _____   ORDER: _____   ACTION #: [ ]   UNUSED ACTIONS: [ ]

DECLARED ACTIONS

(Chosen Action you wish to Declare : Adjusted Action Dice # for that Action)

1. _____ : _____   7. _____ : _____
2. _____ : _____   8. _____ : _____
3. _____ : _____   9. _____ : _____
4. _____ : _____   10. _____ : _____
5. _____ : _____   11. _____ : _____
6. _____ : _____   12. _____ : _____

DAMAGE TAKEN

(Amount   Circle subdue, fatal, or both   Location of Damage : Description and Effects of Wounds)   CURRENT STAMINA: [ ]

_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____
_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____
_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____

ROUND 2

INITIATIVE: _____   ORDER: _____   ACTION #: [ ]   UNUSED ACTIONS: [ ]

DECLARED ACTIONS

(Chosen Action you wish to Declare : Adjusted Action Dice # for that Action)

1. _____ : _____   7. _____ : _____
2. _____ : _____   8. _____ : _____
3. _____ : _____   9. _____ : _____
4. _____ : _____   10. _____ : _____
5. _____ : _____   11. _____ : _____
6. _____ : _____   12. _____ : _____

DAMAGE TAKEN

(Amount   Circle subdue, fatal, or both   Location of Damage : Description and Effects of Wounds)   CURRENT STAMINA: [ ]

_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____
_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____
_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____

ROUND 3

INITIATIVE: _____   ORDER: _____   ACTION #: [ ]   UNUSED ACTIONS: [ ]

DECLARED ACTIONS

(Chosen Action you wish to Declare : Adjusted Action Dice # for that Action)

1. _____ : _____   7. _____ : _____
2. _____ : _____   8. _____ : _____
3. _____ : _____   9. _____ : _____
4. _____ : _____   10. _____ : _____
5. _____ : _____   11. _____ : _____
6. _____ : _____   12. _____ : _____

DAMAGE TAKEN

(Amount   Circle subdue, fatal, or both   Location of Damage : Description and Effects of Wounds)   CURRENT STAMINA: [ ]

_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____
_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____
_____   S / F _____ : _____   S / F _____ : _____

VI. Introductory Adventure

This introductory adventure has been designed to use the pre-generated characters presented in the Welcome Booklet. A GM may allow players may use their own characters but would have to either adjust the adventure to fit those characters, or make sure they were still able to fulfill the various roles required by the story (there may have to be a seer, an honor guard, a healer, etc.).

The adventure is intended to introduce players to the world of *SHARD*. It's presented as an overview that's meant to give players a taste of the setting and expose them to some of the central themes and ideas of Dárdünah. This "mini-module" introduces the players to the culture, travel, magic, and martial arts action of the setting. In it the players will embark on a holy pilgrimage, interact with rustic villagers, and deal with a band of ruthless brigands.

Parts of the following adventure will be presented in boxed sections. These sections can be read or summarized to the players, although it is recommended that players be allowed to interrupt any such narration to ask questions or even to interact with any NPCs that might be present. The sooner you can get the players interacting and roleplaying the better.

A Note on Presentation

This adventure will use some concepts and terms commonly found in screenplays. The different parts of larger adventures would be presented in "acts." An act is defined as a major section of the adventure. Usually there are three acts: beginning, middle, and end (also be called an "opening," a "build-up," and a "climax"). Each act will be further divided into a number of "scenes." A scene is defined as an encounter that takes place in a specific location with specific characters. Each scene should also have it's opening, build-up, and climax. Since this adventure is a small one, meant to be played in merely a few hours, it constitutes a single act (the beginning of the journey), and includes only those scenes used for the opening of the story as a whole.

Because of the nature of interactive storytelling, it's important to keep in mind that the scenes presented in each act are not necessarily linear. Since there is no way to

predict what players will attempt to do, scenes must remain flexible. GMs should reshuffle, omit, or create as many scenes as they need to conclude the adventure in a satisfactory way. The most important thing is for the players to feel like the stars of the show. Their words must carry the most weight, their actions be the most decisive, and ultimately their efforts should be what drives the adventure's conclusion.

And finally, every scene will have a "cast of characters" detailed within that scene. These are the NPCs, creatures, and other beings that will feature prominently in the scene. As with the scenes themselves, GMs should feel free to ignore or create as many NPCs as they need to conclude the scene in a satisfactory way.

Here are some tips and techniques to use when running a scene:

1. Every scene should contain drama and advance the story in some way. Even if the scene is intended to allow players a chance to get to know more about NPCs or each other, the scene should ultimately be dramatic and advance the plot in some way. If the scene bogs down with conversations that don't really seem to be relevant to the characters or plot, take that time to reveal a clue or introduce a plot event (such as the sudden appearance of an NPC) in order to keep the action moving and maintain interest in the overall story. Encourage players to interact with each other, of course, but monitor those conversations to make sure they don't devolve into kibitzing (unless you enjoy that sort of thing).

2. Use the technique of "cutting" to improve the flow of your scenarios. Screenwriters have an adage about scenes: get in late, get out early. Essentially this means that you should "cut to" a new scene in the middle of the action. Don't waste time having characters walk into a new setting and exchange pleasantries if it serves no purpose. Cut right to a heated argument or a tense interrogation at a point where the players can naturally pick up the scene. Likewise, once an encounter is no longer dramatic, don't bother to have the characters say their good-byes and shuffle out of the room. Just cut right to the next scene that you feel is most appropriate, again, right in the thick of the drama of that new scene.

3. Use "intercutting" as another valuable tool. This technique helps keep all the players engaged in the story even when their characters are not present in the scene being played. Think of some of your favorite action movies. They use this technique quite effectively. Let's say two of your players are engaged in an exciting

aerial battle, while another two are engaged in a siege outside a castle's walls, and a final player is engaged in a deadly duel deep inside the castle's dungeon. Intercutting between all those scenes keeps the action moving for all the players and keeps everyone engaged because they want to see how their scene will be resolved (as opposed to waiting around for another player's scene to end).

4. Don't be afraid to cut away from a scene at an incredibly dramatic moment. This is called a "cliff hanger" and it can be quite effective. As a player duels his mortal enemy in the dungeon, cut away at the moment when his enemy seems to get the upper hand and lunges in for the killing blow! The player will want to throttle you, of course, but that's a good thing. Cut from that scene to the scene of his comrades (the other players) fighting their way down to the dungeon to aid their friend before he's skewered by his mortal enemy. This technique can be very effective in creating drama and increasing the players' enjoyment of the game.

5. Think of scenes as a series of peaks and valleys. Although the techniques detailed above help create dynamic, entertaining scenes, GMs should be careful to give players a chance to "catch their breaths" from time to time. If the players have just had two or three action-filled scenes in a row, try and give them a scene where they have a chance to talk about the events they've experienced and wind down. These "quiet" scenes should still advance the story and feature drama, however. Drama, after all, can be created by conversations between player characters, especially if they're star-crossed lovers, or professional rivals, or even estranged family members. Scenes featuring such conversations can create some incredibly interesting roleplaying moments. GMs should encourage those moments.

The Pilgrimage

Act 1: The Lonely Inn

On the road between Sadahm and Tiari, a pilgrimage to carry a crystal singing bowl to the Temple of Krilárah is delayed when a downed bridge forces the group to deviate from their route, spending the night in the out-of-the-way village of Múnkula, at the Inn of Díbra's Rest. The rustic locals at first seem ill at ease. Could there be more than meets the eye to this strange and lonely place?

The Characters:

Héshrim (House Guard and Assassin, male 32 year old rattlesnake, House of Sámtra, on loan to the House of Ayrram)- A calm, watchful snake with an air of casual, unsettling menace and strength, Héshrim proved his merits by helping to bring an end to a spying ring being run out of Magár on behalf of the Sustrümi Aminar. He saved the life of Sámtra during this affair. He currently acts as a warrior and assassin for the House of Ayrram.

Valnérah (Seer Sir'hibas, male 40 year old condor, House of Sámtra, on loan to the House of Ayrram)- A mature, wiry-looking bird in silk robes, known for his intense stare, Valnérah was trained under the Great Seer Arddjumal of Amnol before becoming one of the Line of Inuvkah. He is currently acting as Seer of the House of Ayrram.

Dastánah (Assistant Weapons Master, female 27 year old mockingbird, House of Ayrram)- A sharp eyed, quick-moving little bird with a lot of weapons, Dastánah was trained with the Weapons-masters of eastern Tishínia and the Valah Masters of the lord Rajtármi before being gifted to the Line of Sisyáh by Rajtármi himself.

Arhazbür (Honor Guard, male 28 year old elephant, House of Ayrram)- A seasoned fighter with a serious disposition and intimidating stature, Arhazbür pledged his life to the Line of Sisyáh after having been rescued from slavery in Sustrüm as a child. He currently serves as an Honor Guard for the House of Ayrram.

Gramír (Assistant Suthra Master, male 25 year old wolf, House of Ayrram)- A savage looking jánah with a commanding presence and bold speech, Gramír hails originally from Ishpuria, where he studied for two years in the Academy of Sakrsa in Dar-Purám before coming to Tishínia to serve as a chinti and kelléndu trainer in the House of Ayrram.

Umratáli (Mángai Healer, male 35 year old sea turtle, House of Ayrram)- A monkish-looking priest with a friendly smile and a wise disposition, Umratáli was trained in herbalism and medicine at the Academy of Nilám, this Mángai also studied the arts of mystic healing before returning to serve Ayrram's House.

Establishing Intro Scene (The Setup)

Merely a week after the Feast of the Seas festival in Sadahm, the priest Naímur and a small contingency of guards from the House of Ayrram, have been asked to make an over-land pilgrimage of supplication to the Temple of Krilárah in the city of Tiari. You will take with you a crystal singing bowl as a gift and offering to the temple, blessed by the priests Umratáli and Naímur, and held in a small, beautiful box of aromatic wood inscribed by Valnérah. As companions and friends, the rest of you are chosen to accompany them as Honor Guards, warriors, and hunters, since this will be a journey of several days.

Scene 1: The Maspéra Forest

After having passed through the heart of the city Sadahm, you travel northeast, beyond its ancient city walls, and into the tattered edges of the maspéra forests of Jómahd. Above you the dappled light of the suns glitters through the yellow-green canopies, splashing across the smooth bluish bark of the very type of tree-trunks from which the box holding the crystal bowl is made. It is Díshjulum, the Rainy season, at the end of the first week of the month of Akuvára, and the recent heavy downpours have made the forest lush, cool, and peaceful, despite the noisy sounds of your armored escort's passage. In the branches, multi-limbed, iridescent blue and auburn suthra, called bandar, leap and caper merrily, fighting occasionally over pith-filled fruit pods, only to drop them into the thick ferns below as they scatter in terror at the approach of such a large group. Merely a league or two into the woods, the apparently irritated and aged priest Naímur calls a momentary halt to the procession.

The old **priest Naímur (male great-horned owl, mid 70s)** is annoyed by the constant clamoring of the attachment of House Guards, and demands that they fall back and out of sight behind his chosen companions (the players) as they continue on their way in a more "serene and contemplative state" befitting holy pilgrims. He won't take no for an answer, and, as dignitary essentially "in charge" of the pilgrimage, he eventually bullies the retaining guards into complying with his wishes, insisting that if there is any trouble, "this great giant" (referring to the elephant) will certainly take matters in hand, not to mention the rest of his deadly friends (referring to the remaining players).

The old priest will continue to complain (in an amusing way) about how they are scaring away the beautiful wildlife. Besides that, once the guards are gone, he admits to having a taste for the meat of the wild bandar, and encourages those with bows or other missile weapons to see if they can bring down one or two for the stewpot at the inn he intends to stay the night at along the way, saying that surely the devah Kramah will bless their shots, since they will be hunting for a good and holy cause.

NORMAL ACTION DICE:
Standard Movement, Great Leap, Bite, Night Vision, Clinging, Climb, Standard Sensory Rolls, etc. : 3
SPECIAL ACTIONS:
None

Once the hunting is done, and relaxed by his vices, the old owl will settle into fairly pleasant conversation and religious philosophy as the party continues on their way, the distant, jewel-like peaks of the amethyst Prasha Mountains slowly looming closer in the northeast as the suns make their way across the sky.

That night the party stays at a pleasant inn and roadside teahouse at the intersection of a secondary merchant road leading southeast to the land of Gilárhi. As promised, any bandar from the hunt are cooked up and served with delicate spices to the pilgrims and their entourage, and arrangements are made for the many rooms needed for them all. Another heavy rain falls that night as they sleep. The next morning, after the prayers of False Dawn at the rise of the tiny sapphire sun Edü, the party will continue past an old crystal "guide-stone" obelisk at the muddy intersection that indicates the road northward to Tiari.

The players may attempt to take shots at the bandar as they travel along, either using the **Survival Skill** (to determine the outcome of hunting), or simply attempting to shoot them out of the trees with various ranged weapons. The old priest will testily stop anyone attempting to use firearms, complaining that the noise of the clanking guards was bad enough, and that he doesn't want them coming to investigate. This is due, apparently, to the fact that he ALSO enjoys the vices of drinking wine and smoking a pipe, something else that he doesn't appreciate the guards observing.

Bandar (BAN-dahr) - About shoulder high to a mouse jánah, this playful suthra lives in many of the forested areas of northern Dárdünah. Arboreal by nature, they generally live in small groups (from five to twenty) where they forage for native fruits and occasional small prey. Prized for their colorful bodies and fearlessly inquisitive natures, they are sometimes trained and raised as pets. They are considered uncommonly intelligent for suthra and have gained a certain amount of popularity amongst the southern nobles.

STAMINA: 3-9 levels
ARMOR: 2 points

Scene 2: The Fallen Bridge

Another day of travel passes, and by the third hour after midday prayers you reach the rolling, crystal-studded foothills of the Prasha Mountains. The amber skies seem almost alive with multicolor wisps of swirling vapor and the puffy remnants of storm-clouds that seem to dance on the high mountain airs. The trees along the way are now a mixture of maspéra as well as the hardy, tall, and slender ayurbála trees, whose blade-shaped, dark-crimson leaves flutter in the breezes that scatter their delicate white blossoms.

The road here, though fairly well maintained, is patched with muddy washes from the rains that recently cascaded down the rocky slopes, and is freshly rutted and scattered with debris

from last night's storm. Ahead the road turns sharply, and at its bend a timeworn statue seems to stare from the edge of the forest, depicting an old, burly tortoise in simple artisan's clothes who leans upon a great stone hammer. An offering bowl at its feet, carved into the statue itself by ancient hands, lay cracked and empty, save for fallen leaves and rainwater. Ahead, beyond the bend in the road, can be heard the deep roar of rushing water.

Players with **Knowledge Skills** pertaining to religious lore can roll to see who recognizes the statue as the devah Yatnaríti, the god of wise endeavors, in his form venerating good labors and architecture. Such shrines are often made to commemorate the sites of important public buildings and other such structures.

The old owl Naímur will comment that they must be approaching a bridge that he recalls from his travels, and will shake his head in disappointment at the ill state of the shrine, noting that wise travelers would do well to remember their offerings at such sites. He will stop momentarily to clear out the offering bowl at the base of the statue, placing in it several small grain-cakes from his pack, as well as a few crystal dalán coins, and eyeing the players sternly if they hesitate to make their own offerings.

After they pass the bend in the road the players will come upon an awful sight. Across a fairly deep gorge of muddy earth and spiky crystal nearly a hundred feet, lay what remains of a once large wooden bridge, nearly washed away by the raging torrent of water still flowing down from the nearby mountains that tower near them. Only a few pilings and crossbeams remain amidst the flying foam and deadly current below. As if in testament to the dangerous conditions, the lone corpse of an insectoid riding-beast hangs impaled upon one of the upstream-facing crossbeams, its chitinous limbs flailing lifelessly in the roaring stream. **Knowledge** rolls of **Suthra Lore** will identify it as a wild mountain chinti, as opposed to any tamed suthra that once bore a rider of any kind, since it's mouth chitin has not been carved to accept a bit and harness.

Chinti (CHIN-tee) - The riding and draft beasts of Dárdünah, chinti come in many sizes and varieties. From the lighter swifter beasts of Amnol to the larger sturdier steeds bred in Dar-Purám, chinti all tend to be sociable creatures and sometimes form close bonds with their owners. Chinti mate for life and will reproduce every 3 years. Throughout the wide world, jánah and chinti have been together since the dawn of time. From the barbarous Hardazi hordes to the lone traveler crossing the plains of Háthiyar, the chinti is beast of burden, companion, friend, and sometimes even savior.

STAMINA: 10-20 levels
ARMOR: 3 points
NORMAL ACTION DICE:
Standard Movement, Bite, Standard Sensory Rolls, etc. : 5
SPECIAL ACTIONS:
Rearing kick : 7
Gore attack (horns) : 6

Here the party must decide how they are to continue as a group. Of course the flyers could cross easily, but that would leave the majority behind; unacceptable to the old priest. Flyers wishing to seek an alternate route from the

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sky may make the attempt, and with both successful **Flight** and **Search** rolls will succeed in noticing a neglected-looking road whose intersection they must have missed less than a league back (perhaps a mile and a half). Likewise, players making a **Wit Roll** will recall seeing what looked like a mossy, fallen guide-stone laying by the side of the road beneath the ferny undergrowth where the forest seemed to thin in that same location back down the road. Those with a skill for land-based **Navigation** would recognize that an overgrown side-road like that, leading due north towards the low-lands and the distant sea, would have been an older route forged before the bridge was built, meant to circumvent the streambed during such weather, and would most likely lead to another shallower crossing further downstream. Characters making a successful **Regional Knowledge** skill of the Sadahm area at a –2 difficulty modifier will have some vague memory of a map they've seen showing there being another actual bridge built downstream from this one, with a small road leading right to it.

Backtracking to that spot will give the players a chance to make **Search** rolls once again to find the fallen guide-stone, and to discover that indeed, an old road leads down a gentle slope deeper into the forest through patches of fern and occasional bramble. Close inspection of the stone reveals a barely discernible sigil indicating some sort of settlement in that direction as well. At this old intersection they will meet back up with the following guards, and the journey will soon continue once again with the characters and the stubborn old priest taking a distant lead through the old and quiet wood as the retainer guards sit to rest.

Scene 3: In Sight of the Village

Eventually emerging from the forest near a promontory overlook at the edge of a waterfall, you see the lowlands below spread out like a rolling blanket covered with more forest as it begins its slow decent toward your first glimpse of the distant Sea of Vigára. The old road continues to wind it way through the forest like a rough thread, now bending to the east as it heads toward the glittering ribbon of the swift stream far away. The suns are less than an hour from False Dusk, when bluish Edü begins to set, with the second sun, amber Lokáynü, following merely an hour after. This alternate route has taken more time than any of you would have hoped, and the old owl has grown obviously weary from the trek. It would be unwise to continue traveling in the forest after dark.

Players with the Animal Ability **Far Sight** may roll to see where the distant road meets the river. There they'll see a promising sight! The tell-tale shape of a large wooden bridge spans the wide stream there, and just beyond it can be seen the peaked roofs of a small village jutting up from the treetops. There is a good chance that the party may find a small inn that might suit them and their following company of guards, though they will surely arrive there well after the last sun has set beyond the mountains. Though both priests would be somewhat upset by being forced to travel through evening prayers, the spirits of the old owl will be well improved by this the thought of a warm bed and hot tea served at an inn.

A good hour after the larger amber sun has set, and the prayers of the evening have been mumbled by all as they continued to make time on the road, the party will finally arrive at a break in the woods near the edge of the stream. Here the gorge is much wider, but shallower, and the huge old wooden bridge casts deep shadows beneath the light of the moons which have risen (crystalline green Máynatah, purple Kamádi, and iridescent aqua-blue Rrísi). The sky is now dimly luminescent in various hues of deep blue, purple, and green, as of mimicking the light of the moons with glowing celestial veils. The chirring of strange suthra hum in the night airs, and a mist has risen in the woods, obscuring the far end of the bridge and the apparently dark village beyond. The surrounding forest is a confusing tapestry of shifting silhouettes.

As the party crosses the bridge, characters with either **Keen Hearing** or **Night Vision** as Animal Abilities may make a roll, while all others may roll their **Perception** at a –2 penalty due to the cloying mist. All who succeed will notice that their movement on the bridge seems to have startled two small creatures beneath it on the far bank of the stream. Whatever they are, the creatures flee out of sight downstream, and vanish into the forest beyond. Only those using Night Vision can tell that the two fleeing forms ran on two legs, surely homeless beggars or village outcasts.

Though the village at first appears to be dark, as the mists part while they cross the bridge the warm lights of oil lamps and candles become evident in some of the nearest dwellings, and smoke can be seen curling from the chimney of a two-story building beyond the bridge on the right. An old sign, showing a small gray bear-like jánah of some kind curled upon a sleeping palette, is inscribed with the name "Díbra's Rest". The smell of hot tea and mulled wine floats lightly in the air. Old Naímur will seem overjoyed.

Scene 4: The Quaint Inn of Díbra's Rest

A high-peaked roof with corner ornaments to ward away evil spirits rises above the rustic wooden structure of the inn, and its simple curtain doorway of woven river-reeds opens as a small jánah, a white rat, emerges, eyeing you all with a momentarily startled expression before becoming sullen and traipsing off into the misty night down the village's main road.

The interior of the inn is comfortably lit with various hanging paper lanterns as well as clay tabletop oil lamps, and on either side of a bead-curtained doorway leading into the kitchen, two small jugánu worm cages hold luminescent occupants that cast a cool green glow on the hanging crystal beads. At the far end of the room a merry fire burns in a huge stone hearth where hangs a fat amber cooking pot in which you can discern, through its translucent sides, a thick and simmering stew.

The room is a large one, with ample table-space for the twenty guards who will soon be joining you, and around the room sit several locals of various jenu who eye you all uncertainly as you make your entrance. A male kangaroo dressed in the colorful, flowing silks of an entertainer sits in a cushioned chair near the large hearth and absently strums a sitar as he watches you, a look of bemusement quite evident.

Emerging from the kitchens through the beaded curtain come a male koala and a female meerkat, apparently the proprietors of the place, carrying in their hands ceramic platters filled with sliced bread and fruit. The meerkat nearly drops her dish when she notices you, and with wide and uncertain eyes full of trepidation they both regard your group.

Jugánu Worm (joo-GAH-noo) - Grub-like, bioluminescent creatures that are kept in decorative wicker cages and used as light sources throughout the world. When kept well fed, they give off a gentle glow that varies wildly in color depending upon the species. These creatures glow brightest when they are occasionally petted and stroked, emitting a soft purring sound when given such treatment. Tended to in this manner, they can glow brightly for hours until they eventually begin to dim and go dark as they fall asleep. Their cages can be covered to hide their glow when desired. If harmed, they will emit a shrill, keening wail that will not subside until they are either soothed or slain.

STAMINA: 1-9 levels

ARMOR: 0 points

NORMAL ACTION DICE:
Standard Movement, Standard Sensory Rolls, etc.: 3

SPECIAL ACTIONS:
When harmed, emits a keening wail that can be heard at great distances, and can awaken sleeping jánah within several hundred feet: 6

The innkeeper, in a heavy Nilámi accent, will ask the players why they have come, and regardless of the answer

will tell them they must leave; that there is no place for them here, and that they should move on to the next village. Old Naímur will declare this "nonsense" and will proceed to sit, telling them that he and his companions are on a holy pilgrimage in the name of the Aryah Ayrram, and that both deference to the devah, as well as respect for noble Sunborn, should inspire them to make the group feel welcome. The innkeeper will seem pained, and his wife will further explain that their village is poor, but has recently attracted the attention of local brigands who seek to violently liberate the wealth of occasional travelers. She fears that the presence of such higher caste individuals might inspire their aggression.

If none of the other players speak to reassure her, the priest Naímur will openly scoff at the idea of a band of brigands in light of the fact that within mere minutes their twenty armored guards will be arriving looking for a night's rest as well. At the sound of this it seems as if a great sigh of relief passes through all in the tearoom, and trepidation turns to glee and excitement. The players will then be welcomed to sit, and will be served a hearty meal. The innkeeper and his wife will then introduce themselves.

Díbra the Innkeeper (male koala, early 40's, originally from Nilám), and his wife Chirüh (female meerkat, late 30's, also from Nilám).

Several other villagers of various species will be willing to speak with the group as well. The players will be told that this is the village of Múnkula. Many of the villagers, though obviously relieved by the conversation, seem sullen and tired, but others speak excitedly with them concerning the recent Feast of the Seas festival, asking where they are from, and eagerly seek to hear recent news. Players should roll appropriate **Knowledge Skills** when providing such answers.

Within minutes the rest of the retainer guards arrive, and a pleasant din of eating, conversation, and laughter fills the room as the innkeeper and his wife gladly lay out a veritable banquet for them. Characters with **Performance Skills** pertaining to music or singing will notice the kangaroo playing a delightful but sad song on his sitar, accompanied by his liltingly beautiful, soft voice, and will recognize it as a song of lost love and tragedy. If the kangaroo notices he is being watched, he will wink and smile at the character, inviting them to sit nearer to him and listen, and to sing an adjoining melody if they wish. The song he sings tells the story of a man who loved a woman who was lost to

him far away, and of his desire to meet her at the Edge of Heaven when the devah choose to judge his heart and soul. He mourns the days he spends without her, but he knows his life is not his own to take, and that only the devah can release him from this worldly prison.

He will introduce himself as **Bákuman the musician**, hailing originally from Ishpüria. If asked about this beautifully sad song, he will admit that it is his own story to some extent, and that the lady he loved was killed in a nearby region by marauders that came to take the town's children into slavery. He will mention that such banditry and roguishness has become more common in recent days, and that the innkeeper does not exaggerate when he speaks of the dangerous local band of brigands, cutthroats and thieves that have fled into Tishínia from the border skirmishes with Gilárhi, and that hard times that have fallen upon this village as of late. He hopes that the players will not run afoul of these brigands, but prays that the scoundrels will soon feel Kramah's heavy justice.

The mángai Priests will be approached hesitantly by a sullen jánah, a stout, middle-aged badger who calls himself **Áhuli, the stone carver** of the village. His hands have both appear to have been wrapped in cloth bandages quite recently. He will humbly request that the mángai do the village a great favor and perform a blessing at the temple. He claims that the brigands the innkeeper spoke of recently desecrated their temple by fire and murdered their priest, and they have not yet alerted the magistrate of either Sadahm or Tiari. If asked about his hands, he will tell them that he burned them trying to pull the priest's body from the flames. The innkeeper will try to hush the badger while he speaks, saying that he doesn't want his honored guests troubled by these matters. But the stone carver will be insistent, saying that it is their only hope, and that none of the villagers wishes to go there anymore. He is sure that new blessings placed upon the temple ruins will bring peace to the villagers. He will be most grateful if players attempt to heal his hands with either medicine or magic, saying their kindness has "blessed" him.

Throughout the evening, little by little, most of the villagers in the tearoom will depart for the night and say their farewells while wishing the pilgrims good fortune and luck, making their way out of the inn and into the mist to wander toward the darker center of town. Eventually, only the musician and the two innkeepers will remain as they continue to entertain the new guests of the inn.

Scene 5: Unwelcome Visitors

Two hours before midnight prayers a loud commotion can suddenly be heard outside as the approaching sound of many keening chinti and their riders shatters the peaceful night's calm. The innkeeper and his wife seem transfixed in horror, and the musician turns grim eyes toward the door. Suddenly, a deep, bellowing cry, thick and guttural, rings like a cracked gong from outside, and as it does the very air around you seems to change.

Like awakening from a dream, the pleasant glow of the candles and lamps in the tearoom is snuffed all at once, as if by dozens of hands, all save for the traveling lanterns of your guards. The sultry air, warmed by the hearth's fire, and rich with the scents of smoke and food suddenly crackles and grows threadbare, thin, and cold in an instant. The very furniture upon which you sit suddenly becomes dusty, and upon the tables lay empty ceramic mugs and cracked dishes long abandoned. The hearth is barren and cold, littered with old ashes, and the cushioned seat, upon which had rested the musician, lay empty and broken upon the dirty floor. Harsh firelight from torches held by the jánah outside dances across the floor and walls. There is no one in the tearoom except yourselves and the retainer guards.

Again the deep voice bellows, thick with the accent of Gilárhi; "Come out of there! We know you have hidden inside, we can see the light of your lanterns! You are few and we are many... My scouts saw you cross the bridge! Come out, give us what we want, and perhaps we will let you and your friends live old man!"

A moment or so of stunned silence passes inside the dark tearoom as the guards look at you all and at one another in amazement. Haunted, shocked expressions slowly turn to rage as a strange truth begins to dawn on them. Smiles full of bared teeth spread across the grim faces of the guards. One of them finally manages to growl; "Few eh? Let us introduce them to our few..."

Whether the players choose to participate or not, whether they choose to rush outside to meet their adversaries or not, Combat will now begin for everyone, and the rules of Initiative will apply. Have each player roll for Initiative as well as for their number of Actions that round, and roll for the old owl also (assume he has 6 Action Dice and 20 Stamina), though he will attempt to avoid combat, allowing his Honor Guard to protect him.

The guards' first actions will be to draw their weapons and rush from the abandoned inn to deal with the brigands face to face. The first one to exit will cry out as an arrow pierces his chitin breastplate. Allow the players to have the chance to fight at least one opponent if they wish, and feel free to menace even those who attempt to avoid combat. Players choosing to stay inside the inn should suddenly find a brigand or two crashing through the shuttered windows or forced through the front door after being accidentally thrown or pushed by the guards outside, forcing them to engage in order to protect the old priest's life or their own. Characters fleeing through the kitchen door and out the back of the inn will find that at least one brigand has attempted to sneak into the building from the rear to attempt a surprise attack. Use the statistics below to play any brigand fought 1-on-1, or for any guards the players cooperate with side-by-side.

Typical Brigands (15 total) - (various jenu, though most are apes and simians, lean and hungry, late teens to mid 20's) Thieves and cutthroats from the Gilárhi borders. Use somewhat cheap amber swords and crystal knives as primary weapons.

Action Dice: 5

Stamina Levels: 18

Brigand Leader (Dalmékur) - (large male gorilla, muscular and cocksure, mid 20's) Self-proclaimed "boss" of these petty, murderous criminals. Uses a crimson crystal sword and a bow.

Action Dice: 6

Stamina Levels: 22

Typical Guards (20 total) - (various jenu, strong, agile, and well-trained, mid to late 20's) Warriors of the House of Ayrram. Use crystal swords and chitin spears as primary weapons.

Action Dice: 6

Stamina Levels: 24

The brigands are generally outclassed and outnumbered, and you may assume that the group of pilgrims and their guards will win, though you should certainly allow the players to battle at least one each, and as many as they wish. A good way to randomly determine how many of the retainer guards are wounded or dead would be to roll a single d6. Consider

half the rolled number (rounded down) to have been killed, and the other half to have been wounded. For example, a roll of 5 would mean 2 guards were killed in the fight, and three were wounded. A roll of 1 would only mean that only one guard was wounded. Make a similar roll to randomly determine how many of the brigands could be captured alive, and which were able to escape. Combat should continue long enough to allow the players to fight or encounter at least one brigand each, at which point all the brigands will have either fled, are captured, or are dead. Any brigands captured alive will beg for mercy, and can be taken as prisoners to be presented to the magistrate of Tiari, or killed on the spot for their heinous crimes.

Conclusions

With the battle at an end, there will no doubt be a moment where the players will want to discuss what has just happened, and what they truly experienced in the inn before the brigands arrived. Likewise, the guards may wish to roughly interrogate any prisoners concerning what exactly they have done to this town, and where the villagers actually are. Any living brigands will babble in barely understandable broken Tishíni, indicating that it was their "boss's" fault, and that they didn't want to burn the temple, and will mostly just continue crying out in Gilárhi gibberish. Regardless of how these conversations may go, the old owl Naímur will insist that now is not the time to see what the ruined temple may hold, though he is sure it will be grim. Instead he will insist that they set a watch and get some sleep within the abandoned inn, and deal with the rest after False Dawn in the morning.

At False Dawn the old priest will gather the entire party and the retaining guards to sing in the new day with prayers before the ruined, stone walls of the burned and gutted temple at the center of the village. It is a terrible sight to see. Little is left of the elaborate wooden upper floors, most of which have collapsed in upon themselves in the fire that must have been many weeks ago. The lower level's carved walls of stone, and the wide-open, singed, wooden main doors are all that remain. The seasonal rains have turned the ground to ashy mud.

In the doorway itself lay two bodies festering with rot, one wearing the soiled saffron robes of a Satyan priest, and the other a badger that had been carrying him in his burned arms when he fell. An arrow is sunken deeply in his decomposing chest. Within the ruined temple are even more horrors. It appears as if the villagers, having been attacked by the brigands, fled to these relatively fortified walls in an attempt to hold them off. Whatever happened, the temple began to burn, and the villagers all died within, perhaps by heat or smoke, as the burning upper floors fell around them. They lay huddled, as a group, clinging to one another against the scorched inner walls, their bodies twisted in their agonizing last moments. Not far from the door one jánah lay caught in the light of the rising suns. Grasped tightly in the corpse's arms is the charred remnant of a multi-stringed sitar. Apparently, the only escapee from the inferno (the badger) was shot dead before he could even get beyond the door.

After a moment of contemplative silence the old priest will tell the players that he and the priest Umratáli hold the divine laws of the Partakám (the holiest of texts) in their hearts and on their tongues, and he will ask Umratáli if he believes that their prisoners (if any) are responsible for these crimes. If the player says "yes" then the old owl will agree, and will then call upon the rest of the players, as noble sunborn and warrior caste, to decide if the prisoners should die now, perhaps appeasing the tortured spirits of their victims, or stand for judgment before the magistrate and the Lawspeakers of Tiari in a public forum many days from now. The choice is theirs, and the retainer guards will gladly carry out the decision one way or another.

The matter of the temple is a different issue entirely, and Naímur will ask those with ritual magic to perform a blessing upon the temple and the poor villagers within, to help send them on their way through the Dream to dance at the Edge of Heaven; to release them from the torment that has trapped them here after their deaths. Umratáli should prepare and begin such a ritual, and aided by Valnérah can bring the rest of the companions into the Dream. As always, circles and sigils must be inscribed upon the ground and the area purified with prayer.

Here they can witness, and with their own prayers potentially help in, setting the duhámas of the villagers free from their tortured haunting. Ask the sir'hibas players to make their **Magic Ritual Skill** rolls, and allow the rest of the party to make **Essence Rolls** as collaborators according to the rules of Assistance as they desire to help. Once the ritual has begun, assuming the players initially roll successfully, they will part the veils of Dream, revealing the colorful and nebulous Dream Realm beyond. As it envelops them they will watch the real world seem to vanish around them, and in place of the ruined temple they will see a circle of floating, glowing spheres of golden light that bob and sway as if alive. Those succeeding in **Essence**

Rolls once again will see the vague forms of jánah transposed with the glowing spheres, and will see their own bodies, and those of their companions as ghostly images of themselves. If either sir'hibasi wish to speak to these spirits, then they must each make another successful **Magic Ritual Skill** roll. Once again the other players may assist.

At this point both the sir'hibasi characters should roll their **Magic Ritual Skill** dice to determine if they can open the path to the Edge of Heaven for the lost spirits of the villagers. If they succeed, then feel free to describe some amazing and glorious effect into which the villagers' duhámas will rise or merge, and perhaps tease the players by describing elusive and tantalizing god-like forms that seem to dance and writhe mightily across some celestial back-drop. If they fail, of course, then the tone of the Dream will become sinister, and perhaps there will be some indication that the spirits of the villagers will remain forever trapped, descending eventually into the ranks of "khaujíva" (hungry ghosts) who may one day begin preying upon the living. Either way, once this description is through, the ritual should come to an end, and the players will know that they have done what they can.

With solemn hearts, the pilgrims and their retainers must travel on to Tiari to inform the Magistrate of what has transpired so that he may send soldiers back to the village to secure the region from further villainy and to bring life back to the area. There are still many days travel ahead, but now wise old Naímur seems content to let the guard retainers travel close at hand.