

DÁRDÜNAH

WELCOME BOOKLET



WORLD of the FALSE DAWN

I. An Introduction



Dárdünah: World of the False Dawn - A Sourcebook

The silver gray fox studied the falcon who stood opposite him in the scarlet field. The warm caress of the Singing Wind had brought its eerie melody floating across the plain from the crystal mountains. The fox sighed at the stirrings of his inner soul. The pungent odor of the field invigorated him. Tiny sapphire Edü had begun to set, painting the normally amber sky a rich aurora of deep greens and blues which slowly unfolded like a celestial flower. Golden Lokáyñü would soon follow its diminutive brother on its journey around the world.

The fox adjusted his embroidered silk robe, and exposed his tattooed chest. Pulling the crystal point of his long spear out of the ground, he crouched in the traditional waiting stance. His tail bristled and swayed slightly in the breeze. He considered donning his suthra breastplate, but instead left it wriggling on the ground beside him. The blood colored grass caressed his calves, gently pulling at him.

"I, Kalidásah, first born of Rhuyáni the Crystal Carver, of the House of Ürmi, of the Line of Inúvkah, do greet and honor you," the fox sang out across the field. "May the Great Father and Mother embrace you at the Edge of Heaven this day." Closing his eyes, the fox howled at the swirling skies.

The bare-breasted falcon had not moved. Slowly, and with delicate grace, she spread her smoky wings. She pointed her beak up towards the glowing clouds and screeched her own song up into the wind. It merged with the fox's howl and became one harmonious sound, announcing to the Devah that great warriors prepared to battle.

The falcon drew twin jeweled daggers from her hip sheaths and held the transparent blades against her chitin vambraces. Tucking her right foot against the inside of her left knee, she parted her shimmering turquoise skirt. She held her arms high, her wingtips touching above her head. She too had discarded her ceremonial breastplate which scuttled blindly back and forth behind her.

"I, Vánka, second born of Sikah the Chamberlain, of the House of Pünim, of the Line of Yádrüh, do return your greeting and accept your challenge," the falcon called out. "May Krámah the Lord of Battle be pleased with your skill before you dance on the Edge of Heaven." She twirled her crystal blades, creating a rainbow pattern which flashed in the air. Knives facing outward, the falcon launched herself towards the waiting fox.

What is Dárdūnah?

Dárdūnah (pronounced DAHR-doo-nah) is an exciting new world of heroic fantasy and adventure. Furthermore, it is a rather 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. Dárdūnah's time period is not strictly medieval. The setting draws its flavor from eastern rather than western cultures. And, it is not set on an alternate version of Earth. In fact, there are no humans on Dárdūnah.

The tone of the setting can best be described as Oriental heroic fantasy with a strong cloak-and-dagger influence, all set on an alien world. Using films and fiction as a reference, if you mixed the adventure and romance elements of **The Three Musketeers** (or any Dumas novel), the Byzantine political intrigue and somber atmosphere of **Dune** (or any of Herbert's **Dune** novels), the martial arts combat scenes of **Big Trouble in Little China**, **Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon** (or any Jackie Chan film), the sets and costumes of **The Jungle Book**, **Tales of the Arabian Nights**, **Ran** and **The Last Emperor** (or any period Asian film), and some of the world visuals of **The Dark Crystal**, you would get a pretty good idea of what it's all about.

Dárdūnah features anthropomorphic animals (which we have chosen to call **animorphs**) as the primary character races. Animal-people have always been a favorite of myth and legend - they make great visuals. Plus, they are dynamic and diverse (demonstrated, of course, by the fascinating variety found in nature). Additionally, they offer a wonderful opportunity for role-playing. Finally, so many Oriental myths (the basis for much of Dárdūnah's structure) incorporate animorphs that they seemed to be the perfect races for an Oriental fantasy world. As such a world, Dárdūnah draws from a variety of non-western cultures: Indian, Middle Eastern, African, Southeast Asian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Furthermore, the world is an alien, other-dimensional planet, complete with its own unique flora and fauna.

What this all adds up to is a setting full of bizarre creatures, exotic lands, and strange customs (well, at least by western standards). Fantasy gamers who rely on the familiarity of medieval European-flavored settings will probably find Dárdūnah an interesting challenge. It will become apparent soon after your first visit

that you are definitely "not in Kansas anymore."

Of course, there is also magic. On Dárdūnah, magic is powerful yet subtle and always moody and atmospheric. Instead of imagining pyrotechnic wand-wagging wizards who memorize the contents of spell books, visualize the somber atmosphere of shamanistic rituals performed in darkened crystal chambers. Chanting and singing, drumming, rhythmic music, tattooing and graceful dancing are all elements of Dárdūni 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 culture, and affect all aspects of life in some way.

It is our hope that you enjoy adventuring on Dárdūnah. You will brave glowing clouds aboard magnificent skyships threatened by destructive storms and the deadly Crystal Corsairs. You will defend your lineage and honor against spies and slavers. You will face shadowy assassins and duel with Honor Guards in the Spiral Arena. You will Dreamwalk with eerie sorcerers and battle alien demons. And over all of this,.. the Devah look down from the Edge of Heaven.

A Shattered World

The world of this game's setting is a vast shattered sphere, broken asunder by unimaginably powerful cosmic forces billions of years before any intelligent being walked upon its surface. Its fragile atmosphere held together by even more mysterious forces, and the cuplike rims of thousand-mile wide chasms holding precious water upon the faces of many enormous remnant fragments, alien life found a way to rise and flourish. Upon one of these vast world fragments rests the known regions of Dárdūnah, which have become home to the



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animorphs who call themselves “jánah” (the people). This land rests in the southern hemisphere of the world, just beneath what would be considered the equator of this shattered sphere. Its northern reaches are covered in steamy tropical jungles and alien rainforests. The further south one travels, the more temperate it becomes, with vast deserts of white and even red sand, in the far southwest, Mediterranean prairies and steppes of the central south, and savannas as well as gigantic sequoia-like forests in the extreme southeast. It is rarely cold enough to snow even in the southernmost climbs, except in the taller mountains of the extreme southeastern lands. Most jánah would have no idea of what snow even was, just as they believe that their world is essentially flat, which, considering the vast, essentially bottomless, cloud-filled fissures that surround them,...it may as well be.

The Jánah

The intelligent races of Dárdūnah, those that a player may develop as their character, are not truly native to this world, and even they realize this, for it is written as part of their rich cultural and religious heritage, and passed down as part of a colorful and epic tradition. Their most ancient holy writings speak of their most divine gods, the Great Mother and Father, having fled from beyond the Edge of Heaven in an attempt to escape the ravages of a terrible evil known as the Devourer. In their flight the divine couple came upon the world of Dárdūnah and placed upon it their blessed children, the Devah, who would eventually give birth to all the peoples of the world before returning to the Edge of Heaven themselves, to become the various deities worshiped by the many races of Dárdūnah.

The races of the jánah are, of course, anthropomorphic animals. The wide variety of animals is explained in their holy texts by the legends of the Great Mother pouring the Waters of the Sea Salaan (the Cosmic Ocean) on their children to disguise them with many forms, thus hiding them from the Great Devourer and his demons. In shape and form they are fairly much human (all have five fingers and toes, stand upright, have secondary sex characteristics, and basic human shapes), but they retain their prominent animal features (trunks, horns, tails, spines, winged arms, etc.). Picture, in essence, an animal-headed human adorned with whatever fur, scales, or feathers the animal would have, plus all the minor characteristics (tails, talons, crests, etc.).

The sizes and shapes of the jánah vary wildly; everything from twelve foot tall elephants to three foot tall mice, with similar variations in weight, depending upon the **jenu** (specific animal type) they are. There are three major classifications of jenu; the sarpah, being reptiles and amphibians of all kinds,.. the paksin, representing all feathered creatures,.. and the vajrah, which are the wide variety of mammals.

The jánah are very religious, and all aspects of their lives are touched by religious ritual in some form

or another. There are adulthood rituals, marriage and birthing rituals, a host of war rituals, purifications, oaths to households and lineages, prayers sung at morning and evening; the list goes on and on. It should be noted that behind all these is the ever-present faith in their gods, the Devah. And though they may never actually be seen descending on a silver cloud to bless or punish their worshippers, their existence would never be doubted, not even by a mad outcast.

Customs, Clothing, and Culture

The common interactions within society tend to be quite “polite”. Formal greetings are common, with bowing aplenty and honorifics galore. Most countries of Dárdūnah have a fairly rigid form of caste system, so everyone is expected to treat the jánah around them in certain ways. One would treat equals with great courtesy, superiors with embarrassing courtesy, and those beneath with the simple respect they are traditionally due. Despite the rigid caste system, rudeness, even towards those beneath you, is considered very bad form (one could lose “face”, which can mean a great deal in Dárdūni culture). Again, religion is a very strong part of this, and honors and prayers to the Devah make up quite a bit of the day of an average person. Temples and shrines are fairly common both in cities as well as deep in the country, as are holy days and public displays of religious rituals. Priests are always treated with great respect and few would even dare raise their voices to them, let alone their hands. Dárdūnah 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, acrobats, etc., all can find an easy living in most cities, as jánah love to be entertained and to witness true skills in the various arts. Theater is common, as are dance performances, music recitals, and demonstrations of martial skill, with competitions held in many parts of the world similar to Olympic-style games. Gambling is an all too common distraction, and jánah enjoy their fair share of good drink, parlor games, public bathhouses, and skilled masseurs. In fact, skills in nearly any field are highly appreciated, including simple games of strategy and cards, and even games of chance such as dice. Despite their excesses, brawling tends not to be as common, since most disputes are settled 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 Dárdūni clothing is like. Even peasants wear bright colors, often in gaudy combinations. Loose fitting, Persian-style pants are quite common, as are robes, skirts (for both males and females), and elaborate coats and gowns. The sexes do not tend to separate what one wears over another, and most clothes tend to be unisex. Sandals and soft,

Turkish-style boots are common, often decorated with tassels and crystal bells. Accessories tend to come in the form of bracelets, rings, earrings, necklaces, ankle bracelets (all made of ambers, iridescent chitin, and crystal), and wide flowing scarves and veils. Headgear tends toward turbans, caps, and wraparounds.

The jánah of Dárdūnah have, over the course of nearly ten thousand years since their arrival, made some amazing cultural leaps, and have created civilizations very similar to the height of advancement in the middle eastern and far eastern nations of our own world right around (or shortly after) the discovery of gunpowder. Science, medicine, and architecture have seen excellent advancement in the recent several hundred decades, and so mighty palaces and sprawling cities have dotted the land. As mentioned, ritual and religion play an important part in the lives of the jánah, as does the belief in magic and the intrigues of court politics. With this, of course, come superstition, warfare, and many other negative aspects of such an environment, but the colorful cultures, traditions, and physical differences of its various peoples offer the possibilities of excitingly mysterious and exotic interactions throughout its numerous countries.

Dárdūni Geology

Separating the land regions of the known world are tall and jagged mountains of crystal. At their base, where rock, soil, flora, and fallen fragments litter the slopes, they share much in common with the mountains of our own world. But near their more barren and slender peaks that are exposed to the elements, one can see the suns shining through their huge, ruggedly faceted crystalline depths to illuminate their beauty. The world of Dárdūnah is not composed of a fragile crust and upper mantle over a magma core, and is instead dependant upon the activity and movements of its living crystalline interior for the growth of mountains and slow changes in terrain. Though within the mountains can sometimes be found bluish-white glass volcanoes of incredible heat and power, these are formed from the intense frictional pressures of enormous moving crystals deep within Dárdūnah's heart. The mountains of Dárdūnah are steeper and higher than those of our world, and some of the taller ones pass beyond the range of breathable air, or so it is said.

Within these mountains, and beneath the soil of Dárdūnah itself can be found many minerals and strange crystals with unique and sometimes powerful attributes. There have been discovered crystals that vibrate and sing, stones that glow with light and heat, gems that aid in the casting of ritual magics, and even crystals that are lighter than air, which have been used to make ships sail aloft into the amber skies. The physical laws of this world are different from our own in many ways, and as such, many types of crystals on Dárdūnah seem tougher than those of earth, with matrixes that can support the fashioning of slender crystal blades and other weapons that are as resilient as any we would expect to be made of our own

metals. The crystals of Dárdūnah are considered sacred and mystical to the jánah, and are referred to often in their myths, legends, and even daily sentiments such as, "May your crystal never shatter".

Metal itself is a substance that is essentially non-existent on Dárdūnah, and if ever found is usually in such trace amounts as to be unusable for any real purpose. Most utilitarian or artful things are fabricated from the various materials commonly found on Dárdūnah, such as crystal and stone of various colors, textures, and hardness,.. insectoid chitin (hard shell), leathers, and furry (moth-like) pelts, and silks taken from various native animals,.. the plastic-like ambers derived from the saps of certain trees that can be shaped and then hardened,.. and of course the various woods, fibers, and fabrics derived from Dárdūni plants.

The Living Environment

The native flora and fauna of the world is primordial and alien, and the lands and waters beyond the "civilized" regions of the jánah are anything but tame. The wilderness of Dárdūnah is teeming with life of all kinds. The **suthra** (native animals) of the world come in many sizes and shapes, but are primarily arthropods, being insectoid and often exoskeletal in nature, or gastropods, such as slugs, snails, or other invertebrates of many varieties. These creatures fill every niche as animals do on our world and more, and act as mythic monsters, predators, prey, beasts of burden, and even pets for the jánah who dwell there. There are monster suthra who dwell in the deepest jungles, oceans, mountains, and skies, suthra that are ridden like the horses and trained like the dogs of our world (with some that can even carry a rider into the air), and suthra that are raised for their meat, their shell, and their hides.

The varieties of flora in the world are strange and wonderful, some of them even filling the niches an animal would often fill, such as giant carnivorous plants of various forms and sizes. Much of the plant life exists at a much larger scale than we would find on our world, reminiscent of the prehistoric jungles of our most ancient times. Giant ferns and strange glowing fungus would not be uncommon, with some plants actually having the ability to move of their own volition. Many varieties of trees can grow to gargantuan size, capable of supporting vast structures and dwellings within them.

The Skies of Dárdūnah

And finally, one of the most amazing spectacles of all is the vibrant sky of Dárdūnah. Beyond the horizons and above the pearly clouds, the amber-colored skies are anything but plain. 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, seen brightly displayed, is a spiral shape beyond the clouds where, according to legend, the chariot of the Great Mother and Father

entered the skies of Dárdūnah.

Rarely are the amber heavens ever devoid of the accents of swirling colors and paint-like strokes, even at night when vapors of green, deep purple, scarlet, and blue seem to play. 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 at night, and few dare venture out then. But as beautiful as the skies may seem, great and spectacular storms can often rise from nowhere, and winds bearing razor-sharp shards of crystal have been known to sweep down from tall mountains to bring destruction, or from across vast and wild forests carrying swarms of insects.

A Rich History to Discover

As has been mentioned, the history of the jānah covers nearly ten thousand years since their first arrival, and spans from ancient pre-history, when the jānah were but nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers, through glorious and dark mythic periods when the Devah walked the earth veiled in flesh, to the tragic upheaval of an age known as the Twilight Wars, and finally to the more recent times of grand discoveries and innovations. Throughout all of this the jānah have left behind extensive evidence of this great journey through time, and of their achievements, sometimes glorious and sometimes grim.

All in all, however, Dárdūnah is a place of rare beauty and amazing variety, with many untouched regions and ancient secrets. There are ruins of lost civilizations to explore, and exotic cultures in which to interact. Horrors, wonders, and mysteries abound, and the powers of magic and faith intertwine to touch the world in many subtle and enduring ways. May you find this world a joy and a challenge to experience.

The purpose of the Dárdūnah system in general, is to create an atmosphere of cinematic fantasy. We feel that role-playing isn't merely the following of rules, the reference of charts, and the rolling of dice. The Dárdūnah game seeks to offer an environment where the player may feel immersed in the culture and its peoples. The idea of cinematic fantasy should be to evoke the feeling that the players are involved in situations worthy of retelling. When scenarios within the campaign are drawn to a close the players should look back and say "Wow,... that would have made a great movie!" Remember that the story you are making while playing this game is really the goal. Hack and slash adventures are common, and often fun, but if there is a well devised story to tie it all together, to make the characters memorable, and to make the goals seem important and meaningful, the rewards for the players as well as the Gamemaster will be so much more valuable and long-lasting.

The Basics

For the purposes of this Welcome Booklet, we have prepared a sampling of six different characters that could be created using the rich Character Creation section found in the Basic Compendium book. Though there

are many dozens of various animal types and professions to choose from, these pre-created characters should provide you the opportunity to jump right in and get a taste of what the heart of the game is all about. We'll also be providing you with a simple understanding of the rules of the game, what dice are used, how to perform actions your character is capable of, and the general way the combat system works. After this, all you need is a willing group of players, and a person capable of being Gamemaster (the referee). In this booklet we assume that you already understand the essence of what participating in a role-playing game is all about, so we have also included a simple basis for an adventure that your chosen Gamemaster can use to help introduce your gaming group to this unique fantasy world.

Characters

As mentioned earlier, the character races of the world, the jānah, are anthropomorphic animals, which means, essentially, animal people. Every character in **Dárdūnah** will be described by a series of **Attributes**. These Attributes are game descriptors that will tell you what your character is capable of doing. Attributes consist of **Animal Abilities, Characteristics, Skills, Talents, Advantages** and **Drawbacks**.

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

Animal Abilities are such things as wings, claws, venom, or any other physical animal trait that your chosen animal may possess. This RPG will include **Animal Templates** that will make the construction of an animal character much easier, so don't worry about it right now.

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 a certain poison.

Drawbacks are disadvantages, physical, mental or social, which 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 bring into play. 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 begin the game with. 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 that your character has learned throughout his life. They can include artistic or professional training, various scholarly disciplines, or even hobbies.

Chose one of the following character sheets that most suits your interests. They have been crafted to fit well into the sample adventure that follows them.

Valnérah (Seer Sir'hibas)



BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Condor
 AGE: 40 HEIGHT: 5.5 WEIGHT: 200
 BUILD: Lithe 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 Arddjumul 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
 Gliding : 5
 Hovering : 3
 Natural Weaponry (Talons): 5
 Natural Weaponry (Beak): 5

SKILLS

Brawling	: 3	Debate	: 6	Ancient History	: 6
Camouflage	: 6	Culture	: 6	Ritual Lore	: 6
Climbing	: 5	Alchemy	: 2	Divination	: 6
Convince	: 6	Illuminating	: 2	Legends	: 6
Dodge/Block	: 5	Intrigue	: 6	Magic Theory	: 6
Language (Tishinian)	: 6	Tradition	: 6	Math	: 6
Incense Maker	: 3	Etiquette	: 6		
Regional (Telatah)	: 3	Fasting	: 6		
Mahist Religion	: 3	Magic Ritual: Seer	: 6		
Search	: 3	Melee	: 5		
Shadowing	: 3	Research	: 6		
Stealth	: 3	Fire-Craft	: 6		
Throw	: 3	Scribing	: 2		

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
Kirah's Fury	: 5	Flutter Strike +1, 2, Dmg = Successes + weapon x 2, Contested. Adds 2 dice to next attack roll.
		Triple Wind Kick -1, 2, Dmg = Successes + weapon x 3, Contested. A wings-extended, jumping, kicking attack causing Disable.
		Spinning Feather -3, 2, Dmg = (none) Uncontested. preparatory maneuver, Successes added to any one Defense AND subtracted from one chosen enemy's Defense that round.

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
Dreamwalk	: 6	Passing the Veil of Dream -0
		Seeing the Past Present and Future -1
		Defending in the Dream -1
		Bringing others into the Dream -3
		Seeking and communicating with others in the Dream -2

STORY POINTS



CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 2 Range (1-12)
 VIGOR: 3 Range (1-12)
 AGILITY: 5 Range (2-12)
 DEXTERITY: 2 Range (1-12)
 PERCEPTION: 6 Range (4-12)
 WIT: 6 Range (2-12)
 WILL: 6 Range (1-9)
 PRESENCE: 6 Range (1-9)
 ESSENCE: 6 Range (1-9)

TALENTS

Alertness : 1
 Immunity (disease): 2
 Sirhibas : 2
 Concentration : 2

ADVANTAGES

Caste (Sunborn): 3

DRAWBACKS

Food Requirement (aged meats): 2

COMBAT

STAMINA (Vigor + Will x 2): 18
 CURRENT STAMINA:
 ARMOR: None 0
 CURRENT ARMOR:

Melee: 5 Martial Arts: .. 5
 Brawl: 3 Valah:
 Missile: Suthra:
 Other ():

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Cane	: Short	2
Hurling Disks	: Medium	2

Special Attacks / Adjustments

COMPANIONS

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 Blinding Wing	-3	Stun
NECK	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun
SPINE	-1	Bind / Grab	-2	Cover Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Crystal Sword Hand
SHOULDER	0	Escape	0	Razor Edge	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Bind / Grab	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Escape	0	Razor Edge	-1	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Escape	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Escape	0	Razor Edge	-3	Crystal Sword Hand
ABDOMEN	0	Escape	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Escape	0	Razor Edge	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	-1	Lame (knee)	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Escape	0	Razor Edge	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Escape	-1	Lame (foot) Bind / Grab	-2	Disable Hold / Lock
HEAD VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (feature)	-4	Full Knockout	-3	Crystal Sword Hand
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, Stun, and Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable, Stun, and Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 level of damage to allow end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock.

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.

Blinding Wing - No damage caused. Target is affected by Stun and is blinded for the length of the Stun. A quick flick of a cloak or wingtip across the opponent's eyes.

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

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

Lame - Target gets no more free half moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant double damage till Target wins initiative.

Disable - Double damage caused. Plus, if limb targeted, loss of limb use (½ Movement only if limb used for locomotion and ½ dice pool used for any applicable Skills). Target must succeed in a Characteristic roll of ½ Vigor before attempting ANY Action (except Defense) till healed, failure indicating inaction due to pain.

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

Stun - Any successes that gets through Target's defenses negates equal # of Actions that round (and eventually begins negating Defenses).

Broken - A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (½ Movement only if limb used for locomotion and ½ dice pool used for any applicable Skills) and acts at a negative (based on ADJ #) on dice rolls until healed. Must make a Characteristic roll of ½ Vigor to avoid unconsciousness for 1-6 rounds.

Full Knockout - Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

Crystal Sword Hand - Damage = (Successes x 3) + Weapon. A quick and powerful open-handed strike to the head, neck, torso or spine using the edge of the hand to chop, or the tips of the fingers to jab.

Internal 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 - 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.

Razor Edge - Damage = (Successes + 4) + Weapon. A slicing attack using the forearm, elbow, wing, wingtip or cloak, or even a weapon held along the forearm.

DARDINAH

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	-1	Bind / Grab	0	Escape	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Bind / Grab Throw	-2	Disable Hold / Lock	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	-1	Bind / Grab Throw	0	Escape	-1	Throw
HAND	0	Escape	0	Helpless Loss	-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)	-3	Felling the Tree	-5	Terrible Thorn
TORSO VITALS	-3	Stun and Broken (rib)	-4	Stun, Broken (rib), and Nausea	-5	Terrible Thorn
ARM VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable, Stun, and Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable, Stun, and Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 level of damage to allow end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock.

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 - Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill # of feet away). Target must use Action to rise. If thrown further than 10 feet, then must use Action or 1/2 Move to close. If Target is successful in Acrobatics that round, then no damage taken.

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

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

Lame - Target gets no more free half moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant double damage till Target wins initiative.

Disable - Double damage caused. Plus, if limb targeted, loss of limb use (1/2 Movement only if limb used for locomotion and 1/2 dice pool used for any applicable Skills). Target must succeed in a Characteristic roll of 1/2 Vigor before attempting ANY Action (except Defense) till healed, failure indicating inaction due to pain.

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

Stun - Any successes that gets through Target's defenses negates equal # of Actions that round (and eventually begins negating Defenses).

Broken - A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (1/2 Movement only if limb used for locomotion and 1/2 dice pool used for any applicable Skills) and acts at a negative (based on ADJ #) on dice rolls until healed. Must make a Characteristic roll of 1/2 Vigor to avoid unconsciousness for 1-6 rounds.

Severed - 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.

Felling the Tree - Damage = Successes only. Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes due to a sharp blow to the back of the neck or head.

Terrible Thorn - Damage = (Successes + Weapon) +4. Target is struck unconscious, and begins bleeding internally at the rate per round, equal to the number of successes that penetrated the Target's defense, till healed or dead.

Helpless Loss - No damage caused. Opponent's weapon is struck and destroyed by practitioner. Must use Action to retrieve or draw new one.

DARDINAH

HIT LOCALE	DAMAGE TYPE					
	Subdue		Subdue/Fatal		Fatal	
	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT	ADJ #	MANEUVER EFFECT
HEAD	-3	Bind / Grab	-2	Capering Bandar	-1	Stone Foot
NECK	-3	Bind / Grab	-2	Capering Bandar	-1	Stone Foot
SPINE	-3	Bind / Grab	-2	Capering Bandar	-1	Stone Foot
SHOULDER	0	Leaping Assault	0	Leaping Assault	-1	Disarm
ELBOW	-1	Disarm Throw	-2	Hold / Lock Capering Bandar	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)
ARM	0	Leaping Assault	0	Leaping Assault	-3	Bind / Grab
HAND	0	Leaping Assault	-1	Disarm	-2	Disable
TORSO	0	Leaping Assault	0	Leaping Assault	-1	Broken (rib)
ABDOMEN	0	Leaping Assault	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover
GROIN	-1	Nausea	-2	Nausea Cover	-3	Nausea Stun
HIP	0	Leaping Assault	0	Leaping Assault	-1	Lame (hip)
KNEE	0	Throw / Sweep	-2	Hold / Lock Capering Bandar	-3	Stun Broken (joint)
LEG	0	Leaping Assault	0	Leaping Assault	-1	Lame (leg)
FOOT	0	Leaping Assault	0	Throw / Sweep	-2	Disable Capering Bandar
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, Stun, and Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Arm / Hand
LEG VITALS	-3	Disable and Stun Broken (joint)	-4	Disable, Stun, and Broken (bone)	-5	Severed Leg / Foot

Leaping Assault - No damage caused. A unique springboard maneuver, using the target or surrounding terrain, that if successful sets up the practitioner's next attack by adding an adjustment bonus equal to the total successes rolled during the Leaping Assault.

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 - Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill # of feet away). Target must use Action to rise. If thrown further than 10 feet, then must use Action or 1/2 Move to close. If Target is successful in Acrobatics that round, then no damage taken.

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

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

Lame - Target gets no more free half moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant double damage till Target wins initiative.

Disable - Double damage caused. Plus, if limb targeted, loss of limb use (1/2 Movement only if limb used for locomotion and 1/2 dice pool used for any applicable Skills). Target must succeed in a Characteristic roll of 1/2 Vigor before attempting ANY Action (except Defense) till healed, failure indicating inaction due to pain.

Capering Bandar - No damage caused. A dancing maneuver, which negates a number of dice from each of the opponent's remaining Defense rolls that round, equal to the number of Capering Bandar successes that get through opponent's defense.

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

Stun - Any successes that gets through Target's defenses negates equal # of Actions that round (and eventually begins negating Defenses).

Broken - A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (1/2 Movement only if limb used for locomotion and 1/2 dice pool used for any applicable Skills) and acts at a negative (based on ADJ #) on dice rolls until healed. Must make a Characteristic roll of 1/2 Vigor to avoid unconsciousness for 1-6 rounds.

Full Knockout - Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

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

Internal 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 - 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.

Stone Foot - Damage = (Successes x 2) + Weapon, A lightning quick strike with the foot to the head, neck, or spine that always delivers fatal damage.

Umratali (Mangai Healer)



BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Sea Turtle
 AGE: 35 HEIGHT: 5' 5" WEIGHT: 173
 BUILD: Average 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.

ANIMAL ABILITIES

Amphibious : - Body Armor : 3
 Protective Lids : -
 Keen Hearing : 5
 Hold Breath : 6
 Natural Weaponry (bite): 3
 Swimming : 6

SKILLS

Brawling	: 3	Surgery	: 3	Tradition	: 6
Camouflage	: 6	Medicine Craft	: 3	Melee	: 3
Climbing	: 3	Create Poison	: 3		
Convince	: 6	Jenu Lore	: 6		
Dodge/Block	: 3	Poisons	: 6		
Language (Tishinian)	: 6	Dress Wound	: 6		
Brewing	: 6	Magic Ritual (Healer)	: 6		
Regional (Sadahm)	: 6	Research	: 5		
Mahist Religion	: 6	Culture	: 6		
Search	: 5	Customs	: 6		
Shadowing	: 3	Herbal Lore	: 6		
Stealth	: 3	Medical	: 6		
Throw	: 3	Ritual Lore	: 6		

MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
Endurance of Will	: 6	Crystal Pillar Standing -2, 2, Dmg = (none), Uncontested. Success means no penalty from Stamina loss, plus Stamina increased by amount of Vigor till end of round.
		Breath of the Wind 0, 2, Dmg = (none), Uncontested. Success = Vigor checks made at full, and -2 Defense against Disable & Stun
		Vigorous Judgment -3, 2, Dmg = (none), Uncontested. Defense that negates enemy attack successes & adds Vig. dice to next attack.
		Painless Janah -1 2 Damage = (none), Uncontested. Ignore the effects (but not damage), of Disable, Broken, and Stun, for round.

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions
Heal the Body	: 6	Gathering of the Pranah -0
		Lesser Healing of Small Harms -1
		Healing of Large Wounds -2
		Greater Healing of Terrible Injuries -3
		Knitting of the Bones -3
		Stilling Poisons Progress -3
		Restoring That Which Was Cut Away -4
		Blessed Touch -5

STORY POINTS



CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 3 Range (1-12)
 VIGOR: 6 Range (2-12)
 AGILITY: 3 Range (1-9)
 DEXTERITY: 3 Range (1-9)
 PERCEPTION: 5 Range (1-12)
 WIT: 6 Range (2-12)
 WILL: 6 Range (2-12)
 PRESENCE: 4 Range (1-12)
 ESSENCE: 6 Range (1-12)

TALENTS

Even Temper: 1
 Orientation: 1
 Sir'hibas: 4

ADVANTAGES

Caste (Mangai)

DRAWBACKS

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

COMBAT

STAMINA (Vigor + Will x 2): 24

CURRENT STAMINA:

ARMOR: Body Armor 3

CURRENT ARMOR:

Melee: 3 Martial Arts: .. 6
 Brawl: 3 Valah:
 Missile: Suthra:
 Other (): ..

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Ambershod Staff	: Short	: 3
Crystal Knife	: Short	: 2

Special Attacks / Adjustments

COMPANIONS



DARDINA#

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

- Escape** - Targeted area struck for only 1 level of damage to allow end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock.
- 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** - Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill # of feet away). Target must use Action to rise. If thrown further than 10 feet, then must use Action or 1/2 Move to close. If Target is successful in Acrobatics that round, then no damage taken.
- Disarm** - Half damage caused plus weapon is forced or knocked from target's grasp. Must use Action to retrieve or draw new one.
- Nausea** - Target acts at a negative # on dice rolls for a certain # of rounds, both equal to ADJ # for attack.
- Lame** - Target gets no more free half moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Action to move affected area till healed.
- Cover** - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant double damage till Target wins initiative.
- Disable** - Double damage caused. Plus, if limb targeted, loss of limb use (1/2 Movement only if limb used for locomotion and 1/2 dice pool used for any applicable Skills). Target must succeed in a Characteristic roll of 1/2 Vigor before attempting ANY Action (except Defense) till healed, failure indicating inaction due to pain.
- Hold / Lock** - Targeted area immobile plus attacker's Strength in damage caused per round till Escape or release.
- Stun** - Any successes that gets through Target's defenses negates equal # of Actions that round (and eventually begins negating Defenses).
- Broken** - A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (1/2 Movement only if limb used for locomotion and 1/2 dice pool used for any applicable Skills) and acts at a negative (based on ADJ #) on dice rolls until healed. Must make a Characteristic roll of 1/2 Vigor to avoid unconsciousness for 1-6 rounds.
- Full Knockout** - Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.
- Lost Feature** - A targeted feature of the head, neck, or face is irrevocably harmed in some way.
- Internal 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** - 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.
- Chinti Rearing** - Damage = (Successes + Weapon) x 2, Target must make a Characteristic roll of 1/2 Vigor or suffer from Stun. A double kick to the chest.

Arhazbür (Honor Guard)



BACKGROUND

JENU (animal): Elephant
 AGE: 28 HEIGHT: 12' WEIGHT: 1950
 BUILD: Muscular 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
 Prehensile Limb (trunk): 5
 Thermal Regulation (ears): 6
 Wide Peripheral: 4
 Natural Weaponry (tusks): 6
 Natural Weaponry (trample): 6

SKILLS

Brawling	: 8	Dress Wound	: 4	Politics	: 4
Camouflage	: 4	Duel Dancing	: 8	Famous Janah (warriors)	: 4
Climbing	: 6	Intimidation	: 6	Weapons	: 4
Convince	: 4	Melee	: 6		
Dodge/Block	: 8	Missile	: 5		
Language (Tishinian)	: 4	Valah	: 5		
Armor Craft	: 5	Current History	: 4		
Regional (Sadam)	: 4	Customs	: 4		
Mahist Religion	: 4	Heraldry	: 4		
Search	: 4	Martial Lore	: 4		
Shadowing	: 6	Escape	: 5		
Stealth	: 6	Fast Draw	: 5		
Throw	: 5	Tactics	: 4		

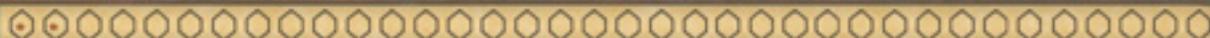
MARTIAL STYLES

Style	Dice	Maneuvers / Descriptions
Gajah Style	: 10	Raging Janah -0, 2, Damage = (none), Uncontested. Subtracts dice = to Successes from foe's next Defense, +2 to next Stun or Disable
		Rushing Wind -1, 2, Damage = Successes + Str. x 2, Contested. The target is Thrown/Swept, plus is affected by Broken to one limb
		Stones From Heaven -2 2 Damage = Successes + Str. x 3, Contested
		Target Stunned or Disabled, plus Vig. roll or Full Knockout.
		Wall of Stone -1 2 Damage = (none), Uncontested. Defense that negates enemy successes plus attacking limb Bound or Grabbed.

MYSTIC DISCIPLINES

Ritual	Dice	Disciplines / Descriptions

STORY POINTS



CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH: 8 Range (4-12)
 VIGOR: 6 Range (2-12)
 AGILITY: 6 Range (1-9)
 DEXTERITY: 5 Range (1-9)
 PERCEPTION: 4 Range (1-12)
 WIT: 4 Range (1-12)
 WILL: 4 Range (1-12)
 PRESENCE: 6 Range (1-12)
 ESSENCE: 2 Range (1-9)

TALENTS

Courage : 1 Eidetic Memory: 1
 Immunity : 1
 Leadership : 1
 Toughness: Stamina = Vigor + Will x 3

ADVANTAGES

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

DRAWBACKS

Food Requirement (triple): 2 pt.
 Intolerance (slavery) : 1 pt.
 Overconfident : 1 pt.

COMBAT

STAMINA (Vigor + Will x 3): 30
 CURRENT STAMINA:
 ARMOR: Hathiyan Armor 4 (+2) = 6
 CURRENT ARMOR:

Melee: 6 Martial Arts: .. 8
 Brawl: 8 Valah: 5
 Missile: 5 Suthra:
 Other (): _____

WEAPONS

Weapon	Range	Damage
Chitin Pole-axe	Medium	8
Stone Hammer	Short	8
Crystal Throwing Axe	Medium	6
Hathiyan Blunderbus	Long	15
Katar (punch dagger)	Short	5

Special Attacks / Adjustments

COMPANIONS



DARDINAH

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

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 level of damage to allow end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock.

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 - Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill # of feet away). Target must use Action to rise. If thrown further than 10 feet, then must use Action or ½ Move to close. If Target is successful in Acrobatics that round, then no damage taken.

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

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

Lame - Target gets no more free half moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant double damage till Target wins initiative.

Disable - Double damage caused. Plus, if limb targeted, loss of limb use (½ Movement only if limb used for locomotion and ½ dice pool used for any applicable Skills). Target must succeed in a Characteristic roll of ½ Vigor before attempting ANY Action (except Defense) till healed, failure indicating inaction due to pain.

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

Stun - Any successes that gets through Target's defenses negates equal # of Actions that round (and eventually begins negating Defenses).

Broken - A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (½ Movement only if limb used for locomotion and ½ dice pool used for any applicable Skills) and acts at a negative (based on ADJ #) on dice rolls until healed. Must make a Characteristic roll of ½ Vigor to avoid unconsciousness for 1-6 rounds.

Full Knockout - Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

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

Internal 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 - 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.

Gajah Takes a Step - Damage = (Successes + Strength) x 2. Target must make a Characteristic roll of ½ Vigor or be affected by Stun. Quite literally, the jánah steps on the torso of their opponent causing considerable damage.

DARDINAH

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

Escape - Targeted area struck for only 1 level of damage to allow end to Bind / Grab or Hold / Lock.

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 - Target falls (potential attacker's Martial Skill # of feet away). Target must use Action to rise. If thrown further than 10 feet, then must use Action or ½ Move to close. If Target is successful in Acrobatics that round, then no damage taken.

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

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

Lame - Target gets no more free half moves for that entire combat, target must use an extra Action to move affected area till healed.

Cover - No damage caused. Target held at point of weapon. Potential instant double damage till Target wins initiative.

Disable - Double damage caused. Plus, if limb targeted, loss of limb use (½ Movement only if limb used for locomotion and ½ dice pool used for any applicable Skills). Target must succeed in a Characteristic roll of ½ Vigor before attempting ANY Action (except Defense) till healed, failure indicating inaction due to pain.

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

Stun - Any successes that gets through Target's defenses negates equal # of Actions that round (and eventually begins negating Defenses).

Broken - A joint or bone has been broken in the target area. Target suffers loss of limb use (½ Movement only if limb used for locomotion and ½ dice pool used for any applicable Skills) and acts at a negative (based on ADJ #) on dice rolls until healed. Must make a Characteristic roll of ½ Vigor to avoid unconsciousness for 1-6 rounds.

Full Knockout - Target unconscious for 1-6 minutes.

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

Internal 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 - 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.

The Dice

Dárdūnah 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, though sharing dice is a possibility. These dice can be purchased in most hobby or game stores.

Action Dice

Many of your Attributes will be assigned a **Ranking**, a number ranging from 0 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 your character had a ranking of 4, you would get to use 4 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. Each grouping of dice is called a **Dice Pool**. Additionally, you may be given **Modifiers** that could increase or decrease the number of dice you may roll when using one of your assorted Action Dice Pools.

Dice Rolls

Whenever your character performs an action whose 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**.

Example: Climbing a slippery wall or a wall of great height would be considered a Contested Action, thus requiring a roll, while climbing over a simple wooden or stone fence your height or less would probably require no roll whatsoever, therefore being a Free Action. The Gamemaster would simply say that you did it, unless there were some other complicating circumstances. Making a leap to a height well within your normal range to simply gain a vantage point may require no roll at all, while making that same leap while being shot at or attempting to remain unnoticed in

enemy territory would be a “contested” roll and would require a roll of the dice. In addition, the Gamemaster may choose to make the roll even more difficult by limiting the number of dice that are rolled in certain situations of extreme duress or complication.

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 **Dice-Penalty Number** that will be deducted from the total number of dice you may roll when attempting the action.

When rolling to determine the success of the action you will be trying to roll **dice-successes** on the dice. On a d6 a dice-success is considered a roll of a 4, 5, or 6. A roll of 1, 2, or 3 is considered a failed roll on that die. Since you will be rolling multiple dice when performing an action, the action’s success is based on the number of dice-successes you make on that individual roll. A roll of only one dice-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 dice-successes means you have achieved a normal, or **Adequate Success**. A full explanation of what it means to roll one or more dice-successes is explained fully immediately below under “Levels of Success”.

In any contested situation the number of successes (dice-successes) you roll when performing the action may often be negated by an opposing roll to some degree, or perhaps two opposing rolls may be made simultaneously with the higher roll deemed the winner. A good example of this would be two opponents arm-wrestling. The opponents may simply be asked to roll a dice pool equal to their Strength Characteristic. The opponent who rolls highest wins. Or perhaps an archer is asked to hit a moving target carried by another janah during a sporting contest. The Gamemaster decides that the archer must make his Martial skill roll after which a separate roll must be made for the target bearer’s base Agility, which will be deducted from the total rolled by the archer. What remains is considered to be the final





total to determine whether the archer was successful or not.

Modifiers

As noted under Action Dice, there are various modifiers that a Gamemaster may often require you to factor in when rolling your Dice Pool as you attempt some Action. These modifiers will be either **Difficulty Modifiers**, requiring you to take a certain number of dice OUT of your Dice Pool before rolling it, or **Bonus Modifiers**, allowing you to ADD a certain number of dice to your Dice Pool prior to the roll.

A Difficulty Modifier is a penalty imposed on the roll due to the particular difficulty of the attempted Action because of prevailing circumstances within the game scenario. The Gamemaster considers any Action the character wishes to take, and imagines how hard would it be for any average person to perform that Action under the current circumstances. Note that we mentioned “average person” here, instead of “that particular character”. The reason for this is, though that particular character may have personal issues that may make the task more difficult (weakness due to fever, low agility because of poisoning, etc.), modifiers because of such issues will have already been taken into account, affecting their base Dice Pool long before the Gamemaster assigns the Difficulty Modifier for any particular task (as described fully later in the rules). Based on these (hidden or apparent) various difficult external environmental circumstances, the Gamemaster

then chooses an appropriate number of dice, from 0 (being easy) to 10 (being astoundingly difficulty), that the player must remove from their Dice Pool before they roll their attempt. A Gamemaster should be somewhat considerate of their players when doing so, such that they are careful not to impose such high and/or frequent Difficulty Modifiers that less powerful characters feel they rarely have a chance for exciting successes, or worse, that they fail far too often.

Example: In the midst of a terrible storm, Muram, a hawk, hears his lord's daughter cry out in dire fear from her window in the tower across the palace courtyard. A quick glance with his keen sight confirms that someone, perhaps an assassin, has climbed through her window with a rope. Muram decides that he must fly to her aid immediately. For any average hawk, on a normal day, a flight such as this would be easy, requiring no roll whatsoever, but the Gamemaster decides that under these circumstances, with the high winds and driving rain a constant hazard to ANY flyer, even a short flight such as this warrants a Difficulty Modifier of -3. Muram, who normally has a Flight ability of 7, thus allowing him to roll seven dice for his Dice Pool, may now only roll 4 dice to attempt this somewhat difficult feat.

A Bonus Modifier is an infrequent bonus applied to a roll, due to specific aspects or well-crafted descriptions a player makes, of his intended Action which the Gamemaster chooses to reward to some extent. Generally, a Gamemaster will reward a player in this way when the player precedes some attempted roll with a particularly good bit of detailed flavorful description, role-playing, or inspirational in-character dialogue. The Gamemaster will then, prior to the attempted roll, inform the player that they may roll an additional number of dice with their normal dice pool, thus increasing their chances for rolling successes. Another incident that a Gamemaster may wish to reward with an additional Bonus Modifier would be a situation where another character attempts to assist someone spontaneously with their intended task by providing some sort of helpful, interactive additions of detail or role-playing to the scene, thus creating a more “cinematic” event. Players should always be encouraged to role-play, really “getting into” their characters and the world around them. Rewarding them for exceptional examples of such role-play in this way is an excellent method of doing that.

Example: Prior to having his character Mujhibsah, a sorcerer, perform an ancient ritual to peer into the depths of the past, his player, Eric, tells his fellow players and the GM of the elaborate way in which he prepares his ritual chambers. He describes how his character slowly moves about the room, as if in trance, lighting the various exotic incenses, placing his glowing gemstones in certain configurations, and gathering the rest of his mysterious ingredients before sitting cross-legged in the middle of his prayer rug and rubbing the edge of his crystal bowl to fill the entire

room with its eerie humming as he begins to chant the ritual used to look into the Dream. The GM decides that such a worthy and colorful description has certainly set the mood for this game moment, and decides to give Eric a Bonus Modifier of +2 dice to his Ritual Skill roll, which he is about to make.

Levels of Success

As mentioned above, rolling multiple dice results in possibly having many dice-successes or simply, successes, when attempting an action. Scoring only one success in combat may mean you inflicted only a minor wound, or one success may mean that a lock you were trying to pick was broken when opened or that it may have taken you twice as long as it normally could have. The exact results of your Success Level are left up to the GM to determine, but some guidelines are found in the table on the next page.

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

Partial Success

This Success Level means that you have scored the bare minimum required in order for your action to have been declared successful. This success, however, should not be everything you wanted it to be. While the gist of what you wanted to achieve may have happened, the end result may be something you did not anticipate, and could create small problems of its own. In combat, a Minimal Success strike will have its damage halved (rounding in the defender's favor) before any defenses have been applied.

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.

Example: Tazi wants to shoot at an enemy up on a wall, trying to get him to topple backwards 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 difficult enough to warrant a dice penalty of -1 (one die taken off of 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 backwards off the wall.

Good Success

Scoring this level means that a little something extra and special has occurred, something beneficial above and beyond what you expected. These successes should be rewarded with an extra tidbit, something which makes the success 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 by whom the amulet was crafted.

Excellent Success

At this level, you have achieved much more than you thought you would. These successes 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 from which she can listen in on bits of conversation between two enemies of her Line. The GM rules that because her targets are being so observant and cautious, and due to the noise surrounding the pair, the action is fairly difficult and he assigns a penalty of -2 dice.

Akari's player luckily 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 a foul plot against her lord).

Astounding Success

This level indicates that truly great things have been achieved and that others would marvel at this success. A GM should generously reward you should you ever score such a success, taking you in delightful roleplaying directions that you may have hoped for.

Example: Vaitin the dancer is selected to perform before the court of the isvar (a great honor indeed). Vaitin decides that he wants to put on one of the most impressive shows the isvar and his court have ever seen. Luck is with 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 success, and truly amazing turns in your character's life should come about because of it.

Example: Sanjiv the physician attempts to save the life of his lord, who was badly wounded in a skyship accident. His lord is near death, with massive internal injuries and badly mangled limbs, so the GM decides that this action will be extremely difficult and assigns a penalty of -3 dice.

Dr. Sanjiv's player, due to incredible bonus

rolls of multiple 6's, beats the odds and scores an amazing 10 successes! The GM rules that Sanjiv not only manages to save the life of his lord, but that furthermore his lord will retain the use of all his limbs and suffer only minor 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 Nilam as an honored speaker on medicine, 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 seemingly the 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 to the limit. 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 Krilarah out of a single, giant sapphire (this assumes, of course, that she already has such materials). The GM decides that such a feat will require months of work and rules it a difficult action, assigning a -1 dice penalty.

Vashamsah's player scores an unbelievable 12 successes! The GM rules that when the statue is finished it will become the envy of artists throughout the world. It will no doubt be sought after by powerful rulers for their own collections. It will be enshrined in a specially built temple and pilgrimages will be conducted. The statue may even be ascribed divine powers (and will, no doubt, possess some). Vashamsah has defined beauty and her place in art history is assured.

It is important to note, however, that the success levels given in the above examples were scored for fairly challenging actions. If these high Success Levels are scored for simple or standard tasks, they will not be anywhere near as impressive, and should be toned down accordingly (no one crowns an artist for performing a very simple feat, no matter how well he performed it). GMs should use their imagination and judgment, and should remember that ultimately the result should be to make players feel especially grand about scoring impressive Success Levels for difficult tasks.

Multiple successes scored in combat will be covered in the **Combat** section of this booklet. These successes will mostly increase the severity of wounds that you can inflict during combat, and will deal with the effects resulting from these severe wounds.

Failing Actions

There are two types of failed actions in Därdünah. The first one occurs if you fail to score any successes (i.e. do not roll at least *one* success on your action dice). This means that your action has simply **failed**. Nothing happens.

The other type of failed action is called a **Botch**, and it is much worse than simply failing. A Botch occurs when you fail to score any successes, *plus* you roll *one or more* 1's on your Action Dice. The more 1's you roll in this situation, the worse the effects of the Botch become, dependant entirely on the ruling of the GM.

A Botch basically means that something catastrophic has occurred during the attempted performance of your action. It could mean that a firearm explodes in your hands, or that a patient is worse off than before, or that a perfect piece of crystal has been ruined, or a neutral audience has turned hostile. The exact effects of a Botch are left up to the GM, and depend greatly on the situation. Thus, Botches can range anywhere from being greatly annoying and embarrassing to being downright deadly. One thing should be consistent, however: the results of a Botch should be worse than if the player had never attempted the action in the first place.

Successive Attempts

If you have Botched an action, you may *not* try the same action again (but you may try something else). If, on the other hand, you have simply failed an action, then you may try again on your next action. However, the next attempt will be made at a penalty of -1 die per successive attempt. Thus, a -1 on the 2nd attempt, an -2 on the 3rd, 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 been failed. However, this will depend on the task being performed, the circumstances surrounding the task, and the character performing it. Use common sense.

Rolling Sixes (optional rule)

Whenever you roll a 6 on your Action Dice, you not only count it as an automatic success, but also, any *additional* 6's rolled at the same time are may be rolled again, thereby increasing your chance of scoring another success. You continue to roll the die over as long as you continue to score a 6, otherwise you stop rolling. This rule makes it possible, though unlikely, that someone with only a few Action Dice will score more successes than they have dice for. Each die that rolls a six is rolled over, and all new successes are added to your total.

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, she gets to roll the second 6 again. She scores another 6! She now has four successes (4, 6, 6, 6) and continues rolling that die (since she rolled another 6). She scores a 5 (another success). At this point, she stops rolling her die as she did not score another 6. She has scored five successes (4, 6, 6, 6, 5) with only four dice.

Special Rolls

Since Därdünah allows the number 0 to be used for an Attribute Ranking, there are a few special rules for basing your Action Dice on a 0 ranked Attribute. Certain situations, such as severe injury or illness, may temporarily lower one or more of your Attributes to 0 (there are no negative numbers in Därdünah except in the case of Stamina Levels). Furthermore, you may at some point wish to perform an action that requires a Skill you do not possess (in which case, you would be considered to have a 0 Ranking in that Skill). The rules below show you how to deal with such situations.

0 Default Roll

The first rule applies in cases where you have a 0 Ranking in one of your Characteristics *and* a 0 Ranking in the appropriate Skill required to perform the task. In this case, you can use the 0 Default Roll. This die roll allows you to use a single d6 as your action die. The result of this rule is that you will only be able to perform the simplest of tasks, and even then you will have a tough time performing them. Tasks considered difficult (requiring a -1 or more penalty to the amount of action dice) will be *impossible* to perform with a 0 Default Roll.

Example: Ishi has developed an illness that has made her very weak (as a result, her strength Characteristic has been temporarily reduced to 0). She attempts to force open a door that has become stuck. The GM rules that such a feat of strength would be a fairly easy task, and assigns no dice penalty to the action. Ordinarily, this would be no problem for Ishi, but due to her illness, she will have a tough time doing it.

Ishi's player opts to use her 0 Default Roll (since there is no "open door" Skill, she defaults to her Strength). She rolls a d6 and scores a 5 (which is considered a Partial Success since she has only one die to roll). Ishi barely manages to succeed at this easy task, opening the door just enough to get through, and would not have been able to succeed at all if the task had been declared a difficult one.



Default Skill Roll

This rule applies only to certain skills, or if no skill exists that seems to apply (such as a simple roll based on Perception to determine if you happen to notice something, or a simple roll based on Strength to try and lift something heavy). Some Skills on the Skill List will have an asterisk (*) next to them. This indicates that this particular Skill is not extremely specialized and can

be performed by someone who does not possess any Ranking in that Skill (in other words, a 0 Ranking). The Default Skill Roll is what you may use if you do not possess that particular Skill, but you do *not* currently have a 0 Ranking in that Skill's linked Characteristic. All Default Skill Rolls use **one half** (1/2) of the linked (or most appropriate) Characteristic, rounded up, as the Action Dice which you may use to perform an action requiring that Skill.

Example: Mushka attempts to juggle three balls in an effort to entertain his ward. Mushka has no ranking in juggling Skill, but that skill is listed with an asterisk next to it, indicating that it possesses a Default Skill Roll. Since Juggling is linked to Dexterity, and Mushka has a Ranking of 5 in Dexterity, he will get 3d6 ($5 \div 2 = 2.5$ which rounds to 3) with which to attempt his action.

A few Skills, such as Surgery or Crystalsmithing, will not give you a Default Skill Roll. If you do not possess these skills, you may not perform any tasks that require them.

Crippled Penalty Roll

This last rule is 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 subtract the number of dice that your Characteristic is down by from any Skill that is linked to that Characteristic. The resulting number will be considered your final Ranking. If the resulting number is 0 (remember, there are no negative numbers), 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 statue for her friend Mushka (despite her condition) in appreciation of his having saved her life. Akari's Dex Penalty of 2 is applied to her artisan's Skill Ranking of 6 (because her artisan Skill is linked to her Dexterity). Thus, she will have 4 Action Dice ($6 - 2 = 4$) with which to perform that task.

Time Measurement

In the Dárdūnah 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 towards a distant land, the GM would not give you a second by second play of the journey (that would be immensely boring). Instead, he would use Narrative Time and perhaps simply tell you, "After several weeks of grueling sea travel, one day blending into the next

as the suns rose and set on the blue-green horizon, 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 5 to 6 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 slightly 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. Each Skill in the Skill List will have an Average Performance Time listed along with the description. These times are general guidelines for the GM to help him 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

In the course of a Combat Round is possible to perform more than one action per round. As explained in the Combat section of the rules there are limitations imposed by the number of actions taken, in the form of a penalty applied to the number of action dice rolled for each action in that round. This penalty is called an Action Modifier and is fully explained later, though in general the modifier is equal to the number of actions taken after the first in a combat round. Multiple actions are taken one at a time (for the most part, though there are exceptions explained later), with everyone taking their first action in order of initiative, then everyone taking their second action, and so on till all actions are completed for that round. Remember that a combat round takes only 5 or 6 seconds (of in-game time) to complete, meaning that each action within a round may take only a fraction of a second, depending on the number of actions the player is taking.

As a general guideline, if any of your Action Dice are ever lowered below a single d6 due to the Action Modifier, you may not perform any actions that require those specific Action Dice. You need at least 1 Action Die in order to attempt any action. It is possible to plan your actions such that you may use your **Focus** (see combat) to allow you to use an action that would otherwise be impossible due to the minuses inflicted by the Action Modifier. The Focus of a Combat Round allows you to choose an action that may be rolled at its full dice pool regardless of the Action Modifier applied to all other actions in that round. The section detailing Combat gives full descriptions of these various rules.

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. As usual, common sense is the best guide. If you Fumble an action during a Combat Round, all other actions declared to have occurred after the Fumble are considered wasted. The GM will decide the actual events that *do* transpire, however, as a direct result of the Fumble, as well as any ill effects that may follow.

Extra Time

You may take more time performing an action if you wish, thereby increasing the number of dice in the Dice Pool and improving your chances of success. As stated earlier, each Skill will require a slightly different minimum amount of time to be able to perform, so GMs must use their common sense when assigning a bonus. Consult the Skill List and see what the Average 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 falls within 6 seconds (the length of a round of combat), use the chart below, 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 round to perform, multiply the *minimum* amount of time needed to perform that task by 6 in order to get the additional amount of time necessary to gain a +1 Dice bonus. Continue to multiply that new number by 6 in order to come up with each successive time increment required for an additional bonus to the Dice Pool.

Example: Uppin the Weapons Master wants to fashion a very fine crystal dagger for his student. The GM rules that doing so will require at least one hour’s worth of hard work.

Uppin’s player decides he wants to take extra time on this task, telling the GM that he wants to strive for a +3 bonus on his Dice Pool. The GM multiplies the hour Uppin needed to perform his task by 6 three different times ($1 \times 6 \times 6 \times 6 = 9$ 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 *and* a bonus for taking extra time. In this case, simply subtract the penalty from the bonus and apply the result to your Dice Pool to get your final number.



Rushing an Action

There will be occasions where you may not have the time to spend on the minimum time required for the performance of a skill (as assigned by the GM). 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 Dice Pool for every halving you do.

Example: Akari's player has been told by the GM that making a crystal necklace for the lady of her house will take her 1 hour. Akari's Crystal Craft skill has a ranking of 5.

Akari's player decides that she does not have an hour to spare (the gift is a last minute decision), and decides that she wants to craft the necklace in 15 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 Dice Pool for Crystal Craft, thus making it a 3.

Once the Dice Pool for any given task reaches 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 have to use their best judgement, and simply take each Skill use on a case-by-case basis.

Other Modifiers

There are a few other optional modifiers that a GM

may wish to introduce into his 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 make their own rulings using common sense.

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 add 1 success to your total Success Level (any 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, 8 days would go to 4 days for the 1st collaborator, 2 days for the 2nd, 1 day for the 3rd, etc.

The danger of collaboration is that should one of your collaborators Fumble, 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 for the success level and no time is saved.

Example: Akari is trying to craft a crown for the head of her line. 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 fairly difficult and assigns a penalty of -2 for the final Dice Pool, further declaring that it would take 2 weeks to perform.

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 at least two helpers whose Ranking cannot be less than half of yours. For every 2 assistants you have (rounded down), you get a bonus of +1 to your Dice Pool up to a *maximum* of a +3 (more than 6 assistants working on the same project at the same time can easily become a nightmare). Further, every two assistants decreases the time needed to perform the action by **one quarter** (1/4) its total time (i.e. 8 days becomes 6 days, 6 becomes 4 and 1/2 days, etc.). Unlike with collaboration, assistants cannot themselves Fumble your project but they can possibly

have an adverse effect on it.

The GM rolls Action Dice for each of the assistants helping on the project. If any of them fail, then that assistant is disqualified for purposes of giving you a bonus, either for the Target Number or for time saved. If, on the other hand, an assistant Fumbles, then they actually add a penalty of -1 to the Dice Pool (it doesn't take two of them to assign this penalty, every single Fumble subtracts a -1).

Assistant Fumbles, however, do not add to the time required to perform the task (unless of course you decide to take extra time to offset any penalties your assistants may have inflicted upon you). 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 assistants 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 fairly challenging and assigns penalty of -1 die, and further decides that it will take Toryu four days to finish the bowl.

The GM rolls Toryu's assistants' Action Dice, which result in two of the assistants Fumbling and two of them succeeding. Due to the successes, Toryu receives a +1 bonus to his Dice Pool and his time is reduced to 3 days. However, the two Fumbles give Toryu a penalty of -2 to his Dice Pool, bringing it back down by two less, making it even harder to perform than was originally declared by the GM. 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.

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 be 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/portrayal was worth. Nevertheless, 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, they should have some way of contributing to the overall role-playing atmosphere of the game. Even the most timid of players can give a description. GMs should reward great effort, not mediocre attempts (this will of course differ from player to player).

Travel

Dárdünah is a large and expansive world. The map that is included with these rules shows the various land regions in relation to each other, the seas, rivers,

and the mountains of the world. The scale in the lower corner 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 natural 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 to get there by mounted land beast, and about **seven** days to reach the destination on foot. Please note the use of the word 'about'. It is important to recognize that the flow of the story of the game, at the Gamemaster's discretion, may increase (or decrease) the general amount of travel time to some extent for dramatic effect, especially in the cases of poor movement-based skill rolls on the parts of the traveling players.

Skills and Abilities used to initiate travel are covered later in the rules under Character Creation. Though sometimes the Gamemaster 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 successful a journey is made. Unforeseen trouble may be indicated by poor dice rolls along the way and any added difficulty factors. The Gamemaster will need to decide whether the player will have to role-play the passage of time for what could be a lengthy journey, or simply say that 'time passes' for the character. The answer to this question will determine if the character needs to make one roll for the whole journey, or roll numerous times throughout the several days of "game-time". An exceptional roll (many successes above the required two) will indicate less time, to an extent decided by the GM. A poor, failed, or botched roll, will indicate more time, and perhaps additional hardships along the way, up to and including utter failure to even get there.

Story Points

After you have gone through the character creation process, you may have a few Ability Points left over. These should be noted at the bottom of your character sheet in the Story Points section. You will see several bubbles that should be filled in to correspond with the number of points remaining. Throughout the playing of the game, the Gamemaster will give several more Story Points to each player at the end of every few game sessions. These new points should be stored in the same manner. Later, as you choose to build up your character's skills, you will expend these points in different ways.

Story Points serve several functions. First, they are points with which all Abilities (Skills, Animal Abilities, Talents, and Advantages) are bought and eventually raised. Secondly, comes the purpose for which they are named, allowing dramatic successes or alterations to be achieved at key points in the game's developing storyline. In these cases, they can be spent to save the character from imminent death (though not necessarily defeat and severe maiming), allow automatic success at skill attempts if failure has occurred during pivotal

story moments, or allow minor reality changes at certain moments that may drive the story forward in a heroic, humorous, or otherwise cinematic way.

Story Points should not be used to buy successes on a point-per-point basis to add to a skill roll during standard combat or any other such situations. Nor should they be used to buy off botches by adding successes with spent points. Players should, in general, succeed or fail based on their own merits, using Story Points to alter the story in broader strokes that add to the enjoyment of the game for everyone.

Example: Manukai, honor guard of his Aryah's daughter, the young lady Yani who is only twelve, has arrived in the nick of time to save her from the dreaded clutches of slavers who had spirited her away to their mountain fortress. This encounter was intended to be the culmination of a weeks-long adventure scenario wherein the players had traveled across vast deserts, battled terrible foes, and unraveled the secrets of the slaver's hidden lair to eventually secure her safely away from her captors. Despite the fact that they could have succeeded or failed in this attempt if one merely depended on the rolls of the dice for the outcome, as luck would have it, the slavers were defeated, many jánah were granted their freedom that day, and the players, with the thankful daughter of their Lord in their hands, begin the journey by skyship back to their lands. Unbeknownst to them, however, a final challenge awaits them as another skyship, other slavers returning from a raid, witness the players' departure from their burning lair and engages them in aerial ship-to-ship combat. As the battle rages, and the characters begin to prevail against the marauders, one of the slavers' cannon shots makes a lucky hit to rear area of the players' ship, destroying the cabins where the young girl had hidden during the conflict. Rushing below, and fearing the worst, Manukai sadly discovers that young lady Yani lay dead, her body shattered by the lucky cannon strike. At this point, many of the players, but especially Manukai's player is horrified by this turn of events, but worse, this randomly unlucky roll of the dice has made their entire adventure seem anticlimactic in the extreme, and seems to have ruined the cinematic nature of the story since the entire adventure was simply to rescue her.

Though there are moments during excellent cinematic drama where terrible losses sometimes make a better story, especially when the death is very meaningful, such as one person sacrificing their life to save another, or some terrible tragedy orchestrated to illustrate a plot-point within the greater arch of the storyline, in this particular instance, the death of their Lord's daughter was merely the result of a series of unfortunate dice rolls, and would serve no real cinematic purpose. As a result of this, Manukai's player requests that the Gamemaster allows them to spend a Story Point to change one aspect of this immediate event to allow her to miraculously have survived the destruction. The GM allows this, but determines that the expenditure of the one Story Point will merely insure that she is not dead, and tells the player that though they detect a very faint beating of the child's heart, she has been terribly wounded by the event, and will need healing that might only come from some magical source so that her life may be spared. The result of this might lead the characters on to another adventure as they seek help for the dying

child, perhaps a mystic healer said to live in strange ruins in the desert, or magical crystals that they must find to give her back her life. Regardless, however, spending the Story Point by no means always indicates that the players decide the outcome, merely that an undesired turn of events might be changed in some way so as to advance the story and continue providing the players with a satisfying cinematic experience.

Campaign Archetypes



Welcome Booklet

In the world of Dárdūnah, there are many different types of settings and stories that will present themselves as a source for potential intrigue and adventure. As the Gamemaster begins considering the types of adventures they wish to run for their players, they will want to put some time and effort into creating the specific backdrop for the campaign as a whole,...the storyline which will tie together all the various subplots into a cohesive overall saga.

Though the best campaign storylines are the fruit of the Gamemaster's own imagination, mixed with the overall desires of the players, it is often helpful to have a few ideas to inspire the general direction of the campaign. Inspiration can be found in various places, from the setting or storyline of a series of beloved novels, to the pacing and action of a memorable movie's plot. Dárdūnah, by its very unique nature lends itself to many different types of excellent stories, but here are a few suggestions of overall archetypes that might give the Gamemaster and players a good general launching point and setting from which to begin a campaign.

It should be noted that these concepts are merely

suggestions, and there are no doubt many more excellent ideas waiting to be created for any number of campaign settings. In the chapters that follow, you will find very detailed descriptions of the nature of Dárdünah itself, a rich history spanning over ten thousand years, its various countries and cultures, and many other fictional works related to the setting of this game. Before creating your own campaign it would be advisable to read through this information to familiarize yourself with a world unlike any other.

Serving a Lord

This type of campaign plays toward the complex relationships and intrigues of Houses and Lines, and generally revolves around scenarios in which the players are the vassals and functionaries of an Aryah of a House, or the Great Aryah of a Line. As such, they would often be entrusted with special missions and endeavors assigned to them by the Lord or Lady of whatever House and Line they belong to, and would be honor-bound to carry out these tasks to the best of their ability. Such tasks would be the “adventures” that the players would enjoy, and could be anything from escorting important members of their House to some remote location, engaging in tasks of spying and assassination, acting as envoys for important missions to other countries, dealing with some terrible situation threatening the peasants who work on their Aryah’s distant farmlands, and engaging in intrigues that might advance one’s own position, or to insure the welfare of their House and Line.

Corsairs and Pirates

Within this campaign the characters are the daring members of a ship’s crew, skimming across the waters of Dárdünah’s many oceans and seas, or sailing upon the fateful winds of the upper airs. Such characters might consider themselves privateers, engaging primarily in honest business that may sometimes give way to more shady dealings throughout the various exotic ports to which they may travel. Or perhaps they are a ship of bloodthirsty pirates or dashing corsairs, who earn their way by making prey of honest vessels who ply their trade across the world. In campaigns of this type, adventure and intrigue can be found in almost any port of call, with the many cultures of the world as a rich backdrop to good deals gone bad, heroic rescues, pursuing enemies,

exotic landscapes, and, of course, the treasures and bounty of a job well-done.

Secret Societies

In a world heavy in political, spiritual, and social intrigue, where religious laws govern the very lives of the populace and certain heresies can never be forgiven, there are always secret societies which form, whose agendas can be anything from bringing about a new age of enlightenment, societal reformation, or even to the toppling of a regime. Of course, players who decide to be members of such societies must always be willing to act in the secret society’s best interests, and will no doubt be called upon to perform services which will continuously test their merit, their loyalty, and their resolve to see the goals of their organization come to a fruitful end. Such adventures may include various acts of espionage, quests for important political, religious, or historical artifacts, infiltration into powerful strongholds to gather information as well as the occasional prisoner, and of course, all this while maintaining one’s cover and keeping a respectable public face.

War Has Come

Within this campaign, the threat of imminent war looms over the nation in which the characters live, whether due to civil unrest, choosing to invade another country, or the approach of conquering armies into one’s lands from an opposing realm. Characters in such a game might be members of the armed forces themselves, or the lords who lead them, or perhaps even the simple peasants who find themselves thrust between the opposing forces, struggling to stay alive in a land torn apart by violence and rebellion. The “adventures” of such a campaign might consist of battle plans formed and executed, political intrigue and war propaganda, the recruitment of troops in surrounding lands, missions of reconnaissance in enemy territory, the sacking of cities, peasants attempting to escape through neighboring countries, and any number of other war-related scenarios.

Thieves and Assassins

This type of campaign focuses on the darker aspects of society, with an emphasis on the secretive lives and questionable pursuits of those who live beneath the



law, and those to whom the value of lives means little compared to the rewards gained from taking them. The criminal element on Dárdūnah extends from the lowliest cutpurse to the master thief from whom even the most fortified palace treasure vaults are not safe. Groups of such criminals sometimes gather together in dens to concoct even more elaborate plans, often having to deal with rival groups competing for the same ill-gotten gains. While within the halls of great Houses, assassins gather to act on the word of their Lord, weaving a tapestry of lies and deceit that mask the terrible nature of their tasks. Characters in these campaigns often face the threat of hideous punishments, terrible danger, and often acting on the wrong side of the laws of their land, with the rewards being the treasures of hapless victims, or the grim honor of being the harbinger of death at the behest of one's superior, or for payment from the desperate and the sinister.

Peasants to Heroes

Great legends often surround the tales of a poor person's rise to prominence, of the meek overcoming the powerful, and of those born to lesser things overcoming all odds to change the world. This is known as the Hero's Journey, and can be seen in almost any memorable tale of honor and glory. This campaign centers on individuals who have been born perhaps into some lower caste, situations of poverty, disrespect, or lesser status, but who, regardless, are thrust by fate onto a path that, throughout the growing story, leads them through many acts of bravery, danger, excitement, and challenge. At the end of this journey, those that have survived will have gone through a character arc that will have transformed them, literally or figuratively, from their base beginnings to a rewarding resolution befitting a true hero. The backdrop of such a campaign is usually some great calamity or threat that galvanizes the characters into action, despite their normally uninvolved natures, forcing them to forego their former lives in pursuit of a solution to the enigmatic problem.

Explorers of the Past

There will always be those whose quest for knowledge and understanding takes them into situations and on journeys of discovery that are as rife with danger as they are filled with an astonishing wealth of wisdom, lore, ancient secrets. Dárdūnah's past is full of unanswered questions and the promise of incredible finds for those with the temerity to seek for them in the ruins of ancient cities and forgotten tombs. Hidden in the furthest jungles and most remote mountain peaks are the crumbling remains of forgotten civilizations and evidence of terrible truths that many have sought to conceal for eons. Religious doctrine and superstition has woven veils of myth and legend that surely obscure the lost lore of ages, and for those brave souls who dare the ire of the priests, and 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,

and even beyond the very edges of Dárdūnah itself.

Outcaste Travelers

Despite the role most Outcaste play upon Dárdūnah, there are those jánah, born or condemned as they are beneath any Caste, who choose to defy the common holy strictures, and who leave the confines of the cities to join those outcastes who have chosen freedom over drudgery. Called often by the derogatory name "Táskara", meaning petty thief or criminal, these noble outcaste make their lives on the road, traveling from place to place in caravans of brightly colored wagons, or upon river-barges of their own making. They are often begrudgingly tolerated in most places, for they do tend to be skilled entertainers, dancers, musicians, and tellers of extravagant tales, but are often blamed for misfortunes and crimes that occur when they are near. The clergy of the Mahist Faith tends to despise and mistrust them because of their self-declared freedom from traditional outcaste obligations, often finding cruel ways to urge their departure from whatever temporary place they seek to settle for a time. Their numbers grow, and their traditions are passed on as each new bride and groom must build a wagon or a barge of their own before they can marry, thus strengthening their traveling bond and the size of their community. They claim to be descended from Sunborn who fought and ruled long before the Wars of Twilight, displaced lords of old lands, though few believe these tales. There are three greater clans of them, each calling themselves by their own names. In the north there are the Mugháni, primarily composed of sarpah, who speak an antiquated dialect of Visedi among themselves. From the west there travels the desert tribes of Sihndi, who are mostly paksin, and whose tongue reminds one of the old languages of Amnol. And, finally, from the southeast there has arisen the Kalderáshi, mostly fur-bearing vajrah from the colder climbs, whose language hearkens to the near-forgotten speech of ancient Kúttá.

Survivors of Destruction

This campaign assumes that the normal world of Dárdūnah has been turned upon its ear by some dreadful sweeping change or because of some vast calamity. The devastation is such that it is most likely impossible to escape it merely by fleeing to another country, for whatever has affected the world, has swept across it entirely, or is still in the process of doing so, forcing the characters, whatever caste, occupation, or persuasion they may be, to fight for their very survival in an environment that has apparently gone mad. In such a world, laws and traditions are often forsaken, life becomes a desperate daily struggle, and the future, full of terrible shocks and unwelcome surprises, is always uncertain. Such campaigns might begin just before such an event, with the daily lives of the characters leading inevitably toward the terrible moment when all their fates are drastically changed. Perhaps an awful and devastating plague sweeps across the lands leaving in its wake the dead, the dying, and the hideously desperate.

A falling star could strike the world, bringing about ecological and geological catastrophe. Even a terrible gateway could be opened from the Shapeless Hells of Nárakah, causing unholy abominations to walk in great numbers upon the face of Dárdūnah. Whatever the cause, it is up to the characters to find a way to survive through this nightmare, and perhaps even to discover a way to reverse the damage that has been done, or to pave the way to a brighter and safer future.

Being a Gamemaster

An important distinction between role-playing games like Dárdūnah, and other types of games, is the inclusion of a person acting as the referee, or Gamemaster. Most table-top games consist of game-play designed to allow players to interact with situations revolving around a basic set of rules and fixed events, whereas role-players interact with various “free-form” situations of the imagination created by a Gamemaster, who uses the rules as a framework for outlining an overarching storyline, called a campaign, and creating numerous exciting subplots, all of which are opportunities for players to enjoy playing the roles of the unique characters they have created to interact upon a world designed for the game itself. This world, presented through interaction with the Gamemaster, should provide an ever-changing tapestry of events in which the players interact as if they are the “stars” of the plotline. If you just intend to be a player, you don’t necessarily need to read this portion of the rules. As long as you’ve read the basics of the game, the chapter on combat, and the character creation section, you will have discovered what your character is capable of as far as their skills and talents are concerned, and how to roll the dice to determine the results of your character’s actions. That, and a fair understanding of Dárdūnah’s unique fiction, is all a player needs to know in order to begin a game session.

Who, however, decides what an adversaries’ skills are, and how many levels of damage are done when a crystal sword pierces a friend or foe, or a valah bullet, poisoned arrow, or amber hurling disk makes their mark? Who is it that sets the difficulty factors for dice rolls? It is the Gamemaster whose responsibility it is to do all these things, and those who choose to shoulder this pleasure and burden must read through, or at least glance over, every chapter and section of this rulebook, fiction and all, to some extent. However, a good Gamemaster is more than an arbiter of rules. Game mastering requires swift thinking, a flair for drama and cinematic timing, a talent for setting mood, and a good level of fairness and impartiality. Remember, the Gamemaster is not on an opposite team from the players, a GM is creating a playground for the players’ fertile imaginations, and setting the stage for a memorable and cinematic storyline. Unlike traditional games, there are no “winners and losers”. All participants, both the players and the Gamemaster, win if a particular role-playing session is exciting, fun, and provides a sense of memorable

adventure, accomplishment, and even meaningful fictional loss to all those playing. And although the players themselves must account for the roles of their characters and the part they play in the overall storyline, it is the Gamemaster who must play the part of every non-player character (also known as an NPC) that the players’ characters meet and interact with. Every villain, their followers and their victims, every crafty merchant or heartless assassin, every simple peasant, mighty Lord, hideous monster or ravening demon the players will deal with must be brought to life by the GM, each one with their own unique personality and behavioral traits. The tasks, therefore, of the Gamemaster are those of a storyteller, an actor, a designer of interesting interactive environments and situations, and an arbitrator of the rules. The Gamemaster sets the pace for the game as well, responding to the needs and interests of the players and insuring that the action, intrigue, and adventures moves along according to the desires of everyone involved.

It is important to understand, as well, that this game is not just for the players. If you are choosing to be a Gamemaster, the experience is intended to be enjoyable for you as well. Don’t let the action and creativity of the game get bogged down by the presence of the rules, and don’t feel as if the task of running the game needs to be all hard work. Have FUN with the game, give your players, and yourself, time to experience the richness of Dárdūnah’s unique world environment and its fiction, and above all, give due emphasis to the story itself, so that you and your players will walk away from each session with a memorable experience.

The Story Unfolds

And now, with this book in your hand a player or a Gamemaster is set to embark upon the beginning of what could possibly be an epic adventure. A great deal of time, energy, and loving devotion, over twelve years of such, have gone into the creation of the deep fiction of this world and all it’s elements, including a respectful amount of study and attention paid to the various cultures and visionaries of our own world, whose unique, interesting, and beautiful inspirations we have heavily drawn from. As such, we would ask that you consider carefully the very thing that might now grow from the experience this game offers, the story itself. It is a story that you as game-masters and players will be creating, a story that will be populated with characters that you should strive to bring life and rich personality to, and one that will hopefully be full of exciting adventures that you can look back upon with great fondness and no small sense of pride. We see what we present here as a personal achievement of creativity that we now seek to share with others in the hopes that they too will gain as much joy from it, and as much creative inspiration from it, as we have. But above all, we hope that you will have fun in this World of the False Dawn, as you proceed to uncover the many secrets and rewards it contains.

The Combat Round

The Combat Round is divided into three basic steps that should flow into one another as combat progresses:

- Step #1: Determine Individual Initiative
- Step #2: Rolling Your Number of Actions
- Step #3: Declaration and Performance

These steps represent large blocks of information and are detailed below. The bold type signifies the main gist of the information contained in the step, including numerous examples of the situations mentioned, while the smaller standard type is additional information to further explain the step for those unfamiliar with the specifics. Italicized examples follow to further illustrate the details. Located in the Appendices (and immediately after this combat round description) is a concise “to-do” list called **A Quick Combat Summary Sheet** that summarizes most of the activities and events that need to occur for a complete, smooth-flowing combat round. This may be a valuable thing to copy and have handy while combat is occurring, since it’s sometimes easy to forget the important little details.

The nature of this system is to emphasize the cinematic qualities of a martial arts battle by allowing the players to describe a number of motions in broad strokes that will occur in a single round while providing the game mechanics necessary to fairly bring these actions to life in order of initiative. One of the pluses to the system below is the allowance of “Reactions”, Actions taken by players out of turn as an immediate response to events taking place in the round. This allows an excited player to make a statement like “This round I want to try and flip over the table, hurl my spear, and perform a flying kick to my enemy’s head.”, and watch as these actual events, successful or not, unfold during their turn in the round, yet still allowing others to make reactionary decisions that have immediate game effect. Read the descriptions below carefully. Though they may seem complex, flowing slowly at first, once a few test combats are run through, the advantages of this particular system will become more apparent. Remember, it’s all in the visual description. Good Gamemasters should be on the lookout for excellent cinematic description that should be awarded with bonus dice for that particular event.

Step #1: Determine Individual Initiative

Have each player role a d6, to which they next add their Attack Ability (Animal Ability, Martial Skill, Missile, etc.). To this total they may also add their Fast Reflexes score if they have this Talent. Subtract penalties from earlier combat damage (if any). Place this total in the “Initiative” slot on the Combat Tracking sheet (a copy of which can be found in the Appendices) in the upper left

hand corner beside the “Rnd #” box. This is their initiative score. The higher the score, the sooner they will get to declare their action(s) for the round and the sooner their actions will sequentially take place. The advantage to this is that the player with the highest initiative will effectively “get the drop” on other players and NPC’s in that round of combat.

When the Actions actually begin, the player (or NPC) with the highest initiative score will act first during that particular round until they choose to cease using their Actions at which time the rest of their Actions become Reactions, to potentially be used later in the round. The next highest score acts second, the next highest after that third, and so forth. The player should write their action order down in the Order slot to the right of the “Initiative” slot so that they will not lose track of their own order.

Example: Eric (playing Ghorum, an elephant, who had rolled a 1 when rolling initiative, has added his modifiers for a total of 9. He and his five companions will be dueling one another in the Spiral Arena. His adversaries have totaled 12, 7, 10, 14, and 16 in their initiative rolls. This makes the order of initiative 16 (first), 14 (second), 12 (third), 10 (fourth), 9 (Eric’s character is fifth), and 7 (sixth and last).

Characters with missile weapons at the ready will always go first, in order of their own initiative, if closing distance is required between them and other characters without missile weapons. If characters choosing to fight one another must take their half-move in order to get near enough to engage in close combat, then combatants with previously drawn missile weapons, or those who have performed a successful Fastdraw as their first action, may take one (or more, depending on the maneuver) of their missile attacks prior to the hand-to-hand engagement regardless of initiative. If there are several such missile attacks going first, then they are arranged in order of their own individual initiatives separate from the rest of the non-missile using group. Once close combat begins, however, all such advantages vanish, and combat continues in the standard fashion.

Example: In this scenario, Ghorum’s opponent (who had decided to throw two crystal hurling disks at Ghorum) actually acted after Ghorum in Initiative order. But in this case, due to the fact that his opponent had his disks out and ready to throw, Ghorum knows that at least one of his enemy’s missile attacks will have a chance to get through before Ghorum is able to close the distance with his half-move, regardless of Ghorum’s initiative advantage.

The Gamemaster should be simultaneously rolling and assigning initiative scores in the same way for the NPCs, feathering them into the players’ totals to determine the final initiative order for the round.

Step #2: Rolling Your Number of Actions

Have each player, in order of initiative, role his or her chosen Attack Ability dice pool once,

adding 2 to the total (giving any player, regardless of how poorly they may roll, at least one Action to use as an attack, and one Reaction for defense). Subtract penalties from earlier combat damage (if any). This roll's total number of Successes will become the Action number and should be marked down in the box to the right of Action # on the Combat Tracking sheet. This is the total number of Attacks, Defenses, and/or Skill rolls they may attempt to make in this round. It is from this pool the players will derive their chosen Declared Actions in a few moments (what they intend to do at the start of their turn during that round). Any Actions remaining after you have chosen your Declared Actions should be written down in the field to the right as Reactions, which are used up as Defenses if needed, or as other Reactionary Attacks and Skills used either before, or after, your turn is done. Declared Actions, Reactions, Spontaneous Actions, and Defenses are explained in the "Basics of Combat" section above.

Having done this, as the GM moves along to hear what numbers the next player generates, this player should begin considering and writing down the Declared Actions they will momentarily announce and perform when it is their turn to do so. These should be jotted down in the Declared Actions field, in appropriate order, with the space to the right used to record the number of Actions required to perform that particular maneuver. Actions, as noted earlier, can be attacks, defenses, or the use of any appropriate skills or animal abilities. These potential Actions may change later, depending on the way the round goes before it is this player's turn, or what their Reactions are (and how many) to other characters' Actions.

Any Actions remaining after Declared Actions are chosen should be recorded in the Reactions # box on the upper right of the Combat Tracking sheet.

Example: Eric, who has just rolled a 4 using his Martial Skill, and added 2 to the total, achieved 6 Successes for his Action # that round. He marks this total down on his Combat Tracking sheet to the right of Action #, after informing the GM. He now begins considering what his character wants to do when it becomes his turn, and writes these actions under the Declared Actions section, totaling the # of Actions required to perform them. If Eric were to decide to declare 4 Actions worth of things he wishes to do in this round, he would then mark 2 points off his written Action # (making it a 4), and write a 2 to the right of Reaction # on the Combat Tracking sheet. These Reactions he should feel free to use even before it is his official turn, if he notices some event during the players' turn's before him that makes him want to react in some way. Writing a number beside Reaction # doesn't limit your number of Reactions, however. You may find it necessary to React to more events before it is your turn

than the number of Reactions you have jotted down, in which case you will need to sacrifice some of the Declared Actions you have already decided upon in favor of what you want to react to now. Just remember that you have a finite number of total Actions you may take during that round,...and if you use up all those Actions as Reactions before your turn even begins, you may have nothing left to perform when your turn arrives.

This time should also be used to roll the number of Actions that any NPCs may wish to take and note this and any other information that pops to mind on the NPC Combat Tracking sheet.

Step #3: Declaration and Performance

In initiative Order (with highest initiative score speaking first) each player simply states what they intend to do that round (the number of actions taken) and in what order. The player will need to either have written these actions down on his Combat Tracking sheet under Declared Actions, or be writing them down as they declare them, as well as the other modifiers



and information pertaining to that round. Either way, the number of Actions used must be marked off of the Action # total as rolled moments before. Players should be trying to decide what they wish to do before declaring their actions, but it is wise to listen to any declared actions (especially the ones that pertain to NPCs) and other events that come before their own, so as to take full advantage of this knowledge and recognize the opportunity to use Reactions if they have any remaining. Once they decide what they wish to attempt that round (these actions include any use of Skills within the limited combat round, not just attacks and defenses), they may begin the Declared Performance part of the round. Remember, when choosing to attack with a second weapon in an off hand, a penalty of minus 1 die will always apply to the roll (though there is no penalty if they are lucky enough to have Ambidexterity).

Example: Eric, who has listened to the prior players in action order, is deciding what actions he wishes to take this round based on what he has just heard declared and performed. Since he is 5th in order he will be the next to declare his actions. An earlier player (who got to act first because he was using readied projectile weapons) had decided that his actions this round were to throw two crystal discs at Ghorum (Eric's character) while making a partial move toward his next target (the 6th player in action order). A single roll was made by the attacker, bundling both attacks into one roll. As the crystal discs were thrown during the previous player's turn, Eric attempted to defend against them, using up two of his Actions as defensive Reactions to the attack, while making a single roll of his Action dice. Eric's attempt to defend failed to negate enough of his enemy's attack successes, and he was struck with both discs, one in the arm, and one in the chest. Eric decided that Ghorum (an elephant) would attempt to React to the two disc attacks (after rolling his defenses) by using a Natural Weaponry "Charge"-a trampling attack under Animal Abilities to which he is combining his free half-move for this round to cover the distance. Sadly, his enemy successfully defended against it (negating Ghorum's Successes by generating an equal or larger amount when rolling defense), dodging out of the way in time. Now the 4th opponent, having no more Actions to use, came to the end of his turn, making it time for Ghorum to announce and perform his Declared Actions. Though Ghorum may have already formulated an Action plan for the round, he must now remember that, though he had 6 potential Actions before, he now has only 5 he may use since he used up one of his Actions as a Reaction moments earlier. He therefore chooses to declare only two actions, leaving the remaining three for other potential Reactions or Defenses. Having now moved too far away from his original target choice due to his Charge, Ghorum decides to continue his attack on the discharging opponent. He declares that his first action will be to attempt a Subdue/Fatal spear blow to the knees in the hopes of a Disable (at a -2 dice penalty for the roll), and his second action will be a blow to the back (torso) for Subdue damage (no penalty) with the shaft of the handle.

This player has apparently decided that he does not intend to kill his opponent, merely defeat him, and has planned his attacks accordingly. In addition, he has noted any damage his character has taken in the Current Stamina field at the right, and just above, the Damage Taken field. This being done, the player now begins

rolling his actions.

At this point, the character (or N.P.C.) whose turn it is will now begin performing their Actions. The GM will require the player to bundle as many of these Actions as they deem appropriate into a single roll. This means that the GM should choose certain series or sets of similar Actions declared by the player for that round to all occur, one after the other, by having the player roll only one dice pool for them all simultaneously. All Actions have an individually appropriate dice pool defined by the purchased Skill (such as Martial Skill or a specific Martial Style for attacks and defense), but when bundling a number of like Actions into a single roll, the player may choose the largest dice pool of any of the Actions in the bundle to roll when determining the success or failure of the entire bundled set of Actions. At any time during any particular Action (or even a following Defense roll), any other player or NPC may React to it (assuming they were aware of it) by using up one or more of their own Actions (depending on how many are required to defend and then attack, if they wish to), though the Reaction (whether an attack or a Skill) must be directly related to the previous event. If any attacks generate successes against an opponent, then Defense rolls are made by that opponent to counteract those successes (if desired), and marked off from the opponent's remaining Action # total (if they have any remaining, if not, then the attack automatically succeeds fully). If the opponent can negate all their attacker's successes with the same number of their own or more, then the attack is thwarted and they receive no damage (in fact, if all successes are negated, and the defender still has 3 or more successes to spare, then the attacker actually takes 1 level of damage for overextending themselves during their foiled strike). If the opponent negates all but one of an attacker's successes, then a "partial" success has occurred, and the attack causes half damage (total rolled attack successes + weapon damage ÷ 2). If two or more of an attacker's successes remain after the defense roll is applied, then the attack is considered "fully" successful, causing full damage (total rolled attack successes + weapon damage). Any damage taken during these performed Actions should be noted in the Current Stamina section of the Combat Tracking sheet, and eventually on the Character sheet as well, once combat is concluded. If more than 1/3rd of total Stamina is lost, all rolls are made at -1 till healed above that mark. If more than 2/3rd of total Stamina is lost, then all rolls are made at -2 till healed above that mark. Also remember that some types of damage can have other negative effects as well, which need to be noted as they may affect further combat and other actions.

Example: Let us say that, in the previous round Eric's character Ghorum had taken a disabling blow to his left elbow. Although his required Vigor roll was successful, allowing him to remain active despite his painful injury, the extent of the damage was such that any rolls made requiring the use of his left arm till the wound is healed will be at 1/2 the normal dice pool since the limb cannot be effectively used. Ghorum, who has

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a Martial Skill of 8, has wisely decided to attack using a spear attack to the legs and head, neither of which (as described by the player) would require the use of his left arm at a roll of only 4 dice (half his original Martial Skill). In addition, as noted under Stamina, there are penalties when a character's Stamina Levels drop below certain amounts. In Ghorum's case, last round he took 15 levels of damage from several attacks against him (including his arm). Since Ghorum has a Stamina of 39, the damage he took has lowered his current Stamina to under 2/3 his normal amount. As a result, all rolls made till this damage is healed will be at -1 die, meaning that one die will be removed from every dice pool used for any rolls made while Ghorum remains at 2/3rd his Stamina levels or lower. If he were to have his Stamina drop to 1/3rd of his original, then all rolls would be made at -2 dice. Another condition that might have affected his dice rolls would have been the taking of any "Lethal" damage (the result of a successful Lethal Martial maneuver in the previous or current round), which might have caused a continuing loss of Stamina per round due to internal or external bleeding. Careful tracking of these effects are necessary as the battle continues since this too will eventually affect dice modifiers.

As it currently stands with Ghorum, as long as he doesn't use his disabled arm, he is able to attack both times with only a -1 to his dice pools. Luckily for him, his opponent has only 1 Action remaining, which he intends to use as a Defense. Since Ghorum has chosen to make two attacks as his Declared Actions, the Gamemaster asks that Ghorum bundles them both together into one roll, using his Martial Skill dice pool. Ghorum rolls fairly well (a 5), but when his opponent rolls his last Defense against Ghorum's attacks, he beats Ghorum's roll by more than 2 Successes (she rolled an 8). This means that not only did she successfully defend against it, she did it so well that Ghorum actually suffers 1 level of damage from trying to get through his opponent's excellent defense,

which the GM declares was Ghorum over-extending himself in his injured state as he attempted to sweep his enemy's legs out from under her. But remember, Ghorum used two Actions in making this bundled Attack, and his opponent had only one Reaction remaining to defend against him, which means that the second of Ghorum's two attacks within the bundle (to the back of his opponent's head) will hit her for full damage (total successes rolled + weapon) as long as he rolled at least two successes during his initial roll. Eric's character Ghorum watches in triumph as his enemy crumples to the ground before him. Eric's Declared Actions now having been completed, it is now the next player's turn.

As combat continues, remember that all Actions are performed in order of initiative with the highest going first. It will have been important for the Gamemaster to have established out loud the proper order of action initially, so that now all he must do is ask the players "O.K.,... who's 2nd? Who's 3rd? etc..." As seen in the example directly above, it will also be helpful to remind everyone of the type of general actions people will be performing by asking questions like "Alright,.. it's Round #1. Which of you have missile weapons ready that you wish to use? (pause) O.K.,... what are each of your initiatives?" "Will you be throwing the spear while you advance on your opponent?" etc. Also do not forget the effects of Armor, which takes a certain amount of damage off of each damaging attack, and Acrobatics, whose successes indicate a total amount of damage that can be negated for the duration of the round in which the roll is successful. Remember that at the end of any combat session in which armor is utilized, a player must temporarily lower his worn armor's protective value by 1 level until effective repairs are done.



A Quick Combat Summary Sheet

- **Step #1: Determine Individual Initiative** (for that round)
 - o Roll d6, add chosen Attack Ability (Animal Ability, Martial Skill, Missile, etc.), and add 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 as compared to others, with Highest Score eventually acting first. (Remember that prepared ranged missile and Valah weapons go first, in their own initiative order, until distance is closed.)
- **Step #2: Rolling Your Number of Actions** (for that round)
 - o Everyone starts by having 2 Actions. Now, in order of Initiative, roll chosen Attack Ability dice pool to determine additional Actions. Subtract any penalties from earlier combat damage (if any).
 - o Record final total in Action # box on Combat Tracking sheet.
 - o Consider and record desired Declared Actions (any Skills, Animal Abilities, etc) you will enact this round in the Declared Actions fields. The number of these cannot exceed the previously recorded Action #.
 - o Any number of Actions not currently desired to be used as Declared Actions should be recorded in the Reactions # box on Combat Tracking sheet.
- **Step #3: Declaration, Performance, and Resolution** (for that round)
 - o **Wait for your turn (all character act in turn according to their initiative Order).**
 - ▮ Listen carefully to the descriptions of player and NPC Actions before you.
 - ▮ Use Reactions to defend if necessary, using Declared Actions if Reactions are expended.
 - ▮ Feel free to React to any appropriate Action of which your character would be aware, marking one (or more) off of your Reaction #'s each time you do so.
 - You may React using only one Reaction at a time, with these exceptions:
 - o When reacting with a Fastdraw when having no weapon in hand to immediately draw, then attack with a weapon, succeeding means you will only need to use one Reaction to use the weapon. If you fail the Fastdraw, then you must use that Reaction to draw the weapon, and you must expend an additional Reaction right then to attack with it.
 - o If your Reaction is to defend against, or use, a Multi-Maneuver as listed in a specific Martial Style, then you must use as many Reactions as the Action number in its description.
 - o Don't forget to factor in any adjustment to your dice rolls due to previous bonuses or penalties (if any).
 - o **In initiative Order (when it is your turn), describe your Declared Actions for that round in the order you intend for them to occur.**
 - ▮ Remember any injuries you may have that might limit your action choices.
 - ▮ The Gamemaster should now inform you how many rolls you'll need to make when you eventually perform these actions.
 - This will be based on bundling sets of actions together when possible, using the most advantageous dice pool, and the least advantageous action modifier of the various Actions in the bundle.
 - o **Begin performing your Actions by rolling the appropriate (potentially bundled) dice pools.**
 - ▮ Don't forget to factor in any adjustment to your dice rolls due to previous bonuses or penalties (if any).
 - o **Fully successful attacks (2 or more Attack Successes remain after Defense roll) cause Stamina loss of initially rolled attack successes + weapon damage. Partially successful attack (only one Attack success remains after Defense roll) causes only half the Stamina loss listed above, rounded up.**
 - ▮ Damage taken can be lessened by Armor worn and by use of Acrobatics successes from that round.
 - o **After your turn is done (you have used all your Declared Actions), continue to observe combat, Reacting as necessary (if you still have Reactions left).**

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PLEASE NOTE: When all is said and done, and all the rounds of that 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 affectivity), and any continuing or far-reaching damage done to the body 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.



Introductory Adventure

This small adventure, played using the pre-made characters presented in this booklet, is intended to give a taste of Dárdünah game-play at average levels, and introduces the players to the culture, intrigue, magic, and martial arts action of the world. In it the players will interact in the courts of nobles, gain a sense of one of the major cities of its nations, and have a chance to save a lord's daughter from a terrible fate, all in the space of a single evening within the fiction of the world.

The boxes surrounding text indicate sections that may be read aloud by Gamemasters to their players without fear of giving away too much, and contain information and descriptions of the various elements of the adventure the character will experience first-hand. Text outside the boxes will contain information for the Gamemaster only, such as details the characters must discover, NPC statistics, combat information, etc. Before attempting to play this scenario, the Gamemaster should thoroughly familiarize themselves with all the text, and be prepared to respond to the unexpected, since there are many different ways this scenario might be resolved, for good or ill, and players should feel free to carry it in whatever direction best suits their methods of play.

I. Arrival in Sadahm

Two of the player characters arrive in Sadahm, capital city of Tishinia, on the eve of an important festival celebrating the dead, which is ironic, considering that they have come in the hopes of saving someone from death's very clutches.

This initial section should merely set the tone for the players, and should not be "played through", but instead merely read to the players in preparation for their arrival at the palace of the lord they have come to see. Feel free to show the players visual references of any of the things described in this section.

In central Dárdünah there lay the nation of Tishinia, trade capital of the world, and home to jánah of a thousand varieties and cultural backgrounds. Situated as it is between the Sea of Vigára to the north, and the Gulf of Bhütai to the south, the goods, the travelers, and the riches of the world seem to flow through its lands, all of which are controlled to some degree by those who sit in the seats of power within the walls of the mightiest of its cities, Sadahm.

This great city, like most across the world, expands outward in larger and larger circles from its very heart, the grand temples of the Mángai and the palace of the ruler himself, Kémentos VI, Illustrious Aryah and Isvar over all of Tishinia. Beyond this stretches the lush estates of the Houses and Lines of the Noble Caste, the Sunborn, blessed at birth by the light of both suns, and bearers of the wisdom of leadership

and nobility in the eyes of the immortal Devah, who look down from the Edge of Heaven. Past the walls surrounding the estates of the nobility one will find the heady scents and rich spices of the Merchants Circle, a place of teahouses and bazaars, auction blocks and gambling dens; a place where a thousands pleasures can be bought and sold, and the crystal coins of many nations pass through a thousand hands each moment, beggar, artisan, lord, and thief alike. Another set of high walls separates all of this from the Commons Circle, where lay the humble homes and some of the workplaces of the inner city's Peasant Caste. But it is further, beyond even these simple dwellings, at the very edges of the city itself, among the squalor and filth of the Outcaste and the shacks of the poorest members of the city's wretches, upon which the attention of our story, having just begun, must now focus. For upon the dusty western road, lined by the blue-barked maspéra trees that have long since dropped the last of their autumn fruit, rides two jánah bearing most dire and secretive tidings indeed.

Among those the mounted jánah pass here, there are few who would truly care about those whom this news concerns, for the lower castes seldom lose sleep over issues in the lives of the nobles, though the rumors would surely fly as swift as a dromi. And there are fewer still among the dirty masses moving past the riders towards their hovels and a well-deserved night's rest, who would think, even for a moment, that they would ever hope to consort with jánah such as the travelers. For even covered with road dust and weary from their journey, despite the rough cloth carefully concealing the finer silks of their garments, the condor and rattlesnake astride their powerful mountain chinti strike any onlookers as impressive and dangerous figures.

They are obviously Sunborn, their bearing identifying them as members of the Noble Caste, even though their ceremonial caste-braids lay hidden beneath their traveling cloaks. The crystal and amber blades the rattlesnake carries attest to his skills, and the flail that lays coiled at his side brooks no curious banter nor any idle stares at either of them as he intently guides their mounts past the barefoot laborers and their draft-beasts towards the main gates of the city. Soon it will be False Dusk at the setting of the smaller blue sun Edü, and once the evening prayers are through, and the second sun, fiery orange Lokáynü, has passed beyond the horizon, they will be expected before the presence of the one they have been sent to see, the Great Aryah Ayrram (EYE-rom), head of the Line of Sisyáh, and ally to the travelers' own House and Line.

In the past the Line of Sisyáh had remained somewhat neutral concerning the intrigues surrounding the court of the Isvar, since they are not a royal Line themselves, and have never maintained their affairs with the belief that they could one day sit upon the throne. In recent years, however, there has

been talk among those well-connected within the halls of the Isvar's Palace that an interest has grown between Viálu, nephew of the Isvar, and Anavári, daughter of the Great Aryah Ayrram, leading to many conclusions concerning the bright future of the Line of Sisyáh, and its eventual relations with the ruling Line itself.

With all such issues, however, there follows secret jealousy, and the danger of reprisals from a faceless foe. Though the line of Sisyáh itself has no open enemies, there are other Lines whose positions at court might be threatened by the Isvar's favor swinging towards new members of the family, should such unions arise. Indeed, should such a marriage bring the Sisyáh Lineage the chance to prove their worth in loftier arenas within the notice of the Isvar, would their elevation to the place of a true Noble Line not be far away?

It is because of the traveling companion of the rattlesnake that the two riders have made this journey from the distant city of Telátah, and why they have taken the dusty roads instead of much swifter passage aboard a skyship. The condor, swathed in his concealing cloak, bears the markings of a sir'hibas, a mystic Seer of their own house, the House of Sámtra of the Line of Inuvkah. In magic ritual, within private chambers laced with pungent incense and the sounds of humming crystals, the Seer had gazed into the Dream and foreseen the gathering shadows of a malevolent danger to the Great Aryah's daughter Anavári, at the hands of a terrible figure cloaked in flowing white, like the specter of death itself, and had envisioned great suffering within the House of Ayrram. It was within this same ritual of Dreamwalking that the condor had felt horrible, cold eyes upon him, and knew that another sir'hibas had observed his prying gaze. A final impression of poison crystal blades wielded by shadowy figures aboard a skyship was enough to convince him that any attempt to warn their ally must come in secret, and over land, for the Great Aryah Ayrram had no Seer of his own, and time was of the essence.

And so, with the blessings of their own Aryah Sámtra, the Seer and his deadly companion and guard made their way across western Tishínia to arrive at the fortified walls of its capital city Sadahm on the very eve of the Feast of Mürtyu, judge of the Cycle of Life and Death, and Guardian of Souls. The whole city prepares for this solemn festival, honoring those who have passed on throughout the year, who now go to dance at the Edge of Heaven. The festival also serves as a time when respected and beloved members of the community walk through the streets with painted lanterns lit to drive away wicked spirits, and to guide good spirits to a feast held in their honor. Colorful ribbons and streamers dyed in the various blue, green, and purple hues of the three moons adorn windowsills and doors, and paper lanterns painted with lurid images of monsters, gods, and demons are hung across streets and over the open fronts of merchant stalls

and teahouses. The smells of rich foods and sweet desserts assail the senses of anyone passing through the marketplaces as poor and wealthy alike prepare for tonight's feast by purchasing all that their guests may require. Past all of this do the travelers ride, well aware that there may be little celebration for them this night, because of the word they bring, and the duties that honor may require them to perform.

It is beyond the great gates of the Nobles Circle, after having shown their caste braids so that they might be admitted by the guards there, that the travelers pause before a small shrine to the Devah, gazing into a reflecting pool and bowing their heads in response to the Evening Prayers whose mournful sounds now roll across the hushed city. The māngai in their tall minarets will continue to sing their devotions for the next hour till the setting of the second sun, but the weary riders pause only for a score of minutes before continuing on their way to the House of Ayram, past the cultured gardens and rich palaces of the lords of Sadahm. Their duty weighs heavily upon them, for on this night, if they fail, the daughter of their noble ally may perish.

II. The Feast of Mūrtyu

This festival (described below) is in honor of: **Mūrtyu** - goddess of change, Judge of the Cycle, guardian of dead souls who usually appears as a raven though other "death" animals are common - jackal, hyena, vulture, crow, wolf, etc. She is always shown seated and holding a scale.

Murtyu is one of the Devah (gods of Dárdūnah). There are many different devah, whose numerous shrines and temples can be found throughout the world, each one considered one of the sons and daughters of the "Great Mother and Father". These two prime gods are often referred to, but seldom called upon, since



the teachings of the Satyan Faith (the primary devah-worshipping faith in central Dárdūnah) say that it is through worship of their children, the Devah, that prayers are answered.

Though the players will pass straight through the city initially without interacting with festivalgoers, the more detailed description of the holiday below will serve to help the players understand what they may see as they venture out into the city as this scenario unfolds.

Feast of Mūrtyu - The final celebration of the year, before the coming of Sheetal, the cold season, this feast celebrates the devah Mūrtyu. It is she who is the Judge of the Great Cycle of Life and Death, and on this day, which in most countries falls upon the evening of the last day of the month of Bhūta, and heralds in the first day of the month of Atmāni, the month of souls, the spirits of those who have gone to dance at the Edge of Heaven are honored, and the duhāmas of the damned are driven away. On this sacred night, dressed in flowing robes the color of mourning (white), sombre chanting jānah emerge from their houses bearing paper lanterns painted with the fearful faces of avenging and angry Devah, and even demons. These glowing lanterns, usually carried at the ends of long and bending sticks, are bourn through places generally associated with fear and caution (dark forests along the fringes of town, the sites of ancient battles, shadow-filled alleyways and abandoned buildings, and any other place where superstition and childhood fear might take hold of one's senses) to drive away wicked spirits, who naturally fear the painted images upon the lanterns, and beckon lost good spirits to follow them back to their homes, where a feast will have been laid out for the living and the dead alike (vacant seats with food left out for them till morning). It is believed that the goddess Mūrtyu will take pity on these lost souls and judge them fit to follow her back to the Edge of Heaven once the feast draws to a close. Most houses, inside and out, are also filled with decorations and shrines that honor those who have passed on, before which are placed gifts of sweet candies and pastries. The children and adults also enjoy similar treats while listening to haunting, cautionary tales of excitement and terror, as the festivities continue throughout the night, and the flickering lights of hearth and home drive away the shadows. This is the last feast of the seasons, and is intended to bring families together to share the final bounties of the harvests before the chill winds that blow during Sheetal blanket the lands in fouler weather and overcast skies during the whole of the month of Tuhina.

III. Ayrram's Palace

The walls of the palace of the Great Aryah Ayrram glimmer with torchlight in the cool mid-winter dusk, and guards of the evening watch can be seen on the parapets above, relieving the earlier watch of their duties after prayer. The last of the servants can still be seen making their way down from some of the upper walls, after having performed their duties lighting the various torches in preparation of night. It is apparent that the Line of Sisyáh is of no little means, as the richness of even the outer walls of the palace attest. Cultured lawns and gardens adorn the road's edge outside the palace, and the beautifully pruned scarlet canopies of ayurbála trees, carefully planted a wise distance from the outer walls, give the lush grounds a sculptural quality.

From a tall tower of the palace itself the fluttering and keening cries of messenger krátellah, keen-sighted and swift of wing, can be heard as the last of them return for the evening. A trained suthra such as this bore word of the travelers' arrival merely a day before. And the warriors that stand before the tall gates observe the travelers' approach with interest, but no surprise as they note their caste, and bright eyes scan casually over the embroidered sigils displaying the colors and heraldry of the House of Sámtra.

A large, fairly friendly, yellowish dingo, wearing polished chitin armor and smelling of minty pipe-smoke, will approach the players, addressing them in a slight Ishpūrian accent, asking them if they are from the line of Inuvkah, and confirming that they are the jānah the aerial message spoke of. He is Bograh, Master of the Evening Watch. If all goes well with the questioning, they will be told they are expected before the Great Aryah, and will be escorted by the dingo through the inner passages of the palace to the Reception Hall, there to meet his lord. He will also mention that the travelers are not the only members of Inuvkah who've decided to visit this eve, for others from a local House in Sadahm arrived just before evening prayers, and are even now in discussion with Lord Ayrram, vassals of the kindly Aryah Arhidásah, a Seer and a Warrior as well.

The riding chinti will be stabled just within the outer gate, and the players will be allowed to brush away the dust from the road, stow their travel packs, and arrange themselves as they wish before being escorted within. Bograh will continue chatting with them as they settle their mounts in, answering any questions he's able to, as well as asking any that may come to his mind, including why they come.

The Palace Grounds

As you are led beyond the mighty gate and onto the private grounds of the palace, its very size is somewhat intimidating. Large, long pools of still water,

adorned with flowering lily pads, reflect the gentle glow coming from numerous wicker cages containing fat and colorful bioluminescent jugánu worms, which are hung from arches that line the walkway. On either side, beyond these pools are the parade grounds and large open areas where can be seen several private skyships, anchored into the earth and floating gently in the evening breezes. "...Guests of the Great Aryah, from the island of Aytya, across the Gulf ...", says the dingo. "The Lord Ayrram is known for his extravagant feasts and generous hosting. I'm assuming you'll be staying here for the Festival!"

As you are taken into the main palace itself, you pass more guards who nod to your dingo escort, and see servants scurrying here and there, apparently in response to the beginnings of some distant merry-making in warmly-lit chambers seen at the end of a long marble hall decorated with large vases from a dozen different countries, as well as rich tapestries and rugs of rough silk. But the sounds of music and merriment fade as you are led past these entry halls, and eventually through an inner courtyard, more of a garden really, with the sounds of a fountain drawing your attention to a far corner.

There you see, bathed in the gentle glow of the evening sky, and under the watchful eye of two large Honor Guards, one a huge rhino and the other an immense elephant, are two elegantly-dressed jackals who sit talking by the glimmering pool. You recognize them as the son and daughter of the Great Aryah, seen several seasons ago during a visit to your House. As you pass through the inner gardens, they both turn and notice, and one of them, the young lord Márüh, rises, releasing the hands of his sister as he and the imposing elephant begin making their way across the gardens as if following you into the inner palace.

The elephant, another player character, is Arhazbūr, the Honor Guard of the young lady Anavári (subject of the disturbing visions), and has been summoned by Márüh to their Lord's side, specifically because of the words of the other members of the Line of Inuvkah who have already arrived. The Great Aryah wishes to inform his daughter's Honor Guard of the danger Anavári may be in, without alarming her directly. In bringing the elephant to his father's side, Márüh has left his own Honor Guard, the rhino, there to protect her. They will follow the travelers at a distance through the halls into the presence of the Great Aryah, where they will join the audience gathered there.

Audience with the Great Aryah

Beyond the inner gardens, and past a great banquet hall from which comes the delicious smells of the many sumptuous food being prepared in the kitchens nearby, you pass through a great passage lit

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by dozens of small braziers filled with glowing orange Stones of Rabishu. Upon the walls of this large corridor, intricate mosaics depict colorful scenes, the history of the Line of Sisyáh, and at the far end, large wooden double-doors bound in amber open to admit you into the reception hall of the Great Aryah Ayrram.

The Lord Ayrram, a male jackal of middle age, sits upon a chair of finely carved exotic woods covered comfortably in giant moth pelts dyed in the colors of his House and Line. To his right, an empty chair, equally as exquisite, upon which you know once sat his beloved Lady, now dancing at the Edge of Heaven some seven years. A shrine honoring her has been erected for this holiday, and stands nearby wreathed in the smoke of incense and the sweet smell of her favorite fruit, which rests in a crystal bowl at its base. Behind the Great Aryah stands Diválu, a muscular bighorn ram, the lord's imposing Honor Guard, who eyes you carefully as you approach the dais upon which his lord sits. To the side of Ayrram, on his left, there stands three other members of his household; Dastánah, female mockingbird, the skilled Assistant Weapons Master of the House, Gramír, an athletic-looking male wolf and Assistant Suthra Master, and finally Umratáli, a male seaturtle bearing the saffron robes and ceremonial tattoos of a Mángai Healer Sir'hibas.

Standing before the Great Aryah there are two other jánah as well, each of who turns toward you as you approach. One, a male genet cat, is dressed in purple and blue robes, and bears the markings of a sir'hibas. You know him as Istvan, Seer of the Aryah Arhidásah. The other, a green male crested lizard, can be none other than Nutmál, Master of the Honor Guards for the House of Arhidásah, and that lord's personal bodyguard during public occasions. They both acknowledge the arriving members of their Line with a respectful nod.

The fact that they are here means that they too must have brought important news before the Great Aryah, and the somber mood of the gathered janah seems to indicate that this news may be as dire as your own. As you bow deeply to the Lord Ayrram, there is the dull sound behind you of the servants closing the heavy doors of the hall, and following that sound, the weighty footfalls of the armored elephant as he and the young lord Márüh make their way forward to stand near you before the Great Aryah. It is now that the dingo Bograh introduces you: "Great Aryah, it is my honor to bring before you, Valnérah, a Seer of her House, and Héshrim, warrior and guard, both noble Sunborn of the House of Sámtra of the Line of Inuvkah."

The Great Aryah Ayrram will greet the new arrivals warmly, and will introduce the elephant Honor Guard Arhazbür to them, noting that his son has brought the Honor Guard to this audience so he may be informed of

a potential danger to his charge's life. The others have also been gathered, because within an hour, they will be accompanying other members of their House, as well as many guests, to an observance of the holidays near the edge of the Commons Circle. Though the guests from the House of Arhidásah have already mentioned that they have heard word through their spies of a potential threat, and have come to offer the services of their Seer Istvan, he would wish to hear the message of his newest guests now, since the House of Sámtra has apparently chosen to send a similar set of jánah bearing word as well.

Dire News from Inuvkah

The members of the House of Sámtra are now given the chance to speak the message they have come so far to deliver. In the box below are the main details of the Dream Vision that prompted their journey.

Valnérah, while in the trance of Dreamwalking many weeks ago, a vision came to you of Anavári, the beautiful daughter of the Great Aryah, walking in darkness through mists, among the stone blocks of ancient ruins, the pale glow of a lantern lighting her way. This Dream seemed a symbolic one, for from some gathering of inky blackness behind her, a terrible figure arose swathed in pale and rotting funerary garments, with arms outstretched like some hideous hungry spirit, a khaujiva. From out of the shadows beneath its tattered white robes there came streaming what seemed like an endless array of vicious makri (large scorpion-like insect suthra the size of wolves or bigger), except they were black like onyx with white stripes down their faces and scythe-like pincers covered in blood. These horrors descended upon the helpless Anavári stinging and tearing her asunder. This scene became veiled in shadow as in the night skies above, the faces of the moons became the faces of her father, the Great Aryah, and other loved ones of the Line of Sisyáh, weeping and lamenting her loss.

It was then that you became determined to travel by skyship here to warn the House of Ayrram of this terrible vision, but before you emerged from the Dream, another vision indicated the folly of this plan, for you perceived yourself aboard a skyship, sailing straight across the Gulf of Bhütai. And in this new vision, dark shadows crept toward you, emerging from the dark corners of the ship, glittering crystal blades dripping with poison fell upon you, and the Dream went dark as you awoke from the trance with a cry.

The Dream Vision convinced you of several things; the Great Aryah's daughter was in terrible danger, that attempting to take a skyship to bring this warning could mean death to you, and finally, that this could only mean that some aspect of this threat would have been aboard that ship, indicating its roots could be from their own home city of Telatah.

As this information is related, the two members of the House of Arhidásah, Nutmál and Istvan will look at one another and react as if some aspects of the vision have meaning to them. Once the travelers have spoken their piece, Nutmál will step forward to offer more insight into the affair, corroborating the potential value of this vision in his throaty, sibilant voice.

“As you know, Great Aryah, my informants told me that they had overheard two unidentified jánah speaking in the more private back rooms of the bathhouse known as Jardeen’s Jewel, one with a great and deep voice who spoke in a central Tishinian accent that they believe was a vajrah (a mammal of some kind), who seemed to be listening and responding to another who spoke mostly in harsh whispers with a hint of a western Tishinian accent, like those of our cousins here (motioning to the condor and the rattlesnake), which they believed to be a sarpah female (reptile or amphibian), perhaps a serpent of some kind.

“Though not all of their conversation could be overheard, the unknown sarpah spoke of someone she referred to as the “Honored One”, who was apparently displeased with the closeness that has formed between the lady Anavári and the “royal whelp”, a title we assume refers to the Isvar’s nephew Viálu, whom we have heard favors your daughter. This unknown sarpah apparently held some sway over the deep-voiced vajrah, for she bid him bring a permanent end to this budding relationship in a way that would bring no harm to the Line of Varám, indicating that Viálu should not be targeted. The deep-voiced jánah was concerned that there would be little opportunity to fulfill this request, considering the secure nature of the Palace of Ayrram, but the sarpah assured him that “what he had done at her master’s behest” would insure he had his chance at Anavári’s next public appearance, she believed, in “that place” so very far from the protective embrace of her father’s palace.

“Soon, and with great silence the mysterious sarpah woman left, and a short time later my informants could hear the other rise, with much displacement of bathwater. Neither left by the front archway, and so my people were unable to see who they were. Great Aryah, it is my belief that they will strike tonight, when your beloved daughter walks among those who serve your house in the Common’s Circle, in honor of the Feast of Mürtyu!”

Aryah, though obviously concerned, grimly reminds his son that all their holdings and the welfare of their house and Line depend upon the good will of the lower castes who serve them. Each caste depends on the other to fulfill their roles, as the Devah have wisely written, thus is balance and peace maintained. The roles of the nobility are defined by the service provided to their vassals, and cannot be shirked, even in the face of danger, lest under similar circumstances, those who serve the nobility abandon them as swiftly. If asked what they had planned to do this evening, the Great Aryah responds:

Tonight, as you know, is the Feast of Mürtyu, where the duháma of the dead are honored, and wicked spirits are driven away. As has become custom in Sadahm, the noble Lords of the Houses and Lines perform a service to those under their protection, the farmers, the merchants, the laborers in the fields. These jánah, though of lesser caste, are the foundation of our prosperity, for without them and their works we would have no wealth,...no influence in the courts of the Isvar. Without their efforts, the power of the Nobles would diminish, as would the strength we bring to our nation as learned jánah, and warriors. On this night, however, our task is simple; Lords send their children, as the Devah were sent by the Great Mother and Father, Mahiámbah and Mahitáytah, to guide and protect the jánah of the world. It may seem a rustic tradition, but with great honor, our children are sent to represent us before our people, leading the way in the evening processions, lanterns in hand, to drive away the haunts of the dark places, and once returned to the homes of the lower castes, raise the first drink in honor of their beloved friends and



Issues of the Evening

Obligations of the Nobility

The Great Aryah’s son Márüh, who has remained during these talks, will beg that his father Ayrram, cancels the evening’s agenda, or at least excuses Anavári from attending the excursion to the edge of the city, but the Great

family, who dance now on the Edge of Heaven.

Tonight, it is my daughter who is expected to represent my House and Line among the silk-dyers who have been a loyal fountain of wealth and prosperity for me and all my holdings, just as you, my son, must walk among the warehouses of the auctioneer's samüt, where that fire took so many lives last year. This cycle has been a year of great sadness for the samüt of the silk-dyers, for some terrible curse seems to have fallen upon their children.

Beyond the North Gate of the city, east of the road at the edge of the Commons Circle, where the houses of the peasants are built among the maspéra trees, reside the families of the Silk-dyers' Samüt. The reek of their plastered dying vats insures that they must ply their trade far from the heart of the city itself, but they are a good, hardworking people, and highly skilled at their arts, the designs of their batiks unmatched throughout all of Tishinia. Just northwest of their community, near the edge of the forest and the crumbling stones of the old outer wall, is an ancient stepwell, many staircases deep, and richly ornamented in the fashion of the Dynasty of Ürud, though parts of it now lay in ruin. I visited there, once, when I was a child, on the way to the nearby shrine of Krilárah at the Natha River, and was impressed by the artistry of the forgotten hands that made it. The stepwell is valuable to the silk-dyers and the surrounding communities, because it is a fresh source of calm water for them, and a safe place to escape the heat. Or at least, it has been until recent months.

Three of the community's children have died there under hideous circumstances, drowned in the depths of the stepwell. The waters are deep and dark, and the paving stones that surround it quite slippery, but children and adults alike often gathered there to swim. Still, word from the silk-dyers is that on at least one of the terrible occasions, a young cub who was accompanying a friend to the well to gather water in the evening, saw him stoop to fill his urn. There was a splash, and the child watched as his friend seemed to slip and fall into the water. Though many would tip into the waters as they played, this time it was different, for the child cried out and seemed to struggle to stay above the surface, then suddenly vanished as if something drug him below. When his friend did not resurface, the horrified cub ran back to their settlement to bring help, and when the adults arrived, an elder supplied glowing stones of Rabishu so that a diver could attempt to find the boy in the depths of the black pool. At the bottom, in a sunken grotto formed by the springs that feed the well, was found the child's body, pale-orange in the dim light of the glowing crystals. In death, we were told, his eyes were wide and mouth open, yet his body seemed relaxed, and sat upright in the very center of the sunken chamber seemingly at rest, his arms hanging

loosely and drifting in the water as if beckoning others to join him.

No evidence was found by any of the adults, even by those who are skilled hunters among them, of anything having entered or exited the waters of the well before the rescuers came, other than the children that night. They believe that whatever dragged the child to his death remained within the well. Two other children who have disappeared in recent months have been found in this same way, and the silk-dyers now fear the place, thinking that the once kindly water spirits that they believed lived there have become angered, and evil. They have begged us to come on this Feast of Mürtyu to drive away the evil spirits, and to bring the blessings of the Devah to the stepwell again. It was my daughter who chose this task for herself, and these members of my House were to attend her.

Soon my other guests who have arrived will begin dressing in the traditional white robes worn on this night as well, and some will join my son, and others my daughter. They have come to enjoy my hospitality this eve, and see the night's activities as a quaint and amusing local custom, albeit a solemn and eerie one, and look forward to returning here with my children afterward to enjoy the final harvest feast of the season. They must not know of these other concerns that you have brought to my attention, lest it strain my relations with them...nor must my daughter know, for already the thought of the silk-dyers' woes seems to disturb her, though her honor and pride will not let her admit it to me. But...I am her father,...I know....

Fears of Ambush and Other Dangers

Nutmál will inform the Great Aryah that he had not heard the tale concerning the drowned children, but fears that their deaths may have been orchestrated in some way to insure that his daughter would be asked to preside over the rituals of Mürtyu for them. Diválu the bighorn ram, Master of the Honor Guards for Ayrram will mention that no trace was found of a mortal assailant, and mention again that it had been young lady Anavári herself who had chosen the task of the silk-dyers. But her brother will insist that any who knew of her knew that she had lavished gifts upon the samüt of the silk-dyers, for they had been generous to her with specially designed cloth dyed in patterns that had greatly pleased her. Many were aware that she was beloved of them, and that they felt their own fortune with the Line of Sisyáh was tied to her good will. It would seem only obvious that she would choose to serve them as a noble child if they were in need during the Feast of Mürtyu. Surely this MUST be a trap! It is Istvan the Seer of Arhidásah who then speaks, saying that he would agree with the young lord, if for no other reason than the fact that the vision of Valnérah seemed to confirm it. He feels that there is more to learn, and quickly, before the obligations of the Nobles must be

met this evening, and recommends having the sir'hibasi here attempt another vision, hopefully better-preparing those who should accompany the lady Anavári for what dangers may arise.

A Plan is Formed

With all of this input, hopefully from the players as well as the NPCs, the Great Aryah will come to the decision that the Seers should enter as swiftly as they can into Ritual, and seek visions that might enlighten them further, warning them that they have less than an hour before his House members and the guests must depart for the community of the silk-dyers by skybarge. Istvan states that, with the help of the Seer of Sámtra, their ritual may go more swiftly, and that in fact, if others are willing, he can attempt to draw them into the Dream Vision to observe, if they are able to enter into a meditative trance first. Nutmál says he is willing, as does the young lord Márüh. This should be a clue to the players that they should volunteer their help as well, and if not, they will be reminded of their duties by the Great Aryah, who will speak of the Mangai Healer delivering his prayers and any other help, his assistant Weapons Master as extra protection of course, and the assistant Suthra Master, in case there are insectoid danger lurking in the dark waters of the stepwell, or in the nearby woods. Of course his daughter's Honor Guard will attend her, and the members of the House of Sámtra are invited to lend their expertise as well, if they feel it would bring honor to their House and Line. Armed with whatever knowledge they obtain from within Dream, they should accompany his daughter's entourage to the stepwell, and hopefully bring an end to the trouble there, and hopefully unravel the dangerous threat to the lady Anavári. Márüh, of course, must go into the city to fulfill his own obligations before the Feast. And Nutmál states that, though he will also partake of the vision, he must go before his lord Arhidásah and report what has transpired before he can decide what he must do next.

The Sir'hibasi Convene in Ritual

Dreamwalking

Istvan will work with Valnérah, the condor Seer, to quickly prepare a Ritual of Dreamwalking in a private chamber provided by the Great Aryah. Servants will assist in helping to set up the chamber so that all the participants may sit, and guards will be posted so that privacy is assured. The player of Umratáli, the sea turtle Mángai Healer, should be reminded that there are many ritual supplies in his own chambers that would help, such as braziers, incense, crystal singing bowls, and other such accoutrements that may help them all enter into deep meditation. Umratáli also has skills in chanting droning meditative prayers that will allow them all to focus through the ritual. Once set up and ready to begin, the description below should be read to the players, including various dice rolls such as the various available Ritual Disciplines appropriate to the ritual

made by sir'hibasi, and base Essence Rolls ($\frac{1}{2}$ Essence rounded up) modified by Concentration Talent dice made by other guests, to determine each player's success in observing these visions. Specific dice rolls required will be noted in parentheses after the boxed description, and should not necessarily be read aloud.

Once you are all in place, gathered in a circle around the three sir'hibasi, the Seer Istvan rings an obsidian chime, Valnérah lights the incense and begins to hum deep in her throat, and the Mángai Umratáli slowly begins rubbing the edges of a shallow crystal singing bowl, while intoning low murmuring prayers that fill the ritual chamber with a sonorous and soothing chanted melody, which is soon picked up by the other two in repetitive harmony. In the midst of the strange night's tidings that weigh heavily on all your minds, a sense of peaceful serenity envelops you.

(Both Istvan and Valnérah must now make a Dreamwalking Ritual Skill roll to each attempt the Discipline "Passing the Veils of Dream" at no difficulty modifier, which allows their spirits to enter the Dream itself, leaving their bodies behind in trance. If Valnérah succeeds, read the following aloud to her player.)

In your mind's eye you see the chamber you are in seem to vanish around you into strange mists and motes of light, and a gentle glow suffuses your awareness, enveloping everything around you. Before you, there seems to form a configuration of many glowing swathes of light, sparkling like motes of dust caught in the colorful beams of a prism. As you successfully invoke the Discipline that parts the Veils of Dream, the shimmering bands of light that float before begin to unravel themselves, folding away from the center of their strange formation like vast petals opening upon a blossom, or phantom-like silken curtains of light and color. With each intoning of the ritual's mantra, the passage beyond the Veils of Dream becomes wider, until your duháma is released from your body to slip through, enmeshed for a moment in the diaphanous portal before emerging on the other side, surrounded by the glittering vapors, shifting nebulae, and flitting shadows of the Dreamworld. The strange sensations seem overwhelming for a moment before your mystic disciplines take firm hold, bringing stability to the scene around you and drawing focus upon the ethereal form of Istvan the Seer who emerges near you as if seated upon roiling cloud and vapor. His eyes are closed and he seems to be in deep concentration.

Istvan is attempting to bring the Mangai sir'hibasi Umratáli into the Dream with them. Umratáli's player must now make a successful Ritual Skill roll, proving that he has achieved a meditative trance, and the GM must make a successful Ritual Skill roll for Istvan to use his Discipline of Bringing Others into the Dream. If successful, he will ask both player characters to assist

him in his attempt to draw the others into the Dream, if they have successfully drifted into trance. To determine this, have each remaining player make a base Essence Roll ($\frac{1}{2}$ their Essence in dice, rounded up, plus any Concentration Talent dice they possess). Each who succeeds has entered into trance, and may be pulled into the Dream if the collaboration of the other sir'hibasi is successful. Istvan, with the Support of the others (as per the rules of Assistance) may now make his Ritual Skill roll for Bringing Others into the Dream at a +1 dice bonus, as long as the two player sir'hibasi each succeed with a single Ritual Skill roll of their own (since they are adding their basic Essence to Istvan's attempt. If all rolls are successful, then the others will all appear in the Dream, and each of the Seer sir'hibasi may use their Disciplines to Uncover the information below, bit-by-bit. Istvan will urge Valnérah's player to lead the way, since it was her initial vision that prompted their long journey.

More Terrors Revealed

Within the Dream, the if the Dreamwalking players make successful Dreamwalking Ritual Skill rolls, the Gamemaster should give them various indications of the following bits of information, all of which the others in the Dream will be allowed to see and experience. They may see the stepwell in its heyday as part of some great lord's estate, long ago when the capital of Tishinia was in far away Telatah, before the mighty city of Sadahm was even built nearby. They will also see the assassination of this lord's beautiful daughter in the stepwell, which was her favorite place to relax, play music, and sing. They will see the estate being abandoned eventually, and fall into ruin, but will be given some sign in the vision that her gentle and benevolent spirit remained in the stepwell. Centuries later, they will feel her joy that a city thrives nearby, and children come to play in her well. Generations after generations of visitors to the well feel her blessings and her peace. The recent murders of the children in her well (though the vision does not clarify the full nature of the killings, however), causes her great anger and sadness, which overwhelms the viewers and obscures that part of the vision with a fearful and terrifying darkness.

The vision shifts and they see the stepwell and the land surrounding it as if from far above at night, but this seems to fade, becoming a Vratha Spider's giant web. Three drops of glistening dew hang from its very edges, slowly trickling toward the center, attracting a beautiful dromi which flies toward it, unaware of the danger. A strange and haunting melody can be heard as if accompanying the fated dromi. Straying near the center of the web, which appears like a funnel winding down into darkness, the dromi remains fascinated by the sparking droplets, and then is suddenly caught unaware as the hideous Vratha Spider violently emerges from the web's funnel with a terrible noise as it snatches the shrieking dromi and withdraws into its hideous lair. The players will be thrust out from the Dream, followed

by the haunting sound of a faraway female voice softly crying.

IV. Walking with the Dead

With their awakening from the vision, they will all hear the gonging of the hour resonate through the halls of the palace, and the young lord Márüh, the Great Aryah's son, will tell them that the skybarges must leave soon, and that they all must prepare. He will express his gratitude to the visiting sir'hibasi, and will mention that he now feels more than ever that the only evil at the stepwell tonight will be that brought by their very mortal enemies. He begs them to take care of his beloved sister, and to teach their enemies fear. With that everyone goes to quickly get dressed in the season's traditional robes of white, promising to speak more once they gather on their skybarge.

Sky-barge Travel to the Edge of Sadahm

The transport to the edge of the city is one of the Great Aryah's grand floating pleasure-barges, held aloft by banks of large skycrystals, lined along their sides, that seem to glow dimly blue in the light of Dárdūnah's three moons. Once everyone is aboard, and the servants and sailors have unscrewed the large land-anchors from the ground, the delicate amber sheets of rolling slats, infused with the mineral dust that dampens the skycrystals' effects, are pulled away into the lower deck, and the vessel begins its slow ascent into the colorful night sky. The Great Aryah has many guests this night, and their spirits do not seem to match those of your group as the journey commences. They, of course, have no idea that there is danger ahead, and by the very command of the lord Ayrram it must remain that way, an order that applies to his lovely daughter as well. She can be seen mixing with the other guests, sharing in their jests and listening intently to their own tales that pertain to this night's festivities. Looking at her, though, one can see that in the back of her mind there is the thought of the somber nature of the duty she must perform, and this she eventually begins sharing as the flight over the city gets well under way. The other guests, too, mix freely with you all from time to time, amidst the passing of drinks and small delicacies carried by humble and silent servants, and each of you must politely deal with them as the scores of minutes pass. Finally, however, comfortable groups seem to form here and there as the carousers settle, and you gather into smaller groups as well, so as to arouse less suspicion.

The first group that could form would be that of the mockingbird weapons-master and the wolf assistant

suthra master, who will have brought his trained kelléndu (an insectoid mantis-dog-like suthra), who will sit chittering obediently at his side. They will be joined by Nutmál, who it seems has asked the barge to drop down near the House of Arhidásah, so that he may report to his lord. He can stay only a short while, but changed his mind about coming aboard the barge after the Dream Ritual. He will let the players know that at first he believed the assassins could be aboard this very ship, having arrived as part of the “guests” from over the waters of the Gulf. But after sharing the vision, he now feels that the greater threat may already be in place, waiting for the players’ arrival, and that they should remain very aware of their surroundings once they arrive. Further, he thinks that the threat may come from the Line of Yádruh, rivals of the Line of Inuvkah. He suspected this before, but the news of the vision carried by the House of Sámtra makes him surer, especially because of the strange black and white striped markings on the “faces” of the dream-makri that emerged from under the phantom’s death-shroud. The Great Aryah of the Line of Yádruh,...is a badger. With this, the barge should drop to street-level in a park already filled with revelers in white robes, bearing the lanterns of the season, and allow Nutmál, dressed like all the rest, to disembark.

The second such group the GM should deal with could be the rattlesnake and the condor, from the House of Sámtra, who could be speaking with the Mangai Umratáli when they are joined by Istvan the Seer near the prow of the ship overlooking the approaching city’s edge. Istvan will ask what the others think of the vision they shared first, but will eventually let them know that he fears the rage and sorrow he felt from the spirit in the well, and worries that she may have become khaujiva, spirits twisted by what they have endured in such a way that they have become harmful to jánah. If this is so then there may truly be a supernatural danger awaiting them, even if there are assassins abroad seeking Anavári’s life. He will especially warn the seaturtle Mangai Umratáli to watch the dark waters of the well, and be prepared should evil arise from within it.

And the third group, unfortunately for the elephant Honor Guard Arhazbūr’s player, can only be composed of himself and the lady Anavári, since it is his duty to remain with her as she moves among her guests. He is allowed to interact with guests as they greet him, and the lady Anavári herself, of course, who has confided in him many times in the years he has served her. She will most certainly trade comments with him during their entire journey. At some point in time, however, she will notice (perhaps after a roll by the GM) that her Honor Guard seems to be in a strange mood, and will ask him if something is wrong. If she is unsatisfied with his answer, she will specifically ask him if something made him upset when he was called away from her to speak with her father, and those strangers who arrived just as her brother came to relieve him of his duty to her momentarily. Further hemming and hawing will result

in her deciding it is time to meet these strange guests, who have seemed quite “distant” throughout the flight, but as she begins to approach the other players, the barge will arrive at their destination, and she will be forced to attend to other matters.

The Crumbling Outer Wall

As the skybarge begins to descend, those looking over the railings will see the pale light of the moons shining illuminating the somewhat crumbled remains of the outer wall of Sadahm below them. This wall, built when Sadahm had been newly made capital of Tishinia many centuries ago, once separated the Commons Circle from the rougher peasantry and shambles of the cities outer edge, and had been well maintained in ancient days. Now, though it mostly remains intact, its gates are not guarded nor its ramparts patrolled, and seldom does the city pay to make repairs unless the lives of those who live beneath are in danger due to collapse. The gates themselves still have their beauty maintained, but here, near the forested edges away from the major roads, there are many sections where the walls have been allowed to collapse, and it is not uncommon for stray block to be used for other building endeavors.

Many sections of the Outer Wall are said to have been made from the stones of ancient palaces and holdings of former dynasties, such as the one that made the antique stepwell that can even now be seen peeking like a pale hole from within the dark tree canopy below, less than a sixth of a league from the lights twinkling in the nearby settlements. The skybarge full of its festival-goers, circles lazily downward as the lanterns of the silk-dyers’ families below can be seen to gather in a large paved square lined with numerous brick houses and huts. The spiked walls surrounding the drying yards seem to ascend like jagged teeth, but the silks blowing on the skeletal lattice racks within seem to glow in their various colors this night, aided perhaps by a fine, barely-perceptible ground fog that has risen from the nearby river’s edge, illuminant under the moons’ collective gaze. The reek of the nearby dyeing-vats can already be detected, lending an acrid quality to the air, and the guests have already begun to chatter in excitement. The lady Anavári busily moves among them now, quieting them,..and reminding them of the solemnity of their duties this night, though a grand feast awaits them at her father’s palace. Amphorae of wine are brought from below, as are simple delicacies for the families of the silk-dyers, and sweets for their children, all gifts to be presented in the name of the Great Aryah. Servants gather to prepare the barge for disembarking as the vessel slowly settles into the square below.

The GM should now ask the players if there is anything they wish to do or prepare before they disembark. There is a general feeling of muted excitement in the

air, and even the suthra master's trained kellédu will prance about momentarily, awaiting the command to leap to the ground below. Once they get off the barge, both the guests and the players are expected to act with honor and deference to the words of the lady Anavári as she speaks with the elders of the samüt and begins the process of her duties. Though some guests may whisper or make light of their presence here, any such things overheard by Anavári will be frowned upon.

The Laborer's Houses of the Dyers' Samüt

The elder of the silk-dyer's community approaches, an old ring-tailed lemur called Namránu. Various other simians seem to have taken to this occupation as well, for a large number of them, of many different jenu (animal types), gather around the Sunborn and their noble guests, bowing respectfully in honor to their caste. All ages are represented here, from skinny youth to gnarled adults, and the heat of the suns as well as the nature of their work has given many a wrinkled and worn aspect to their countenances. Such is the way of things among the Peasant Caste.

The square has come alive with the light of the many lanterns gathered there, held by peasant and noble alike, and more appear as servants upon the anchored barge busily light others to be handed down to the gathered lords and ladies below them. Now is made even more apparent the stark difference between the lives of those near the center of the city, with their houses lit and decorated by hundreds of colorful paper and cloth lanterns of the season, and their streets garishly adorned with bright streamers and elaborate shrines dripping with extravagant offerings,...and here, among the peasant laborers of the outskirts, where dim hovels of mud-brick and thatch crowd together, untouched by the more mirthful aspects of the Festival, save for the feeble lanterns they carry, and the tattered pale robes that the luckiest among them wear, often handed down for generations.

It is now obvious that the old traditions are not as "quaint" to these peasants, as the distant guests of the Great Aryah had first assumed. And it is this, more than anything else that seems to lull the once-excited nobles into a respectful silence. Lady Anavári seems quite pleased at this change among them.

As servants begin unloading the gifts that have been brought, and other peasants begin quietly setting up the tables that will host the meager Feast the families of the samüt will share, the elders will gather to finish their audience with the Great Aryah's daughter, and to formally enlighten their noble guests as to the nature of their woes, thanking them in advance for the blessings they bring, before eventually leading them along the moonlit trails through the maspéra trees toward the

stepwell.

Players making observational rolls to perceive anything out of the ordinary will notice nothing, though feel free to add creepy details to the surrounding scenery just to put them on edge. It will quickly become apparent to the players, if it hadn't already, that in the dim light of the lanterns, as the gathered jánah begin making their way into the forest, the white robes of all the attendants to this event make everyone look the same, especially in the gloomy mist from the distant Natha river that continues to thicken.

The Stepwell of the Silk Dyers

The quarter-mile walk on winding trails through the shadow-filled Maspéra Forest should do little to calm the nerves of the players. It is filled with the strange night-sounds of chittering wild suthra and rustlings in the leaves. The peasants seem unaffected by these things. The light of the moons helps little here, for the shadows of the tree canopies are made even more stark and deep by contrast. At some point muffled cries will rise from one grouping of the guests, as if from muzzles covered by hands. Running across the ground nearby them, and climbing swiftly into the trees are what appear to be three glistening-wet skeletal children who cry out suddenly in terrible clicking and hissing voices. An atmosphere of fearful alarm begins to descend on the nobility until the elder Namránu hoots out loudly, cutting through the confusion, and telling the noble guests that what they are seeing is merely a trio of wild bandar (insect monkeys), whose shining chitin carapaces reflect the light of the moons. They are harmless, and merely attracted to the smells of the food carried on the noble's clothes. The bandar will vanish into the forests once they realize the jánah have nothing to give them. Finally, after passing the long-topped foundations and ivy-covered masonry and carvings of an ancient and forgotten palace, the party will arrive at a large clearing, well-lit by the three moons, but shrouded in the mists from the distant river.

The enormous clearing seems like a sunken place in the forest, a bowl-like depression filled with scrubby bushes, sparse trees, and the crumbling remnants of walls and columns rising above the wispy ground fog. At its center is yet another large square depression into which the fog seems to sink, surrounded on two sides by the ruins of intricate stone arches and walkways once covered in ancient days. There comes the smell of mineral-rich water, and of late-blooming wild flowers that still spring from the remnants of what surely must have been ancient gardens when this estate was young. Wordlessly, the elder, and the rest of the families of the samüt make their way across the meadow, weaving in between piles of rubble and shattered sculpture as the full view of the timeless stepwell is displayed before you.

Multiple levels of stone nearly fifteen feet high,

descend to sculptured ledges of equal width, like an inverted ziggurat, with numerous sets of chiselled stone, double steps at least seven feet in breadth leading from level to level on each of the sides. Carved deeply into the many vertical surfaces beneath the solid stone steps and in the open faces of the large ledges are many shadowy niches and alcoves, some large enough to be supported by ornate pillars. A number of them have collapsed over the many centuries to reveal the remains of elaborately carved shrines of the Devah within, Krilarah in her obscuring veils, a dancing Kramah wielding his mighty axe. The width of the stepwell, as a whole, becomes smaller as it descends, and finally peering down over the edge toward its bottom more than six stories below, you all can see through the gloom and mist a square yard of sorts, ancient but beautifully-tiled artificial banks of stone surrounding a great, still octagonal pool of water some twenty feet across or more, reflecting the wan faces of two of the moons which float in the skies high above.

It is here that the lady Anavári will take the lead, heading first toward the ruined buildings upon the terrace surrounding two sides of the first level of the stepwell. Beside her will walk two of her trusted attending servants, behind her, Arhazbūr her Honor Guard, the other members of her House, then her father's guests, and finally the families of the silk-dyers. Anavári carries before her upon a thin and bending wooden rod, a large cloth lantern, painted by a holy Mángai with the snarling leonine face of Kramah, Devah of Valorous Battle. Her servants, as well as the sea turtle Umratali's player, will be each asked to carry a large flickering flat candle carved into the shape of a beautiful white lotus and made to be able to float upon the still, dark water below, representative offerings to the three poor children who have recently died here.

Once organized, the entire party, most carrying bobbing paper and cloth lanterns of their own, will begin to pass through the upper ruins, noting as they do the remnant mosaics of the ancient lord's family who once dwelled nearby. Characters making a successful Search Roll will notice a rendering depicting a beautiful white female tiger playing a sitar beside the pool below, a noble woman, with young children of various jenu cavorting nearby. Those who shared the earlier vision will recognize her as the young lady slain here centuries before. As the party begins to take the first steps down, the lady Anavári will begin to sing the song of mourning she chose for this occasion, and any characters making a successful Wit Roll (½ their Wit rounded up in dice), or a successful Music Knowledge roll, will recognize her song as the same haunting melody heard in the vision as the beautiful dromi flew toward its doom. As they continue to descend, players may make whatever Perception-based skill rolls they please, but will only discover the occasional nest of water-beetles disturbed from the numerous dark niches by their passage. The

mist here seems to grow thicker as they descend down into it, blurring the lines of those around them, dampening their robes, and muffling the sounds of Anavári's song and the accompanying prayers intoned by Umratali's player as well as other devoted Mahists among the group.

Once they reach the bottom, gathering around the edges of the pool itself, Anavári will conclude her song, and the murmured prayers of others will die away, leaving the party in a sudden silence. The lady Anavári will abruptly break this silence as she begins to speak about reason she has come, the nature of the season, and the sorrowful deaths of the three children. She will address whatever spirits that guard and protect the well, begging for their benevolence, after which she will, one by one, take the three scented lotus candles and place them into the water, speaking the names of the three children while kneeling down at the carved edge of the dark and utterly still pool.

V. Unwelcome Guests

The Attack

Just as the lady Anavári releases the last candle to float upon the water, speaking the name of the most recent child killed here, an unearthly chorus of wailing sorrow can be heard from above, near the upper rim of the stepwell, and echoing down into its graven depths to surround you all. Over the topmost ledge can be seen rising three gaunt figures in flowing, translucent tattered shrouds, hideously backlit by the pale light of the gibbous moons. Their burning blue eyes glow out from a terrible darkness where their faces should be, and as they raise their hands, a angry fire seems to blossom within their clenched talons. Their wailing now rises in pitch, becoming an unbearable shrieking that seems to come from all sides, joining madly with the terrified cries of the nobles and peasants.

All this is merely an elaborate distraction to hide the nature of what now happens. Only those players who specifically state that they refuse to take their eyes off of the lady Anavári may make a Perception Roll (½ their Perception rounded up). Those who succeed will catch a momentary glimpse of a hulking dark-grayish figure rising smoothly and silently from the misty black waters as if from the moon-shadow of the lady Anavári, its stubby and massive arms seeming to literally envelop her small form in its vast embrace before it effortlessly drags her down into the depths of the well. Her short-lived gasping scream utterly drowned out by the screeching of the ghoulish "specters" above. Those who fail in this roll, or who's attentions were drawn to the distraction above, will have time only to turn and see the rippling waters of the pool, and the unfortunate daughter of the Great Aryah suddenly gone. It is now time for the players to decide how they wish to react, if they haven't begun shouting their actions already.



Dealing with the Three “Ghouls”

These three scoundrels are actually assassins and spies of the Line of Yádruh, from the House of Punim here in Sadahm. Their costumes cleverly created, their glowing “eyes” merely ever-bright, blue stones of Rabishu sewn to dangle from their headpieces, the fire in their hands were red stones of Rabishu, held to touch one another so that they would begin to glow in their grasp. As Nutmal suspected, it is they that have been commanded to participate in this assassination attempt, under the orders of Mocárrman, the female cobra agent of the badger Sagérruh, Great Aryah of the Line of Yádruh himself, who serves another master, whom the assassins have no knowledge of, except that this mysterious jánah is referred to only by the title “Honored One”. None of this information, however, including their own names will they give out unless compelled by torture.

Once they see that their target has been pulled beneath the water, or the instant they are attacked or pursued, they will flee into the woods as directed, after which they will attempt to make their separate ways back into the city, where they will eventually rendezvous back at the House of Punim. If confronted as they flee they are willing to fight to the death if cornered, but will otherwise continue attempting escape, using every deadly tactic they can think of. Each one is a skilled assassin in their own right.

Tsetráhm - (male black whipsnake, oily and manipulative, enjoys showing off, late 20's) Warrior and assassin for the House of Punim. Uses twin crystal swords as primary weapons.

Action Dice: 6 Stamina Levels: 24

Darjin - (male barn owl, speaks only when spoken to, enjoys petty torture of others, mid 30's) Warrior and

assassin for the House of Punim. Uses blowgun and a pair of matching chitin sai as primary weapons, but will attempt to stay out of direct combat and use poison darts.

Action Dice: 7 Stamina Levels: 30

Sárdu - (male grey wolf, thin and athletic, a subservient schemer, late 20's) Warrior and assassin for the House of Punim. Uses amber chain scythe as primary weapon, with which he enjoys the tactic of breaking jánah' necks.

Action Dice: 6 Stamina Levels: 24

Braving the Waters of the Well

There is nothing supernatural about what has dragged the poor lady Anavári below the cold waters of the well. It is Kirmah, yet another Yádruh assassin from the house of Punim, and though huge and bulky, water is his natural element. He is an excellent swimmer, and capable of holding his breath for a very, very long time. It was he who has been coming to this stepwell in the recent months, on orders from Mocárrman, to murder the children of the silk-dyers one at a time, drowning them in the terrible waters of the well, and placing them at the bottom in positions that would terrify their would-be rescuers. He was never discovered coming and going from the well due to a secret, natural underwater passage linking the deepest part of the well to the cool waters of the nearby river Natha, which he proudly discovered on his first reconnaissance visit many months ago.

After pulling lady Anavári below the water, Kirmah is not foolish enough to believe he has time to watch her drown, as he did with the peasant children. He knows that her protectors will soon brave the waters of the well to come to her aid, despite the crude distractions above. To insure he has done his job, he will drag her

struggling, drowning form with him down to the bottom of the well, remove the stone slab he used to hide his underwater exit tunnel, and pull her inside behind him as he attempts his escape. He has practiced this many times, and knows where the exit is in the black, murky water, but even he will be forced to use a small net-bag of glowing red stones of rabishu to aid his journey down the tunnel, which he will hastily tie around his thick wrist. This may be the only chance any diving character may have to see him as he escapes through the underwater tunnel. Any characters that reaches the bottom of the well (over 40 feet below the surface of the water, requiring two successful swim rolls for those with the standard Swimming Skill, and only one roll for those possessing the Animal Ability), will need to make a Search Skill roll at a -2 dice penalty, due to the murky darkness surrounding them. If they succeed, then they will catch first a glimmering of reddish orange light out of the corner of their eyes, then a flash of the white gown of the Aryah's daughter as she is spirited away into the depths of the tunnel. By the time they see this, the lady Anavári will no longer be struggling, dragged limply behind him like the corpse the assassin intends her to be. If the players attempt to deal with the assassin underwater, they should use a Hold Breath Animal Ability, if they have it, allowing them to hold their breath a number of minutes equal to their Ability score plus successes rolled while using it. Character without this Animal Ability can hold their breath a number of rounds (six seconds each) equal to their Vigor before they begin suffering 1 point of Stamina per round due to air deprivation.

Kirmah - (male hippo, fat, muscular, and thick skinned, gruff, sour, and quick to anger, early 30's) Warrior and assassin for the house. Uses chitin punch daggers as primary weapons, but prefers to crush his enemies with his bare hands.

Action Dice: 9 Stamina Levels: 38

The Resolution

For the assassin "ghouls" above, the resolution would be either to let them escape, in which case the players might have to deal with the disappointment of their House and Line, or to use their skills to give chase, in which case the players will either capture them, kill them, or be either wounded and/or killed themselves in turn. The assassins will take no prisoners.

For the hippo assassin Kirmah, the resolution will take place within the pitch-black, six-to-seven-foot wide underwater tunnel somewhere between the bottom of the well and the river. When chased by the players (assuming they succeed on a few more of their Swimming Skill or Ability rolls, and can hold their breath long enough), they will eventually catch up to him deep within the winding and uneven natural tunnel, finally realizing what (if not who) he is (appropriate Knowledge Skill rolls might allow them to identify him). The only light-source in the tunnel is the dimly glowing net-bag dangling from the hippo's wrist. If the player(s) grab

the limp body of Anavári and attempt to wrest her from his grasp, the ensuing momentary struggle will tear the net-bag containing the glowing reddish-orange stones away, causing it to float to the silt-strewn tunnel floor, continuing to light the blurry underwater scene eerily from below. The hippo, however, is quite strong and dangerous, and it will doubtless come to blows as the combatants struggle for control. The hippo will be at a slight disadvantage (-2) on his attack rolls due to his size in this constricted tunnel, as would the elephant if he has attempted to swim down here. If, after a single round of attack, the players are unable to break the clutches of the hippo, he will use his great strength to wrench the apparently lifeless form of Anavári away from the player characters and up beside him in the tunnel, apparently preparing to wring her neck with his bare hands. Either way, read the following description.

Ahead of the hippo you suddenly notice something strange, like writhing movement in the murky darkness. From out of the inky blackness of the tunnel ahead there seems to coalesce twisting forms that curl up from the silt and mud of the tunnel's floor and sides. At first it seems like fetid riverweeds mixed with shell and other decayed matter, and the water around the hippo becomes murkier still as he appears to be struggling with his hold on Anavári.

If there is more than one character in the tunnel to see this, make them all roll a Perception Roll at a -2 (½ their Perception rounded up, -2 dice), while those with the Sir'hibas Talent may add that number of additional dice to their roll as well. Those rolling no successes are only able to make out the fact that the hippo seems to vanish into the dark gloom, leaving the unmoving Anavári behind. A half-success (only one success rolled) means the player sees "something", like tendrils of black ink, seem to wrap around the hippo's head and upper torso, yanking him into the dark tunnel ahead and out of sight. Whereas a full success (or if there is only one player in the tunnel) means the player sees three small furred pairs of terrible rotting hands, like the pale clawing arms of children, reach from the sediment-filled black water of the tunnel ahead to clutch the struggling hippo and drag him away into the unseen depths.

Regardless of what is seen, however, there is the immediate concern of the lifeless Anavári who floats near them in the tunnel, and who may still be able to be saved. By the time any player reaches the surface with her (taking several more successful Swimming Skill rolls) she will be at -1 Stamina, essentially dead, and losing one level per minute unless she can be revived and brought above 0 Stamina using either natural healing skills or magical healing skills.

If she is saved, everyone gathered around her will see her cough up water (or observe the water magically drawn away by glowing golden light if she is healed using a Ritual), and watch as she brings her hands to the face of her savior, whispering "Thank you..." before swooning

into unconsciousness. What her HEALER sees is a very different thing, for at the moment the water leaves her lungs, the face of Anavári seems to shift and change before their very eyes, to become the face of a beautiful white tigress, the exact likeness of the unfortunate ancient noble's daughter murdered here centuries ago. It is she who then cups her healer's face gently in her hands and says "Thank you..." to him before the visage fades away to be replaced by the living, but unconscious lady Anavári.

VI. Conclusions

What Remains

It will be up to the players what to tell the families of the peasants before they leave, and the noble guests as well. Do they reveal the horrors of what they saw in the dark well? Do they speak openly of the gratitude of that ancient spirit after the healing? Do they discuss the attack, and who they think was to blame. Regardless, it is time to leave the outskirts of the city to bring the guests and the daughter of the Great Aryah back safely aboard the skybarge. As the GM, you must decide how either the guests or the peasants will react to any of the news the players give them. They may find relief if they are told of the thankful spirit, or they may be further terrified at reports of the angry spirits within the well. The issues concerning the obvious charade of the "ghouls" and the evidence that the children were murdered by a mortal assailant will no doubt be concerning to all, and will surely lead to further questioning if there are any prisoners taken. There may also be other players and NPCs in need of healing now that the combat is through, perhaps quickly, and if any have died, then funerary pyres must eventually be arranged once the mourning is done. Players successfully completing this adventure should be given 2 Story Points.

Lasting Intrigue

In the world of Dárdünah, rarely do adventures tie themselves neatly up at the end, one thread often leading to another and another. What has happened at the stepwell points to a conspiracy far greater than the attempted assassination of the Great Aryah's daughter. The players may have recognized that it was, if fact, the

Yádrüh who have dared this affront, though there may be no evidence that can prove it. And if the Great Aryah of the Line of Yádrüh, the badger Sagérrüh, wasn't the one who ordered the assassination, but merely the one whose servants carried it out, as indicated in the Seer Valnérah's initial vision, then who was the one who gave the order to have Anavári killed,...and why? Will they attempt to strike again? Deep beneath the waters of the well, did the hippo truly meet his final fate, or was he actually able to escape to the river beyond? And finally, are the angry spirits of the stepwell now truly at peace? All these questions and more could be the fodder for future adventures to come.

Lines/Houses important to this adventure

Here we have a short list of the non-player character members of the Houses and Lines that are relevant to this introductory adventure, along with their general descriptions.

The Line of Varám

The line of the Isvar of Tishinia (Sadahm chapter):

Kémentos VI - (male wolf, silver furred, regal and handsome, mid 40's) current Isvar of Tishinia.

Palanés - (male white wolf, imposing and stern, early 40's) the brother of the Isvar, father of Viálu and the governor of the eastern provinces of Tishinia; lives in Samüdra.

Terüsi - (female dingo, pleasant and attractive, early 40's) the wife of Governor Palanés, mother of Viálu, Lady of the House of Palanés.

Viálu - (male dingo, slender and chiseled, smiles a lot, mid 20's) nephew of the Isvar.

The Line of Sisýáh

Powerful line, not considered royal, though trying to arrange marriages with Varám line (Sadahm Chapter):

Ayrram - (male jackal, very accommodating, early 50's) Great Aryah of the line.

Diválu - (male bighorn, a bit brusque, dry humor, mid 30's) Master of the Honor Guards.

Márüh - (male jackal, sensuous look to him, friendly,



late 20's) heir to the line.

Anavári - (female jackal, quite a dish, very sexy, mid 20's) second born child of Ayrram.

The House of Sámtra (of the Line of Inuvkah - Telátah)

Sámtra - (female coral snake, a bit stuffy but good-natured, late 40's) Aryah of the house.

Anéka - (male ram, flirtatious, known for his love of women, early 40's) Master of the Honor Guards.

The House of Arhidásah (of the Line of Inuvkah - Sadahm)

Arhidásah - (male black bear with a spotted muzzle, 50ish) the Aryah of the house and lover of honeymelons; Head of the Family of Inuvkah in Sadahm.

Nutmál - (male crested green lizard, active and energetic, soft sibilant voice, mid 30's) the new Master of the Honor Guards for the house, in charge of general security and assignment of house honor guards, also serves as Lord's personal honor guard. Master spy and tactician.

Istvan - (male genet, a powerful Dreamwalker, but often opinionated and willful, late 30's) Seer to the house, gifted to it by the Great Aryah of the Line.

The House of Pünim (of the Yádruh Line - Sadahm)

Pünim - (male cheetah, calculating and deliberate, tall, thin and slow-moving, mid 40's) head of the enemy house to Arhidásah's, his treacheries are renown in the city.

Mocárman - (female cobra, silent, very dangerous-looking, lithe, defined build, mid 30's) chief assassin to Punim and very infamous killer, known throughout the nation, usually does not stay in Sadahm but resides with the head of the Yádruh line (on loan) in the northern Tishinian city of Telátah, doubles as his Arena Master.

Sardu - (male grey wolf, thin and athletic, a subservient schemer, late 20's) Warrior and assassin for the house. Uses amber chain scythe as primary weapon, with which he enjoys the tactic of breaking jánah' necks.

Kirmah - (male hippo, fat, muscular, and thick skinned, gruff, sour, and quick to anger, early 30's) Warrior and assassin for the house. Uses chitin punch daggers as primary weapons, but prefers to crush his enemies with his bare hands.

Darjin - (male barn owl, speaks only when spoken to, enjoys petty torture of others, mid 30's) Warrior and assassin for the house. Uses blowgun and a pair of matching sai as primary weapons, but will attempt to stay out of direct combat and use poison

darts.

Tsetrahm - (male black whipsnake, oily and manipulative, enjoys showing off, late 20's) Warrior and assassin for the house. Uses twin crystal swords as primary weapons.

Creatures of Note



Bandar
(BAN-dahr)

Chinti (CHIN-tee)



Dromi
(DRO-mee)



Kelléndu
(kehl-EN-doo)

STAMINA: 12
levels

NORMAL
ACTION
DICE: ...4

SPECIAL
ACTIONS:
Keen Hearing,
Tracking
Scent, Sprint
....5

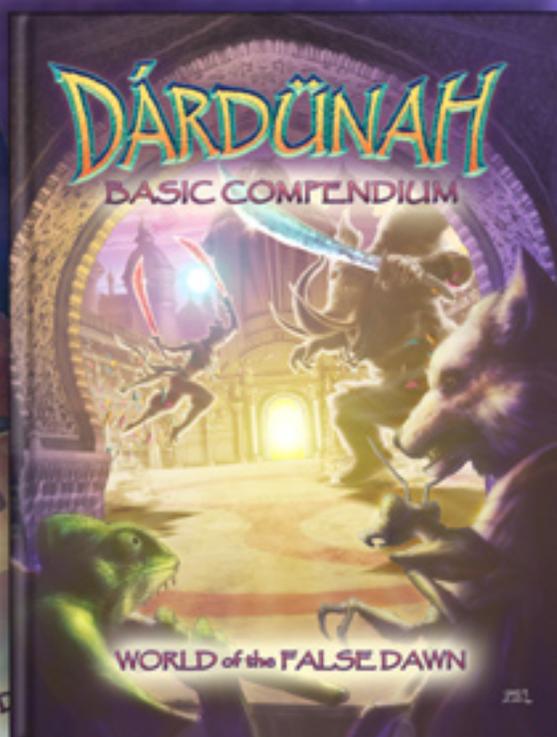
Welcome Booklet

DÁRDÜNAH

WORLD of the FALSE DAWN

Dárdünah (pronounced DAHR-doo-nah) is an exciting new world of heroic fantasy and adventure. Furthermore, it is a rather 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.

Skyships glide through the shimmering airs 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. Currently being play-tested across the country, you may soon find this product available nation-wide by the beginning of 2007.



COMING SOON

This Dárdünah 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.
- Simplified combat instruction for experimenting with game-play.
- Six pre-created archetype characters of various animal species to enjoy.
- An introductory adventure with intrigue, terror, and heroic rescue.
- A teasing glimpse of Dárdüni wildlife.

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