

BLADES UNDER TYR.

A Blades in the Dark reskin by
RAVEN DAEGMORGAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Character Creation	3
Heritage.....	4
Actions	8
Scoundrel Playbooks	9
Crew Playbooks.....	14
Standard Items	16
Water.....	18
the Dragon's Deal	18
Ceramic and Iron.....	19
Sorcery	20
Arrested	23
Factions	24
City Districts.....	30
Vice Purveyors	43

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BLADES UNDER TYR.

a **BLADES IN THE DARK** hack for the **Dark Sun** campaign setting

To play this game you will need the *Blades in the Dark* core book and a copy of the 1st edition *Dark Sun* campaign setting box.

Tyr, a wretched hive of scum and villainy. The safest oasis for hundreds of miles. Surrounded by the monster-haunted desert wastelands that make up the rest of the world, the only thing that keeps the city safe are the god-king warded city walls. Within, the noble houses vie for power, merchant caravans hold goods hostage for water chits, and thieving elves fight to sell the scraps that are left. But worst of all are the Templars, the de-facto rulers of the city, enforcing the will of King Kalak from his Golden Palace.

And then there's you. You just want a piece of it all before you die. water. Food. Safety. A fist full of ceramic. A little opulence. All before the sands claim your bones.

A dark sun rises over the city every morning.
Two strange moons hang in a foul-colored sky.

Welcome to Tyr, scoundrel.

The latest version of this document is available on Wild Hunt Studios' website.
~ release version 0.1 ~

In early 2022, I realized the core fictional conceits of *Blades in the Dark* aligned well with the presentation of Tyr in the original *Dark Sun* boxed campaign set: a post-apocalyptic city full of scheming factions with an immortal ruler at the top, surrounded by a deadly wasteland full of monsters, and strange powers and beings everywhere you looked.

Other than a few cosmetic differences, it was chocolate and peanut butter. I knew I had to make this real. But I didn't have time to craft a full conversion with new playbooks and actions, so this is more of a reskin, with close attention paid to the sections that make a Blades game really work: the people, districts, and factions, the ability to personalize details, the narrative-supporting mechanics, the assumption of competency.

Still, what you have here isn't entirely complete due to my limited time, but if you know how to run Blades you can easily add the missing pieces: I hope to flesh out the factions properly with interesting clocks and important persons in a future version.

If you are familiar with *Dark Sun* and its various supplements, you will note I have taken liberties with some of the details, changed or removed small elements, and added others. D&D is focused on adventure, heroism, and big quests, and as such, the details of the presented setting reflected this. Blades needs a different garden in which to grow.

This text focuses on schemes, politics, mysteries and con jobs; and on the people who make the rules, and the people who want to make the rules.

~ Raven Daegmorgan, September 2022

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CHARACTER CREATION

You'll be creating a scoundrel who works from the shadows and forgotten underground passages of the city of Tyr. Follow these steps.

CHOOSE PLAYBOOK

Cutter, Hound, Leech, Lurk, Slide, Spider, Whisper.

CHOOSE HERITAGE

Human, Elf, Half-elf, Dwarf, Halfling, Mul, Half-Giant, Thri-Kreen, Aarakocra, Other.

CHOOSE BACKGROUND

Philosophy, Labor, Law, Trade, Military, Noble, Underworld.

ASSIGN FOUR ACTION DOTS

One dot that reflects your heritage.

One dot that reflects your background.

CHOOSE SPECIAL ABILITY

Go with the first one in your playbook if you can't decide.

CHOOSE FRIEND & RIVAL

Pick one contact from your list who is a close friend.

Pick one contact from your list who is a rival or enemy.

CHOOSE VICE

Faith, Gambling, Luxury, Obligation, Pleasure, Stupor, Weird.

NAME, ALIAS, AND LOOK

Names often come from heritage. Pick a mutation if you'd like. Pick or make-up an alias or nickname you use when you're being a scoundrel.

MUTATION

Additional limb, third eye, sizeable tail, antennae, unusual coloration, stripes/spots, large/small horn(s), bony protrusions, acidic blood, clawed fingers, exoskeletal plate(s), compound eye(s), split tongue, fanged jaw, gills, patches of scaly/furred/feathered/bare skin, oversized forehead, marsupial pouch, extra/missing fingers, prehensile toes, redundant eyes, suckers, barrel chest, crab claw, neck/rib frills, mouth-on-palm, arm-legs, webbed fingers, hair tentacles, bloated features, a single eye, second face, frog tongue, elastic skin, extra-long neck/torso/limbs, rooster comb, serrated teeth, eyestalks, misaligned camel hump, no lip/ear/nose, transparent flesh, warts and carbuncles, skin ridges, emaciated features, porcupine quills, whiskers, bioluminescence, anemone tendrils, fused fingers/toes, vertical eyelids, elongated skull, brain shell, trunk-nose, enlarged muscles, tusks, tiny extra arms, wrist shell.

ALIAS

Amethyst, Bell, Biter, Bones, Bricks, Bug, Chime, Coil, Cross, Cutter, Echo, Eyes, Flint, Flute, Gith, Grime, Grip, Hammer, Hook, Jankx, Junker, Lirr, Moon, Nomad, Red, Ringer, Sands, Skinner, Slug, Song, Spur, Tackle, Thorn, Twelves, Vixen, Well, Worm, Whip, Wicker.

LOOK

Collared Shirt	Inix-skin Bodysuit	Fitted Dress
Fitted Leggings	Half-Cape	Leather Gloves
Bandoliers	Hide & Furs	Hood & Veil
Hooded Cape	Bone/Obsidian Knife	Knit Cap
Sun-Goggles	Leathers	Airy Robes
Scarf	Loose Silks	Mask & Robes
Rags & Tatters	Rough Tunic	Scavenged Uniform
Sharp Trousers	Short Cloak	Woven Skirt
Slim Jacket	Soft Boots	Straw Hat
Necklaces/Jewels	Sandals	Chitin Greaves
Head-wrap	Bone Pauldron	Leather Collar
Wide Belt	Silt Mask	Work Trousers

HERITAGE

Heritage is a mixture of physical and cultural traits. The first heritage trait listed is always specific to the named people and cannot be taken or copied by any other heritage (with the exception of mixed-heritage individuals); if not taken, you do not have its mechanical benefits but still have physical traits ascribed to your people for narrative purposes (e.g. elven endurance), and any cultural expressions you wish to engage in.

Choose two heritage traits. Record their effects. *You may take heritage traits from another heritage(s) if you wish, if they fit your character.*

HUMAN

The most numerous of the rebirth peoples. Theirs are the cities and farmlands. Fractious and inconstant, and yet clever and adaptable.

- ❖ Adaptable : gain an additional dot in any action (max 2).
- ❖ Lucky : you may tick special armor to re-roll a die that came up 1-3.
- ❖ Enduring : if you succeed at a risky action without pushing, gain a free push for 1d (not effect) later. May only have one free push at a time.
- ❖ Variable : when you gain a new Special Ability, you may also choose to exchange an existing Special Ability for a different ability.

ELF

Nomadic desert herdsman with a reputation for banditry and dishonesty. Can run for days without rest. Tall, light, and noticeably long-limbed.

- ❖ Wind-swift : gain +1d maneuver when running.
- ❖ Clan-loyal : test someone's loyalty; if they pass, you may provide them with one free assist during that score or the next.
- ❖ Lore-keeper : gain +1d to recall information about ancient legends, secrets, events, or places.
- ❖ Desert-dweller : gain 1 additional water box.

HALF-ELF

Considered untrustworthy half-breeds by both elves and humans. They prefer the company of dwarves and others. Relatively tall.

- ❖ One of You : add this xp trigger to your playbook *You took a desperate action to impress or gain the acceptance of a group.*
- ❖ Warren-rat : gain an additional dot in Finesse (max 2).
- ❖ Self-reliant : if you choose not to participate in a group action, but attempt the same action in your own way, gain +1d.
- ❖ Animal Lover : you have raised and trained a small, loyal pet that follows you, and have potency when you Consort with beasts.

DWARF

A dying people whose cities are long dead and buried. Short but broad shouldered, with iron-like muscles. Hairless. Often weigh 200 pounds.

- ❖ Focused : long-term projects gain increased effect. You may only pursue one at a time and you *must* work on it during downtime.
- ❖ Stout : you may perform a feat of near-supernatural strength or physical endurance by using 1 water (you may not also Push).
- ❖ Uncompromising : when you resist with Resolve, use 1 less water.
- ❖ Content : when you indulge in your Vice, you can't overindulge.

HALF-GIANT

Created long-ago for strength and obedience, they have an undeserved reputation for being half-wits. Twice as tall as humans, a ton in weight.

- ❖ Copycat : choose a companion's heritage trait at the start of a Score; you act as if you have that trait and benefit from its effect.
- ❖ Mountain-of-flesh : when you take physical Harm, take one level less.
- ❖ Protector : when you take consequences for someone else, you gain improved effect when resisting.
- ❖ Giant : you can fight small gangs on equal footing by using 1 water (you may not also Push).

MUL

The bastard children of dwarves and humans, bald and barren. Often the favorites in the gladiatorial pits, as well as for hard labor.

- ❖ **Pack-bearer** : when you take Heavy load, you move as if you were in Normal load; this does not prevent you from being noticed.
- ❖ **Built-to-fight** : your Skirmish action may advance to 4 dots.
- ❖ **Nihilist** : when faced with fear, including from supernatural sources (magic, undead), you do not need make a resistance roll to act.
- ❖ **Stubborn** : gain +1d when you resist with Resolve.

HALFLING

Head-hunters from the mountain jungles who look like children. They have a deserved reputation for cannibalism, and a vibrant, ancient culture.

- ❖ **Old-ways** : can use Attune to call upon the local spirits of a place for help, without needing to resist fear when they answer.
- ❖ **Sneaky** : tick your Special Armor to gain potency when hiding, or for +1d to Gather Information.
- ❖ **Artistic** : gain potency when you use song, dance, poetry, or art to communicate or distract.
- ❖ **Curious** : add the following xp trigger to your playbook *You Gathered Information for this Score*.

THRI-KREEN

Four-armed mantis-folk as likely to view you as food than as friend. Rarely seen in the cities. They can craft their venom as crystal blades.

- ❖ **Alien** : either *throwing knives are always [Load 0]* – tick special armor to cause a paralyzing bite on a successful Skirmish action.
- ❖ **Calculating** : gain an additional dot in hunt (max 2).
- ❖ **Hive-mind** : when you take a group action with your clutch-mates or your imprinted parent, gain +1d.
- ❖ **Hardened** : you may tick your special armor to resist blunt force physical trauma; ticking armor has improved effect.

AARAKOCRA

Brightly-feathered, vulture-beaked bird-folk. Agile fliers with twenty-foot wingspans and hollow bones. Rarely seen in the cities due claustrophobia.

- ❖ **High-flier** : gain +1d to resist consequences of flying.
- ❖ **Watchful** : gain an additional dot in Intuit (max 2).
- ❖ **Covetous** : you gain +1 Ceramic on a successful Score.
- ❖ **Ritualist** : gain an additional dot in Attune (max 2).

OTHER HERITAGES

These are not the only sapient creatures that are seen within the walls of Tyr. Other beings, some unique to themselves alone – born from the dark, wild sorcery of the desert – may find themselves within its walls for a time, or make the city their home on a long-term basis. Either give such a being two heritage traits based on their culture, personality, or traditions (but one may be uniquely specific to their kind), or take no heritage traits and instead gain two additional dots to add to actions based on their heritage or the nature of the being.

NAMES

Human : Agis, Albeorn, Aristes, Beryl, Borys, Caldon, Canth, Damras, Dote, Dyan, Etheros, Gallard, Garreth, Haakar, Herminard, Ictinis, Jedra, Jun, Katid, Larkyn, Lyra, Marut, Narissa, Neeva, Phatim, Quay, Rayne, Ryana, Sacha, Sycia, Tara, Tithian, Uyness, Wyan, Xamres

Elf : Alaa, Bademyr, Coranuu, Faenaeyon, Gaefal, Jaarati, Jirah, Kama, Keyvas, Luubarra, Meredyd, Miiri, Mutami, Nysia, Rhayn, Riv, Ruvella, Santhaal, Tala, Tamana, Utaa, Wik, Yalana

Dwarf : Bontar, Brul, Caelum, Daled, Fyra, Gralth, Ghedran, Hai, Jo'orsh, Jurgan, Kesi, Kov, Krom, Lazra, Ltak, Lyanius, N'kadir, Portek, Rkard, Sa'ram, Sult, Thurin, Yerik, Zareb

Halfling : Agu, At-horg, Anezka, Cha, Derlan, Dote, Fullgrin, Horgan, I'toc, Ibl, Jun, Kilay, Kor, La, La-lai, Lokee, Nok, Ojoba, Orel, Pauk, Puy, Sa-rea, Taiy, Tar, Toth, Urga, Ves, Weom, Wyan, Zivlil

Aarakocra : Aera, Arraako, Aial, Aur, Awnunaak, Cawthra, Driikaak, Deekek, Errk, Gazzijja, Heehk, I'kki, Kariko, Kekko, Kleeck, Kraah, Krekkekelar, Lisako, Nakaaka, Orr, Quierk, Thraka, Salleek, Urreek

Thri-Kreen : Chkik-i-chikk, K'kikrik, K'kivir, K'kriq, Kk'tkk, Klik'l, Krikik, Nnn'tkk, T'kkyl

Half-giants, mul, and half-elves tend to be given human names, as that tends to be the culture in which they are raised, though sometimes bear a name from their non-human parent's cultural heritage instead.

Aarakocra can both learn and speak the tongues of other creatures quite well, and other peoples are usually able to do a passable imitation of the bird-folk's tongue (heavily accented and lacking the proper beak-clicks).

Most non-kreen, lacking the mouth-parts necessary to properly reproduce kreen sounds, have trouble pronouncing their names, and so call thri-kreen by nicknames, or shortened versions or approximations of the name like: "Click-click", "Kick", "Caver", "Crick", "K.T.", "Enik", "Tickle".

Depending on the kreen, this either may not bother them, or they may find it deeply annoying or even rude. Most kreen who have spent enough time in the city accept that the food-people are simply unable to speak properly.

Thri-Kreen similarly have extreme difficulty pronouncing the language of non-kreen: when telepathic communication is not an option (given how alien kreen minds are to non-kreen), the convention is for the kreen and a translator to learn one another's language so they can each communicate in their native tongue while still being able to understand one another.

SLAVERY

We recognize slavery, forced breeding, and brainwashing are deeply uncomfortable subjects. These issues are utilized to showcase the casual cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of the ruling classes, and this society's cultural view that life is cheap. This material does not shy away from these subjects, but does not present them or presume them to be acceptable activities from a modern or moral perspective. If your group feels uncomfortable with any of these elements, place them behind a veil. This is a game we play for fun: don't include subjects that will make it un-fun for individuals in your group.

Slaves are a common sight within the city, providing most of its labor, and outnumber freemen two-to-one. The rulers of Tyr enslave members of all sentient peoples, whether for hard-labor on the farms or mines, or to serve out criminal sentences in the gladiatorial arena for the entertainment of the population. They are not treated well, and all desire freedom from their chains – though most are too terrified to make the attempt. Ex-slaves are not safe from mercenary slave-catchers sent to retrieve them – but neither are freemen caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Muls are often – not *always*, not *mostly* – the product of forced breeding by cruel nobles and despotic public works groups within the Templarate, literally bred to work the mines and fields due to their perceived docility, superior strength, and resilience. Many enslaved mul attempt to escape into the city warrens or into the deserts, often killed in the attempt, desperate for freedom. Others are the children of Tyrian freemen, born to freedom (such as it is) and as likely or unlikely to take to slavery or blood-sport as any other person.

Half-giants, as a people, were originally created through sorcery by the god-kings, who desired strong and obedient servants. The god-kings keep the descendants of their creations close: there are few templars who are not served by a half-giant bodyguard raised since birth to protect their ward at all costs. But half-giants are also found throughout the city, serving as mercenaries or guards to noble houses or merchant guilds, working as skilled craftsmen in the markets and smithies, and are no more inherently loyal to the Templarate or god-kings than any other individual.

BIOESSENTIALISM

Race isn't biology, but species is. Species have specific physical or behavioral traits inherent to their genetic makeup. The problem with reflecting this in gaming is one of determining where this line stands: it is difficult to differentiate between the biological, the traits expressed as a part of a cultural upbringing, and those of a created narrative by a dominant culture, as well as difficult to capture the biological and cultural complexity of the real world through mechanics for a game.

As such, we do not use an abstraction of absolute bonuses, penalties, or traits so we can avoid the troubling or hateful real-world fallacies that such systems can come dangerously close to mirroring. It is too easy for differences between culture or environment to become blurred or confused with what some people may believe is "biological reality", or where the generalized may be confused with the individual.

Instead, the different sapient species are described alongside a variable set of optional, non-absolute heritage traits to reflect that, though there may be general patterns within populations, not every member of a species share the same physical or mental attributes, behaviors, or culture.

ACTIONS

There are twelve actions Scoundrels can take, separated into three groups of four actions known as Attributes. Descriptions of most of the actions are as indicated in the core Blades rulebook, however, a few actions are different or require significant changes to work in the Dark Sun setting.

Remember, unless you don't want to be, even with zero dots in an action Scoundrels are considered competent in all actions.

Insight : Craft, Hunt, Intuit, Study.

Prowess : Finesse, Prowl, Skirmish, Wreck.

Resolve : Attune, Command, Consort, Sway.

ATTUNE

Employ the (sometimes latent) psychic powers of which all beings are possessed; gain access to and contact with spiritual realms and forces, or draw and shape other-planar energies.

You could understand the nature of a psychic or immaterial force or being or learn a magical ritual (but Study might be better), enchant a mystical device (but Craft might be better), or strike at someone with sorcerous powers (but Skirmish might be better).

Roll Attune to read minds or project thoughts; some few are even able to glimpse future events, understand the thoughts of beasts, read the history of objects, view nearby places, ignore pain, or lift or push small objects. Those most adept with such psychic forces often bear marks of mutation.

Unless a Scoundrel has received formal training at the School of the Way, they are not well-versed in the practice of greater mental powers. Those with the wealth to gain entry to study at the temple with the Masters of the Way learn the philosophies of the mind and – with the requisite degree of ability – the deeper mysteries, increasing their connection to and understanding of psychic forces.

When you attempt deeper mysteries or supernatural actions without the proper training, you have Desperate – No Effect.

CRAFT

Repurpose basic materials into a new tool or weapon, carefully take apart or put together a complex object (like setting a trap), hide a door or entryway, or mix potions and craft obsidian spheres.

You could also design a structure, trap, or other complex object or plan a garden for growing potion fruits (but Study might be better); or disable tripwires and open sealed doors (but Wreck might be better).

INTUIT

Observe and anticipate outcomes, “get a feeling”, spot trouble before it starts, or exploit a momentary opportunity or weakness; use knowledge arising from experience or gut-sense.

You could defend yourself with magical wards or use psychic senses to read the future (but Attune might be better).

SCOUNDREL PLAYBOOKS

The following Special Abilities are part of all playbook lists.

- ❖ Veteran : choose a special ability from another playbook. (max 3)
- ❖ Master of the Way : gain potency with simple Attune actions involving psychic actions; you may have access to deeper mysteries through extensive training. *Who trained you and why?*
- ❖ Mutant : your mutation provides you a benefit, usually allowing an action that would be impossible otherwise (e.g. breathing silt), or that would be significantly more difficult otherwise (improved position), etc. Work with the GM to decide the benefit your mutation provides.

MUTATION EXAMPLES

The Big Brain : Your cranium is swollen to twice normal size, and somewhat oddly shaped. Sometimes it pulses. You are naturally, and exceptionally, good at stealing thoughts from others.

Four-eyes : You have twice the number of eyes normal for your kind, sitting above and slightly off-center your normal set. They provide you with exceptional visual perception as well as visual clarity in low-light.

Man-e-arms : You sport a dexterous pair of extra, though oddly-placed, limbs. Sometimes they twitch, grasp, or make unintended gestures.

Not Just Fashionable : You have patches of beautiful, anemone-like tendrils growing from your shoulders; they are sensitive and cannot be covered, but make you able to detect coming changes in the weather, up to a few hours away, with perfect accuracy.

OH SNAP! : One of your arms and hands is a deformed, shelled, pincer, slightly larger than a normal arm and hand. You're always considered armed – the pincer can be used as a weapon, and as special armor against some violent assaults. If torn off, or mangled and removed, the arm slowly regrows over a period of months.

Cyclops : You have one-eye instead of the normal number for your people, asymmetrically placed. While this creates difficulties with normal vision and depth perception, it is mitigated by the strange, additional senses you have developed – a sense of danger, or predilection for sudden prophecy.

FISTS

Good at winning fights, violence, and intimidation. Start with 2 Skirmish and 1 Command. You earn xp when you address a challenge with violence or coercion.

- ❖ Gladiator : Consort +1, Intuit +2, Craft +1, Champion.
- ❖ Thug : Command +1, Wreck +2, Sway +1, Savage.
- ❖ Mercenary : Consort +1, Sway +2, Intuit +1, Bodyguard.

Friends & Rivals : Coran, a renowned gladiator. Thumper, a vicious thug. Akkad, an experienced mercenary. Akiik'lii, a reputable healer. Faylen, a crooked gamesman.

Special Abilities : Battleborn. Bodyguard. Leader. Mule. Savage. Vigorous. Psychic Fighter : while your body battles on the physical plane, you may defend yourself and strike back in the psychic realms; you have potency with attacks made using the Way. Champion : you may push to: *fight as a small gang in close combat, gaining scale – perform a feat requiring near-supernatural physical force.*

Playbook Items : Fine Hand Weapon, Fine Heavy Weapon, Scary Weapon or Tool, Manacles & Rope, Potion Fruit (Enrage).

EYES

Good at hunting, tracking, and following and finding things and people. Start with 2 Hunt and 1 Inuit. You earn xp when you address a challenge with tracking or violence.

- ❖ Ranger : Attune +1, Craft +2, Intuit +1, Survivor.
- ❖ Explorer : Prowl +1, Study +2, Wreck +1, Scavenger.
- ❖ Bounty Hunter : Consort +1, Skirmish +1, Prowl +2, Scout.

Friends & Rivals : T'zzzhiik, an experienced hunter. Iyrlis, a sketchy herbalist. Mari'sae, an old wanderer. Dasak, a loyal guardsman. Sallam, a shady collector.

Special Abilities : Focused. Scout. Vengeful. Mekillot Hide : *see Tough as Nails.* Survivor: gain +1 water box; you are able to subsist on the strange flora and fauna of the desert and adept at finding safe shelter and avoiding its monstrous predators. Psychic Hunter : your pet can fight and defend itself in the psychic realms with potency, and (choose one) *you and your pet gain a mind-link, allowing you to share your senses and thoughts – your pet can psychoport over short distances at will – your pet can imbue its muscles with psychic vigor and outpace any other creature or vehicle.* Archer : you may push to *make a ranged attack at an extreme distance – improve effect one additional level with a ranged attack.* Scavenger : if you are lost or trapped, you may make a resistance roll to immediately determine your location or find a way out; you may tick special armor to temporarily gain an item you wouldn't normally have access to.

Playbook Items : Fine Ranged Weapon, Trained Hunting Pet, Maps & Spyglass, Fine Throwing Weapon, Fine Crystal Focus.

FINGERS

Good at the weird stuff, growing potion fruits, crafting and fixing tools. Start with 2 Craft and 1 Wreck. You earn xp when you address a challenge with skill or mayhem.

- ❖ Cartographer : Skirmish +1, Study +2, Hunt +1, Analyst.
- ❖ Gardener : Intuit +1, Attune +2, Study +1, Alchemist.
- ❖ Smith : Finesse +1, Consort +2, Study +1, Artificer.

Friends & Rivals : Ajani, a tall-tale telling wanderer. Fyris, a desperate honey-addict. Lelil-i, a daring smuggler. Naram-Sin, a fanatic priestess. Nen'ar, a questionable guildsman.

Special Abilities : Analyst. Saboteur. Venomous. Fortitude. Healer : see *Physicker*, use Craft instead. Alchemist : see *Alchemist*, applies to growing and mixing potion fruits. Supernatural Ward : see *Ghost Ward* (applies to spirits, undead, etc.). Artificer : see *Artificer*, applies to *arcane* or *psychic* features of obsidian spheres, psychic crystals, and similar items.

Playbook Items : Fine Crafting Tools, Fine Wrecking Tools, Blowgun & Poison Darts, Potion Fruits, Spare Tools.

BRAINS

Good at being prepared, and *always* has a plan. Start with 2 Consort and 1 Study. You earn xp when you address a challenge with calculation or conspiracy.

- ❖ Disgraced Templar : Intuit +1, Command +2, Hunt +1, Calculating.
- ❖ Fallen Noble : Study +1, Sway +2, Command +1, Connected.
- ❖ Convict : Wreck +1, Command +2, Skirmish +1, Jail Bird.

Friends & Rivals : Mikki-Lelil, an obsequious servant. Nillor, a greedy architect. Bael, a brazen alchemist. Talathra, a sly noble. Rhamassu, a curious templar.

Special Abilities : Foresight. Calculating. Connected. Functioning Vice. Oath of Service : see *Ghost Contract*. Jail Bird. Mastermind. Weaving the Web.

Playbook Items : Fine Cover Identity, Fine Honeyed Wine, Blueprints, Slumber Fruit, Fine Small Hand Weapon.

FEET

Good at going unnoticed, sneaking around and getting into places. Start with 2 Prowl and 1 Finesse. You earn xp when you address a challenge with stealth or evasion.

- ❖ Burglar : Finesse +1, Wreck +2, Skirmish +1, Infiltrator.
- ❖ Spy : Intuit +1, Consort +2, Study +1, Shadow.
- ❖ Messenger : Hunt +1, Consort +2, Attune +1, Reflexes.

Friends & Rivals : Bug, a friendly beggar. Anok, a young city guard. Kriste'i-shin, a daring noble. Jhorim, an unhappy templar. Tarmos, a respected craftsman.

Special Abilities : Infiltrator. Ambush. Daredevil. Expertise. Reflexes. Shadow. Psychic Veil : you can use the Way to momentarily make your body insubstantial; spend 2 water, plus 1 per to *make it last a few minutes – become invisible – become weightless and float*. Acrobat : see *Devil's Footsteps*.

Playbook Items : Fine Burglary Tools, Fine Shadow Cloak, Light Climbing Gear, Silence Fruit, Night-vision Fruit, Light Climbing Gear.

TEETH

Good at charm, subterfuge, and fast-talking. Start with 2 Sway and 1 Consort. You earn xp when you address a challenge with deception or influence.

- ❖ Bard : Consort +1, Sway +2, Finesse +1, Subterfuge.
- ❖ Grifter : Intuit +1, Study +2, Finesse +1, Trust in Me.
- ❖ Siren : Intuit +1, Attune +2, Command +1, Mesmerism.

Friends & Rivals : Ojoba, a twitchy honey dealer. Miri, a young prostitute. Nysia, a secretive bard. Rhayn, a connected grifter. Alaa-la, a friendly tavern owner.

Special Abilities : Rook's Gambit. Cloak & Dagger. A Little Something on the Side. Mesmerism. Subterfuge. Trust in Me. Reflection : see *Like Looking Into a Mirror*. Spirit Voice : you can interact with elemental (and other) spirits and (thinking) undead, as if they were normal humans, regardless of how wild or feral they appear; you have potency when interacting with the supernatural.

Playbook Items : Fine Clothes & Jewelry, Fine Disguise Kit, Fine Loaded Dice, Trick Ivories, Trance Powder, Cane-sword.

SOUL

Good at magic, mysticism, and dealing with the supernatural. Start with 2 Attune and 1 Study. You earn xp when you address a challenge with knowledge or supernatural power.

- ❖ Student of the Way : Sway +1, Intuit +2, Study +1, Second Sight.
- ❖ Elemental Priest : Command +1, Sway +2, Consort +1, Tempest.
- ❖ Wizard : Craft +1, Prowl +2, Wreck +1, Ritual.

Friends & Rivals : Kotolu, an angry spirit. Mord'akim, a scheming undead. Vovuruk-dai, a mysterious druid. Wick, a veiled wizard. Gorrog, a rapacious smuggler.

Special Abilities : Iron Will. Occultist. Ritual. Strange Methods.

Warded. Compel : you may Attune to summon a nearby spirit (elemental, land, undead, etc.), force it to appear before you, and obey a given order; you are not supernaturally terrified of it (others may be). Second Sight : you are always aware of any nearby supernatural being, and you may gather information by supernatural means with +1d. Tempest : you may push (gaining the normal benefit of doing so) to *unleash an elemental strike (fire, earth, water, air, etc.) as a weapon or a psychic blast – summon a violent “storm” of elemental or psychic nature.*

Playbook Items : Fine Focus, Fine Psychic Ward, Potion Fruit, Summoned Spirit, Obsidian Defense Charm.

CREW PLAYBOOKS

The following are part of all playbook lists.

- ❖ Veteran : Choose a special ability from another crew. (max 2)

MERCENARIES

Thugs, ruffians, and killers.

Contacts : Fyris, a young gladiator. Ajenna, disillusioned city watchman. Edgarde, a cautious weapon crafter. Byrtus, an untrustworthy healer. Aghkam Dred, a high-ranking templar. Xahil, a sympathetic tavern owner.

Special Abilities : Dangerous. Blood Brothers. Door Kickers. Fiends. Forged in the Fire. Patron. War Dogs.

Crew Upgrades : Mercenary Rigging (see: *Bravos Rigging*). Arena Contacts (+1 Tier in the Arena). Elite Rovers. Elite Thugs. Hardened.

Turf : Templar Intimidation (see: *Bluecoat Intimidation*). Templar Confederates (see: *Bluecoat Confederates*).

SMUGGLERS

Contraband transporters and black-market fences.

Contacts : Baldirik, a savvy caravaneer. Fray, a strung-out drug dealer. Krikik, an amoral arms dealer. Agu, a weird arcanist. Bruul, an unhinged anarchist.

Special Abilities : Like Part of the Family. All Hands. Passage. Just Passing Through. Leverage. Reavers. Renegades.

Crew Upgrades : Smuggler Rigging. Camouflage. Elite Rovers. Steady. Relocate (see: *Barge*). Mount (see: *Vehicle*).

Turf : Ancient Gate (safe passage in the wastelands). Caravan (your cohorts have a small caravan).

CULTISTS

True believers: Templars, Veiled Alliance, Elemental cults, the Order.

Contacts : Ka'tal, a low-ranking templar. Kalee, a creepy defiler. Oron, a sun-addled explorer. Screib-Dhaqor, An ancient undead. Kal-malek, a perverse noble. Is-kari, a panicked astronomer.

Special Abilities : Chosen. Anointed. Bound in Darkness. Conviction. Zealotry. Hidden Power (you know the secret arts to blunt the obviousness of your spell-casting). Glory Incarnate (a powerful, ancient being takes up your cause...but their goals may not be your goals).

Crew Upgrades : Cult Rigging. Ritual Sanctum. Elite Adepts. Elite Thugs. Ordained.

Turf : Ancient Gate (safe passage in the wastelands).

BARDS

Hired assassins and poisoners.

Contacts : Big Red, a scheming gang boss. Xarel, a cold deal broker. Karnak, a vicious noble. Ulu-lahaalit, a soft-spoken bounty hunter. Imid, a power-hungry templar. Hurukhen, a self-absorbed merchant lord.

Special Abilities : Deadly. No Traces. Patron. Predators. Vipers. Artful Veil (you are simple entertainers, above suspicion). Psychicdeath (the psychic veil around the victim is twisted and confused; the murder cannot be viewed by mystical means).

Crew Upgrades : Bard Rigging (see: *Assassin Rigging*). Elite Skulks. Arena Contacts (+1 Tier in the Arena). Elite Thugs. Hardened.

Turf : Inix Pens (see: *Hagfish Farm*).

ROGUES

Thieves, spies, and scoundrels.

Contacts : Kroft, an eager explorer. Yan, a clever city watchman. Ethelesa, a well-connected deal broker. I'kree, a curious collector. Demirakes, an angry noble. Mikki, a drunken tavern owner.

Special Abilities : Everyone Steals. Pack Rats. Patron. Second Story. Slippery. Synchronized. Psychic Echoes (an uncanny sense for avoiding danger and finding strange pathways).

Crew Upgrades : Rogue Rigging (see: *Thief Rigging*). Underground Maps & Passkeys. Elite Rooks. Elite Skulks. Steady.

Turf : Inix Pens (see: *Hagfish Farm*).

DEALERS

Drug dealers, bookies, and prostitutes.

Contacts : A desperate templar. A disgraced city watchman. A vicious deal broker. A connected smuggler. A seductive noblewoman. A tough gang boss.

Special Abilities : Silver Tongues. Accord. The Good Stuff. High Society. Hooked. Patron. Market.

Crew Upgrades : Dealer Rigging (see: *Hawker Rigging*). Arena Contacts (+1 Tier in the Arena). Elite Rooks. Elite Thugs. Composed.

Turf : no changes.

STANDARD ITEMS

Items can alter position and/or effect from Limited, give you potency in specific situations or against specific obstacles, or grant you Limited Effect when you would otherwise have No Effect or would simply be *unable* to attempt the action.

When equipment is marked as *Fine*, it is iron (etc.), contains additional items, or is otherwise improved from standard.

A Blade or Two : hand weapons such as an obsidian knife, bone hand-axe, or sword; one or two.

Throwing Knives : six honed, balanced bone knives, shards of obsidian, or throwing stars of hardened crystal.

A Sling : a leather strap with a pouch of heavy, smoothed (or sharp-edged) stones; or a small blowgun with envenomed darts (mildly toxic), range of ten paces.

A Large Weapon : a war-hammer, polearm, bow or crossbow (range of 150 long-paces).

An Unusual Weapon : something you've turned into a weapon (spiked gloves, a whip, a wheat flail).

Armor : a few pieces of thick, flexible leather, with bone or chitin pauldrons.

+**Heavy** : the addition of a helmet, greaves, a chestplate, and a shield.

Burglary Gear : a bone hand saw, solid wood prybar, some oil, thread and small bone hooks.

Climbing Gear : coils of giant-hair rope, bone or wood grapples, chalk dust, harness with wood or bone rings, a mallet and wooden pegs.

Maps & Passes : crude, unmarked maps (or with symbols at best) and forged ceramic passes and identification.

Spiritual Implements : ceramic symbols, a bag of soil, a pinch of defiled ash, vial of citrus, blessed water in a small ampule.

Subterfuge Supplies : theatrical make-up, costume jewelry, forged badges, stolen guard uniform or Templar garb (reversible) and head covering.

Demolition Tools : stone sledgehammer, wooden stakes, wood or bone crowbar, bone or stone hatchets.

Tinkering Tools : picks, pliers, cord, needles, a sharp stone.

Torches : oil-treated wood and prepared wrappings.

Focusing Crystal : a small crystal attuned to psychic energy.

WEAPONS AND TOOLS

Similarly to other tools and gear, when you attack with a weapon made of wood, bone, obsidian, or other non-metallic materials, a serious consequence may be that the weapon breaks. This destruction may be resisted using your crew's Tier, but note that the Tier of the opponent may remove dice from this roll.

ARMOR

When resisting by checking your armor or shield made of wood, bone, chitin, or other non-metallic materials, you may choose to negate the water cost on a 1-3 result and instead cross the armor off your playbook. It has been rendered useless. If you choose to do so, it cannot be resisted.

In order to equip that item in the future, you must take an *Acquire Assets* action (but in this case, your ownership is *not* temporary) or otherwise find a way to replace it. This cannot be done with Heavy Armor until the second use is ticked during a Score. All ticks are cleared as usual before the next Score.

The GM is still free to use the loss or destruction of armor as a serious consequence, but as a usual consequence, it can be resisted.

POTION FRUITS

Insects, grains, and meats are the staples of the world's diet, along with some fibrous tubers and root vegetables. But growing out in the deserts, at forgotten oases only the elves know of (and some say carefully cultivated in the King's gardens) are fruit-bearing bushes and trees. Fruit is not mere nutrition, but power and strange experience. Berries, rinds, seeds, and juices can by themselves, or in combination, allow for everything from the treatment of minor malady, to the granting iron-hard flesh or ability to walk into the dreams of others. Because of this, fruit is almost entirely illegal to sell, as well as dangerous to simply devour.

This is not to say the noble houses do not keep a few carefully-nurtured fruit-trees well hidden in their personal gardens, or that it cannot be found in the Elven Market.

There are also those who measure and combine the pulp, juice, and extracts of various fruits, and other substances, and quietly sell the concoctions they have invented through successful experimentation to interested patrons, for a significant fee. Of course there are as many snake-oil salesmen passing off watered-down, dye-colored honey as miracle remedies as there are honest alchemists – not many, as both activities are illegal and likely to result in arrest.

OBSIDIAN SPHERES

Powerful spells are often worked into beads and spheres of treated and polished obsidian. This practice is safer for the wizard than channeling the energies normally called forth, and can allow for more effective results. The stored energies or spells may only be released when the sphere is crushed or shattered, with more powerful spells requiring increasingly larger spheres, or even a set of spheres.

PSYCHIC CRYSTALS

Those who study the Way have found that psychically “attuning” themselves to certain, special crystals only found naturally in deep caverns and cut in specific fashions, can help focus their abilities and ease the effort of concentration normally required to access and maintain the forces required of the deeper mysteries.

Some students have found that large, carefully crafted and polished spheres of obsidian can mimic the benefits of a psychic crystal, though these spheres are less suited to the practice and often fracture or explode (can be used as a serious consequence).

WATER

Every Scoundrel in the city has an abstract resource called water representing the effort they can put into the tasks they undertake before it catches up with them. water allows you to perform feats and resist consequences, but since water is precious under the constant blaze of the dark sun, running out is dangerous.

You have eight water to start with, though some heritages and special abilities provide additional water.

Pushing requires spending two water per benefit desired, some special abilities require spending water to activate, and a flashback or a resistance roll may result in the use of water. Some actions might require an expenditure of water (most often for the use of sorcery or psychic powers) but the GM should discuss any atypical costs with you before play begins.

Spent water can be replenished during Downtime when you indulge your Vice.

TRAUMA

Once you use more water than you have, you restore all your water and take a trauma condition: choose one from the list or make one up. You flee or are left-for-dead, but return later, shaken.

Taking a trauma removes you from the scene (*not* the Score or the session) as you deal with the consequences. A trauma doesn't go away once taken and can't be healed.

Once your Scoundrel takes four traumas, they retire – whether they do so to the gutter, a squalid room in a crowded tenement, or a luxurious estate, is dependent on how much Stash you have accumulated.

THE DRAGON'S DEAL

There is but one Dragon. Many stories are told about it. Some believe it is a story told to frighten children.

When you want to gain an additional die for a roll, consider taking a Dragon's Deal. The effect of the deal occurs regardless of the results of the roll, and usually involves collateral damage, unintended harm, sacrificing Ceramic or an item, betraying a friend, offending a faction, starting a troublesome clock, adding Heat, or taking Harm.

Deals can't be resisted, negated, or reduced like other consequences. *You always pay the price.*

CERAMIC AND IRON

Metal is so rare and precious it is not wasted on common coinage. Only a few iron notes – also called orange notes, due their tendency to rust – are issued by the Templarate every year to cover larger sums paid to the merchant houses.

Trade and barter are the most common methods of exchange in the city, even though Tyr mints and issues a kind of “currency” in the form of ceramic bits. Most merchants haggle for possessions or goods over taking ceramic, particularly from those of questionable reputation – merchants may call upon Templars to examine bits before accepting them, as the Templars are able to tell if a ceramic bit is counterfeit.

CERAMIC

The city provides two ceramic bits per day to every citizen – coin-sized, blue ceramic disks stamped with the King’s likeness, also sometimes called ‘water chits’ or ‘a bit of blue’. A single bit is worth one full drink from a well or a loaf of bread. This ‘shows’ that the King provides for the people of Tyr.

Originally intended for use to buy water at the public wells or bread from the public ovens – and still their main use – the public began to use these ceramic bits in barter, and they now exist as a de facto, secondary currency. Bits are stamped, then colored using a distinctive dye to prevent counterfeiting. (The exact ingredients used in the creation of this dye are a closely guarded secret.)

Two bits is often the most anyone from the warrens can afford per day, so some citizens choose to live on the street in order to save their bits for more water. It is illegal, however, to be without tenancy, and the Templars make regular sweeps through the city, arresting homeless “vagrants” and putting them to work in the fields or mines.

As most material wealth in the city is in the form of trade goods, the payouts for Scores are abstracted as an amount of Ceramic. While this *can* be in the form of ceramic bits, it more often takes the shape of common

items useful for barter. A single dot of Ceramic can be thought of as a good-sized purse of bits or a few items of valuable barter.

Stash is comprised of expensive luxury goods, plots of farmland, herd animals, or similar. An iron note is worth a whole line of Stash...but they are difficult to convert to Ceramic by anyone not authorized to own one, and rare enough that altering the ownership is a difficult task (as this is carefully tracked by the Templarate).

METAL

Metal (of any kind) is extremely scarce – only the wealthy can afford even the smallest amount. Even though Tyr is famed for its iron mines, they produce only a few tons per year. Given its scarcity, this is still enough to keep the city’s coffers full and a common destination of trade caravans seeking profit, despite the horrors of the wastelands.

OTHER MATERIALS

Wood is expensive, but not prohibitively out-of-reach. The giant agafari trees harvested in the cursed forests of the Goddess Lalai-Puy of far-away Gulg provide for almost all wood used in construction in the city. Agafari wood is nearly as hard as iron, and equally difficult to work. Because of this, it can be prone to cracking when stressed, as it cannot be tempered as can iron from Tyr’s mines, making carpenters careful with their designs.

The most common materials used in place of metal or wood are bone, chitin, and obsidian or other types of hard stone. Luckily, stone is cheap and common, and the monstrous beasts beyond the King’s walls can be slain and their bodies harvested for bones and meat, while herds of giant insects provide chitin and honey.

The problem with weapons or armors made of such materials, however, is they are prone to cracking or shattering when subjected to force, and even in general use. Workmen and artisans need to constantly replace their tools as they wear down or break, making for a brisk trade in raw materials to skilled craftsmen.

SORCERY

Magic-users are known as “wizards” or sometimes “sorcerers”. Usually, they’re called “defilers.” Whatever they’re called, though, everyone knows they’re the ones who destroyed the world and created all its monsters. Everyone isn’t wrong—it’s because of magic that everything is barren sand and hungry beasts.

To use magic, you must know spells. When you use spells, it draws life-force from the nearest living things, starting with plants, and if you aren’t very careful, it *drains* the life from whatever it draws from. In the case of plants, it turns them and the soil in which they are rooted into dead ash. When a wizard uses a spell, people or larger animals *usually* just feel ill and weak, but when a wizard uses a powerful spell, it may kill those around them, turning them to ash as well.

To avoid this consequence when using magic, you must make a resistance roll. You don’t have to. Most wizards don’t care enough to waste their own precious energy equalizing this draw of life force. Some aren’t even aware you can.

GM asks : Beyond any effect a spell itself causes and the draining of nearby life, *what actions must you take to cast a spell and what supernatural effect manifests when you cast any spell?* These actions and strange effect are unique to each wizard.

RESISTANCE

Seeing (and feeling) sorcery worked is terrifying. It isn’t invisible. There are lights, smells, sounds – none of them natural—even if the wizard doesn’t turn the fields and soil to ash. Most people freeze up or run away. Those who don’t form mobs to hunt the wizard down.

Whenever you encounter wizardry performed by someone else, *even within your own Crew*, you must make a resistance check to take any action, unless your act is to flee. You can, of course, simply stand there terrified.

When you use magic on a Score inside the city, if witnesses can see you, or *whenever* you defile, you gain +1 Heat as a consequence.

SPELLS

When you want to learn a spell or create a new one, start a Long Term Project, and work with the GM and answer the following questions:

GM asks: *What is the spell and what does it do?*

Player answers: Give the spell a name and a brief description.

GM asks: *What resources do you need to learn this spell? How did you gain access to the things you need?*

Player answers: Tell the GM what resources (strange materials, time, a hidden space) and forbidden knowledge (tomes, scrolls, tablets, a teacher) the spell needs for you to learn it. The GM may add or change elements.

Player asks: *What must I do to cast the spell and what is its price?*

GM answers: The price may be nothing more than a few words and gesture, and a commensurate cost in life-force per its magnitude; or it may have other requirements, such as requiring a sacrifice, ownership of a rare item prepared as a focus, the use of strange ingredients, or even the start of a dangerous clock. A powerful spell may even drain water or require the use of a downtime action; the most rare and powerful of spells might require taking a trauma to cast. You may use the magnitude table as a guide, using the highest level as a water cost or to impart consequences.

GM asks: *What new belief or fear does knowledge of the spell instill?*

Player answers: Learning wizardry requires knowledge of dark and occult forces and beings who can instruct the wizard on how they must twist and pull aside the veil of reality to access energies and dimensions inimical to the established laws and order perceived by those who dare not part these veils. Decide what unpleasant truth the wizard subjected themselves to, or new worry has arisen from the knowledge gained.

EXAMPLE SPELLBOOK

If such things could be said to be 'common' in any sense, most wizards have learned a few shared tricks and manifestations. But rare or common, they must keep this knowledge recorded in some way, yet hidden – perhaps as beaded strings, or columns of numbers scratched into slates, or as patterns hidden within detailed frescoes – for reading and writing are illegal, let alone wizardry. The most concerning part of such records is that the nature and necessary implementations of the spells sometimes change, as if alive, even while the wizard studies the particulars.

PHANTASM

An illusion of minor sort, without sound or shadow, or other presence, a wise viewer may note these problems; the less wise fall victim to their own belief and will "feel" its actions or intended effect, possibly falling unconscious, fleeing in terror, feeling full or sated, etc.

This spell requires the wizard to be blind in at least one eye or have replaced at least one eye with that of a monstrous creature.

Knowing this spell requires pulling the veil of the world aside and recognizing the temporary and illusory nature of all beliefs – a previous certainty now rings hollow. *What truth do you no longer believe?*

MAGIC DART

A sharp dart or lashing tendril of solidified energy that can draw blood or kill as well as any scoundrel's knife; some claim this sorcery can never miss its intended target.

This spell requires the wizard cut, stab, burn, or otherwise cause themselves pain or injury; the injury need not be severe, but it cannot be insignificant (a pinch). Drawing blood is always enough.

Knowing this spell requires the wizard commune with certain spirits or daemonic powers, who may regularly seek them out for favors. *What payment do you owe to the spirits?*

CHARMING HEX

A change of your features and voice in the mind of a victim beguiles them for a period into service. They will perform tasks almost without reservation, for they trust the wizard implicitly and will follow suggestions and cater to demands. A simple sentence or less, with no further influence, often leaves the target unaware of what has happened. Not so with longer periods of enchantment and repeated demands.

Knowing this spell results in a fear of how easily the mind is clouded and fooled; you worry others are not truly friends, but deceiving you. *What friend is now your rival?*

DIVINATION

By whatever method used—whether that is reading the intestines of a slaughtered beast, interpreting carved bone slates or dice crafted from a sentient creature, or charting the wandering stars on hides whose source is best left unnamed—a hint of the future is revealed, though its nature and context may not always be obvious.

Knowing this spell results in fears that the future is unchanging, and taking action is pointless against the inevitability of time's desires. *How have you foreseen you will you die?*

BARRIER

Of lesser use against physical attack and injury, this glimmering, transparent shield can be summoned with a gesture or a word and floats in front of the wizard, providing total protection against non-physical attacks and minor hexes for as long as it is concentrated upon.

This spell requires the wizard have bonded a metal plate bearing a particular sigil to their own flesh, somewhere, in some manner.

Knowing this spell requires the wizard to learn of and access certain shifting planar energies on the verge of touching and draining away the material plane...and hopefully never accidentally touch those energies. *What terrible thing happened that time they did touch?*

SHADOW'S KISS

A sweet, cooling wave of air spreads out and causes all whom it caresses to fall into a deep sleep for a short period. Loud noise and injury can easily awaken those so enchanted, however.

This spell requires the caster to bond a piece of living shadow to their own flesh. Where they might obtain such materia, or even what it might be or how to bond it with their own body, is left to the wizard to discover.

Knowing this spell leaves the caster's dreams open to *something* they have glimpsed in the psychic dream-realms. Something dark and uncertain. Nightmares are certain to follow. *What dream keeps awakening you?*

SHADOW-BORN STEED

A summoning ritual that brings into being a number of large, shadowy, quadrupedal beings with ice for eyes whose forms waver and smoke in the dry desert heat. The terrifying creatures are solid enough to ride upon, highly intelligent, tireless, and require no food or water.

However, the forces required to restrain the creatures are taxing. The longer the wizard forces the beasts to serve him on this plane, the more vicious they become and the more exhausted the wizard becomes.

Returning them requires a ritual of banishing. The death of the wizard will, of course, immediately release the creatures from service.

Knowing this spell leaves the wizard with the certain knowledge these creatures hide in the minds of other beasts, and now the wizard can hear their unsettling whispers when looking into the eyes of other beasts. *What terrible things are the shadows whispering?*

FLAME'S WRATH

By drawing and concentrating the ambient heat and light from the surroundings, the wizard can cause flame to consume everything in a small area, at the weakest starting fires, at the most powerful immolating any living beings caught inside the area.

This spell requires the wizard have committed his body to the flame, and is left with the scars of a severe burn across a portion of their body.

Knowing this spell leaves a weak flame glowing in the depths of the caster's eyes. It will usually go unnoticed on casual inspection, but it makes them shine like a desert beast's at night. Some say the elemental lords of fire have marked them for transgressing on those spirits' domain. *Do you wear goggles or a veil to hide your eyes from sight?*

ARRESTED

While those of low class or “lesser” crimes (“vagrancy”, ie: being in the wrong place at the wrong time) are sold into slavery or indentured service to noble or merchant houses, or forced to work on the farms or in the mines for the city, unrepentant, violent, or otherwise dangerous criminals are sent to the Arena to thrill the citizens of the city with blood-sport (“accidents” are sometimes arranged for in the cell blocks or on the arena floor). The rulers of the city find it cheaper to use criminals to provide blood-sport amusements than to house and feed them in a prison, and the arena pits serve just as well as a prison. While not all the games are to-the-death, there is often little fairness in the judgements the games or Arena Master hands down.

ARENA CLAIMS

Allied Claim. Gladiator Control : *your crew has a gladiator and his trainer under their total control; you can't Trauma from being thrown in the Arena.* Arena Master Payoff : see Guard Payoff. Match Winner : see Hardcase. Release Influence : see Parole Influence. Smuggling.

These claims can be lost the typical way; for example, if you fail to pay off the Arena Master, it may damage the “goodwill” you’ve built; the gladiator you’ve control of suffers the worst of a lethal bout; etc.

If a member of the Crew is sent to the farms or the mines instead, use the same chart, but tailored for those situations and for dealing with the Templars and their guards. Do not use a new Claims sheet.

FACTIONS

The city of Tyr is crowded with groups of actual criminals, and purportedly legitimate organizations, cults and secret societies, who are really just more well-organized gangs struggling for power and turf, whether physical, economic, or political.

TEMPLARATE (V)

The right-hand of the god-king Kalak. The Templarate runs the city, overseeing its public works and enforcing the King's laws and decrees. Their bureaucracy is entirely corrupt, and its members are greedy, power-hungry, utterly amoral, and their prayers and proclamations have actual physical power. If there's something illegal going on in the city, a Templar probably has their hand in it, and are more than willing to put a knife in the back of any partner as soon as it suits their purpose. The Templarate consists of dozens of hierarchal bureaus, with the largest being Construction, Planning, Farms, Treasury, Trade, and Slaves.

CITYWATCH (III)

Though under the control of the Templars, the City Watch is one of the least corrupt organizations of significant power within the city...left to their own devices. All patrols are accompanied by or report to a Templar, meaning that, in practice, the city watch are more mob enforcer than law-keeper, doing the Templars' dirty work whether they like it or not.

SENATE (IV)

Every noble house in the city maintains a presence in the Senate, fighting over trade deals, land claims, public recognition, and social status. The god-king's word is absolute law, but he is content to allow the nobles to debate decorum and taxation, as long as they ably run their slave-farms to feed the city and pull iron from the mines. Those with other ideas tend to disappear.

SCHOOL OF THOUGHT (II)

At the sufferance of the King, masters of the Way teach promising students meditation and philosophy, and the deeper mysteries, at their temple in the Golden City. At least for those who can afford such training. They are careful not to run afoul of the Templars through heresy or incitement against the god-king, and often train promising members of that organization as a buffer.

ORDER (III)

A secret society within the School of Thought who practice theoretically impossible, even heretical, arts. Their true purpose is ostensibly keeping the forces of the Way in balance, but no one with that much power has entirely selfless goals. And "balance" isn't peace or brotherhood. They are behind a significant number of events in the city, moving other people in the city, and beyond, like pieces on a board to their own ends. They target powerful users of the Way for membership, or extermination.

VEILED ALLIANCE (II)

Small, secretive cells of rebels and terrorists dedicated to disrupting the Templarate and overthrowing the god-king, led by wizards who refuse to defile the land with their arts...but they are still foul wizards. While mainly committing acts of vandalism, heresy, and theft, occasionally they cross the line into outright assaults on members of the Templarate, or destroy city projects and public works "for the greater good."

ELVEN MARKET (II)

If there's something you want, and you shouldn't have it, the Elven Market will. A gang of smugglers and honey-runners whose membership is constantly changing, making it impossible to pin down, as the elves come-and-go with the winds and the seasons. The Market operates under a veil of legitimacy running an actual market that sells exotic goods, hides, meat, spices and herbs (and strange fruits possessed of wondrous powers).

HARP AND KNIFE (IV)

A secret society among bards and entertainers who engage in kidnapping, extortion, and assassination. They say if you murder anyone in Tyr, and the Harp and Knife don't get their cut, they'll take trade in your flesh. The number of back alley murders that go unavenged would seem to belie this claim, but plotting nobles and merchants know better than to try their luck against their rivals without going through the Harp and Knife (or paying them to stay out of it).

LION'S PAW (II)

King Hammanu, the Lion of Urik, would like nothing better than to take control of Tyr, more particularly its iron mines. A direct war requiring sieging down the walls with an army would be costly, if not impossible. Instead, he has sent his spies and manipulators into the city to sow discord. Some cults have begun to worship Hammanu as a saviour figure who is opposed to the evil tyrant-god Kalak.

MERCHANT HOUSES (IV)

By long agreement, none may do business in the city without the blessing of the Merchant Houses, to whom they must tithe some percentage of their goods for export. The Houses are ostensibly able to conduct business without need to bribe the Templarate, nor are they required to provide tithe or fee to them except as that required from long-standing agreements at the city gates. The Templarate finds this arrangement disagreeable, claiming it hobbles their ability to enact the King's Law, but has never been able to convince the Senate a change is in order.

The Houses are not static, they rise and fall across the years with changes in their fortunes, becoming prominent or fading away, or even being replaced entirely. There are, however, a few long-standing Houses in the city, some centuries old. Some still strong, some ripe for the plucking. Some withered and desperate. As a group, however, they are powerful.

GUILDS (IV)

Similar to the Merchant Houses, but lacking any centralized structure beyond that of sibling-hood by proxy, the Guilds are collections of laborers and artisans who keep the secrets of their crafts hidden from outsiders, such that only members are allowed to learn their trade skills. Violence dis-incentivizes non-membership or the dissemination of guild secrets.

There are many guilds throughout the city, though some jobs do not have a guild, such as the farmers or bricklayers, as these are mostly slave labor. The most powerful guilds in the city rival the Merchant Houses and have brokered deals to reduce the tithes their members must pay, provide other forms of protection, and handle official journeymen licensure.

Of these, the Bonesmithy, the Masons, the Weavers, the Ceramists, and the Draquomen, are the most powerful.

ELEMENTAL CULTS (III)

Each of the four elemental lords – Earth, Air, Fire, water – has a small, dedicated priesthood who serve in the Temple of the Four Elements, but smaller shrines to one or more of the elementals are found throughout the city, usually tended by a priest or temple acolyte. The King tolerates the priests, but makes certain they are too busy dealing with internal politics to make trouble or challenge his authority as the supreme ruler of all worldly and otherworldly things.

CULT OF THE DRAGON (I)

This secretive cult is dedicated to worship of the creature known as the Dragon: a giant, winged reptile of myth and legend. The exact nature of their rites and beliefs is unknown, but they are thought to believe the Dragon is either a savior who brings rains and will make the desert bloom, or a harbinger of the end whose purposes they wish to serve in order to rule in the aftermath. Many of their rituals are dedicated to its summoning.

CARTOGRAPHERS (II)

Explorers and wasteland travelers. More than a little insane (you'd have to be to wander the deserts). They often pry into things people ought not know, and have heretical ideas, so they are carefully watched. But they are too useful to be rid of. The Cartographers are thought to smuggle books and magic, and teach letters, but the wonders they bring back from ancient ruins make the god-king overlook any such rumored crimes. Usually.

BALICAN REDS (III)

The Reds claim to have been formed from a group of mercenaries who arrived from a distant land and preferred the restitution in Tyr. They are now the city's premier band of sell-swords and mercenaries, well-known for taking any job, if the payment is right, and have no code of conduct other than a refusal to fight or oppose brother or sister members. This has ensured the Houses hire members of the Reds as protection against other Reds who might be hired as assassins or bandits – a most enriching situation for the mercenary company.

THE SPIDERS (I)

A secretive group who run the brothels and illegal games of chance inside the "legitimate" businesses found in Shadow Square, and are involved in various blackmail schemes in the Noble Quarter. If you "do business" in the Warrens, some of it eventually ends up reaching the Spiders.

BONESMITHY (III)

Wood is an expensive resource and metal is scarce, but bones are free, once someone or something isn't using them any longer. The Bonesmithy know the secret arts of shaping bone into strong, effective tools, from weapons to farming implements, making them a powerful and vitally important guild in the city. They pay well for bodies, bipedal or otherwise, and effectively serve as coroner and mortuary services for the city.

MASONS (III)

Not merely stoneworkers, the Mason Guild is instrumental in building and maintaining the walls that protect Tyr from not just the physical monstrosities and hostile tribes that roam the wasteland, but environmental and mystical forces that could bring ruin to those within, such as the Gray Death and the wandering undead spirits. They are said to know secrets that not merely allow them to build strong walls, but imbue walls with spiritual wards against such forces. They also know where all the bodies are buried.

WARREN RATS (II)

A gang of orphans you get kicked out of when you're "too old", they're one of the worst gangs of thieves and beggars in the city. They've also carved out a niche as trusted message-runners for the other gangs in the city, as they can slip through and get into places older folks can't. Membership provides some degree of protection to the street children of Tyr from other gangs and slave-catchers in the city.

PUG'S GANG (I)

Less a gang, and more a rough group of drunks and second-rate pit-fighters who have decided to jump into the mercenary game, with thuggery-for-hire as their main trade. They'd like nothing better than to be on a House patron's payroll, whether above or under the table, but really anyone with ceramic to burn and brawls to start would be fine with them.

DUST PEDDLERS (II)

Professional news-mongers and gossips who, in reality, control the flow of information in the city: their stories are filled with half-truths and outright lies (all paid for, of course). They can be found on corners throughout the city, calling out the current time, the latest news of interest, and anything else of note they have over-heard or "over-heard".

THE DISGRACED (II)

A gang of Templars who fell from grace thanks to the treachery of their fellows, out-played in the game but alive to tell the tale. They would like nothing better than to see their rivals defrocked and hung from Tyr's walls with their own intestines. To those ends, they've recruited former gladiators, spies, and defilers into their network of revenge, and many still have the loyalty of their half-giant guardian. The Disgraced managed to hang onto their garb and badges of office, and have all the secret knowledge of the Templarate, but no longer have access to the powers granted by the god-king. The Templarate – or at least their rivals within – would like this problem to go away.

WESTERN REACH (II)

A club of educated nobles with a penchant for adventure stories and curiosities, which is a cover for smuggling, prostitution, and illegal slave auction operations. They are always on the look-out for “associate members” – those who are not blooded nobles, such as actual explorers and wasteland treasure-hunters, but can bring something useful to the table as well as provide an air of legitimacy.

DRAQOMEN (II)

The guild of city guides and message-runners based near the Caravan Gate. They earn their pay by escorting new-comers around the city, answering questions, directing people to the best food and lodging and directing them away from dangerous areas, and helping out with “Templar entanglements” new-comers might encounter – using their knowledge of the bureaucracy to argue down the cost of bribes (then charge their clients a small fee for the service) or talk a client out of trouble. Sometimes a scoundrel gets the idea they can fleece a traveler by offering their own services as a guide – but like all Guilds, the Draqomen do not tolerate anyone else working their turf or sully their good name.

THE WATER KINGS (I)

As part of the Bureau of Planning, the Bureau of waters is responsible for maintaining and protecting the city's wells, distributing water chits and water to the citizens, and maintaining records of water usage and claims by the nobility. A handful of the Templars within the bureau have secretly begun to worship and make sacrifices to the elemental lord of water, feeling that the King's failure to renew the deep reservoir waters will not just destroy the city, but their personal fortunes. Their hope is that by appeasing and enriching the elemental lord, the waters will be refilled.

BUREAU OF TRADE (III)

This bureau has managed to slyly push its way into a powerful position within the Templarate, choosing to work with the Merchant Houses rather than against them, gaining favor with the Houses and advancing their trade interests with lucrative deals. For now. The bureau's long-term goal is the dissolution of the ancient trade charters giving the Houses independence from law and tax, and the establishment of new charters more favorable to the Templarate.

BUREAU OF HERESY (II)

Once one of the most important bureaus, its power has declined in recent decades. Tasked with rooting out heresy, such as knowledge of letters, practice of wizardry, worship of false gods, and various forbidden activities (the list changes frequently). While they take great glee in torturing suspects for information, the bureau has long offered information bounties, and many are only too happy to inform on their friends and neighbors for a few extra water chits and the god-king's blessing. Accused heretics can swear reformation (making sufficient tithes to the officiating Templar), or face public execution through noose or fire.

THE THIEVES' GUILD (IV)

The Thieves' Guild is supposedly a group of cut-purses, muggers, grifters, burglars, and pan-handlers at the top of the city's criminal pyramid. If you aren't paying them off to work the streets, whoever you are paying off is. Some claim the idea of a shadowy association of criminal gangs running the entire underworld is nonsense because scum like that would eventually just slit one another's throats and the whole thing would collapse. That's probably true. In reality, the Guild doesn't engage in theft directly, but is a protection racket aimed at criminals. They recruit the poor, desperate, and ambitious, and in return for the membership fee paid to the guild by the actual cut-purses, muggers, grifters, burglars, and pan-handlers, the guildsmen provide safe refuge, arrange for bribes, and pay the bone-saws.

BLACK PEACE (II)

The King keeps a cabal of defilers in service to the crown, hidden as a branch of the Templarate. Their main offices are inside the Golden Tower, but a dummy office with a couple of bored, clueless staff kept in the High Bureaus for appearances' sake. The defilers swear a geas sealed by the King's own sorcery not to use their powers to assault or work against him. In return, the Black Peace have full access to the King's libraries and are tasked with research into ancient artifacts, the preservation and copying of lore too heretical for the Templarate to be trusted with, the study of dangerous magic and demon-binding, fighting or containing powerful undead creatures, and hunting down the Veiled Alliance. Other Templars fear the Black Peace and defer to them when they make an appearance.

IRON LIRR (II)

A small mercenary outfit based out of Tyr which guards caravans for the Merchant House that bids the highest. Their membership has fluctuated wildly over the years and they are always looking for fresh bodies to fill "vacated" positions. They usually serve alongside one or two other mercenary groups hired by their employer, depending on the size of the caravan, and have thus established both friendships and rivalries.

DANCING COIN (II)

Former members of the Harp & Knife who managed to survive banishment, and disguised as entertainers rather than bodyguards, now sell their services as security personnel to nervous nobles and rich merchants, having intimate knowledge of the methods their former colleagues use. The Harp & Knife consider their existence a stain on their honor, but thus far is enjoying the challenge.

DEEP LEGION (IV)

The battalion of the city's army responsible for doing battle with existential threats to the citizens of Tyr out in the deserts. Templars assigned a command in the Deep Legion consider it a punishment and a career dead-end, as there is no prestige in the position, little-to-no chance for wealth or intrigue, and a high chance of a violent death. The Deep Legion soldiers themselves are well-equipped for their job, well-fed, and when not marching through the desert or defending the walls, serve as the Golden Tower's and King's fanatically loyal personal guardians.

UNION OF THE WHITE PALMS (I)

A secret sect within the Templarate with beliefs even the worst of the other Templars find vile. The Union is a death cult that works towards the death of all outsiders, mutants, and non-humans within the city. They aren't afraid to kill "the pure" who get in their way. In an act of unlikely enlightenment, the King has ordered the cult stamped out with extreme prejudice before it spreads – which has more to do with the fact half of the city's slaves are non-humans.

THE EYE, THE EAR & THE HAND (III)

A secret society among bards and entertainers focused on espionage, blackmail, spy-craft, and double-dealing. The Knife & Harp ignores them as long as they don't expand into murder and kidnapping. The Hand, however, has been slowly plotting to take over Harp & Knife as well.

BEGGAR CULTS (II)

The Beggar Cults are a collection of beggars, cripples, and other lost souls who have come together in worship of the elemental lords or various forgotten gods at shrines in Under-Tyr. The beggar cults view Kalak as a failed god, and express the unmasked ascetism of a beggar's life as virtue, but otherwise have widely varying ideologies and beliefs.

THE TENTH (III)

A slave-army from a distant city who murdered their overseers and took up as mercenaries. They don't make trouble and follow local laws, but the Templars believe they're helping hide escaped slaves, possibly even freeing them, but have no proof...yet. Until they do, the Templatate is avoiding direct action against the Tenth only because the company is numerous, incredibly well-armed, and in the employ of powerful Merchant Houses.

CULT OF THE BLACK SUN (I)

The high priestess of this cult has repurposed a crumbling temple in Under-Tyr, where she spends most of her time attempting to commune with "the Black Sun", and claiming to her faithful she brings them its holy commands. The cult believes the dark sun is an actual deity, and hold quiet, daily rooftop services watching the sunrise and sunset. The cult's symbol is an orrery encasing a cinder. It is possible an ancient, undead spirit that has made its home in the temple is the actual leader of the cult.

BURNING CANDLE (II)

The Elven Market doesn't have a stranglehold on moving illegal products into the city. The Candle is a failed Merchant House, that, rather than its surviving members scattering, decided to use their connections to help move certain goods inside the walls of the city for discerning clientele. The group communicates via a complex system of burning candles placed in certain windows at particular times of night.

SCARABS (II)

A loose association of alchemists and gardeners in the Artisan Quarter involved in selling potion fruits and other illicit drugs, as well as experimenting in the creation of new substances and experiences. They usually have at least one honey-den for customers, but the locations move. They're also involved in kidnapping, the slave-trade, and assassination.

BROTHERS OF THE EMPTY HAND (II)

A Beggar Cult faction that wages war against the city's slave traders. Those they free are "asked" to join their cause and swear oaths of ascetism, then taught unarmed combat techniques and psychic exercises at their temple in Under-Tyr. Not everyone so freed desires to devote their lives to poverty, but the monks are not above forcible indoctrination.

WEAVERS (III)

The most privileged and corrupt demagogues in the city are the Masters' Council of the Weavers' Guild. While they don't have the absolute power of the Templatate or the sway of the Senate, the Weavers control most of the city's neighborhood aldermen, giving them political influence over numerous local matters and citizens and a wide web of information and sentiment to manipulate in the favor of the Guilds.

THE ACCURSED (II)

Those abandoned and left to die in the desert are exposed to myriad curses, dark magics, and the horrors of the wastes. Most do die. Some of those refuse to stay dead. Among the sane undead not driven entirely by desire and thirst, some have successfully made their way into the city, and now haunt Under-Tyr or the Warrens. It is whispered some have even managed to hide their true nature and taken the place of prominent nobles, merchants, or Templars to further their own unaccountable ends.

CITY DISTRICTS

Everything properly called Tyr is surrounded by stone walls, fifty-feet thick and high, blessed by the god-king to hold back the foulest aspects of the desert weather, such as shard storms and the gray death; as well as to repel attacks by gargantuan desert predators, raids by gathered elf tribes, hungry thri-kreen swarms, and worse. Only the farms lie outside the city walls, guarded by powerful Templars and full units of Tyr's army, and the forces of the Noble House with the land-deed.

Three gates lead into the city: the Caravan Gate, the main gate leading into the trade districts, the Arena Gate leading into the industrial district and slave pens, and the little-used High Gate that leads directly into the Golden City. There are always a few makeshift tenements around the gates where anyone can sleep free for the night...unprotected.

The city itself is comprised of austere, multi-level mudbrick or adobe buildings with wide doorways – to allow cooling breezes through – with large windows high on the walls, and floors of tiled mud-brick or hard-packed dirt. Most buildings are pressed up against one another for support, and the city streets are like a drunken maze, winding and twisting, with no discernable layout or design.

The common section of the city, inhabited by the slaves, freemen, merchants, and nobility, is dominated by an immense, as-yet-unfinished ziggurat which casts its shadow across the districts below. The ring of the city that houses Tyr's bureaucracy is instead dominated by the immense tower at its center, wherein the King and his most faithful reside.

Over centuries of war, earthquake, catastrophe, and urban planning, the city been rebuilt on top of itself many times, and there are as many levels below the streets as there are above, though most of those under Tyr are sealed off and dangerous – making them the perfect place for scoundrels and outcasts to hide from law and authority.

CARAVAN DISTRICT

From the grand gate leading into Tyr runs a broad, merchant-lined avenue that twists towards the base of the god-king's ziggurat. The most culturally vibrant area of the city thanks to the multitude of people and goods from distant lands flowing into the city – with an equal multitude of inns, taverns, boarding houses, eateries, and guides competing for their patronage. Maze-like streets spider-web away from the main thoroughfare, with no sign of planning or underlying design to their layout.

Almost anything you care to purchase is available here, often at a cost that will make your eyes water. Every merchant here has fought (lied, stolen, and murdered) to gain their spot within the district, with the most prestigious being those shops directly along the Caravan Way.

LANDMARKS

The Caravan Gate is a massive entryway, usually left open but always well-defended. In times of trouble – such as during an attack or dangerous desert storms – the “gate”, made up of two huge blocks of solid stone carved with statuary of the god-king, can be moved into place by groups of psychically-powerful Templars to form an unbroken wall and seal the city.

When the need is less pressing, a set of “smaller” gates have been engineered from thick slabs of agafari wood banded and studded with rusting iron, which require “only” a team of half-giants to push into place and bar. The gate is constantly patrolled and well-watched.

Caravan Way is a long, twisting avenue that leads from the main gate to the Merchants' District. The avenue is broad enough to allow a fully-burdened mekillot (a not-uncommon sight) to pass and still leaves more than enough room for street vendors, crowds of pedestrians, and the nobility with their retinues. The avenue is lined with wealthy shops and market stalls selling (almost) everything you can imagine.

The Overlook on the southern edge of the district consists of pricey, long-term lodgings and a few high-end shops built along an escarpment above the broad, shallow ravine below that local legend claims was once part of a river of water that flowed through the city. The northern bank of the ravine is much higher than the southern, and from here one has a grand view of the nobility's large, walled, garden estates on the opposite bank.

SCENE

A riot of colorful street vendors gather along the broad avenue in austere buildings of beautifully white-washed brick, all advertising wares or lodging for person or beast, with painted boards and facades. Crowds flow around the ponderous mekillot and muzzled inix making their way down the broad, winding avenue. Elite patrols of the city-watch, led by templars and backed by half-giants, march through maze-like streets. Nobles and their retinues of slaves and bodyguards move from shop-to-shop, seeking the latest art, fashions, and finest spider-silks from afar.

NOTABLES

Manchus. The mutant human templar who oversees the security forces of the Caravan Gate brooks no variation from schedule or regulation: “Disorder brings opportunity for enemies of the city-state.” He is temple-trained and powerful in the Way. He keeps the dusky yellow markings of his mutation covered out of personal shame. (Nervous, Rigid.)

Mila. Half-elven proprietor and hostess of the Golden Inix Inn, an upscale stop-over for foreigners and merchants spending a day or two in the city. Her regular guests are incredibly loyal. She is secretly a powerful telepath and rumor-monger. (Serious, Inquisitive, Graceful.)

Lira. The senior guard-officer of the City Watch headquartered in the Caravan District. She carries herself proudly. While she dislikes that the Watch is essentially an arm of the Templarate, she is far too loyal to complain or take action against the King's priests. (Decisive, Organized.)

Trink. The half-elven owner of a pawn-shop called The Tarnished Cup, which buys and sells previously owned goods of all sorts, from instruments, to jewelry, clothing, and even chariots. He has multiple black-market contacts. (Sly, Greedy.)

Wealth 2. Safety 3. Criminal Influence 2. Supernatural Influence 1.

Take +1d to acquire an asset here, because chances are good someone has what you're looking for, but take +1 Heat doing it, because you're probably being carefully watched.

MERCHANT DISTRICT

At the end of the winding Caravan Way, past caravan warehouses and animal pens, under the shadow of the ziggurat, rise the immense, high-walled compounds of the Merchant Houses, founders of the caravans and holders of the merchant guild-titles of Tyr. Large emporiums surround each compound, offering House goods for sale – often the only (legal) place one can purchase certain goods due to ancient trade-rights the Houses have negotiated for themselves, and for which they have not given resale rights to associate merchants elsewhere in the city.

Each compound is a self-contained village, guaranteed a certain amount of independence from city law, and provides its representatives, caravan masters, and guardsmen free tenement. The compounds serve not just as embassy, but estate for the most prominent local House members, whose quarters are often as lavish as those of any noble.

LANDMARKS

Iron Square. The central hub of the district, surrounded by the ten major Merchant Houses in the city, and dominated by the compound of House Vordon – the holders of the city's trade contracts for iron and iron tools – taking up an entire quarter of the square. Each of the ten Houses' trading emporiums are located here, as well as access to their main offices, though the inner compounds are off-limits to non-House members or employees.

The lesser Houses maintain small offices here, with street stalls and cramped lodgings around the edge of the square. They often pay the larger houses to safely store their equipment, goods, and animals. Such protection contracts are considered inviolate; Houses that break this trust by stealing from a House under their protection may find their trade contracts and protection-rights revoked, and caravans marked for plunder.

House Shom. An ancient, powerful House based in distant Nibenay, which over the past few decades has become less concerned with trade and more with draining its immense coffers by means of lavish, decadent, very private parties catering to the obscene vices of its founding family. The Shom compound in Tyr is more of a palatial mansion of delights filled with extravagant artwork, and one of the few buildings in the city designed for aesthetic value, rather than austere utility.

While the family ignores the collapse of their trade empire, its agents fund their own luxurious lifestyles at the House's expense. Through its vast trade network, these agents can easily arrange to smuggle and sell contraband for themselves, or others...with the correctly-sized bribe.

SCENE

The ziggurat looms over the Merchant District, casting its cold shadow upon the Houses, reminding them they only exist at the patience of the King. Guards draped in their House's colors gather at every street corner, making up for the absence of templar patrols. The stench of animal pens hangs in the air and weird animal cries mix with the shouts of porters moving goods – off-loading them into warehouses before transport to shop and emporium, or loading them onto departing caravans. Local craftsmen, hurried traders, and rough mercenaries seeking employment push their way through the crowds and past lumbering caravans.

NOTABLES

Asher Troika. Founder and caravan master of the new House bearing his name. They have a small, cramped compound, but he pays very well and is seeking skilled and loyal guards and handlers. (Tough, Fair, Generous.)

Thaxos Vordon. A merchant lord who would be king, the head of House Vordon secretly plots for revolution and, through a number of dummy lesser Houses, funds select groups also seeking to overthrow the city government. It is unlikely his family would approve of this plan, nor the civil war sure to result when his more honest subordinates refuse his commands. (Friendly, Manipulative, Power Hungry.)

Strabo Ianto. The Patriarch of House Ianto has relocated most of the House's resources to an ancient fortress some miles south of the city. With the House falling on hard times, he pays well for secrets...and for deniable sorties against the other Houses. (Tired, Desperate, Wrathful.)

Wealth 3. Safety 3. Criminal Influence 2. Supernatural Influence 1.

Operations against warehouses or the compounds are considered "hostile turf" for the purpose of generating Heat.

NOBLE QUARTER

The walled estates and villas of the nobility begin at the edges of the Caravan District, just beyond the high-end merchant shops selling items such as perfumes and body oils, jewelry, gemstones, colorful feathers and body paint, tapestries, skillful carvings, and other finery. At the district's outer edge, the estate walls press up against those of the city; while at their inner edge, they loom over the slum-like Warrens and Brickyards.

Like all the architecture of the city, the buildings are austere and pressed together, sharing thick adobe walls and overlapping levels, though some prestigious few bear colored tile roofs or golden domes. Within any given estate, however, are dozens of lavish rooms surrounding a broad, open courtyard with carefully tended gardens. All run on slave-labor.

LANDMARKS

The King's Square. In the center of the northern section of the Quarter is a wide, diamond shaped park enclosed by high walls. The nobility come here to relax, but more often to discuss matters of state outside the Senate, and to air personal grievances among one another. An ancient fountain still sits at the center of the square; the priests of the nearby temple keep the waters flowing. The nobility may drink freely from the fountain, but severe penalties await anyone else who does so.

Temple of the Four Elements. A pillared procession leads from the King's Square to an immense, tile-roofed cathedral. Four towers capped with golden bricks praise the elements, one for each. The tower of water is the largest, followed by Fire, while the smaller towers of Earth and Air are tucked away near the city wall. The temple and its priests only exist by the leave of the King – the Templars occasionally *remind* the priests that the elementals serve the god-king, not the other way around.

The Burning Hand. An open-air spa for the nobility, containing a series of baths heated by summoned fire elementals whose presence has led to rumors the baths are sacred and can cure all manner of ailments. Numerous slaves tend to the varied needs of its guests.

SCENE

Servants move quietly along broad, clean streets alongside nobles carried on palanquins borne by slaves. Patrols of polite private security mix discretely into the foot traffic, watching for ruffians, scoundrels, and the unsuitable to remove from the district. House guards and servants stand outside in the hot sun by the wide doors of each villa, waiting to greet visitors. The broad green leaves of the occasional tree rise above compound walls, casting shade on blue-tiled roofs. All seems calm and quiet.

NOTABLES

Seff. The district's guard captain, loyal to the King, but holds a secret grudge against the elite he has been assigned to protect. He happily informs on the nobility to the Templarate. (Dedicated, Secretive.)

Uthaya. A Templar and the most feared wizard-hunter in the city. He relies on good relations with the elemental clerics to gain leads from citizens reticent to speak with Templars, and often intercedes on the behalf of clerics when particularly harsh punishments are doled out for imagined blasphemies. (Vengeful, Insightful, Quick.)

Baroness Sorok: Her influence extends to the highest levels of the city as she has the ear of her father, the King. She runs multiple slave farms just beyond the walls and is thought to have several mine foremen in her pocket. She seeks to become the city's Queen, whether alone or by her father's side. (Vain, Manipulative, Perverse.)

Lliss. The high priestess of the Temple of the Four, a devotee of elemental water, and the mul daughter of the earth cleric Bontar. She is a skilled diplomat, and helps the nobility with their Quarter's water issues to earn concessions for the clerics from the Senate. (Sly, Tireless, Mercurial.)

Wealth 4. Safety 3. Criminal Influence 1. Supernatural Influence 2.

Engagement rolls suffer -1d due to city watch, templar patrols, and private security. The entire district is considered hostile turf for the purpose of generating heat during a score – the Noble Houses have a long memory.

WARRENS

The narrow, twisting streets and crumbling buildings of the Warrens make up the majority of the northern quarter of the city. These are Tyr's slums, inhabited on its outskirts by poor freemen and laborers, while the tenements further towards the core of the district are increasingly abandoned and serve only as sources of raw material, or simply places to dump trash. Gangs and mobs roam the Warrens, mugging, robbing, and murdering. This sometimes extends into the neighboring districts.

Templar patrols are rare, and do little good, but some tradesmen have hired mercenaries to serve as a make-shift city watch. The poor souls of the deeper Warrens tell tales of hauntings by dark spirits and monsters.

LANDMARKS

Elven Market. Just past the Elven Bridge, the drab buildings of the city become a colorful riot of tarps and tents, where elven vendors of the various nomadic tribes around Tyr spread their ever-changing wares upon blankets, or hawk them from counters behind quickly-closed windows. Due to its central location and wide variety, the market is frequented by everyone in the city – though quality is not guaranteed, and the market is rife with thieves and con-artists. Almost anything you desire can be found (and sold) here, if you know the right questions to ask the right people.

Shadow Square. A small entertainment district busiest after sunset and before dawn. The technically illegal gambling houses are an open secret. Less so are the pleasure dens catering to honey-addicts, unlicensed brothels, and underground fighting rings, each supported by (or pretending to be) legitimate business: wine and ale shops, hostels, and dance halls.

Veiled Alliance Headquarters. Known only to its proprietor, a hidden passage in the basement of the Drunken Giant tavern – an unpretentious establishment with good food and drink at affordable prices – leads to Under-Tyr and the Alliance. Or at least to one of their contacts.

The Elven Bridge. An ancient bridge worn down by the centuries crosses over a wide, barren gully cutting through the Warrens. The gully supposedly once flowed with water, but now holds only discarded trash. Clandestine exchanges are often held in the shadow of the bridge, and rogues sometimes hide beneath, waiting to waylay the unfortunate.

SCENE

The noise, laughter, and cursing of the unrestrained commerce of the Elven Market gives way to the scratching of vermin scuttling through the detritus that crowds against the edges of ill-kept tenements. Crumbling buildings reek of discarded trash and worse. Hard-looking men and women stand in groups in the shadows of narrow streets, watching passers-by with dark eyes and stony expressions, but scatter when groups of armed, rough-looking mercenaries wearing tradesmen or House sigils stroll down the street, hands on weapons. Heavily-armed Templar patrols ransack the rough shanties, seeking “escaped slaves”, and press-gang “vagabonds” (ie: anyone who can't pay them off) into field-service.

NOTABLES

Krysta. A former half-elven gladiator renowned for her beauty and sensuality. She runs the notorious Crystal Spider: a lavish, three-story gambling house that stands out in the decay of the Warrens. It boasts a private courtyard and working fountain, as well as private meeting rooms and offices on the upper floors. Her employees are known to be fanatically loyal. (Beautiful, Fierce, Provocative.)

Shiral. An out-going elf with a melodious voice. His tribe gathers fresh vegetables and herbs from the Forest Ridge, right under the noses of the halfling tribes, and runs them to the city via a secret route. For especially trusted clients, he can also provide the potion fruits gathered during the tribe's dangerous excursions. (Friendly, Sharp-eyed, Cautious.)

Sarkea. An ancient-looking woman with pale skin, jaundiced eyes, and long fingers ending in sharp, painted talons. She both oversees and never leaves the House of Fingers – a safe-house and holy shrine for the city's bards, where murder and poison are forbidden. The House stands in what is facetiously called “the Bard's Quarter” near the Elven Market, its walls are adorned with thousands of ancient fingers and other appendages from every manner of sentient creature. Destroying one immediately marks a person for death. (Superstitious, Creepy, Insightful.)

Wealth 1. **Safety** 1. **Criminal Influence** 4. **Supernatural Influence** 3.

No one cares: take -1 heat to any score being performed in the Warrens.

ARTISAN DISTRICT

On the northern edge of the city, sandwiched between the Warrens, the gladiatorial arena, and the city wall, are the shops and homes of Tyr's freemen. The buildings here are simple but well-maintained. The district's shops provide the basic crafts and goods by artisans such as cobblers, potters, and weavers, that are needed by the citizens. The streets lack the hawkers and street vendors of the more "colorful" trade districts, and a few bars and restaurants cater to locals, with less tolerance for outsiders.

LANDMARKS

The Wayward Trader. A popular, quiet tavern frequented by the locals, offering a variety of drinks and food. Strangers are left-alone as long as they cause no trouble, but are watched carefully, if discreetly, by the regulars. The owner, Quen (Witty, Resigned), is a sassy caravaner who stayed in Tyr rather than risk the journey back to Raam when her merchant house failed. She paints and embroiders curtains with stunning and fantastical scenes; some can be seen hung up around the tavern.

The Critic's Ceramic. A pottery and ceramic shop named for the small, psychic lizard often kept as a pet by Tyrian families. The family who owns it claim it has been in business as long as Kalak has sat upon his throne (ie: the beginning of time). This is unlikely, but the shop is almost an institution in the district, and no one can recall a time it wasn't there. Its placard is a painting of a lizard wrapped around a water chit.

The Serpent-handled Basket. A small, nondescript tavern that runs illegal gambling games in a basement room. One of the owners, Septris (Deceitful, Amoral), secretly drugs customers with doses of toa'd'dup – a sweet, syrupy incredibly illicit substance that has a nasty effect on anyone using psychic abilities: "It cuts down on cheating."

The Spider's Sister. The tailor of this small shop, Isobel (Philanthropic, Secretive), specializes in spider silks, though no one knows from where she obtains the material. Most of Isobel's income goes towards helping her sister pay off serious debts she has incurred with other Templars.

SCENE

Freemen walk along the clean, narrow streets past stoic, aged homes and shops with worn, painted placards. Some sit outside on narrow, shaded porches at street level, or more commonly on the second story. The bulk of the stadium rises in the background, banners waving overhead. Regular Templar patrols sweep through the streets, protecting the citizens from ruffians, and for this service collect the King's Tax in goods or flesh.

NOTABLES

Thra. The last descendant of House Sharpe, whose family was murdered by bards when she was a child, and their land and wealth distributed to the other noble Houses. A family slave escaped with her into the Artisan District and hid them both. She suspects House Vordon, as they gained the most from her family's destruction. (Sullen, Impulsive.)

Argys: A sharp-eyed tax-collector committed to ensuring Kalak receives his due from the city's freemen. Plus a little for himself. He plays his part as a mid-ranking Templar well, but is aware of far-more than he lets on as he is actually a spy for a rival city-state. He may be a member of the Lion's Paw or merely affiliated. (Suspicious, Thorough.)

Alderman Tlevis: The district's go-between for the people and the powers that run the city. He has some sway with the Templarate, and attempts to keep the local overseers happy and well-bribed. Through contacts with the Noble Houses, he subtly plays the Houses and the Templars against one another to gain concessions for his district, but would be killed if discovered doing so. (Daring, Charming, Educated.)

Mir: A mutant half-elf who claims to be a "Prophet of the Two Moons." Quite insane, but mostly harmless. In actuality, she is an informant and spy for the main Veiled Alliance cell that works in the district – the perfect cover, as her thoughts appear confused and chaotic to any who attempt to explore her mind. (Convincing, Perceptive.)

Wealth 2. Safety 2. Criminal Influence 2. Supernatural Influence 2.

It's easy to acquire goods here, but criminal types and outsiders draw attention. Take +1d to acquire assets, but +2 heat when you do.

SMITHY DISTRICT

On the southern side of the city, between the stadium and walls, is the industrial district of carpenters, stonecutters, tanners, wainwrights, bonesmiths, and similar craftsmen whose work requires larger spaces, creates intolerable noise, or is similarly unsuited to adjacency with residential locations. Unlike the rest of the city, the streets here are broad and straight, the buildings are one story and free-standing, not clustered and stacked, all with significant yards on one-or-more sides.

LANDMARKS

Arena Gate. The opening is flanked by immense carvings of the Dragon, while the gate itself is carved in the shape of the beast's feral jaws; the tunnel is lined with triangular stones mimicking its wicked teeth. Slaves from the pens are marched daily through this gate to work the city fields, but otherwise there is constant traffic from nomadic elven traders, herdsmen and trappers, and transports of ripened crops and crude materials such as stone and gravel from mountain quarries.

Beast Market. Beast handlers assisted by powerful psychics oversee the high-walled pens of z'tal, inix, and mekillot, crates of jankx, herds of kip and baazrag, pens of kank (trained and untrained), and corrals of crodlu and erdlu that fill the grounds between the stadium and the slave pens.

The Brickyards. Centuries ago, Kalak ordered nearly a third of the city razed to make room for his ziggurat and new stadium, and the brickyards necessary for their construction. The former tenants found themselves enslaved inside the new pens lining the edge of the district. City-owned slaves either haul bricks to and construct the ziggurat, or wallow in the mud and excrement used to craft them.

SCENE

The unpleasant smells of animal musk, urine, and feces choke the air, tinged with the earthy reek of the mud from the brickyards. The crack of whips and the yells of task-masters commanding grunting, silent slaves is a constant, mixed with the crack of chisels working stone. A variety of animals low, squawk and hiss, herded in through the gate at set intervals alongside burdened carts of ore, grain, and other rough material.

NOTABLES

The Gentlemen. Dwarven twins – brothers – who run a stabling business for exotic creatures, located just outside the Brickyards near the gate. Besides Merchant Houses or traders with peculiar needs the market pens cannot accommodate, their pens are most often used to contain dangerous creatures the arena master does not want inside the arena itself (until it is time for the games). (Single-minded, Quiet, Weird.)

Katid. Widely reviled and feared by the slaves of the Brickyards, this former gladiator is an unparalleled trainer of beasts, and breaker of people. She trains both mounts and hunting beasts for the Templarate and Noble Houses, and anyone else who can offer her a good deal; and is often called on to pacify unruly slaves. (Unpleasant, Ruthless.)

Grik. An ex-gladiator mul famous for his ability to craft the finest, sharpest weapons in the city...for a small mark-up. He often has a few select, exotic weapons from distant lands available for purchase, even metal weaponry. He purchases ancient weaponry from explorers, and knows much about ancient places. A well-known member of the Bonesmithy, though he works in multiple materials. (No Nonsense, Hard Bargainer.)

Axos. The district's trademaster oversees all materiel being delivered through the gate: grain, stone, straw, ingots, etc. It is understood that he favors those who give him small bribes, while others may find themselves stuck outside the walls for long periods. The King's unchecked expenditures are cutting into his business. (Meticulous, Clumsy.)

Wealth 1. Safety 2. Criminal Influence 2. Supernatural Influence 1.

Work on the ziggurat is performed around the clock, and the district is constantly busy with traders and herdsmen arriving at all hours, so there is no good time for covert operation. People are always willing to look the other way for the right bribe, however...if you have something they want.

STADIUM

Blood-sport gladiatorial games take place here, sponsored by the King and thus of minimal cost to the citizens. Thanks to his largess, even the poorest can afford to watch the slaves and criminals fight one another – in death-matches against arena favorites or monstrous desert beasts captured for use in the games. Slave-gladiators who survive long enough can even earn their freedom. Most of the games, however, are to first blood rather than the death, and many gladiators – whether free warriors or sentenced criminals – have devoted fans throughout the city.

The stadium is sometimes used to host market events, filling the arena with crowded stalls covered by tarps and blankets. However, the smell of cooking oils, spices and sizzling meats, along with the sweet candy scent of citrus, often fail to completely cover the coppery smell of blood and of fermented urine that have soaked into the sands over the centuries.

LANDMARKS

Prisoner Cells. Those condemned to fight in the games are kept in cells beneath the foundation stones of the arena's broad seating. The cells are cramped, and new prisoners are lucky if they have a pile of new hay to sleep on. The bars, made of treated bone strong enough to keep the worst desert monsters caged and fastened with nearly impossible to cut giant's hair rope, are raised and lowered via pulley. Imprisoned gladiators who prove to be crowd favorites gain better accommodations and food.

King's Balcony. Opposite the ziggurat, when he deigns to descend from the Golden Tower, the King and his royal guard watch the games from here beside the Arena Master. The announcer stands just below, calling out matches and whipping the crowds into frenzy. He also stands ready to call the arena guard should any of the combatants get ideas about escaping or about refusing to fight.

The Arena Floor. A broad field of white and gold sands stained red and black with blood and ichor. Four stone obelisks are evenly spaced across the arena floor, providing for some tactical maneuvering as well as markers for games with goals. A broad chariot track runs along the outer edge for use in brutal races of weapon and speed.

SCENE

Roaring crowds sit and stand on the tiered stone to watch the bloodsport on the red sands below, cheering their favorite gladiators, booing and jeering others, thrilling to the monstrous, terrifying desert beasts kept (deliberately barely) under control by trained arena mystics. Nobles are attended by fan-bearing slaves keeping them shaded and cool, often in private boxes, while the lower classes bake under the sun in the public seats. The announcer calls out matches, voice magnified, whipping up the crowd's excitement, bending their mood.

NOTABLES

Sheent the Bloody-Hand. Leader of the toughest gang of human and dwarven gladiators kept in the pens. Most of them are vicious criminals serving sentences for unspeakable crimes, and have survived multiple death matches. Sheg makes sure his people eat well (usually at the expense of other gladiators), are treated well by the guards, and receive other compensations. Those gladiators who dare cross or anger him end up starved, brutally murdered, or both. (Cruel, Charismatic.)

Arkan. The oldest gladiator still performing in the games; he has won dozens of brutal fights, including several death matches. His role has become largely ceremonial, given his immense popularity, but even the worst of the other gladiators respect and defer to him rather than have the crowds (and thus the Arena Master) turn on them. (Skilled, Patient.)

Teg. The current Arena Master is mainly concerned with keeping the crowds happy, and keeping the King happy by ensuring the popularity of the games. The crowds always want to see exotic desert monsters and blood: he has no compunctions about setting up such games, and with the city's coffers behind him, can pay well for creatures and beings captured in the wastelands. He often taunts the criminals and ill-liked gladiators, which also pleases the crowds. (Brutal, Sadistic.)

Wealth 1. **Safety** 2. **Criminal Influence** 1. **Supernatural Influence** 1.

Scores done within the Stadium are at -1d to the Engagement roll.

KALAK'S ZIGGURAT

In the very center of the city, nearly rivaling the Golden Tower in height, and the width of an entire district, is a ziggurat the god-king has spent generations building. Kalak's immense monument to his own glory can be seen clearly anywhere in the city, as can its towering carvings and painted murals. A rainbow of bold colors mark its terraces, topped by the brilliant crimson at top, from which sacrificial fires issue a constant cloud of smoke.

The people say its glazed bricks are mortared with the blood of all the slaves who died in its construction – but they say it quietly. The groaning bodies of the original designers, architects, and slaves are entombed within to protect its secrets, and are said to emerge on dark nights to drag the living inside for a terrible ritual consumption of spirit and flesh.

Its design and construction have been slowly strangling the city of resources and labor necessary to Tyr's survival. It will soon bankrupt the city entirely. Some have noted it seems near to completion, and perhaps the city might yet be spared total collapse.

LANDMARKS

Plaza of the Moons. The top of the ziggurat is essentially a broad, open area broken only by large pits of smoldering coal and elemental fire. Immense banners are planted near its corners, billowing in the winds. The pits are tended day-and-night, and expensive herbs and oils – and slaves and prisoners – are ritually sacrificed into them on a regular schedule set by the cycle of the two moons. There are entrances here into sub-surface rooms where the Templars prepare themselves and their victims, and perhaps ways deeper into the ziggurat as well.

Chamber of Stars. There are rumors the god-king had tens-of-thousands of obsidian bricks cut and shaped for a multi-leveled maze within the ziggurat, protecting hundreds of chambers filled with treasure. And, if it actually exists, an immense, domed chamber deep in its bowels, walled with polished obsidian bricks set with diamonds – and a few rubies and sapphires hidden among the glittering horde – all connected by thin grooves that appear and take on shapes when light strikes them from the correct angles. At its center a deep well wide enough to accommodate the bulk of a dozen mountain drakes or mekillots plunges into the dark earth.

The Ten-Thousand Steps. A steep, broad staircase without handhold, railings, or landings leads straight up the side of the ziggurat from the Merchant District. It is flanked by a series of titanic statues, and smaller human-sized icons set into the bases of the statues or along the steps, depicting mighty warriors and priests, as well as strange beasts.

SCENE

A constant breeze created by updrafts around the structure do little to cool the glazed, sun-baked bricks. Artisans perched on scaffolds carve the final details into the statuary and add the final brushstrokes to the immense murals. The god-king's faithful ascend the ziggurat in ritualistic worship, ignoring scores of dirty, ill-fed slaves too parched to sweat. The slaves haul bricks to unfinished sections under the threatening eyes of Templars, and some are dragged to the summit, screaming or weeping. The lucky ones return, hauling ash from the fire-pits to the Brickyards.

NOTABLES

Letergis. The High Templar in charge of the sacrifices and lunar rituals rarely descends from the Plaza of the Moons. The lower ranking templars who serve him whisper that he has gone mad and now thinks himself a god born from the sky. (Strict, Compulsive, Insane.)

The Black Queen. Long ago, Kalak summoned a mysterious entity to protect the city from spiritual attack by the other sorcerer-kings. Local legend says an ebony figure dressed in regal garb can sometimes be seen walking the walls, and members of the city watch occasionally claim to have briefly spoken with her. (Protective, Powerful.)

The First Architect. A low-ranking templar in life, with an unfortunately exceptional mind for engineering and construction. After designing the ziggurat for the King, she was entombed alive in the depths of the edifice so that the ziggurat's secrets would have no chance of being learned. She is now a centuries-old undead. (Clever, Hungry, Hateful.)

Wealth 2. Safety 3. Criminal Influence 1. Supernatural Influence 4.

You should not be here. You are not prepared for what lies within. Scores inside the ziggurat automatically start at Desperate.

THE GOLDEN CITY

Separated from the rest of the city by its own encircling walls, the tiers of the Golden City contain both the King's palace and the city's administrative machinery. Each tier is likewise separated from those below by a wall. The lowest tier consists of the barracks and housing for the lowest ranking members of the Templarite; this level also contains gates leading to the rest of Tyr. The second tier consists of the High Bureaus and the halls of the Senate, as well as providing access to the Observation Tower. The third tier consists of the King's Gardens, a private preserve of exotic plant life, crowding up around the thick base of the Golden Tower.

LANDMARKS

The Grand Gate. Most rarely utilized of all the city gates, it faces into the desert at the opposite end of Tyr from the Caravan Gate. It is opened only for high-ranking officials needing immediate access to the Golden City or for ambassadors from distant city-states. The massive gates, crafted of intricately carved agafari wood, arch high above the wall. A massive stone block carved with the form of the dragon confronts visitors at the entry; Templars trained in the Way can slide the block into place to seal the breach in the wall when the gates would not be enough.

The High Bureaus. Here stand the great edifices and courts of the city's internal bureaucracy. Citizen petitioners must start at the lowest levels, with low-ranking Templars, and make (bribe) their way towards the higher levels to meet with those empowered to resolve their problems.

The Senate. Standing amid the bureaus, overlooking the city below, these ancient halls and chambers are where the nobility meets to scheme, bicker, and enforce the King's will (such little that they are given to preside over) through the Templars and the city guard. It is cheaper, but more difficult, for a citizen to gain the ear of a Senator who can work and bribe the bureaucracy than to deal with the High Bureaus – but they must be able to provide something of value in return.

Wealth 3. Safety 4. Criminal Influence 1. Supernatural Influence 3.

The Templars are corrupt beyond measure, always playing their games of one-upmanship, and thus always alert. Scores here generate +2 Heat.

SCENE

Clean, orderly streets surrounded by many-leveled austere buildings packed between the high walls of each tier. The watchful eyes of silent half-giants at attention outside every building. The hint of lush greenery around the base of the wind-polished stone of the King's gleaming palace above. Squads of Templarite soldiers march and drill in the hot sun, attended by as many slaves, while high-ranking Templars lead groups of citizens in prayer services to the King. Voices ring out from the Senate chambers in heated arguments over pointless matters. Confused and frustrated freemen search for the correct offices among the mazes of halls and rooms, marked by written placards citizens are not allowed to know how to read, and barely differentiated by murals and statuary. Long queues form where fees are handed over loudly, while bribes are whispered into ears or surreptitiously disappear into robes.

NOTABLES

Shanto. The half-elven Clerk of water Levies oversees the city's water distribution system and well titles. He is extremely concerned about the dangerously low water reservoirs deep under Tyr, but fears bringing up the issue as his prior raised a fuss about the situation immediately before Shanto found himself promoted. Shanto is terrible at the political games of the Templarite, and though he doesn't want it, has managed to keep his prestigious position through dumb luck. (Organized, Mostly Harmless.)

Fiero Shaal. An ancient, balding woman of unkind character and worse vices leads the faction of the Senate currently in power. Even her supporters suggest she would have made a better Templar than a politician. House Shaal has no heirs, but Fiero's plans ensure at least the name of Shaal will leave its stamp on the city forever. (Smart, Wicked, Ambitious.)

Kemta. A low-level magistrate in the Templarite who has managed to turn her low standing into a source of wealth. For a larger bribe than usual, she will helpfully resolve a petitioner's issue rather than bother higher-ranking Templars with the matter. Once her superiors discover this scheme, even though it is *technically* within her purview to make such resolutions, it may prove a problem for her. (Creative, Educated.)

THE GOLDEN TOWER

A massive cylinder of golden stone rises from the greenery of the King's Gardens at its base and the ring of bureaucratic buildings clustered around them. The tower has been polished by a thousand years of wind and dust until it gleams in the light like a beacon in the desert. Inside are thousands of chambers, grand halls, and columned corridors, the vast majority disused. At the peak of the tower is the great throne room, with windows and recessed balconies, from where the god-king may look down and watch his citizens.

LANDMARKS

The King's Garden. This lush garden rises in a series of terraces towards the Golden Tower like a mirage of the mythical past. Every wall is covered in a jungle of thick green leaves peppered with barbed thorns, mixed with silver-blossomed climbing vines. The air is filled with the scents of pepper, sandalwood, cedar, and lily. Cobblestone walkways cross green, or blue, lawns. Gleaming grapevines grow wild along steps marked by knee-high brass statues – lifelike sculptures of a thousand different creatures. Garden paths are rolled with sand, and pass by small wading pools fed by underground springs, full of lilies and rushes, surrounded by exotic foliage such as lizard roses.

When the King defends the walls, portions of the gardens wither and wilt, and must be coaxed back to life. Rich soil from the jungles beyond the Ringing Mountains must be secured and imported to replace the dust that remains, which must be dug out and dumped beyond the walls, and the gardeners must be careful not to breathe in this dust, or else they risk the Gray Death. Much of Tyr's water supply is consumed by maintaining the gardens. Possibly the only thing in Tyr the King has not tapped in order to complete the construction of his immense ziggurat.

The Observation Tower. A high, thin needle of a tower rising from the wall surrounding the King's Garden is the only way to enter the Golden Tower. Only those bearing proper papers and the right titles are allowed within. The narrow Tower Bridge connects the two towers, leading to recessed doors where even more checks are performed before entry is allowed to the actual palace of Tyr's immortal king.

SCENE

Squads of elite guardsmen in silks, carrying iron weapons, and armor bearing blessings from the god-king stand at unmoving attention. High-ranking Templars stare smiling-daggers at one another across the wide court of the king as they work to gain his favor. Awestruck nobles bow in deference at the foot of the king's throne. Dark, dusty hallways hide relics from forgotten ages and shelf-filled rooms of symbol-scratched parchments it is heresy to understand. The god-king's pampered wives prepare his dinner and his bed. Things whisper and beckon from the shadows.

NOTABLES

The Grand Templar. A bald, albino dwarf in heavy, dark robes which hide a multitude of tattoos. Petitioners must work their way past every Templar in the city before they may talk to the affable Grand Templar. He can afford to be friendly as he has already thought of everything his murderous underlings could do, and prepared for it – as a century holding his position has proved. (Friendly, Reasonable, Brilliant.)

Tala Rex. A halfling who has worked in the gardens since he was a child, and been well-rewarded for it. He is far more comfortable with plants and soil than people. He knows the secrets of all the plant-life in the immense garden, as well as every hidden path and grove and herb. He has also overheard many things he should not know. (Shy, Silent, Sneaky.)

Ia-tem. The High Observer oversees the guards in the tower and on the bridge that connects the city with the Golden Palace. A highly prestigious position...with no room for advancement. Ia-tem takes his duties seriously, and does them well, but spends the rest of his time in a drugged stupor to make the most of and avoid dwelling on his situation. (Bitter, Reliable.)

Enith. One of the King's many pampered concubines. The nobleman Rall Kera is smitten with her and carries on a dangerous, illicit affair. He has whispered to her of his (unlikely) plans to flee the city together. (Bored, Ignorant, Self-centered.)

Wealth 4. Safety 4. Criminal Influence 1. Supernatural Influence 4.

Hahaha. Good luck.

UNDER-TYR

The city below the city. Over the centuries, Tyr has continually built on top of itself; now explorers can find tunnels and chambers that have preserved old plazas, buildings, and streets from the past – even ancient, heretical temples watched by undead guardians – as well as sewers, tombs, catacombs, fissures, and caves, all hidden underneath the streets and buildings above. While most of the entrances are sealed due to the danger, occasionally a street or floor will collapse and open a way into a known or unknown section. A few ceramics have the same effect.

However, there are ancient powers and artifacts here from the Green Age – a mythical time before the deserts – all best left undisturbed; as well as twisted creatures, and undead beings of both ancient and more recent provenance, plus traps, deadfalls, unstable earth, and other scoundrels.

Most of what is referred to as Under-Tyr is not linked, existing as independent pockets, so one cannot simply cross the city from beneath.

LANDMARKS

The Sorrows. The largest of the ancient centers of Tyr is found now beneath the Warrens and Shadow Square. At its center, passageways lead into a vast temple left mysteriously untouched by time. Few scoundrels would make their lair here as moving shadows and the hungry ghosts of ancient soldiers of the King (and their victims) are common.

The Poison Sting. In the distant past, the rubble here was part of a glorious gambling hall. The tunnels leading to and from it are filled with poison traps and secret passages to protect it from both the curious, and from monstrous creatures. The area is a meeting place for bards, cut-throats, and foolish guests with large purses, and no matter the time above, someone is always here doing business at one of the rough tables.

Tembo's Teeth. A series of natural caverns underlying the western portions of the city that were used by smugglers to move contraband into and out of the city. Until the King discovered the last of the outside entrances and permanently sealed it off. Rumored to be inhabited by snake-monsters: some say these are the smugglers cursed by the King to guard the tunnels forever; others say the monsters came from the depths and the King sealed the tunnels to protect the citizens – or left them there to discourage anyone from re-opening the caverns.

The Crawl. A dangerous series of tight, partially collapsed passages no more than three-feet high. They are given to cave-ins, but rumored to hold undiscovered treasure chambers, drawing the foolhardy. With a little luck, sometimes you can use the Crawl to reach the Teeth.

The Elven River. When the deserts swallowed the land and drove the water underground in the distant past, it carved a series of tunnels. These now dry tunnels run mainly beneath the Warrens, adjacent to the Elven Bridge. Many explorers have vanished into them seeking a secret source of free water, or a way into the city's deep wells.

Belly of the Noble. The labyrinth underlying the adjacent sections of the Merchant District and Noble's Quarter consists of tight passageways between forgotten, opulent homes of dusty marble that were simply built over during an expansion of the nobility in centuries past. It is regularly sealed off, and equally as regularly, scoundrels find new ways in to gain access to the Belly, and thus to the rich businesses and estates above.

Merchant's Maze. A series of accessible, interconnected tunnels linking the Caravan and Merchant Districts. They are heavily patrolled by the Houses, and regularly utilized to move shipments. Some grumble that, as such, these are not "rightly" part of Under-Tyr.

Night-Trader's Way. An open honeycomb of passages underneath the Artisan District sometimes used to do business by night. More often, used to do business hidden from the watching eyes of the Templarate.

SCENE

A rubble-buried street, the shattered façade of an old residence. A broken fountain's basin pooled with fouled, unhealthy water. Bulging walls of strained brick pressing tight. The sickly glow of a phosphorescent fungus...or undead spirit. The scraping and grinding of shifting rock, or monstrous feet. Laughter and talk echoing down from the city above. A stairway leading nowhere. Broken statues, detritus. The skeletal remnants of an unlucky fool, picked clean. Thieves' marks and explorer signs. Alliance agents, disturbing what ought not be disturbed, seeking resources, buried history, and power to bolster their cause. A protected shop of dangerous goods. Concealed treasure caked with the dust and grime of the ages. A hidden garden. Teeth, claws, screams, and darkness.

NOTABLES

D'tor Rhythe. An insane "sage" who follows the old religion of the Dead-Eye God and occasionally attempts to preach on the steps of the Temple of the Elements. He has a small cult of followers, but is generally held in contempt by high society. Templars sent to quiet his heresy return always seem to return empty-handed, telling tales of his impossible escape – an ancient metal coin or two in their purse. (Crazy, Unhinged, Eccentric.)

Fates. A priestess who worships a forgotten goddess of fate, destiny, and the undead. She and her cultists perform disturbing rituals to rip out their own spirits and then send them against citizens to collect "debts." She and her cult have thus far slipped away from or killed those sent to capture or destroy them. (Sinister, Knowledgeable.)

Zak'chik'tilik. One of the mantis-folk. They claim to be a banished noble of their kind (a nonsense claim) seeking a relic from the mythical Green Age, and believes it is buried deep under Tyr. Somewhere. Rumored to be one of the Order of Druids. (Strange, Protective, Fast.)

Faria. A tradesman and thief in life who discovered a small set of passageways underneath the Caravan District that gave her access to competitors' businesses. After she was caught and executed, the entrances to her passageways were sealed when she kept crawling out of them to continue stealing. (Gluttonous, Hungry, Desperate.)

Unethas. A Veiled gang, rather than a singular person, who all use one street name to make investigation into its members even more difficult than the Alliance's usual methods. Also one of the most active Alliance cells exploring and excavating Under-Tyr, and particularly vicious about the sanctity of their excavations. (Bold, Unforgiving.)

Wealth 1. **Safety** 1. **Criminal Influence** 4. **Supernatural Influence** 4.

There is no Heat penalty for using magic in Under-Tyr. But certain beings that make the depths their home may find it either attractive or distasteful and seek out its user.

VICE PURVEYORS

FAITH

- ❖ Maasin, the Temple of the Elements, Noble Quarter.
- ❖ Brother Kal't, the Crimson Shrine, Under-Tyr.
- ❖ Master Uryaes, the School of the Way, The Golden City.
- ❖ Shinta, the Shrine of water, Artisan District.
- ❖ Letergis, Moon Sacrifices, Kalak's Ziggurat.

GAMBLING

- ❖ Penar the Kank, a bookie, Arena.
- ❖ The Gentlemen, the crodlu races, Arena.
- ❖ Red Phrag, boxing, Smithy District.
- ❖ Krysta, the Crystal Spider, Warrens.
- ❖ Mistress La-lai, the fighting pits, Caravan District.
- ❖ Temu Merik's card game, Merchant District.
- ❖ Septris, the Serpent-Handled Basket, Artisan District.

OBLIGATION

- ❖ Family members (heritage) or former co-workers (background).
- ❖ The Veiled Alliance, a secret society.
- ❖ Thaxos Vordon, a revolutionary, Merchant District.
- ❖ The Order, a secret society.

LUXURY/PLEASURE

- ❖ The Burning Hand, bath house, Noble Quarter.
- ❖ Shining Sands laundry and tailoring, Caravan District.
- ❖ Zch'tck's bakery and pastries, Artisan District.
- ❖ The open-air theater, Artisan District.
- ❖ Mila, Golden Inix Inn, Caravan District.
- ❖ Grana, a dealer in rare oddities, Artisan District.

PLEASURE/STUPOR

- ❖ Don Gral, King's Way bar, Artisan District.
- ❖ Mallus, the Addled Inix tavern, Caravan District.
- ❖ Sa'rea, meat-roasting pit, Smithy.
- ❖ Yessa Ira, the Kind Lady brothel, Caravan District.
- ❖ Etheros, a Master of the Way, Noble Quarter.
- ❖ Esta Phren, an Elven Market druggist, Warrens.
- ❖ Administrator Kapaan, House Shom gala, Merchant District.
- ❖ Scripps, boxing, Smithy District.

WEIRD

- ❖ The Black Queen, a strange and lonely spirit wandering Tyr's walls.
- ❖ Kraah, a defiler always looking for people to experiment on.
- ❖ Shen, a mutant alchemist, a hidden shop in Under-Tyr.
- ❖ Tek-tek, an undead vendor of strange items, Merchant District.
- ❖ Veso, a mad dwarven Cartographer, Caravan District.
- ❖ Caelum-re, priestess of a dead-god's cult, Under-Tyr.
- ❖ Shraa, the House of Nails, Warrens.