

MODERN AGE

QUICKSTART



THREEFOLD



PLAYING MODERN AGE

You hold in your hands the *Threefold Quickstart*, gateway to the *Modern AGE* roleplaying game. In *Modern AGE*, you play a character much like you would in a video game, but with pen and paper, dice, and friends to play other roles. This **quickstart** contains everything you need to start playing right away: streamlined rules and beginner guidelines, as well as an adventure designed to introduce you to the game's mechanics and concepts. You'll also find sample characters you can pick up and play, and an introduction to *Threefold*, the first original setting for *Modern AGE*. The full *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* supports numerous genres and settings, while the *Threefold* setting book explores a vast cluster of universes that supports most of the game's possibilities in a single setting.

To support a variety of genres and stories, the full *Modern AGE* game includes several **modes** of play, including **gritty** and **pulpy**, among others. This quickstart uses **cinematic** mode, designed to emulate high-octane action, where heroes are tough and capable of daring deeds.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

There are three parts to this quickstart. The first is a condensed guide to the rules of the *Modern AGE* RPG, including a reference sheet that players can keep handy during play. The second is an adventure called *Burning Brighter* set in the *Threefold* "universe of universes," or Metacosm. The third is a set of five pre-generated Player Characters designed to fit the setting and adventure.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

To play this quickstart you'll need at least two people, though four to six is best. One person serves as the Game Master (GM), while the others will be players. You'll also need at least three regular, six-sided dice. Ideally, one of these dice should be a different color than the others. You'll also need some copies of various portions of this quickstart, but more on that later. Pencils and paper, or electronic means of recording information at the table, are also necessary.

IF YOU'VE NEVER ROLEPLAYED BEFORE

If you're interested in giving this thing a try but have no idea what tabletop roleplaying is all about, don't sweat it. Roleplaying is some of the most fun you'll ever have with your friends, but to teach the basics of roleplaying is a bit beyond this quickstart. Grab your computer, fire up your web browser, and search for some basic info. The Wikipedia page "role-playing game (pen and paper)" is a little dry, but as good a starting point as any. Better yet, track down a friend who's done this kind of thing before and rope them into showing you how it's done. The full *Modern AGE* game also introduces roleplaying and gives advice to Game Masters, while the *Threefold* setting book provides a detailed fictional world to play in, much like you'd find in a fantasy novel series or popular "cinematic universe." Trust us, you're going to love this.

BEFORE YOU PLAY

Before the group gets together to play, the Game Master should read this whole quickstart, print out one copy of each pre-generated Player Character, and print out a copy of the reference sheet for each player. Players can read the rules section of the quickstart if they wish, but shouldn't read *Burning Brighter*. It may also help the players get into the world if they read the section entitled **The Metacosm of Threefold**.

THE MODERN AGE CHARACTER SHEET

All the information a player needs can be found on their character sheet. We'll start a tour of the *Modern AGE* character sheet by looking at its backbone: the nine **ABILITIES**.

- **ACCURACY** measures aim, precision, and finesse, particularly in using ranged weapons such as guns and thrown weapons.
- **COMMUNICATION** covers social skills, personal interaction, and the art of making friends and influencing people.
- **CONSTITUTION** is your character's overall health, fortitude, and resistance to harm, illness, and fatigue.
- **DEXTERITY** covers deftness, hand-eye coordination, agility, and reaction time, from doing delicate work to dodging attacks.
- **FIGHTING** measures your character's abilities in close combat, with hand-to-hand weapons or unarmed.

BRIGHTER STILL

For those familiar with the original *Modern AGE Quickstart*, you might notice some similarities between its adventure and mini-setting and this one. *Burning Brighter* is the evolution of the original quickstart adventure, with a substantially different plot and setting. Vigrith is no longer a single parallel world, but one of countless planes of reality in the *Threefold* Metacosm.

MODERN AGE QUICKSTART: THREEFOLD

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- **INTELLIGENCE** measures a character's reasoning, memory, problem-solving, overall knowledge, and education.
- **PERCEPTION** is the ability to pick up on and notice things using any of the character's senses.
- **STRENGTH** is sheer muscle-power and the ability to apply it, from lifting heavy things to feats of athletics.
- **WILLPOWER** measures self-control, self-discipline, mental fortitude, and confidence.

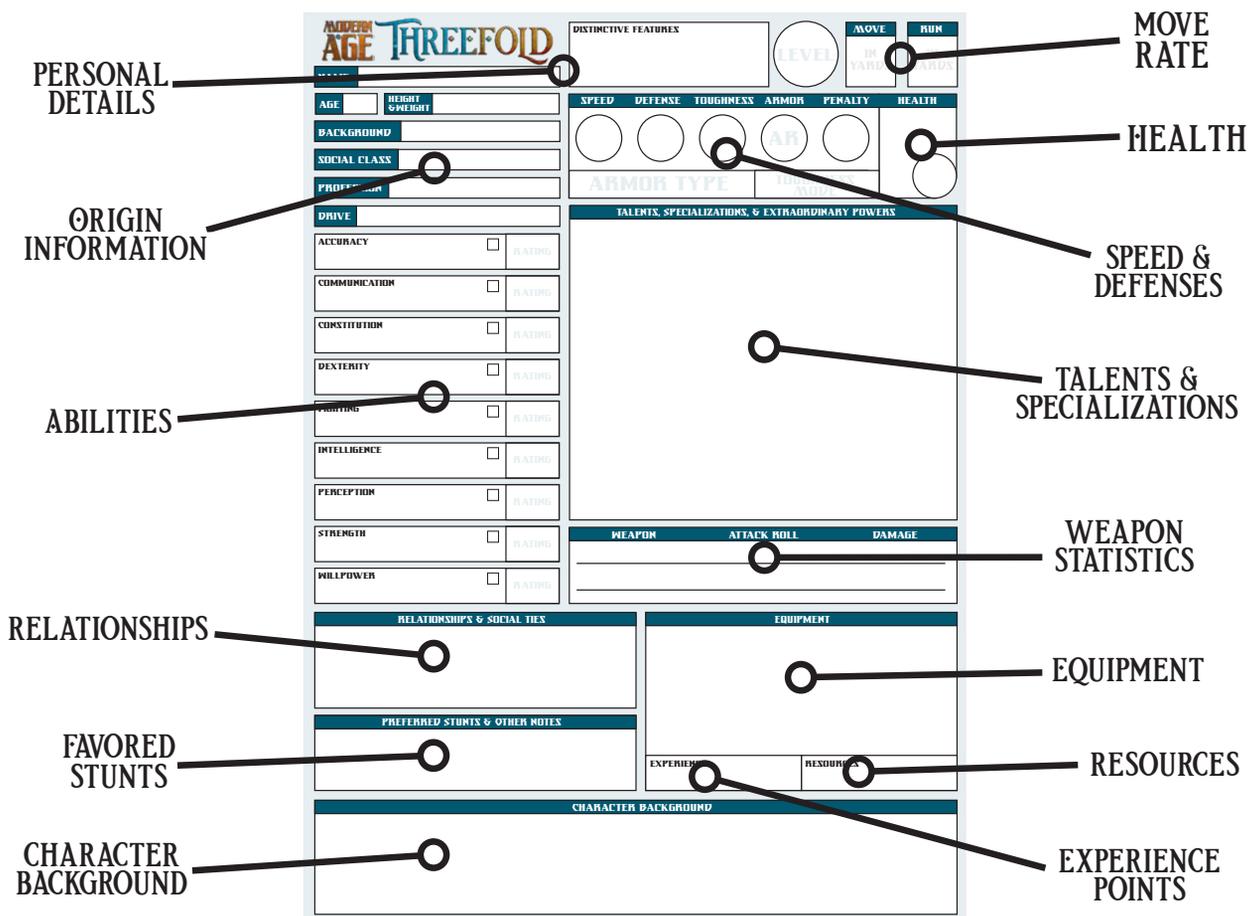
Abilities are usually scored on a numeric scale from -2 (quite poor) to 4 (truly outstanding), though exceptional characters and creatures may have scores outside this range. Your character's ability scores provide a useful "snapshot" description of the areas where your character is outstanding, above average, poor, or just average, and you use ability scores to determine the outcomes of most actions in the game. A score of 1 is considered average for Player Characters and other extraordinary people, while 0 is average for everyday individuals: the sort of folks who avoid adventures and weird capers.

Some abilities have one or more words in their box. These are **FOCUSES**, which are areas of expertise under that ability. These focuses are generally self-explanatory. For example, characters with the Persuasion focus are especially good at using their Communication ability to persuade someone. It's important to note that characters don't need to have a focus to try something. A focus is just an added benefit for characters with special aptitude or training. For example, characters without Persuasion can still try to persuade people. They simply use their Communication score without an additional bonus.

When abilities and focuses are written out in the rules or an adventure, the focus follows its ability. You might read "Communication (Persuasion)" or "Perception (Seeing)," for example. Next, you'll notice some other numbers on your character sheet.

- **SPEED** governs how fast your character can move. The Run and Move actions (see the **Actions** section) use Speed to determine how far you can go on your turn.
- **DEFENSE** is the target number (TN) your opponent needs to roll to hit your character in battle. (More on target numbers later.)
- **ARMOR RATING** measures your character's physical protection. The Armor Rating is subtracted from any damage done to your character, including damage from spells, unless the attack somehow bypasses your armor.
- **TOUGHNESS**, like Armor Rating, subtracts from the damage of incoming attacks. However, it doesn't come from equipment, but from your character's raw endurance and will to survive. Add Toughness and Armor Rating together and subtract the total from an attack's damage. Anything bypassing Armor Rating also bypasses Toughness. The sheets for each character already combine both ratings for you.
- **HEALTH** is the amount of damage your character can take before they start dying.

RELATIONSHIPS are special emotional connections with other characters and sometimes even with ideas, such as Honor or Vengeance. These give your character extra motivation to



succeed. You can draw on your Relationship once per game session to gain extra stunt points, which you can use even if you don't roll doubles. (More on stunt points later.)

Furthermore, each character has a **BACKGROUND**, **PROFESSION**, and **DRIVE**. Your character's background is the lifestyle they grew up with, their profession is how they've gotten along in the world, and their drives are one-word descriptions of what motivates the character or how their personality compels them to adventure. A Judge may wish to reward right and punish wrong, for example. You can change the listed character drives for others you invent, if you like

CHARACTER TYPES

Modern AGE doesn't make use of character classes, unlike many other roleplaying games. As characters develop beyond their backgrounds and professions, they choose unique paths. For efficiency, each sample character has a special set of skills:

- **Avery** is especially skilled in hand-to-hand combat and is a Wandersoul, able to find gates between planes of existence (also called worlds or dimensions).
- **Dion** has military experience as a medic, and knows how to handle firearms.
- **River** has excellent social skills, and is good at influencing people or getting information from them. They're also a Wandersoul.
- **Trace** is a capable investigator, and a cyborg enhanced by Aethon, a secret organization that protects Earth from extraordinary threats.

- **Val** is an arcanist, someone capable of magic ("wizard" and "mage" are considered old-fashioned terms). Val knows magical fields of study, called arcana: Fire Arcana and Digital Arcana. Val is a member of the Sodality, an organization devoted to exploring different planes of existence and protecting their inhabitants.

You can find these character sheets at the end of this quickstart. Note that each of these characters can be of any gender, age, and appearance. What sets them apart from most people (or at least, most people on Earth) is they know about other planes of existence and the gates that transport people between them. They know the empires, war hordes, and other governments commanding multiple planes. They know of magical Otherworlds, as well as hellish Netherworlds.

Over time, characters increase in level, improving their abilities and gaining other benefits. The pre-generated characters here are level 1. Some of the Non-Player Characters (NPCs) in

ABOUT THE RULES

The condensed rules presented here in the *Modern AGE Quickstart* cover the basics, but many rules included in the full game have been left out. None of the character generation rules are included, for example. Many rules have been simplified or narrowed for use in a single context. Various other areas have been significantly streamlined to ease you into the system. If you run *Burning Brighter* with the full *Modern AGE* rules, expand what you see in the adventure to work with them.

HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS

WEAPON	DAMAGE	MIN. STR.
<i>Focus: Brawling</i>		
Brawling Strike	1d3+2	—
<i>Focus: Short Hafted</i>		
Axe	2d6+2	1
Club	1d6+2	-1
Hammer	1d6+2	0
<i>Focus: Long Hafted</i>		
Sledgehammer	2d6+5	3
Staff	1d6+3	—
Spear	1d6+5	0
<i>Focus: Light Blades</i>		
Dagger	1d6+3	—
Fencing Sword	1d6+5	0
<i>Focus: Heavy Blades</i>		
Long Sword	2d6+2	1
Two-handed Sword	3d6+2	3
<i>Focus: Flexible Weapons</i>		
Light Chain	1d6+2	1
Heavy Chain	1d6+5	2

FIREARMS & OTHER RANGED WEAPONS

WEAPON	DAMAGE	MIN. STR.	ROF	RANGE	RELOAD
<i>Focus: Pistols</i>					
SA Handgun	2d6+2	0	SA	55 yards	Minor
<i>Focus: Longarms</i>					
Hunting Rifle	2d6+4	1	SS	400 yards	Major
Sniper Rifle	2d6+4	1	SS	600 yards	Minor
<i>Focus: Shotguns</i>					
Combat Shotgun	2d6+4	1	SS	75 yards	Minor
<i>Focus: Assault Rifles</i>					
Automatic Rifle	2d6+5	1	A	550 yards	Major
<i>Focus: SMGs</i>					
SMG	2d6+2	1	A	200 yards	Minor
<i>Focus: Bows</i>					
Compound Bow	1d6+4	1	SS	60 yards	Minor
Crossbow	2d6+3	1	SS	50 yards	Minor
<i>Focus: Thrown</i>					
Throwing Knife	1d6+2	—	SS	15 + Strength yards	Minor

Burning Brighter are at higher levels. Their stat blocks accurately reflect their capabilities.

Characters also have talents that grant specific benefits, arising through natural aptitude or specialized training. Talents come in three grades (novice, expert, and master), so you might notice that talents give different PCs and NPCs different benefits. To keep it simple, descriptions of the talents in each case have simply been adjusted. The pre-generated characters' talents are explained on their character sheets and stat blocks. Characters with powers, and the power points they require, are explained in the **Extraordinary Powers** section.

ARMOR

Armor provides an Armor Rating that, along with Toughness, is subtracted from damage inflicted on the character. In this quickstart, just combine Armor Rating and Toughness, and subtract the total from damage. Other games using the full *Modern AGE* rules handle Toughness differently. Furthermore, in the full rules, some types of armor treat certain sources of damage differently, depending on whether it's inflicted by firearms or less sophisticated weapons such as knives. The quickstart rules treat all damage as the same. Armor also applies an Armor Penalty to Speed and Defense. Your character might be able to shrug off damage when wearing armor, but they move slowly and are easier to hit.

WEAPONS & WEAPON GROUPS

Weapons are divided into different groups. These groups are focuses. If a character has the correct focus, they earn a +2 bonus to attack rolls. This is already figured into the bonuses listed for both Player Characters and Non-Player Characters. Note that there is no penalty if a character lacks a weapon's focus.

Each weapon is described by the weapon group it belongs to, the damage it inflicts, and the minimum Strength ability required to wield it.

Missile weapons have three additional statistics: Rate of Fire, Range, and Reload.

- **RATE OF FIRE (ROF)** tells you whether the weapon is single shot (SS), semiautomatic (SA), or Automatic (A). Semiautomatic and automatic firearms add the result of the Stunt Die to the damage of a successful attack.
- **RANGE** is the distance in yards in which a character can fire that weapon with no penalties. Past that distance, the character suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls. Shots farther than 1.5× the weapon's range aren't possible.
- **RELOAD** indicates whether it requires a major or minor action to reload a firearm or otherwise ready a ranged weapon. (For thrown weapons, the action listed is for pulling out another weapon, not retrieving the original one.) In these quickstart rules, you must take the action listed to reload each round for a single shot weapon, and whenever you miss and the Stunt Die comes up 1 or 2 for a semiautomatic or automatic weapon.



TESTS

Modern AGE uses three standard, six-sided dice (3d6) for tests. One die should ideally be a different color than the others. The different-colored die is known as the Stunt Die (more on that later). You make tests to determine success in challenging or risky situations.

SIMPLE TESTS

To make simple tests, roll 3d6 and add the relevant ability. If you have an appropriate focus for that ability, add +2 more. For example, when attempting to avoid someone who jumps in front of your car, you roll 3d6, add your Dexterity score, and add +2 if you have the Driving focus. A character may only add one ability score and one focus bonus per test. Always remember you don't need to have a focus to try a test. Appropriate focuses for a given test are listed in parentheses after the ability the test calls for. For example, "an Intelligence (Medicine) test."

The sum of your die roll, ability, and focus are compared to a target number (TN) that represents the difficulty of the test. The harder it is to succeed, the higher the TN. If your sum matches or beats the TN, then you have succeeded.

3D6 + ABILITY SCORE + FOCUS BONUS (+2) VS. TARGET NUMBER

Sometimes the circumstances of a test will make it easier or more difficult, giving a bonus or penalty to the total. Such bonuses are rarely greater than +3, and penalties rarely worse than -3.

In some cases, it's helpful to know not just whether you succeed, but how well you do. The quality of a success is determined by the unmodified result on the roll's Stunt Die—the different-colored one of the three dice. For example, a character trying to blend in at an elite nightclub must make a Communication (Etiquette) test. Assuming the character succeeds at the test in the first place, a Stunt Die result of 1 may mean the character commits a faux pas and looks like they were let in as a favor, while a Stunt Die result of 5 or 6 might mean the character conducts themselves well enough to be admitted to a private table. In most cases the GM determines the precise effects of the Stunt Die, or in certain cases like combat, whether to allow points from the Stunt Die to be spent on stunts (see **Combat** and other sections of these rules for stunts).

OPPOSED TESTS

Sometimes you must pit your character's ability against another character's ability. This is called an opposed test. In an opposed test, all sides make simple tests simultaneously, but rather than comparing their results to a target number, the character with the highest total wins. If there's a tie, the character with the highest Stunt Die result wins. If it's still a tie, the highest ability score wins. The counterparts in an opposed test sometimes use different abilities. For example, a character attempting to sneak past a guard rolls Dexterity (Stealth) against the guard's Perception (Hearing). If one character has an advantage over their opponent not already reflected by their ability or focus, those circumstances may provide a bonus or penalty to the roll. Such modifiers are usually no worse than -3 or better than +3.

FOCUS LIST

Presented here for your reference is the full list of focuses in the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*. In these quickstart rules, a character never needs a specific focus to attempt a test.

- **ACCURACY:** Assault Rifles, Bows, Black Powder Weapons, Grenades, Longarms, Pistols, Shotguns, SMGs, Thrown
- **COMMUNICATION:** Animal Handling, Bargaining, Deception, Disguise, Etiquette, Expression, Gambling, Investigation, Leadership, Performance, Persuasion, Seduction
- **CONSTITUTION:** Propelling, Running, Stamina, Swimming, Tolerance
- **DEXTERITY:** Acrobatics, Crafting, Driving, Forgery, Initiative, Sleight of Hand, Piloting, Riding, Sabotage, Stealth
- **FIGHTING:** Brawling, Flexible Weapons, Grappling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, Long Hafted, Short Hafted
- **INTELLIGENCE:** Anthropology, Art, Astronomy, Biology, Business, Cartography, Chemistry, Computers, Cryptography, Current Affairs, Earth Sciences, Folk Crafts, Electronics, Engineering, Evaluation, Explosives, History, Homemaking, Law, Medicine, Navigation, Occultism, Physics, Research, Security, Tactics, Theology, Tinkering
- **PERCEPTION:** Empathy, Hearing, Searching, Seeing, Smelling, Tasting, Touching, Tracking
- **STRENGTH:** Climbing, Intimidation, Jumping, Machining, Might, Steering
- **WILLPOWER:** Courage, Faith, Morale, Self-Discipline

ADVANCED TESTS

Sometimes a test is so complicated or time-consuming it seems wrong to settle it with a single test. Examples might include researching esoteric facts in a library, navigating a ship through a storm to a far-off shore, or competing with another public speaker to win a crowd's approval. Advanced tests are used in these situations. Advanced tests are simple or opposed tests requiring a series of rolls before success can be achieved. Each individual roll is carried out just like a simple or opposed test.

On a successful roll—one meeting the TN or exceeding the opponent's result—the result of your Stunt Die is added to a running total. On an insufficient roll, nothing is added (or your opponent's running total is increased, for an opposed advanced test). Success at the advanced test is achieved when the running total meets or exceeds the advanced test's success threshold. Importantly, each roll takes a certain amount of time—a round, a minute, an hour, or any other increment of time—depending on the test, so an advanced test can be used to determine how long a task takes. Sometimes each roll also consumes some amount of resources. Usually, an advanced test can only be failed if time or resources run out, or if—in an opposed advanced test—your opponent wins the test first.

COMBAT

Combat in *Modern AGE* is straightforward. An order of initiative is determined once, at the beginning of the fight, and then all combatants take turns in that order. Each cycle of all characters taking one turn each is called a round. When each round ends, a new round begins, using the same initiative order.

INITIATIVE

At the beginning of combat, each combatant makes an initiative test using Dexterity (Initiative). This is a simple test, but rather than being compared to a target number, all combatants' test results are ranked. Combatants then act in descending order, with higher results going before lower results. Ties are broken the same way as in opposed tests. The GM usually rolls separately for each important NPC, but rolls for minor NPCs in groups who all act at the same time.

ACTIONS

On their turns, characters take actions. There are two types of actions: major and minor. On any given one of their turns a character takes one major action and one minor action. If the character wishes, however, they may take two minor actions instead. A character may also decline either or both actions and do nothing.

The most common major and minor actions are listed here. The GM can adjudicate other actions, using these as a guide. Actions even less substantial than the minor actions listed here are "free" actions. Examples might include shouting something simple or looking around. A character can take as many free actions as they wish as long as the GM agrees they have time.

MAJOR ACTIONS

MELEE ATTACK

You attack an enemy within 2 yards in hand-to-hand combat.

RANGED ATTACK

You attack an enemy by firing or throwing a missile weapon.

RUN/CHASE

You travel up to double your Speed in yards. You must already be in a standing position to do this. If you are running after someone who is also using this action, or they are running after you when you are, you have a chase on your hands. This requires an advanced Constitution (Running) test (TN 13) from each participant. Track accumulated points from the Stunt Die for each roll. The character with the highest Speed adds +1 on top of the Stunt Die result for each successful test.

The first person to hit 10 accumulated points in an urban area, or 15 points in an outdoor or suburban area, may choose to get away. If two people in a chase are within 2 points of each other, they are virtually neck-and-neck. Vehicles and mounts may also be involved in chases, though they use their own ability focuses, and get bonuses against slower participants.

DEFEND

You gain a +2 bonus to your Defense until the beginning of your next turn.

FIRST AID

You provide quick medical assistance to an injured ally. You must be adjacent to your ally and have bandages ready. This is a TN 11 Intelligence (Medicine) test. If you succeed, your ally regains an amount of Health equal to the Stunt Die + your Intelligence (minimum 1 Health point).

MINOR ACTIONS

READY

You unsheathe a weapon, pull out a tool, or otherwise get ready to use some stowed item on your person. As part of this action, you can also put away something you already had in hand.

MOVE

You travel up to your Speed in yards. If you limit your travel to half your Speed you can also fall prone, stand up, or mount or dismount a horse or vehicle.

AIM

You carefully plan your next strike. If your next action is a melee attack or ranged attack (even on your next turn), you gain a +1 bonus on that attack roll.

ACTIVATE

This action is used with certain powers or items whose descriptions say something like, "Use an activate action to..."

MAKING ATTACKS

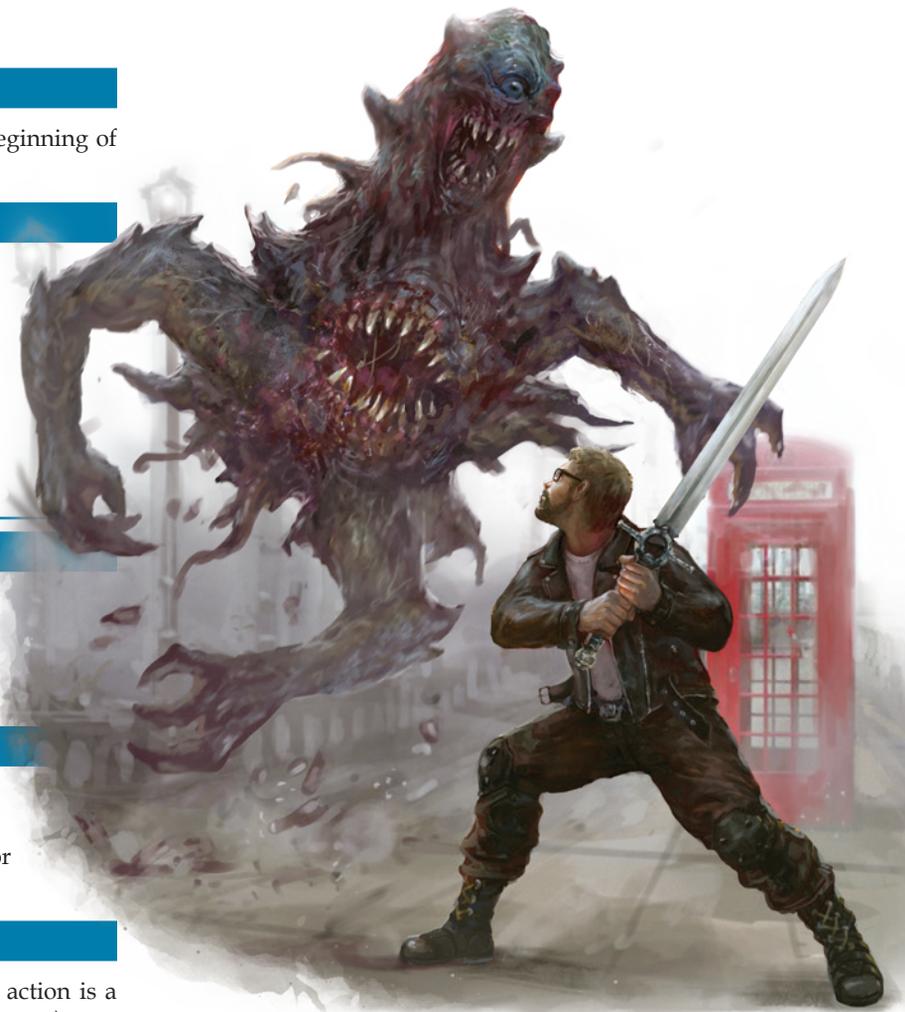
When attacking an enemy, make a simple test. The target number is your target's Defense. On a success, the attacker inflicts damage based on their weapon. On a failure, the attack does nothing. Each pre-generated character and NPC stat block has a pre-calculated attack bonus that includes the appropriate ability score, focus bonus, and any other bonuses that always apply. If you need to figure out other attacks on the fly, use the following rules.

MELEE ATTACK

This is a close-range attack on an adjacent opponent with a weapon such as a fist, knife, or sword. Roll Fighting with a TN equal to the opponent's Defense, and a +2 bonus if the character has a focus that covers the weapon being used. Add Strength to damage.

RANGED ATTACK

This is an attack with a firearm or other weapon that's shot or thrown. Roll Accuracy with a TN equal to the opponent's



Defense, and a +2 bonus if the character has a focus covering the weapon being used. Attacks on enemies farther away than a weapon's Range (but no farther than 1.5× Range) suffer a -2 penalty. Add Perception to damage.

RELOADING

When you attack with a firearm, you're assumed to be getting as many shots off as you can to maximize damage. Instead of tracking bullets, the rules assume you reload whenever you can and usually have enough ammunition. However, sometimes you must pause to reload. If you're using a single shot (SS) weapon, you must reload each round, using the action type noted for the weapon. If you're using a semiautomatic or automatic weapon, you must take the listed action to reload whenever you miss and the Stunt Die comes up 1 or 2.

INFLECTING DAMAGE

Each pre-generated character and NPC stat block lists the damage each of their weapons inflicts. To inflict damage, simply make that roll and subtract the results from the target's Health. Subtract their Armor Rating plus their Toughness from the damage before reducing Health, unless the damage is "penetrating" damage, in which case armor is not helpful. Remember, semiautomatic and automatic firearms add the result of the Stunt Die to the damage of any successful attack.

BATTLE MAPS AND MINIATURES

Modern AGE defaults to descriptive combat where the GM and players keep a mental picture of the adventure's evolving battlefields. If you prefer to use a battle map and miniatures, however, *Modern AGE* accommodates them easily. Square and hex grids work equally well. The best scale is one where each square or hex is 2 yards across.

GENERAL COMBAT STUNTS

SP COST	STUNT
1-3	DUCK AND WEAVE: Gain +1 to Defense per SP spent until the beginning of your next turn.
1+	SKIRMISH: Move yourself or your attack's target 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend; you can choose Skirmish more than once per turn.
2	DOUBLE-TEAM: Choose one ally to make an immediate attack on your target, who must be within range and sight of the ally. Your ally must have a loaded missile weapon to attack at range.
2	KNOCK PRONE: Knock your enemy prone. Melee attacks against a prone foe gain a +1, but ranged attacks against a prone foe suffer a -1.
2	TAUNT: Roll Communication (Deception) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline) against any target within 10 yards of you; if you win, they must attack or oppose you in some way on their next turn.
2	VICIOUS BLOW: Inflict an extra 1d6 damage on this attack.
3	BLOCKADE: Move up to 3 yards to position yourself between a foe and something or someone else. Until the beginning of your next turn, that foe must succeed at a minor action Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Might) test vs. your Defense to reach whatever or whomever you're protecting.
3	LIGHTNING ATTACK: Make a second attack against the same target or a different one within range and sight; you must have a loaded missile weapon to attack at range.
3	SHOCK AND AWE: When you succeed at a non-attack physical feat or take an opponent out, anyone who witnesses it rolls Willpower (Courage or Morale) vs. your Strength (Intimidation). If you win, they suffer a -1 to the next opposed roll they make against you, or a -1 to their Defense vs. your next attack against them, whichever comes first.
4	SEIZE THE INITIATIVE: Move to the top of the initiative order until someone else seizes the initiative. You may get to take another turn before some others act again.

When a character has Health 0, they are either dying or have been knocked out for 2d6 minutes. The attacker chooses whether the character is knocked out or dying, except in the case of hazards like explosives and gas, in which case the GM decides what happens. A dying character can talk, but can't take other actions. A knocked-out character is unconscious, and can't perceive or do anything. Conscious or not, a character at 0 Health can't take any actions. Note that any injury that would drop a character to negative Health just reduces it to 0. In other words, there's no such thing as Health below 0.

Unless they receive first aid to increase their Health, a dying character perishes in a number of rounds equal to 2 + their Constitution. An unconscious character can be revived with a major action without the need to roll, but if at 0 Health, can't do anything unless given first aid.

The GM may rule that NPCs simply die when their Health reaches 0, rather than bothering to wait the requisite number of turns, or that they are knocked out for as long as would be convenient for the story.

STUNTS

In *Modern AGE*, stunts represent dazzling maneuvers and tide-turning moves. Whenever you make a successful attack while also rolling doubles, you gain stunt points (SP) equal to the number on your Stunt Die. "Doubles" just means rolling the same result on two or more of the three dice from your test. You can then use your SPs to immediately perform a stunt. Unused SPs don't remain. You spend stunt points to perform stunts on the **General Combat Stunts** table. You can choose any combination of stunts as long as their cost doesn't exceed your SPs. (You can spend fewer SPs, but any leftover stunt points vanish.) You can only choose each stunt once per attack, except for the Skirmish stunt, which can be chosen as many times as you wish. NPCs can perform stunts just like Player Characters can.

RELATIONSHIP STUNTS

In addition to gaining stunt points by rolling doubles, once per session you can gain a number of stunt points equal to your Relationship rating to perform any stunt that would be in-character when it comes to that Relationship. You may do this after you see if you succeed. You might use these points to help a friend or lover the Relationship lists, or battle an enemy noted in the Relationship. If you *also* roll doubles, you can combine these Relationship stunt points with the stunt points you earned on the Stunt Die.

HEALTH AND HEALING

There are three ways to recover lost Health. The first is through the First Aid action, as described in the **Major Actions** section. The second is to be the target of a Heal spell. The third is to take a five-minute breather after a combat encounter. At the end of the breather you recover 6 + your Constitution in Health. However, you can't take a breather if you have 0 Health. Special situations and powers also provide opportunities to heal. The rules for these are explained when those situations come up.

OTHER ENCOUNTERS

During adventures, you get involved in scenes other than combats. Exploration encounters concentrate on finding information, dealing with the environment, and general problem-solving. Social encounters involve speaking to and otherwise interacting with people, be it to find things out or get favors. Mixed exploration and social encounters are possible as well.

In most cases, using the basic rules and rolling ability tests against target numbers will get you through these encounters. It is possible to use stunts during these types of encounters as well, by rolling doubles or using a Relationship. The tables in this section list a small number of the Exploration and Social Stunts available in *Modern AGE*.

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS

Exploration encounters can feature a variety of events and challenges. These usually don't happen round by round, but over periods of time determined by the GM. The most common events include the following.

INTERACTING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

You may be called upon to sneak past guards, walk across a narrow ledge, or pick a lock. If the challenge is another person, an opposed test is called for. Otherwise, a simple test against a TN representing the difficulty of the action is what you'll use to see if you succeed or fail. Use abilities and focuses befitting the task – Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) to pick a pocket, for example. The GM has the final word on which tests, abilities, and focuses to use. The higher the number on the Stunt Die, the better you did, whether you rolled doubles or not.

INVESTIGATIONS

An investigation is a catch-all term for any action where you're trying to get information. Generally, if you need to find a lead to go forward in the adventure, like a matchbook for the club you need to find or footprints leading in the right direction, the GM should automatically provide it. You'll usually use Perception and Intelligence tests and focuses related to the lead (such as Computers to find information on a laptop) to get more information out of them – but you can always just try to guess. When you succeed, the GM gives you a clue: a fact about what's going on. You can also use investigation tests to find out information not directly related to the adventure, but which may help you in other ways. In those situations, you don't automatically find the lead. You must make a test to discover it in the first place.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Social encounters work much like exploration encounters, except the focus is on interacting with other people. Social encounters normally use simple tests when you want to make a general impression on a group and opposed tests when you're trying to influence someone to do or say something that would inconvenience or embarrass them, or seems

EXPLORATION STUNTS

SP COST	STUNT
1-3	WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER: You reveal this test was part of your plan all along, granting a bonus equal to SP spent on one ally's next test during the same encounter to accomplish the same goal. You must make this decision before the ally rolls.
2	SPEED DEMON: You complete your test in half the time it would otherwise take.
3	THE UPPER HAND: If your success leads to combat within a moment or two, you receive a +3 on your initiative roll.
4	WITH A FLOURISH: You impress everyone who watches you with your showmanship. Gain a +1 to opposed tests against them for the rest of the encounter.

SOCIAL STUNTS

SP COST	STUNT
1-3	IMPRESS: Gain a +1 per SP spent to your next social test against the same target as this test, during this encounter.
2	AND ANOTHER THING: Make a second, related test as part of your action, before anyone else has a chance to respond or make any tests of their own.
2	HIDDEN MESSAGE: Your words convey a different message to one person than to everyone else who hears them; the character you choose is the only one who can decipher your true meaning.
3	OBJECTION!: You step in on someone else's behalf. Another character in the scene may use your ability + focus instead of their own next time they oppose a test during this encounter.
4	CLASS CLOWN: Your words lighten the mood, imposing a -2 penalty to all enemies' initiative rolls if a fight breaks out during this encounter.

ATTITUDES

3D6 ROLL	ATTITUDE	SIMPLE INTERACTION MODIFIER
3 or less	Very Hostile	-3
4-5	Hostile	-2
6-8	Standoffish	-1
9-11	Neutral	+0
12-14	Open	+1
15-17	Friendly	+2
18+	Very Friendly	+3

somehow counter to their interests. Social actions usually use the Communications ability and its focuses, and in opposed tests are often resisted by Willpower and its focuses. In situations where you're trying to get results through threats, you may use Strength (Intimidation) to sway an NPC. Social actions intended to find things out can use the same lead and clue format as investigations, at the GM's discretion.

In situations where the NPC's attitude toward the characters matters, the GM decides what it is (or rolls on the **Attitudes** table if they don't feel like picking) and applies the listed

POWER STUNTS

SP COST	POWER STUNT
1-3	POWERFUL MANIFESTATION (CORE): Increase the Force of your power by 1 per stunt point spent, to a maximum of 3.
2	SKILLFUL POWER: Reduce the power point cost of the power by 1. This can reduce the cost to 0. If the power requires a fatigue test, reduce its target number by 2.
2	MIGHTY POWER: If the power does damage, one target of your choice takes an extra d6 damage.
3	LASTING POWER: If the power has a duration beyond instantaneous, it remains in effect twice as long with no additional power point cost. Powers lasting until the end of the encounter are extended by 1d6 minutes instead.
4	FAST USE: After you resolve this power, you can immediately use another. The second power must require a major action or a minor action's worth of time to use. If you roll doubles on the roll to use the power, you do not get any more stunt points.
4	IMPOSING POWER: The power manifests in a much more dramatic fashion than usual, or perhaps radiates a sinister aura. Until the beginning of your next turn, anyone attempting to make a melee attack against you must make a successful Willpower (Courage) test. The target number (TN) is 10 + your Willpower ability. Those who fail must take a move or defend action instead.

modifiers to your Communications tests to get them to aid or usefully interact with you.

If an opposed test is necessary, the NPC rolls Willpower, with the focus depending on the situation. Willpower (Faith) would be used in situations where the NPC is being asked to set aside their beliefs, for example, while Willpower (Courage) could resist attempts to frighten the NPC. However, if the NPC would be forced to do something self-harming, or something they find immoral or disgusting, they automatically win an opposed test to resist the suggestion.

PCs cannot be swayed by social actions, but you can always make tests and use the results as advice to help decide how your character would act.

EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

Extraordinary powers don't exist in all *Modern AGE* campaigns, but in *Threefold*, magic flows freely in the Otherworlds and can even work on Earth, provided a practitioner is careful. But magic—sorcery out of myth—is just one extraordinary power found in the Metacosm. Other powers include posthuman enhancements granted by advanced implants, and occult psychic gifts and rituals which put the practitioner's soul in peril. Souls themselves may grant certain powers, such as the Wandersoul power which connects characters to gates. When these powers enter play, the adventure, character sheet, or other rules will describe them. Magic requires a bit more explanation.

Magic manipulates kanna: the energy of creativity. If one could measure the power of a myth, it would be by its kanna. But it is also a practical power source for arcanists casting spells, which one sample character, Val, is capable of. Kanna is measured in *power points* for game purposes, but characters don't use that term in the story.

Casting spells is straightforward. An arcanist must know a spell (that is, have it listed on their sheet or in their stat block) to use it. They must then spend an action and expend power points to cast it. Each spell's description lists the type of action—major or minor—needed to cast it. Once an arcanist has spent an action and the necessary power points to cast

a spell, they must make a power test to see what happens. A power test is an Intelligence test whose target number depends on the spell, and is listed in each case. On a failure, nothing happens. On a success, the effects of the spell are carried out, with one important complication: Sometimes a spell's target(s) are allowed a resistance test of some kind to avoid some or all of the spell's effects. Instructions for these resistance tests are part of each spell's description.

Arcanists regain 1d6 + their Willpower in spent power points for each full hour they rest, and all power points after eight hours of sleep.

POWER STUNTS

Characters using magic may perform Power Stunts. They must succeed and either score doubles (gaining stunt points equal to the roll on the Stunt Die), use a Relationship (gaining stunt points equal to the Relationship's rating), or harness both (gaining stunt points from both sources), as with other types of stunts. "Force" is the target number to resist a power's effects. In these quickstart rules, Power Stunts are used for magical spells. The **Power Stunts** table lists the range of available Power Stunts.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Non-Player Characters (NPCs) use all the same rules that apply to Player Character heroes, unless otherwise noted. In *Burning Brighter*, most NPCs are described with stat blocks. Combatants have longer stat blocks than NPCs who aren't likely to be involved in fights. Both types have their abilities and focuses listed. Combatants also have Speed, Health, Defense, Armor Rating, attack statistics, and power descriptions. NPCs also have a Favored Stunts entry, and some have special stunts only they can use. These are suggestions to help the GM keep things moving along briskly, but the GM is free to choose other stunts. Only a few NPCs have no stat blocks, due to appearing briefly or being unable to interact with other characters for some reason. If these circumstances change, the GM can make up whatever game statistics they think would be interesting and appropriate.



THE METACOSM OF THREEFOLD

Threefold is the first original setting for *Modern AGE*, and its Metacosm is sprawling.

We begin with Earth. Guided by a cabal of inhuman intelligences, a conspiracy called the **Peridexion** manages the planet's technological progress, experiments with time travel, and manipulates parallel worlds. Their **Aethon** agents are cyborgs trained in transcendental reasoning, able to traverse our world and others, maintaining a balance according to criteria even they only barely understand using persuasion, infiltration and, when necessary, high-tech violence. They share the world with psychic adepts, secretive warlocks with blood-fueled magic, AI-influenced criminal syndicates, and more.

That's just Earth.

The second layer of the Metacosm consists of countless **Otherworlds**, linked by gates. In one Otherworld, mountains have sharper peaks and colors burn with mythic intensity, as **kanna**, the energy of magic and story, saturates the environment. In another, a world rests in the coils of a sleeping serpent, which will awaken when the last Priest of the Snake in a generation sings the Apocalypse Song. In a third, everything is oceans and floating islands. Humanity has a broad definition on these planes — one that includes spiral horns and purple skin. The variety is endless.

In the Otherworlds, the gods once reigned, and their children, demigod **Optimates**, sometimes style themselves successors. Optimates rule a **Divine Empire** over numerous planes where "mere mortals" are serfs. The second great power, the **Vitane**, settled only where it is wanted to bring peace and spread the lore of the planes to those ready to learn it. **The Sodalities** are its explorers, ambassadors and, if necessary, soldiers. In many *Threefold* games, you'll play Sodality members, but it isn't mandatory.

The third great power now seizes territory in the Otherworlds, but it comes from the third layer of the Metacosm. The **Netherworlds** are places of nightmare, ruled by archdemons and populated by their servants and nations of damned souls. Only the invaders, the warrior society called the **Nighthost**, freed themselves from the Netherworlds' ruling **Alastors**. Their warbands of berserkers and **dreygur** half-damned fight for personal freedom and prestige through conquest. Where arcanists study magical kanna and Earth's elite benefit from technology that redefines their humanity, the Netherworlds offer occult power to gifted psychics, making rituals possible which channel hell's energies, for a price.

Three layers, three great powers — and the tripartite secret behind it all. That's why it's called *Threefold*. But while you can play full campaigns in any corner of the Metacosm, we encourage you to take the grand tour: to solve mysteries in distant planes, and find new wonders as you step through each gate. **Burning Brighter**, the adventure in this quickstart, offers a first taste.

Let's go exploring.



BURNING BRIGHTER

Burning Brighter is an adventure for *Modern AGE* that introduces the *Threefold* campaign setting. Only the Game Master should read the adventure, which contains spoilers if you intend to play a hero instead.

This adventure's setting introduces multiple planes of existence and organizations ranging through them, so some terms, such as the Vitane or Otherworlds, will be unfamiliar to start with. The Game Master should read through the whole adventure to familiarize themselves with them. The *Threefold* campaign book lays it all out in further detail.

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

In *Burning Brighter*, a conspiracy spanning worlds unfolds as a rare disease with magical effects breaks out in New York City. The organization protecting the worlds of magic, the Vitane, cooperates with the shadow government of Earth, the Peridexion, and they ask the Player Characters to track down a rogue agent believed to be behind the contagion. Two of the Player Characters are members of the Sodality and Aethon (special agents and troubleshooters under the Vitane and Peridexion, respectively) working together as part of the alliance between their parent organizations.

Unbeknownst to the Player Characters, the Peridexion representative, Professor Humphrey Bolton, is behind the disease. It is caused by a microorganism of his own creation, the Tellurophage, and is designed to eat kanna (magical energy).

Bolton tricked Aethon agent Parker Purwaha into spreading the disease while part of a Sodality team (Aethon and Sodality agents frequently work together) on Tannebrim, a world under siege by the interplanar horde called the Nighthost. Purwaha discovered the truth and returned to Tannebrim, intentionally making himself sick.

Meanwhile, a renegade demigod (commonly called an Optimate by those who deal with them) named Jannika Reach smuggled several refugees to Earth, including people afflicted with the engineered disease.

This triggered the crisis threatening to expose Bolton's work. The Player Characters are a necessary evil, since something must be done about the plague on Earth, but Bolton wants to keep them in the dark and, if that fails, eliminate them. He's employed the Krypteia, a secret criminal organization, to track Purwaha and kill anyone who might turn up the truth. And to continue his research, he's deployed a clone named Bao Hun to observe the plague's progress and collect samples.

USING THE ADVENTURE

Burning Brighter consists of three parts, divided into multiple encounters. Each encounter is labeled as an action encounter, an exploration encounter, a social encounter, or a combination. These labels let you know, broadly, what the players are expected to accomplish before moving on, though innovative players can always find alternate solutions. Each encounter is summarized, to help you get your bearings.

A GLOSSARY OF THE METACOSM

The story of *Burning Brighter* takes place in *Threefold*, a multidimensional setting for *Modern AGE* where characters visit worlds of wonder, those of dread, and even alternate Earths, and where magic, psychic gifts, and futuristic technology exist side by side. This adventure uses many terms unique to the *Threefold* setting. Refer to the following list for their meanings.

THREEFOLD

AETHON: The Peridexion's paramilitary and espionage wing. Aethon agents called operants are equipped with technology far beyond what is considered cutting edge.

GATE: A passage to a different plane of existence. Some planes can only be reached through a route spanning multiple gates, called a "gate chain."

INCESSANCE: The "resistance" a plane exerts on items or creatures that do not conform to its rules, such as high technology in a magical world.

INITIATED, THE: People aware of the existence of magic, psychic powers, futuristic technology, and the reality of multiple worlds and the gates connecting them.

KANNA: The energy that powers creativity, inspiration, and magic. Kanna flows freely in the Otherworlds, but it is severely restricted on Earth, and warped in the Netherworlds.

KRYPTeia: A criminal syndicate under and beyond other syndicates, with access to futuristic technology and knowledge of other planes.

MISSION: A team of Sodalts and allies, including Aethon operants.

NETHERWORLD: A hellish or hazardous plane of existence ruled by demonic beings called Alastors.

NIGHTHOST: A vast warrior society who broke free from their dark gods and now conquer and plunder under their own banners.

OPTIMATE: A demigod-like being, descended from a mortal and a powerful being called an Emanate.

OTHERWORLD: A plane of existence where magic works better than other sources of power.

PERIDEXION: A secret society overseeing Earth and all its alternate versions, with access to futuristic technology.

PLANE: Another dimension with its own locales and natural laws. One moves between planes using the gates between them.

SHABDA: The universal language. A person fluent in Shabda understands every language and is understood by any sapient being.

SODALITY: An arm of the Vitane which explores the Metacosm to preserve peace and expand knowledge.

SODALT: A member of the Sodality.

VITANE: A vast organization that helps multiple planes coexist in peace and harmony, to pursue knowledge and prosperity for the benefit of all sapient beings.

WORLDLINE: The history or timeline of an alternate Earth, also used to refer to an alternate Earth itself. The core Earth is called the "primeline;" all other Earths are alternates or "Alts" that forked from the primeline at various points in history.

Most encounters contain sections of blue text which can be read aloud to the players, though you can summarize and embellish their contents in your own voice. Experienced Game Masters may wish to eliminate or expand encounters based on your allotted time.

THE PREGENERATED CHARACTERS

A set of five pre-generated characters have been provided in the back of this book, along with a system references sheet. The premade Player Characters each have a reason to be

present as well as a role to play, so we recommend you run any extra Player Characters as NPCs acting alongside player-controlled heroes. In such cases, your NPCs should follow the players' lead.

A MATTER OF RESOURCES

Finally, this adventure introduces *Modern AGE's* Resources system, teaching while you play. You can streamline the game further by dropping these rules, and assigning any equipment you think the characters could acquire.

PROLOGUE

As you hand out the character sheets, let the players know they should decide on each character's gender and appearance. You can also hand out copies of the Equipment table and let them buy additional gear. When they reach the middle of the adventure, the heroes will have the opportunity to obtain additional gear better suited to traveling through the various magical planes of the Otherworlds; show the players the **Otherworld Equipment** table at the beginning of **Part 2** when they get to that point.

Rather than keeping track of currency, *Modern AGE* characters have a Resources score that represents their available cash, credit, assets, and other sources of wealth. To purchase an item, a player makes a Resources test (3d6 + Resources score) with a TN equal to the item's cost (listed as a Resources test difficulty). A character does not need to make a Resources test if the cost of the item is lower than their Resources + 4. Success means the item was purchased, but if the item's cost is equal to or higher than the purchasing character's Resources + 10, the character's Resources score is reduced by 1.

You decide how much the characters can shop around and can call for the first scene to begin when you feel like the characters have what they reasonably need.

As the players prepare, narrate that the Player Characters are visiting the Blake Clinic for the various reasons described in their character sheets, or help the players justify their characters' presence there. The heroes are all initiated; they know about the true nature of the connected worlds and that magic and magical creatures are real, and recognize the authority of the Sodality and Aethon over interplanar matters.

EQUIPMENT	
GEAR	RESOURCES DIFF.
Camera	8
Cell Phone	8
Flashlight	6
Flare Gun	9
Gasmask	11
Laptop / Tablet	11
Mechanic's Toolkit	10
Medic's Kit	10
Mountaineering Gear	14
Signal Jammer	13
Survival Gear	11
VEHICLE	
RESOURCES DIFF.	
<i>Focus: Propelling</i>	
Bicycle	8
<i>Focus: Driving</i>	
Classic Motorbike	11
Compact Car	10
Sedan	13

The adventure begins as the PCs wait in various rooms in the Blake Clinic. This is a good time for each player to describe their character's appearance and mannerisms to the other players. Allow the PCs to converse in character for as long as it remains interesting to the players. Make sure they at least learn each other's names.

PART 1

THE FOREST OF THE NIGHT

After an outburst of violence at the Blake Clinic, the Sodality and Peridexion ask the characters to track down the origins of a magical plague.

SCENE 1

THE BLAKE CLINIC

ACTION ENCOUNTER

While visiting the Blake Clinic on their own business, the protagonists must repel a hit job with an unusual target.

The Blake Clinic is located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. It's an unassuming building, open 24/7 to treat low-income families, absorbing the costs of care and medication. The place is clean, even if the building and equipment show their age.

Trace, you know this is the perfect cover for the high-tech facilities of Aethon hiding in Basement Zero, the place you are just leaving via the main elevator. Val and Avery, you are sitting in the waiting room for purposes all your own. River, your brother just fell asleep in his room, his vitals stable but with signs he's battling an infection. You're ready to get out and grab something to eat. Dion, your shift is finally over and you're just chatting with the receptionist.

Suddenly, two uniformed cops enter, carrying between them an odd-looking man, ragged with an unkempt beard. He's wearing a homespun tunic, breeches, and tall leather boots, as if he's come out of a fantasy film. Avery, Val, and River, you immediately know those clothes are of Otherworld make.

"Durs val'or! Athon vassak!" The man mutters over and over. Avery, River, and Val can understand the meaning: "Let me go! This is wrong!"

"He was waving this around at people until he passed out," says one of the cops, gesturing to a short sword his partner carries. "Hospitals are full. Help us out by giving him a look?"

The Otherworlder is **Thurien**, a Tanneb refugee (see **Part 1, Scene 4** and beyond for what that means), though he is incapable of saying so. He's been infected with the Tellurophage and is only capable of repeating the same words over and over. At this point, ask players to make a **TN 9 Perception (Seeing)** test. Via security cameras or through glass in the front doors, those who succeed see two men in black suits and sunglasses withdrawing sub-machine guns just outside the clinic. Those who fail are startled and cannot take any major actions in the first round of combat. Eight civilians sit in the waiting room on various couches, two nurses occupy stations behind the reception desk, and one security guard rushes forward to help the cops and doesn't notice the two men enter.

The attackers are **Krypteia Hitmen** with orders to capture the delirious Otherworlder. They don't care about collateral damage. On their first round they enter the clinic to shoot the cops and the security guard. They plan for one of them to incapacitate their target and carry him off, while the other covers their withdrawal and takes out witnesses.

Trace's Earthsoul talent can identify hyper-advanced technology in the intruders' submachine guns, sunglasses, and earbuds. Anyone else notices the guns are sleek and seamless, their makes unidentifiable.

Any attacker becomes a primary target, but if Val casts spells at them, they will try to retreat at once and use their Getaway special quality.

THURIEN

A scout for the Tannebrim, Thurien accompanied refugees to the Earth camp protected by Jannika Reach (see **Part 1, Scene 4**). Thurien contracted the Tellurophage in Tannebrim but didn't show any signs of infection. He became separated from his people when he decided to patrol the area by himself. The disease hit him fast and hard and he grew delirious, far from his people before the police found him.



While Thurien's sword is exceptional solely due to its alien yet functional style, he also wears a ring that confers exceptional running speed (about equal to that of a motor scooter) and invisibility for short periods of time. This and his skills as a scout allowed him to get far without being noticed. In his confused state, he doesn't think to use it again until it's time for him to get away, which automatically happens during the fight.

Thurien exists to introduce the adventure and act as a target for characters later, so he shouldn't be significantly injured or killed, and is given game statistics as a non-combatant. In the default setup of the adventure he *must* be able to get away.

KRYPTeia HITMEN

These low-ranking Krypteia enforcers are usually given tasks that do not warrant the attention of one of their elite so-called Phalanxes but which the secret society would not entrust to ordinary criminal goons. The hitmen are silent; their earbuds allow for subvocal communication with one another.

IN THE CONFUSION

During the fight, Thurien makes a run for the street, leaving his sword behind. The Krypteia Hitmen try to capture him unless they are engaged in combat, in which case Thurien uses his magic ring to vanish and escape. If the Hitmen capture him and take him away, he manages to escape their custody. He eventually becomes visible again in front of cameras monitored by Aethon, as alluded to in **Part 1, Scene 2**.

THURIEN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BOWS, THROWN), COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 4 (RUNNING), DEXTERITY 5 (RIDING, STEALTH), FIGHTING 3 (LIGHT BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 2 (CARTOGRAPHY, NAVIGATION), PERCEPTION 4 (SEEING), STRENGTH 2, WILLPOWER 3 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

KRYPTeia HITMAN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

3	ACCURACY (PISTOLS, SHOTGUNS, SMGs)
2	COMMUNICATION
3	CONSTITUTION
1	DEXTERITY
2	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, LIGHT BLADES, SHORT HAFTED)
1	INTELLIGENCE
2	PERCEPTION
3	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
2	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING + TOUGHNESS
11	23	11	6

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
ADVANCED SMG	+5	2D6+4
UNARMED	+5	1D6+5

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Double-Team, Knock Prone, Shock and Awe, Vicious Blow

ADVANCED EQUIPMENT: Equipment listed as "Advanced" grants the Krypteia Hitman +1 stunt point whenever doubles are rolled in tests that require or are aided by their use. This applies to the Advanced SMG's attack rolls, Perception (Hearing) tests using the Advanced Earbuds, and Perception (Seeing) and Intelligence (Computers) tests using the Advanced Augmented Reality Sunglasses.

CYPHER: The Krypteia Hitman doesn't exist on any database.

DEADMAN'S SWITCH: When a Krypteia Hitman drops to 0 Health or is rendered unconscious, the mechanisms and electronics of their equipment melt down into inert goo.

GETAWAY: A Krypteia Hitman can call for a getaway ride as an Activate action. A vehicle will arrive at the beginning of the next round at the nearest street and speed away as soon as the last among the Krypteia Hitman and their allies is aboard.

TALENT - TACTICAL AWARENESS: The Krypteia Hitman can take the Melee Attack or Ranged Attack action at any point of their movement.

TALENT - STRIKING STYLE: The Krypteia Hitman's unarmed attack inflicts 1d6 damage instead of 1d3. Also, the Hitman can use the Knock Prone stunt for 1 SP instead of 2 SP with an unarmed attack.

EQUIPMENT: Bullet Resistant Cloth Armor, Advanced SMG, Advanced Earbuds, Advanced Augmented Reality Sunglasses

THREAT: MINOR



REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE

Since the Blake Clinic is hiding an Aethon facility, the attack triggers security measures. At the beginning of the fifth round of combat, six Aethon guards arrive, dressed as clinic security guards. If the Krypteia Hitmen are still present and standing, the guards promptly gun them down and proceed to help any injured persons before the clinic's medical personnel arrive as well. The leader of the Aethon response team, **Luke Parson**, acknowledges Trace, and then all the other Player Characters. He asks the Player Characters to come down to Basement Zero for a debriefing and medical treatment, if they need it.

DEBRIEFING

The Player Characters are taken to Basement Zero, a small Aethon listening post and resupply station serving operants (Aethon agents) on the way to various missions. It occupies two sub-basement floors under the clinic—or had, until now. When the characters come down, they see personnel already packing—and in some cases, destroying—sophisticated equipment of all kinds. This is standard procedure when an outpost is considered exposed. The medical bay is still assembled, however. Aethon medics use superior technology to bring injured characters to full Health in a matter of minutes.

Once they are patched up and ready, Parson asks them about what happened, and whether they know anything about the attackers and the Otherworlder. These are just routine ques-

tions; Parson is polite and professional. He has no more information about the event than the Player Characters themselves. Allow time for characters to talk among themselves and get to know each other. When you think the story is ready to move on, read the following.

Parson pauses and his eyes unfocus, as if seeing and hearing something the rest of you can't. He nods, then addresses you.

"Well, it seems there's more to this than what any of us knew. Our bosses are calling up a joint task force and they want all of you in it. I've been instructed to extend an invitation to The Crucible Club tomorrow evening. You'll get briefed there."

SCENE 2

THE CRUCIBLE CLUB

SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

The protagonists meet representatives from the Vitane and Peridexion, who brief them on the burgeoning epidemic and what the Sodality expects from them.

The Crucible Club is one of Greenwich Village's hidden gems, upscale but welcoming—assuming you're on the guest list. When you arrive just after dusk, a smiling hostess leads you to a private room on the second floor. You hear the muffled sounds of live jazz below.

A man and woman are in the room. Both appear to be in their mid-forties, and both wear business attire, though the woman also wears cufflinks with elaborate sigils. Val recognizes the sigils as symbols of the Tenebrous School, an arcane college on the plane of Vigrith, capital of the Vitane.

"I'm Magister Clarissa Estevez from the Vitane," says the woman. "This is Professor Humphrey Bolton from the Peridexion. We've been monitoring the situation that led to last night's events, but it's not over. We need your help."

Estevez explains why they want the characters to join together for this assignment. Val and Trace, as official members of the Sodality and Aethon, respectively, represent their mutual organizations. Avery and River, with their experience as "civilians" of the Otherworlds, provide a grounded view, while Dion brings combat and medical experience to the table. Estevez allows Bolton to speak after she answers any further questions.

Bolton clears his throat and stands, mussing with his carefully trimmed and whitening beard. He looks at each of you as if trying to find some fault, then speaks.

"One of our agents has gone rogue," he says. "We don't expect you to capture him. Your mission will be to deal with the consequences of his actions.

"The man you met is the fourth admitted to city hospitals with similar symptoms. These start with depression and general malaise, advancing to repetitive behavior and catatonia. Fortunately, their unusual bloodwork caught our attention once it was filed. Mundane medics cultured this."

Bolton hands them what looks like a screen print. One window has a photograph of a spidery, phosphorescent growth on a culture slide. Another has a microscope image of a cell colony. Val recognizes that the internal structures of the microorganism are arrayed much like a magical diagram.

KRYPTIC STAKES

Neither Estevez nor Bolton address the attack on the clinic unless asked by the Player Characters. If pressed, Bolton says the hitmen couldn't be identified, but Estevez mentions evidence indicating they were members of the Krypteia, an underground crime syndicate. She admits they don't know what interest the Krypteia might have in the Otherworlder, but doubts it's unrelated to the matter at hand. Unbeknownst to all but Bolton, he contacted the Krypteia about the Tellurophage. The Krypteia want to sell it as a weapon to select clients. In return, they're helping him in several ways.

"We call it a 'Tellurophage,'" says Bolton. "It seems to drain kanna from its hosts, and then from their immediate surroundings."

"Kanna fuels magic, and creativity itself," says Estevez. "Deprivation is probably causing the reported symptoms. Theoretically, the host eventually loses their mind. Supercharged with kanna, the organism might magically spread to nearby hosts. I do not need to tell you the dangers of letting such a disease spread to Earth."

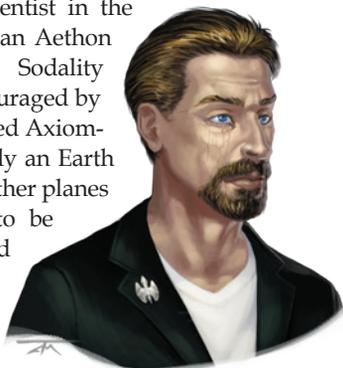
Bolton points out that River's brother seems to be in the initial stages of the infestation. Estevez interjects, informing them that Vitane arcanists (magic-using personnel) will help keep anyone infected alive by feeding external kanna to the Tellurophage. This is a stopgap measure; they need a real cure.

What Bolton is not telling anyone is he already knows about the disease—in fact, he created it. He duped an Aethon operant named Parker Purwaha into releasing it in an Otherworld called Tannebrim as part of the testing stage, but never expected the contagion to reach Earth. Bolton is moving his pieces to pin the blame on Purwaha, but has no reason to mention it to anyone.

Estevez lays out the characters' mission: Find "patient zero", who they suspect is the Otherworlder (Thurien) at the clinic or someone who might be found with his help. Bolton lists the hospitals where the parasite has been discovered and says the Peridexion used its own surveillance apparatus (which includes access to thousands of ordinary security cameras) to intermittently track the Otherworlder to a cluster of warehouses in Brooklyn. The characters should start their search there.

PROFESSOR HUMPHREY BOLTON

Bolton is an ambitious scientist in the Peridexion. He used to be an Aethon operant, joining several Sodality Missions in his youth. Encouraged by an artificial intelligence called Axiomatic Hieroglyph, he's secretly an Earth supremacist who believes other planes are semi-real "shadows" to be exploited or depopulated depending on what they have to offer. According to his theories, kanna is energy released by other



COMBAT WITH ESTEVEZ & BOLTON

Bolton and Estevez are non-combatants but by no means defenseless. If attacked, they make a combined use of their posthuman and magical abilities to escape. Bolton pings Aethon for support, and a tactical squad arrives within a minute. Both officers will report the assault to their organizations, who will devote experienced agents to arrest the offenders. If the Player Characters do this, the adventure has really jumped the rails, and it's up to you, as GM, to improvise events in a story of your own!

PROFESSOR HUMPHREY BOLTON

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2, COMMUNICATION 3 (DECEPTION, LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING -1, INTELLIGENCE 5 (BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, EARTH SCIENCES, OCCULTISM, RESEARCH), PERCEPTION 2 (SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 3 (FAITH)

NOTE: Professor Bolton has several posthuman augmentations granting him the ability to perform microscopic and spectrometric analyses via ocular implants, conduct complex computing processes by thought alone, and secrete tailored chemical compounds from his fingertips.

MAGISTER CLARISSA ESTEVEZ

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

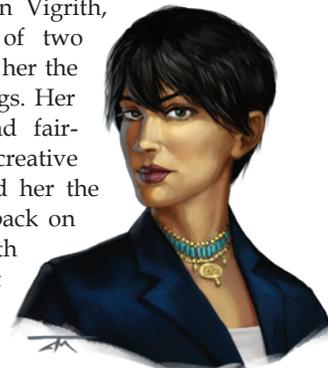
ACCURACY 3, COMMUNICATION 4 (EXPRESSION, LEADERSHIP, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 6 (BUSINESS, CURRENT AFFAIRS, DIVINATION ARCANA, EVALUATION, FIRE ARCANA, HEALING ARCANA, OCCULTISM), PERCEPTION 3 (SEEING, EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 4 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

NOTE: Magister Estevez knows the Divination Arcana, consisting of spells that allow her to supernaturally detect and predict phenomena, and has learned any other arcana you think would be plausible and useful.

planes' inherent instability. He has long-term plans to siphon it from other realms as a clean energy source. As a biological form of kanna storage, the Tellurophage represents one avenue of research along these lines.

MAGISTER CLARISSA ESTEVEZ

Although she was born on Vigrith, Estevez is the daughter of two Earth arcanists who taught her the value of balance in all things. Her sense of responsibility and fairness, paired with quick, creative thinking, eventually earned her the position of Vitane consul back on Earth. She's collaborated with Bolton before and doesn't quite trust his intentions. She is giving him space to see what happens.





GRIFFON CUB

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

-2	ACCURACY
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
3	DEXTERITY
3	FIGHTING (BITE, CLAWS)
0	INTELLIGENCE
3	PERCEPTION (SEEING, HEARING)
3	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT)
1	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING + TOUGHNESS
14	35	13	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+5	1d6+5
CLAWS	+5	1d3+3

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Duck and Weave, Lightning Attack, Vicious Blow

FLURRY OF CLAWS: The griffon cub may make a claw attack as a minor action.

THICK HIDE: Tough skin grants it an Armor Rating of 2.

THREAT: MINOR

SCENE 3

FURIOUS AVIAN

ACTION AND EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

With nothing much to go on, the characters arrive in Brooklyn on the outskirts of a curiously abandoned industrial zone.

In Brooklyn, many industrial areas have been recently renovated into high-end housing, but that isn't the case here. Activity dwindles on the streets until you reach an area with multiple red brick buildings with boarded-up windows. These derelict warehouses are masonry relics of a bygone era, and are at least 100 years old. The graffiti too seems dated, as if this area isn't even popular for people who like to do business in the dark.

Make a **TN 9 Intelligence (Occultism)** test for Val. If it succeeds, they can attest there's magical interference in place, but can't pinpoint the type or source. The streets are dirty and dusty; a successful **TN 12 Perception (Tracking)** test uncovers various footprints—including some strangely shaped boots, with pointed toes but no raised heels. Thurien wore such boots.

As the characters go deeper into the area, ask the players for a **TN 13 Perception (Seeing)** or **Perception (Hearing)** test. Those who succeed see the **griffon cub** coming before it strikes! If none of the characters succeed, the griffon cub gets a free major action to attack. As this happens, read or paraphrase the following:

As you walk near a fenced, vacant lot, a screech pierces the air and a large shadow jumps the fence. You know it's not a dog when its wings unfurl, and you see the silhouette of a curved beak!

The griffon cub can only take gliding jumps, not fly. It flees if its Health points are reduced to half its total or less, leading the PCs to the Tanneb refugee community.

GRIFFON CUB

To Earthly eyes, this young beast has the body of a lion and the head, wings, and front legs of an eagle. In truth, it's simply an animal from Tannebrim, and none of its parts quite match those of these more familiar creatures. Its wings are blue with a rainbow sheen as they scatter light, and the rest of its body is blue-black. The cub is the size of a large dog. Thurien is its master, and it went looking for him, only now returning as Thurien recently did. The characters smell like Thurien but are *not* him. This and agitation arising from its unfamiliar environment prompt the cub's attack.

SCENE 4

EXILED & QUARANTINED

SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

The protagonists find the Tanneb community in hiding, and discover that the contagion is much worse than they feared. They meet an Optimate, Jannika Reach, who has been bringing refugees over and who points the characters to the source of the contagion: an Otherworld called Tannebrim.

The griffon leads you around a corner and down an alley when the words, "That's as far as you go, errand boys," ring out in a woman's voice. The speaker walks out from behind an arch. She's a dark-haired woman with bronze skin who's dressed like something between a hiker and mercenary, in tough military surplus and athletic gear. The griffon stops before her and lies down on its belly, submissively. She makes a clicking noise and it bounds through double doors in the archway she came out of.

"I see you found Hopper," she says. "His partner will be happy once he gets his head screwed back on."

The woman introduces herself as Jannika Reach, and she doesn't play around, stating outright that she knows the characters are working for the Sodality and the Peridexion. Her initial attitude (see **Social Encounters** in the rules section) is Hostile (-2 to tests to socially influence her) but she's not violent. Characters can gain her wary trust with a convincing lie and a successful **TN 14 Communication (Deception)** test, or they can be honest, polite, and empathetic and try a **TN 11 Communication (Persuasion)** test. (The target numbers are based on Reach's abilities.) Both tests suffer the -2 modifier for her Hostile attitude, though this can be lessened if the players portray their social interactions as particularly compelling. Success changes her attitude to Neutral. Characters can attempt to win her deeper trust, making her Friendly. As Game Master, decide which tactics are required and which tests to use from the rules in this quickstart.

Once Jannika has a Neutral or better attitude, she reveals she's an Optimate and member of the Ferrymen, protecting a camp of people the Peridexion should not know about. Sodality and Aethon-affiliated characters know of the Ferrymen, who smuggle goods and people between Earth and the Otherworlds in defiance of other interplanar organizations' rules. However, the Sodality and Aethon often look the other way, since the Ferrymen have a loose code of honor that keeps them from abuses such as trafficking in sapient beings. As an Optimate, Jannika is descended from a Hierarchy, beings of the Otherworlds Earth's humans believed were gods. Optimates often inherit special powers, and a few have the rare ability to travel the planes without using gates.

After describing the situation in quick, loose terms, Reach leads the characters inside a boarded-up warehouse through a side door. Inside are several tents pitched upon the floor and along the walls, and a large van is parked near the warehouse's locked main entrance. The people in the tents and milling around fires lit inside trash cans shoot the new arrivals suspicious glances. Most of them are dressed in homemade tunics and cloaks, though a few have Earth clothes as well. A few of them have features not found in Earth humans, such as blue skin, pointed ears, or golden eyes.

The griffon cub runs to a large tent set apart from the others. Jannika leads the characters there as well. Inside, six cots hold people who, in a fever, repeat nonsense phrases and stare into empty space. Furthermore, veins on the surface of their skin glow pink at the rhythm of their breathing. The griffon cub curls at the foot of one of these cots, which holds Thurien. The number and glow of the veins on his body are not quite as intense, but he is similarly unable to think.

Jannika Reach confirms that the disease the characters are tracking down is here, among these Tannebrim natives. Eight days ago, she brought them to Earth to escape an invading Nighthost war-horde. The Nighthost is a warrior culture that frequently raids and conquers other planes. In this case, they have a collaborator from the plane of Tannebrim: an arcanist who goes by the name Lady Silverwrath. With some anger, Reach notes she encountered a Sodality group "just monitoring the situation." Members were Sodalt Avres UI'darna, Aethon member Parker Purwaha, and two Sodality Academy students, "coming along as if it was a school trip."

Reach originally planned to take the refugees to Vigrith and dump them at the Sodality's doorstep to see if they'd help, but she realized some of the refugees were sick, and their illness progressed faster when close to strong sources of kanna. She brought them to Earth (the Ferrymen use this and adjacent warehouses to store luxury goods they smuggle to other planes) to slow down the disease. This has helped, but it's still progressing. She mentions that the Tannebrim were getting sick before they ever came to Earth.

Characters who succeed at a **TN 9 Perception (Empathy)** test confirm she's telling the truth and is concerned about the disease's nature. If PCs reveal what they know about the Tellurophage, they gain more of her trust (improve her attitude by one step, to a best result of Friendly) but her worries and suspicions grow.

Jannika Reach believes any "patient zero" could still be in Tannebrim. She suggests the characters travel there through a gate chain (a sequence of gates through multiple planes).



There are not many chains a traveler could take, and all known chains from Earth pass through the plane of Vigrith first, and Koralvos last. Those two planes are therefore the ones most likely to have clues for them. If Friendly, she also shares her suspicion the Sodality group wasn't telling her the whole truth about their presence.

Reach suggests Player Characters look for information in the Cataract, a crime-ridden district in Akavastu, Vigrith's (and the Sodality's) capital, where most gates to the plane lead. As

far as Koralvos goes, she has no advice, as she doesn't know the plane well. Nor does she know more about the route to Tannebrim beyond what she's already said, since she gets there via "a shortcut" —her plane-hopping van. While characters can travel to Vigrith by a gate monitored by the Peridexion and Vitane, she offers to take them through another route: a ride in her van, which acts as a focus for her Optimate ability to travel without a gate. That way, they can travel without being tracked if they wish.

In exchange for this information, Jannika wants the characters to keep their mouths shut about the refugees. She warns the characters that she will know if they betrayed the refugees' location and that, in any event, she'll have to relocate the camp.

JANNIKA REACH

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4 (BOWS, PISTOLS, THROWN),
 COMMUNICATION 2 (DECEPTION, LEADERSHIP),
 CONSTITUTION 3 (STAMINA, TOLERANCE), DEXTERITY 3
 (DRIVING), FIGHTING 4 (HEAVY BLADES, LONG HAFTED),
 INTELLIGENCE 6 (EVALUATION, NAVIGATION, OCCULTISM,
 TACTICS), PERCEPTION 2 (EMPATHY, TRACKING),
 STRENGTH 3 (MIGHT, STEERING), WILLPOWER 1 (COURAGE)

SPECIAL FEATURES

Jannika is an Optimate. She has several abilities and items that allow her to perform any exceptional feat the GM deems necessary.

NOTE: While more than capable of defending herself (and others), Jannika has no time for foolishness if the characters attack her. She will just teleport them to the New Jersey Turnpike near Newark, and begin relocating the refugees. Thus, she is detailed in truncated form as a noncombatant.

JANNIKA REACH

A handsome woman in her thirties with a Mediterranean tan and thick black curls sloppily tied behind her head, Jannika Reach is an Optimate, descended from a Hierarch whose powers over travel and knowledge she has partly inherited. According to Reach, her ancestor was "mistaken for Odysseus." She used to work for the Sodality but grew bored and frustrated, eventually helping found the Ferrymen.



IN WHAT DISTANT DEEPS OR SKIES

The characters follow their leads through many gates, exploring Otherworlds in search of clues about the Tellurophage.

Jannika Reach laid out two options for the characters to continue the adventure. Each has advantages and disadvantages. In both cases, characters may need new equipment. The **Otherworld Equipment** table describes Resources costs, but each option provides different conditions for access.

OPTION A

CATCH A RIDE

Jannika can cross planar boundaries in her van and literally drives to Vigrith, taking the characters to Akavastu. If the characters travel with her, they will arrive with all their equipment, including firearms, although it's likely that Dion will need to stop by their place first, since walking around town with a carbine is not a good idea.

Another advantage is that the Sodality and Peridexion will not know they traveled to Vigrith unless the characters announce themselves, and their continuing investigation in the Otherworlds will completely blindside Bolton, which will affect the encounter in the conclusion. Adjust the number of transplanar mercenaries in the finale up or down based on how much you think Bolton would discover about their progress. On the other hand, the characters won't have Vigrithian marks (the plane's primary currency, and thus a Resources score) on hand to buy equipment, and must trade their own gear at a market in the Cataract.

One disadvantage is that if characters let Jannika drive them and *then* make contact with the Sodality or another organization, they may be held for questioning about why they bypassed normal protocols. This isn't exactly against Vitane law in situations like this, but it's suspicious, and Bolton will be especially curious as to why the characters did this. Escaping debriefing requires some fast talk and perhaps some Communication (Persuasion or Deception, depending on the approach), with Estevez being the easier one to convince. In the end, any delay should be temporary, however — you must get on with the story.

OPTION B

OFFICIAL CHANNELS

Relying on the Sodality or the Peridexion to travel to Vigrith comes with certain perks. Authorized travelers (this includes the characters) need only request access. Bolton is slightly alarmed that the characters' investigation did not end on Earth, while Estevez only has words of encouragement as she leads the characters to a gate housed in a nondescript midtown Manhattan building.

After they cross, characters can choose appropriate Otherworld gear, including armor and weapons, at no cost, as long as these are plausibly for personal use. Furthermore, autho-

EARTH TECHNOLOGY IN THE OTHERWORLDS

Characters who take modern Earth equipment to Vigrith would be wise not to rely on it as heavily, for it may be affected by Incessance: the way the rules of reality in a world affect technology. When the characters first use a high-tech item (roughly, something relying on 20th century or later tech) after crossing a gate into an Otherworld, the GM makes an Incessance test by rolling 3d6 and adding the plane's Incessance modifier (listed at the beginning of each world's description). The TN is set by the resistance of technological items or the augmentations possessed by posthumans from Earth. This TN is 20 for implants and augmentations, 15 for firearms, and 11 for cell phones (which do not have a network to rely on beyond Earth, in any event). Trace has a Talent called Earthsoul, which adds +5 to the resistance TNs of technology on his person.

Each time an Incessance test is successful against an object or implant, these items suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to tests to use them until they return to Earth. Items which fail due to Incessance often do so in strange or irritating ways, left to the Game Master to invent.

The full rules of Incessance and its effects on other kinds of worlds and other kinds of targets are described in the *Threefold* setting book.

OTHERWORLD EQUIPMENT

ARMOR	RESOURCES DIFF.	ARMOR RATING (PENALTY)
Heavy Leather	9	4 (-1)
Mail	15	6 (-3)
Steel Plate	16	8 (-4)
WEAPON	RESOURCES DIFF.	
Axe	7	
Club	--	
Hammer	7	
Staff	8	
Dagger	8	
Fencing Sword	10	
Long Sword	12	
Two-handed Sword	14	
Compound Bow (includes 20 arrows)	12	
Crossbow (includes 20 bolts)	14	
Throwing Knife	10	
GEAR	RESOURCES DIFF.	
Backpack	7	
Camping Gear	8	
Oil Lamp (w/oil)	4	
Lock Picks	8	
Rope (20 yards)	3	
Tent (small/large)	5/9	
Rations (10 days)	5	

rized visitors are given a modest supply of Vigrithian marks for other local expenses. This provides a Resources bonus of +4 for tests: not enough for expensive items, but sufficient for typical purchases.

Gate security will strongly suggest characters leave modern equipment behind, since it tends to malfunction, and may try to confiscate items which might malfunction dangerously, including firearms. Trace has special training as an Aethon operant and is permitted to retain his high-tech gear, no questions asked. Anyone else must succeed at a **TN 12 Communication (Persuasion)** test.

SCENE 1

THE START OF EVERY ROAD

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The protagonists arrive at Akavastu, the capital city of Vigrith, so-called center of the planar ways. The characters can find many leads regarding the Tellurophage and Parker Purwaha by seeking out both the authorities and less savory individuals.

This scene can begin in one of two ways, depending on which option the characters took in the previous scene.

THROUGH A VITANE OR PERIDEXION GATE

Characters can enter one of the gates under control of the Vitane or the Peridexion, emerging from the corresponding gate in the Tablea Transita, a collection of gates in the city of Akavastu. Read or paraphrase the following:

As the arcane rush of gate travel dies down, your body knows it is not home anymore by the smells. There's a certain humidity in the air, and the wind carries the scents of fresh food, running water, and other things you don't recognize. You stand at the edge of a huge circular plaza, surrounded by other gates which people of all descriptions are emerging from or disappearing into. With a gesture of her long pike, a guard urges you to keep moving.

The plaza is huge, but only one of many in a walled park inside the city. The paths are clean and clearly marked, and traffic is heavy, with people and beast-drawn vehicles making their way to and from the many gates within the park's confines.

BY OPTIMATE POWER

Taking up Jannika Reach's offer is the more exciting option. Her van is furnished with wooden interiors, and creaks like

PLANE 0B-000001: VIGRITH

Special: On Vigrith, technology tends to attract and magnify kanna. The largest Incessance penalty which currently applies to a character or an item in their possession is also a penalty to tests to resist the Force of an incoming spell.

INCESSANCE: +2

a ship when it moves. She affectionately calls it "Argos." She drops the characters just outside the city's walls. Read or paraphrase the following.

The van turns a corner and the whole trip takes on a dream-like quality; you're not sure if it's the entire world that is wobbling or just you, and only the blues song playing in the van's stereo helps you hold together, despite lyrics sung in no language you recognize. Time stretches and snaps. You see strange suns and twisted trees give way to deserts of red sand. At one point you feel like the van falls, and you see endless clouds in a deep blue sky, but it passes, and you're on a dirt road, hurtling into the mist. Plunging through, you see a massive stone wall on your right. Jannika hits the breaks.

"This is your stop," she says. "Akavastu, jewel of the Metacosm. Mind your step!"

Before saying goodbye and driving off, Jannika reminds the characters of the leads they can pursue while in Akavastu. They can find the gate chain leading to Tannebrim, inquire about Parker Purwaha with the Sodalts who traveled with him, and visit the Cataract for more clues. She also recommends the characters find **Vaus Nakheet**, who can trade their equipment and their money for Otherworld equipment and Vitane currency.

Akavastu is a huge city that welcomes denizens of all worlds. It's the capital of the Vitane, the interplanar authority which commands the Sodality and stands in alliance with Earth. It was built at the site of the final battle of the Fellwar, a conflict that pitted gods, demons, and unimaginable war machines against each other, until only the mortal founders of the Vitane remained. The canals and raised aqueducts that crisscross the city offer transportation, with slow public ferries moving alongside magically propelled capsules in a system called "the Quick." Beautiful gardens stand beside slender towers and cathedral-like structures.

RESEARCH IN CARDINAL HOUSE

As Val knows, Cardinal House holds the Sodality's governing body and would have records of the journey to Tannebrim, and perhaps even participating personnel. As a Sodalt, Val can gain entry for the group without any effort, but navigating bureaucracy is another thing altogether.

Ask the players to make **TN 11 Communication (Persuasion)** or **Communication (Investigation)** tests. Failure means the searcher wastes 7 hours minus their Stunt Die result looking in the wrong places. With a success (and after the same 7-Stunt Die result hour duration), they find **Avres UI'darna**, the Sodality Searcher (a member of the exploration division, in other words) who accompanied Parker Purwaha. While only Avery, River, and Val can understand the language the reports are written in, anyone can talk with UI'darna, a man with fine features, purple eyes, and pointed ears. (Note that he has no game statistics because he can't be harmed in the high-security environment of Cardinal House and can perform any task the Game Master deems necessary.)

His impression of Parker Purwaha was that of an honorable, dutiful man, though not one he knew well, as they were brought together via an anonymous order along with cadets

Vaya and Strevan. As far as they were concerned, this was a training exercise. Tannebrim is a moderately distant, somewhat volatile plane, but not beyond the group's abilities. They were to perform survey and sample-gathering duties at their discretion, then return home.

Ul'darna readily provides a correct gate chain to Tannebrim. For other information, characters can either guide the conversation with a successful **TN 9 Communication (Investigation)** test, or concentrate on the Tannebrim operation records, harvesting information with a successful **TN 9 Intelligence (Research)** test. On a success, characters uncover a number of significant facts equal to the highest Stunt Die result of their combined efforts. The GM provides them from among the following.

- The Mission arrived through the Koralvos gate to observe the Tanneb people as they dealt with Nighthost incursions. They spent time in a city-state called Bulwark (see **Part 3** for information on this place and Tannebrim, which are in the records) and interacted with refugees from a nearby kingdom called Valencrast, until the refugees traveled north, farther from the gate than Ul'darna considered safe given the Nighthost presence.
- Purwaha possessed a non-standard biological sampling device. He was assigned it by the Peridexion for this mission and did not know all its functions, though it did extract tissues from subjects painlessly.
- Purwaha used the sampler to extract tissue samples from animals and willing Tanneb humans ("humans" meaning sapient creatures with a hominid body plan, in this case). Again, he did not know the purpose of taking these samples, but collecting them isn't an unusual assignment.
- Cadet Strevan noticed the unusual sampler and detected kanna resonance, indicating a magical function, which is extremely unusual in Peridexion technology. It didn't affect the operation in any way, however.
- On Koralvos, returning from Tannebrim, Purwaha left the Mission group for three hours on personal business. After he returned, Ul'darna notes Purwaha was "distracted, perhaps upset," but did not disclose why.
- In his personal records dating to the initial mission briefing, Purwaha mentions he intends to visit a friend on Koralvos named Ferrl Thornstone.
- According to the briefing notes, Koralvos is an anomalous world called a *heterarchy*. Magic and advanced technology both function well here, making it a haven for renegade elements from Earth, such as Accelerators who defy Peridexion restrictions on technological development, and Krypteia smugglers.

THE CATARACT

Akavastu's government considers the Cataract a "release valve" for a certain degree of inevitable lawlessness. The neighborhood lies in abandoned tunnels originally meant



for Quick capsules. Below the grand, wide, bridge-borne marketplace called the Arc, a circular network of waterfalls terminates more than 100 feet below, in the whirlpool that gives the area its name. The Cataract's tunnel entrances stand between the waterfalls, all the way down. Service stairs provide a way down. Characters will almost certainly come here at Jannika Reach's suggestion, searching for Vaus Nakheet.

Remind Avery that they have been in the Cataract before. **Guth**, one of their Relationships, lives here. By asking Guth, Avery can find Vaus Nakheet immediately. Otherwise, it takes a few hours (and a possible awkward social or even action-oriented encounter, devised by the GM) to find the peddler.

THE PEDDLER'S CORNER

Vaus Nakheet owns a small general goods store in one of the bottom tunnels of the Cataract. His initial attitude is Neutral and he deals with the characters with professionalism, offering information only if they pay for it. See the **Vaus' Information** table for the information he can offer and the TN for the Resources test to pay for it.

Vaus can buy the characters' Earth equipment as well as exchange their money for Vigrithian marks, no questions asked. Characters who are willing to reduce their Resources by

3 (to a minimum 1) may use this new score the Otherworlds. Selling Earth Equipment increases their new Resources score by +1 per major piece of equipment sold, to a maximum of +3.

Convincing Vaus to lower his prices requires increasing his attitude to Friendly; succeeding in an opposed **Communication (Persuasion)** test against Vaus' **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** will improve his attitude by one step. Mentioning that they are looking to help the people of Tannebrim will automatically take his attitude to Friendly and he will throw in directions for the Tannebrim gate chain for free.

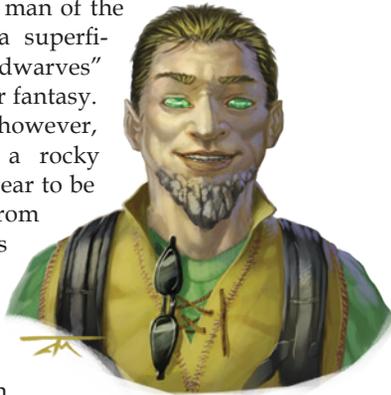
If his attitude is Friendly, the TNs in the **Vaus' Information** table are reduced by 2, and Vaus will provide one of the pieces of information (your choice) for free.

VAUS' INFORMATION

TN	INFORMATION
7	The Nighthost is sending warbands to worlds with gates that open directly to Tannebrim. Thus, travel to the plane might be dangerous.
9	There are rumors about sick people among Tanneb refugees.
10	Parker Purwaha came to the Cataract after his visit to Tannebrim, business unknown. He fought off a small group of mercenaries who ambushed him at the docks.
13	Other Earthfolk have been asking about Purwaha. Vaus pegged them as criminals.

VAUS NAKHEET

Vaus is a short, stocky man of the huldra lineage. Huldra superficially resemble the "dwarves" or "gnomes" of popular fantasy. Instead of a beard, however, his chin tapers into a rocky point, and his eyes appear to be faceted and carved from green glass. He shares trivial information as a lure, fishing for new secrets from people he talks with. He's been operating from the Cataract for decades as a gray-market merchant and gossip. If attacked, he flees. If captured? He's no fighter, but has an iron will when it comes to keeping his secrets. He's a non-combatant.



VAUS NAKHEET

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (THROWN), COMMUNICATION 3 (DECEPTION, INVESTIGATION, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 3, INTELLIGENCE 4 (ANTHROPOLOGY, BUSINESS, CARTOGRAPHY, CURRENT AFFAIRS, EVALUATION, LAW, OCCULTISM, RESEARCH, SECURITY), PERCEPTION 4 (EMPATHY, HEARING, TRACKING), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 2 (MORALE)

SCENE 2

THE GATE CHAIN

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The characters begin their extraplanar voyage, crossing gates into different worlds.

The next part of the journey can happen as a descriptive collage, describing the different sceneries and people the characters encounter as they cross different planes to reach Tannebrim. In each case, characters must pass through a gate, then find and walk through the next gate in their journey. Thanks to the Sodality or Vaus Nakheet, they know where each gate in the chain is, and where it leads. Vaus and the Sodality provide different chains, but both reach Korvalvos as the last plane before Tannebrim. Crossing from Vigrith is no challenge. Characters have the credentials to use the appropriate gates at the Tablea Transita.

To generate the Sodality's or Nakheet's chain, roll 1d3+2 to determine the number of planes between Vigrith and Korvalvos. Then, roll 2d6 that many times on the **Planes in the Gate Chain** table to discover the planes and environments characters visit. The GM can always choose results instead of rolling, and can improvise encounters along the way or briefly describe a less eventful leg of the journey.

KORALVOS

No matter their route, the characters' penultimate destination is Korvalvos, where magic and technology form a rare amalgam. Advanced technology is normally a function of Earth's sophisticated natural laws, while magic relies on the roiling creative energy called kanna. Unknown entities have somehow grafted Earth-style physics onto the plane, while maintaining its magical potential.

Korvalvos' gates have not been fully surveyed, but stand scattered throughout the plane's sole settlement of significant size, Siege. Siege is an arcology: a single enormous building of rock, steel, and glass, built out of a sharply rising cliff. The deeper toward the center one goes, the more prestigious the neighborhood, until one reaches the sacrosanct Godheart. Veins of iridescent liquid circulate through the Godheart. These can be tapped for electricity and when they flow over the white, chalk-like substance called *bashai*, it attains properties similar to coal, except that it releases a sweet vapor when burned instead of polluting smoke.

Characters arrive in the outer regions, where technologies utilizing the Godheart and bashai are on display. Even wireless devices function, thanks to expertise, technology, and protocols borrowed from Earth. Signs are in English and Koralvese, a language that looks like ancient Chinese "oracle bone" script. Koralvese are human and dress in robes made

PLANE HI-28132: KORALVOS

Notes: Incessance tests are still required for technology from Earth, but have no bonus. Technology made on Korvalvos doesn't suffer Incessance.

INCESSANCE: +0

PLANES IN THE GATE CHAIN

2D6	NAME	DESCRIPTION
2	Verdaren	Healthy marshes inhabited by people adapted to amphibious life. Travel is via canoes rented from the locals. They sometimes forget visitors can't breathe water.
3-4	Gazarath	A rocky desert riddled with patches of thick vegetation with sharp, serrated leaves. Small predators fly during the night but do not attack the characters. They're telepaths, amusing themselves by reading visitors' thoughts.
5-6	Boran	A thick forest where visitors travel across bridges built by its sophisticated elfin inhabitants. The forest floor is inhabited by sapient bears locked in a war with the tree people.
7-8	Ollidaster	Grass-covered hills with no tall vegetation and many cracks on the ground. There are soft tremors throughout the day, and at least two big earthquakes during the journey.
9-10	Draenti	Ruins of an ancient city extend to the horizon. Small communities thrive in walled-off neighborhoods. Each community believes itself the last survivors of the city, and other communities remnants of an invading army.
11	Mapayem	A thick and impassable jungle; the gates are in clearings, where locals offer rides to the nearest settlements in carriages propelled by magic that leap from tree to tree. Similar carriages are operated by "treewaymen."
12	Lofertavor	A prosperous, pastoral world with shining castles and walled villages. Anyone caught outdoors at night has a chance of being dragged into the ground and suffocated by the animated bodies of their dead. This fertilizes fields and is considered a holy event.

from richly decorated textiles. They are indifferent to visitors, but accept trade in electronics and gold.

If the characters reviewed Sodality records in Vigrith, they know Parker Purwaha intended to meet **Ferri Thornstone** here. Finding her workshop is easy; a successful **TN 9 Communication (Investigation)** or **Intelligence (Research)** test will provide her address by asking around or finding a local directory. Failure means either Thornstone has already gone home by the time they arrive at her shop (she'll be back at dawn the next day, as a sign helpfully says) or that characters must sacrifice an electronic device or some gold (a coin will do) to pay a local guide to help them.



THE AETHON ENQUIRY

Whether they find Thornstone on arrival or wait for the next day, she receives them happily, for she's always glad to trade information with Sodalts and other planar travelers. Her initial attitude is Friendly, and turns Very Friendly if the characters mention Parker Purwaha, who she credits for the breakthrough leading to her newest invention.

Unprompted, Thornstone tells the characters Purwaha brought a gizmo to her for analysis. Fascinated with how small Earth electronics can be, Thornstone took it apart and analyzed its contents. It had some kind of redundant biological sampling function, but its main function was to "deliver a biological-arcane agent." She then shows them a drawing of the Tellurophage organism. Characters recognize it from their initial briefing with Bolton and Estevez.

Thornstone is oblivious to the implications of her findings. To her, the only thing that mattered was discovering a way to siphon kanna. She has emulated the organism's structure through nanocircuitry and believes she can prevent it from draining kanna from the living. She completed her original analysis in just over an hour, with Purwaha present. The results upset him, but she doesn't know why.

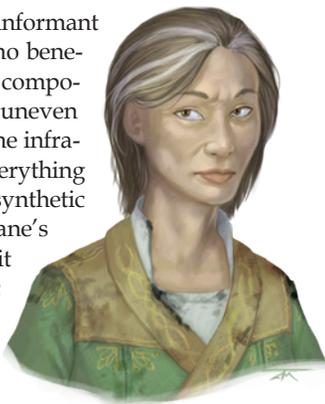
In her chatty manner, she goes on to say she designed a chemical cocktail to kill the Tellurophage, but strictly to keep her shop clean. It would kill any host injected with it. She might be able to develop a less toxic countermeasure, but would need new samples of the organism to work with.

Thornstone is useful in one other way. She owns a grab bag of items, from weapons to electronics, rebuilt from imported and locally made parts. These items suffer no Incessance on Koralvos. Thornstone accepts Vigrithian marks, but her prices are +1 Resources higher than those for Earth equipment.

FERRL THORNSTONE

Thornstone is an occasional informant for Aethon and an inventor who benefits from the trade in Earth components. Koralvos suffers from uneven development because it lacks the infrastructure required to make everything from integrated circuits to synthetic rubber. However, the plane's unique environment makes it possible to integrate magic and technology. Visitors from other planes often come to research these applications, and Thornstone tries to stay

ahead of them. She is strictly a student of arcane theory, not a practitioner—she lets arcanists do the dirty work of casting



FERRL THORNSTONE

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0 (THROWN), COMMUNICATION 3 (INVESTIGATION),
CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 3, FIGHTING 0,
INTELLIGENCE 4 (ELECTRONICS, CHEMISTRY, OCCULTISM, PHYSICS,
RESEARCH, SECURITY, TINKERING), PERCEPTION 2,
STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 3 (MORALE)

spells. She does however hope to produce cutting-edge devices that have spells embedded in them.

Ferrl Thornstone wears singed and stained Koralvan robes over a tall, thin, and slightly stooped frame. At age 40, she has features which would be thought of as East Asian on Earth, but light brown hair with white streaks.

THE LAST STRETCH

Through their sources, characters know the gate to Tannebrim lies in the Scab, a part of the Siege arcology directly behind the cliff wall, but devoid of windows. Early in the city's history it was a section devoted to mining and power generation "before the Godheart"—a period natives don't discuss. The Scab is now a refuge for the violent and desperate, and only patrolled because of the number of gates found in the tunnels. Characters find obvious foreigners doing business beneath sputtering lights, their Godheart fluid dripping through leaky lines.

SCENE 3

BLOCKADE

ACTION ENCOUNTER

The characters encounter a Nighthost warband intent on keeping them away.

The gate to Tannebrim takes about half an hour of travel through the Scab to reach. Once characters turn the corner to the vast underground chamber it stands in, read or paraphrase the following.

You see the gate: a circle of rock eight feet wide, fixed in the floor in the middle of this huge cavern. The room must be thirty feet tall and 100 feet wide. Across from you, two other tunnels lead in – and the sound of a horn echoes from the one to your right! Then you see them: at least two dozen, with jagged blades and slate-colored armor. Thanks to the gift of Shabda, some of you understand their war cry: We, the demon-slayers. We, the world-breakers. We, the Nighthost!

This large warband of 25 happened to be approaching the gate for the first time, as Nighthost forces only recently learned of it. It's supposed to guard the gate in four six-hour shifts of six warriors each, but detected the characters' approach and hastily charged in at full strength. This action scene is not about combat, but a race to safety represented by an opposed advanced test to which all characters can contribute. The success threshold is 15, at which point either the characters reach the gate or the warband does. The warband can make two **TN 11 Stamina (Running)** tests with a bonus of +5 on each of their turns, but characters can make the following tests. Unless otherwise noted, the effect of a successful test is to add the result of the Stunt Die to the running total towards the success threshold:

- **TN 12 Accuracy (appropriate firearm focus):** Dion and Trace can use suppressive fire with their firearms to break the warband's formation, imposing a -2 on the warband's next test.
- **TN 9 Communication (Persuasion):** Inspire the next character to make a test, granting a +2 bonus to their roll.

- **TN 11 Dexterity (Initiative):** Try to outmaneuver the warband.
- **TN 11 Intelligence (Navigation):** Find the fastest route to the gate.
- **TN 12 Intelligence (Occultism):** Val can use Fire Arcana to set fire to terrain in front of the warband, imposing a -2 on their next test.
- **TN 13 Intelligence (Tactics):** Predict how the warband will move.
- **TN 11 Stamina (Running):** Run towards the gate.
- **TN 9 Willpower (Faith):** Don't lose hope that the group will succeed.

Characters who roll doubles on their tests gain Stunt Points as normal. In this case, the Speed Demon stunt adds 1 to the test's running total. Other uses of Stunt Points in this encounter are:

- Reduce the warband's running total by 1 per 2 SP spent.
- Impose a penalty to the warband's next roll equal to -1 per 2 SP spent.
- Grant a bonus to the next character's test equal to +1 per 2 SP spent.

NIGHTHOST WARRIOR

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

1	ACCURACY (THROWN)
0	COMMUNICATION
3	CONSTITUTION
1	DEXTERITY
2	FIGHTING (GRAPPLING, LONG HAFTED)
0	INTELLIGENCE (TACTICS)
1	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
2	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING + TOUGHNESS
11	23	11	7

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
JAGGED SPEAR	+4	1d6+8
GRAPPLE	+4	1d3+4

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Double Team, Lightning Attack, Vicious Blow

BERSERKER: Once per session, the Nighthost Warrior may take an Activate action to sink into a frenzied battle-trance, which lasts until the end of the encounter. This gives them +2 to Strength, but -2 to Perception. While berserk, the Nighthost Warrior also performs the Double Team stunt for just 1 Stunt Point. However, when they fail at an attack or other offensive action, they must succeed at a TN 11 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test, or this failure indicates they actually targeted an ally instead. Roll the action again, targeting the Nighthost Warrior's ally. (Failing this second action has no effect.)

EQUIPMENT: Jagged-Bladed Spear, Half-Plate Armor.

THREAT: MINOR

THE CHARACTERS ESCAPE

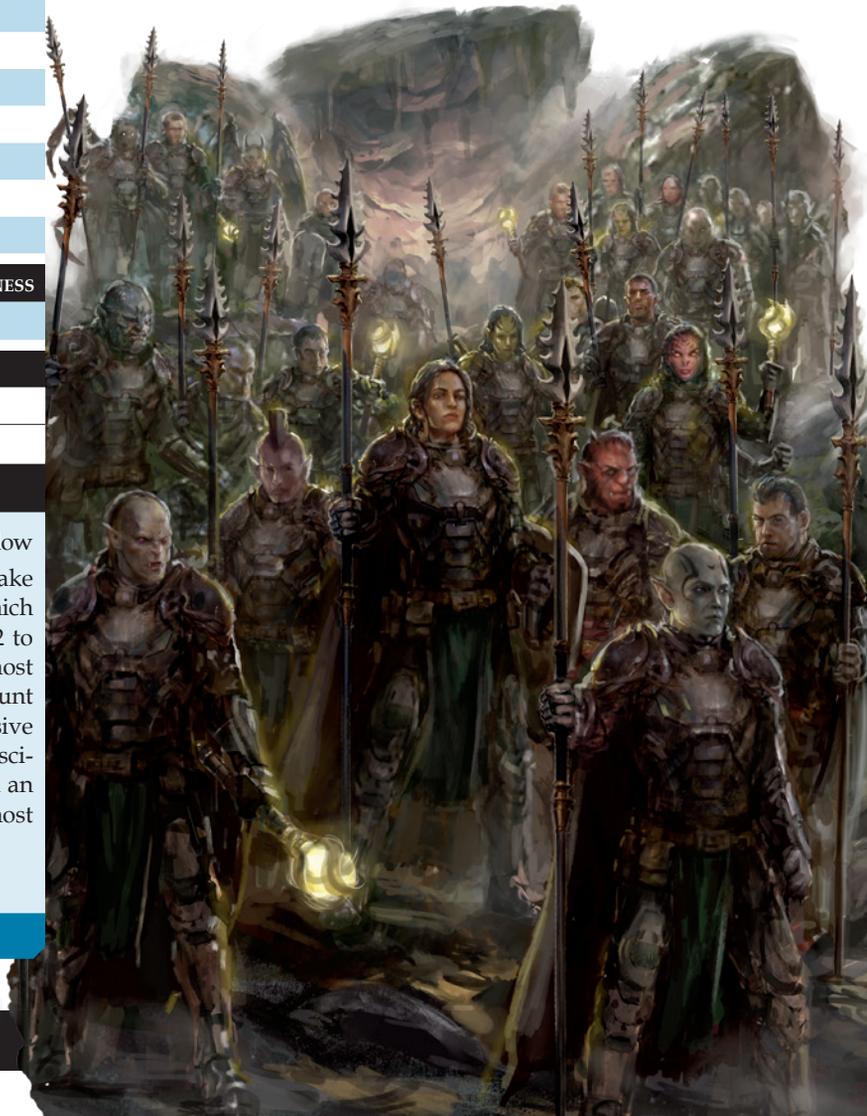
Once the characters reach the test's success threshold of 15, they reach the gate and cross into Tannebrim. The warband doesn't pursue them—it's not what they were ordered to do.

THE WARBAND WINS

If the warband reaches the success threshold first, the characters can correct course and run away in a different direction. The warband's goal is to prevent passage into Tannebrim, so they will not pursue. However, as the warband is supposed to guard the gate in shifts, all but six of the Nighthost disperse in the next hour. These six are much easier to deal with, through combat, stealth, or deception.

NIGHTHOST WARRIOR

These warriors are jana (a term for humans who look mostly like Earth natives) and dreygur (humans with bestial or demonic features, common in the Netherworlds) whose warband emulates the behavior of wolves. They're loyal and fierce, but lack initiative, as they're younger Nighthost eager to prove they can follow orders. Once they're in front of the gate, they warn characters away with their spears, but only call for others (by sounding a horn) if half their number have been defeated. Reinforcements take 1d6+1 rounds to arrive. Off-duty, Nighthost troops amuse themselves with drinking and fighting at several surrounding establishments in the Scab.





PART 3

FEARFUL SYMMETRY

Armed with clues, the protagonists reach Tannebrim.

The last part of the adventure happens in the besieged plane of Tannebrim. Tannebrim's world is largely Earthlike, but contains small kingdoms carved out of vast wild spaces. Less influenced by intelligent hands, Tannebrim contains no indigenous intelligent life. Its inhabitants consist of many varieties of humankind, who settled the plane after the Fellwar during a period of unrecorded migration. Tannebrim is a plane of primeval forests, mammoth-like megafauna, and saber-toothed predators. Technology common to medieval Europe and the Middle East reigns, due to both planar Incessance and the lack of infrastructure. Conflict between kingdoms is rare, due to the space and natural bounty all around them.

The Nighthost discovered Tannebrim before the Sodality, through routes which didn't pass through Koralvos. Their warbands initially raided remote settlements, returning to the planes they came from by the nearest gates. This changed a year ago, shortly after the Sodality began its surveys, when a Tanneb warlock who called herself Lady Silverwrath joined the invaders. She'd mapped gates in the heart of every major kingdom. Nighthost warriors poured from castles and capitals to conquer a dozen great nations.

Sodality Missions observe, but don't intervene, except to help refugees who cross their paths. Parker Purwaha was part of such a Mission. The organization does not render aid on a larger

scale unless it is requested by a significant number of a plane's population or their representatives, but the Tanneb kingdoms are in disarray, unable to request it. The Nighthost invaders know this and leave Missions alone, except to shower them with insults, though over the past few weeks they've begun to block passage into Tannebrim, possibly before a final offensive.

**PLANE OB-05127:
TANNEBRIM**

INCESSANCE: +3

SCENE 1

INTO THE FIRE

SOCIAL AND EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The characters reach Tannebrim at Bulwark, one of the free cities. From there, the trail grows hot.

You rush through the gate with questions. Will the Nighthost follow? Will they be waiting on the other side? But on the other side you see only flickering torchlight, illuminating what looks to be a stone cellar. Two soldiers in mail armor carrying spears look at you with a mix of curiosity and apprehension.

One of the soldiers greets the characters and asks them their business in a bored tone. They've only ever received peaceful visitors through this gate, and have no idea the Nighthost just discovered it. Telling them as much startles them into action, so that after the characters go upstairs, workers start filling the cellar with gravel. These countermeasures tend to fail over time but for now, they'll get in the way of invaders.

Stairs lead up and out into a fortified manor that looks to have been renovated across centuries. Renewed activity from the gate has turned it into an ad hoc customs office for the Free City of Bulwark, where the building stands. Bulwark is a fortified hunting town, where foresters wielding super-heavy crossbows slay titanotheres: giant mammals extinct on Earth. Titanotheres on Tannebrim are intelligent enough to hold grudges and occasionally besiege the city, necessitating thick walls which, combined with the fact that Lady Silverwrath didn't know about the gate, have also prevented Nighthost invasion.

A dozen soldiers and officials work on the main floor of the manor. Past Sodality visitors have been friendly and generous, so these locals offer the following information, if asked, without any favor or test.

Refugees from Valencrast came to Bulwark some days ago (two weeks, plus the time the characters have spent on the adventure). They camped for three days, but after that, the city turned them away due to news of a disease in the camp. As Bulwarkians describe it, the disease is undoubtedly the Tellurophage. The refugees headed north to Lake Drous, which no kingdom claims, intending to set up a camp. It's about three days' journey on foot.

While the refugees were camped outside the city, a Sodality Mission came through. This is the mission consisting of Avres Ul'darna, Parker Purwaha, and two cadets. They provided medical treatment and followed the refugees north for a day, but eventually returned and left through Bulwark's manor gate. This information corresponds with what characters might have read in Sodality records.

Five days after the refugees left, a cart driven by an "odd thin man" named Bao Hun and his apparent servants came to the gate and asked after the refugees. The man was especially interested in the disease. Guards didn't let him in.

The characters should conclude they need to go to Lake Drous. Characters may acquire gear here. Resources scores don't cover the barter required. Instead, the Game Master should think in terms of something a resident of Bulwark—that is, a rough hunter who takes down things that look like giant moose-rhinos—would want. This might be high-tech cold weather clothing, gold, or even an especially fetching hat. Acquisitions are limited to the sorts of things available in the late Middle Ages.

Bulwarkians do *not* sell their special crossbows, but characters who steal them acquire a weapon that requires 3 minor actions to reload, then inflicts 3d6+4 points of damage with its long bolts.

SCENE 2

PLAGUE LAKE

SOCIAL AND EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The characters reach the refugee camp and meet the Valencrastians' unofficial leader, a retired soldier. If she trusts them, she describes the refugees' situation, including the contagion they contracted after camping outside Bulwark and the fate of Parker Purwaha.

Unless the Game Master decides otherwise, the trip to Lake Drous is an uneventful three-day journey. As they approach the lake and refugee camp, read or paraphrase the following.

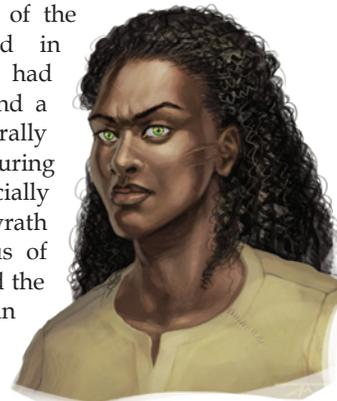
The camp stands on the lake's dark waters. You see five caravans and at least a dozen tents, five of which are set apart from everything else and surrounded by smoking torches. The caravans have seats for drivers, but also wooden handles, as if they can be pulled by beasts or pushed by human labor. You see a few people milling about, and they look like other Tannebs you've met. Thin wisps of smoke follow a chill wind toward you, carrying burnt vegetable smells. Jagged mountains stand in the distance.

To reach the camp, characters must leave the road as it curves around the lake. Valencrastian lookouts see them and sound the alarm unless they approach stealthily, via a successful **TN 13 Dexterity (Stealth)** test or something similarly difficult. Refugees flee approaching characters they detect. There's a main camp with ten tents and five caravans around a central clearing, and five tents situated a dozen yards from this main cluster. The tents set away from the main encampment contain refugees struck by the Tellurophage.

The camp contains 83 refugees of all ages and genders, 18 of whom have been incapacitated by the plague. (As will be revealed, Parker Purwaha lies among the sick.) The rest of them are tired, hungry, and unable to stand and fight. They were forced to butcher sick pack animals and pushed their caravans to the lake. They don't have a formal leader, but a woman in her late fifties obviously commands respect among them, and approaches characters who reveal themselves. She identifies herself as **Gan Bragstav**.

GAN BRAGSTAV

Gan Bragstav was a member of the Valencrastian militia, trained in massed spear formations, but had retired to work as a potter and a respected mediator. She naturally fell into a leadership role during the Nighthost invasion, especially since she'd met Lady Silverwrath personally and was suspicious of her before the arcanist betrayed the plane. Bragstav has dark skin and tightly coiled, long locks. She has green eyes and wears a patched homespun robe.



WHAT THE REFUGEES KNOW

The refugees can offer a lot more information about the contagion. Bragstav ordered all the sick people isolated. She can take the characters to meet them while answering their questions, but she needs to trust them. She has a starting attitude of Standoffish (-1 to applicable Communication-based tests to sway her) toward characters. This improves by one step if characters help the refugees. They need assistance improving their food supply, sanitation, and shelter. Related tasks such as foraging and ditch-digging last until dusk, and the GM can, if they wish, improvise encounters related to them. Sharing information about the Tellurophage is also helpful. A **Communication (Persuasion)** test opposed by Gan's **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** can also improve her attitude by one step. Once Gan's attitude is Neutral or better, she allows access to the sick, and shares the following information.



GAN BRAGSTAV

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

3	ACCURACY (THROWN)
3	COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP, INVESTIGATION)
2	CONSTITUTION
1	DEXTERITY
3	FIGHTING (LIGHT BLADES, LONG HAFTED)
3	INTELLIGENCE (TACTICS)
0	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
1	STRENGTH
4	WILLPOWER (FAITH, MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING + TOUGHNESS
11	22	11	2

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
JAGGED SPEAR	+5	1D6+6
DAGGER	+5	1D6+4

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Blockade, Knock Prone, Vicious Blow

TWO-HANDED STYLE (EXPERT): When Bragstav hits with a two-handed weapon (including her spear) she can move an opponent 2 yards in any direction. This stacks with the Skirmish stunt. Using her spear specifically, she can strike opponents up to 4 yards away. She can also perform the Vicious Blow stunt for 1 SP.

EQUIPMENT: Spear, Dagger, Patched Robe

THREAT: MINOR

- The Sodality Mission with Avres Ul'darna and Parker Purwaha visited the refugees in Bulwark. They provided food and medical treatment. Parker Purwaha asked for permission to take tissue samples. Most had no objection to this painless process. They traveled with the refugees for a day before turning back to protect the students in their group.
- After they left, another group visited. They identified themselves as Sodality, but Bragstav was suspicious of them. They wanted more samples, and under her advice, the refugees refused to provide them. The alleged Sodality group were unfriendly, battle-hardened individuals led by a "sickly man" named Bao Hun. If the characters ask for a more detailed description, they'll realize that beyond descriptions of a thin, bent build, Bao Hun is a dead ringer for Humphrey Bolton!

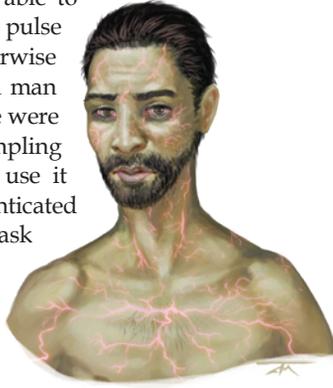
PATIENTS ZERO

The quarantine site is surrounded by carefully placed burning torches in the hope that fire and smoke will keep the disease from spreading.

The afflicted refugees look much worse than the sick refugees under the Ferryman's care back on Earth. Gan describes the symptoms with greater detail. The onset of depression and malaise is followed by crippling weakness. Days later, the patient's veins glow under their skin. Victims eventually fall into a semi-conscious state, where they can take in fluid by reflex but are otherwise incapacitated.

If the characters are searching for a "patient zero," there's good and bad news. The first victim was a Valencrastian arcanist, Thosa Vrane. She's been cremated. But there's a new patient zero: **Parker Purwaha**.

Parker is bedridden but still able to speak. Infected, glowing veins pulse across his body, which is otherwise that of a slender South Asian man who would be handsome if he were well. Parker was issued the sampling device along with orders to use it through anonymous, authenticated Peridexion orders. While the task wasn't exceptional, he was curious about the device and the source of his orders.



He visited Ferrl Thornstone to get the sampling device inspected and discovered it was injecting the Tellurophage into subjects. Believing an element of the Peridexion is behind the plague, Purwaha fled with a sample of the plague, and eventually found an alternate route to Tannebrim by sneaking through Nighthost lines. He arrived three days ago. To gain the refugees' trust and protect the sample from Bao Hun (whom he doesn't know anything about) he injected himself with the sample. This makes him a second "patient zero" whose tissues could be used to engineer a cure—or a more sophisticated version of the disease.

Parker Purwaha had been using his medical expertise to treat afflicted refugees, but he has become increasingly confused as the plague has progressed. Under and beside his cot in the tent, Player Characters can see his equipment. One box contains advanced medical gear, including the following.

- Shears, sterile gloves, tubing and other standard EMT gear
- Antibiotics and 100 doses of a combined vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. (The refugees have not been willing to take these vaccines due to lingering distrust caused by the plague.) These are in disposable ampules deliverable by one of two autoinjectors.
- Syringes and tubes suitable for collecting blood
- Five nanorobot ampules, deliverable by autoinjector. As these are advanced technological items, using one triggers an Incessance test against a TN 13. If the test fails, the nanorobots heal 2d6 Health points.
- A robotic life support system harness. This vest combines a defibrillator with an epinephrine deep injection system, built-in monitor, and other functions. It's capable of stabilizing a critically injured (0 Health) character for 10 minutes. The system loses its charge after stabilizing one character. This has already resisted Incessance.

In addition, Purwaha has an SMG he acquired on Koralvos, along with 4 magazines. The SMG has standard game statistics but will not take other bullets, since it was designed to Koralvan standards. It is subject to Incessance, but has not yet suffered any penalties. When Bao Hun attacks, Purwaha will offer it to characters who need weapons if it looks like they're going to protect the refugees.

Note that as he is incapacitated, Parker has no game statistics. The Game Master decides what he is well enough to say.

HOMUNCULUS & HOUNDS

ACTION ENCOUNTER

In the final scene, the clone Bao Hun and his Krypteia mercenaries attack the refugees, hoping to kidnap specimens for the next phase of Bolton's plan.

The quiet but tense atmosphere is broken by screams coming from the edge of the main camp. Barking and shouting follow as well as a shrill, oddly familiar voice yelling commands. Looking toward it, you see human silhouettes and those of hulking, four-legged animals under their control. They seem to be threatening the refugees.

Bao Hun commands six **Krypteia transplanar mercenaries** who have special training in off-Earth operations. They in turn control four **wrathdogs**, a Netherworld predator typically domesticated by the Nighthost, but which is commonly smuggled by the Krypteia. Bao Hun believes the mercenaries and wrathdogs were given to him by Lady Silverwrath, who he thinks he serves—but this is a ruse by Bolton. Bao Hun is Bolton's clone, and contains a substantial reproduction of the original's knowledge and personality. Bao Hun believes himself to be a plane-hopping scientist in league with Lady Silverwrath, but if he knew he was Bolton's clone, he might snap—as clones tend to do in the face of finding out they're reproductions. The Krypteia operatives know the truth, but follow orders to play along.

Characters automatically see and hear the resemblance to Bolton. Characters inducted into Aethon, including Trace, would know a clone is a possibility, and with a successful **TN 13 Intelligence (Biology)** test, have skimmed material indicating clones aware of their nature as a derivative of a still-living host become psychologically unstable.

The mercenaries are using wrathdogs to herd the refugees for inspection and capture. Those with potent or interesting variations of the Tellurophage will be sent to Bolton for further experimentation, and their diseases spread to other planes. Programmed by subliminal urges, Bao Hun wishes to select a representative set of subjects, from those who show no sign of illness to advanced cases. He's started with healthy subjects but will eventually attack the plague tents. While the mercenaries work, Bao Hun supervises them from a steel-clad wagon. Characters who've met Bolton immediately recognize him in Bao Hun, except that Bao Hun is shorter, bent, and sickly, and is wearing garish multicolored robes. A team of four horse-sized stags pulls the cart.

The various tents provide excellent cover if the characters wish to ambush the attackers, providing a +3 bonus to any **Dexterity (Stealth)** tests. At first, only three mercenaries attack at a time, as the others drag prisoners to the wagon. The wrathdogs are busy keeping refugees cowed, and unless attacked immediately, don't attack until the second round of combat.

If Gan Bragstav turned Friendly toward the characters, the refugees trust them. When at least three attackers are taken out (any combination of mercenaries and wrathdogs), these refugees gain some courage, and help the characters by throwing things at the attackers or generally running interference. Ask the players to make **TN 12 Communication (Leadership)** tests as a



minor action to rally the refugees, with success granting a bonus to the attack roll of the next Player Character or to the Defense of the next Player Character who is the target of an attack. This bonus equals the result of the Stunt Die. The refugees can only be rallied twice per round. If the mercenaries face this resistance for two rounds, they abandon plans to kidnap healthy refugees and press on to the plague tents. Gan Bragstav has opted to stay there and defend the sick. The other refugees won't help there, but Bragstav fights beside the Player Characters.

The mercenaries are highly disciplined, and fight to the point of death or incapacitation. If targeted, Bao Hun flees on the wagon, but suffers a cumulative -2 penalty to **Dexterity (Riding)** tests per round. When he fails, the stags break free. They can smell his unnatural nature and grow increasingly agitated. The wrathdogs also avoid him. Bao Hun runs and fights unless it's obvious he'll lose and fail to escape, at which point he surrenders.

THE HOMUNCULUS

When captured after combat, Bao Hun identifies himself as a servant of Lady Silverwrath. He claims to be collecting the plague as a weapon for his mistress, but various details surrounding his story are vague and contradictory, and he occasionally uses Earth slang and scientific terms. A successful **TN 12 Communication (Investigation)** test reveals that while he can't be telling the truth, he doesn't know that. Confronting him with his contradictions makes him tremble and mutter.

If told he's a clone without being questioned about other information, Bao Hun laughs it off as a bizarre claim, but if interrogators tell him after everything else, show him

concrete evidence (such as an image of the real Bolton), or are especially successful in Communication rolls to interrogate him, he snaps. This breaks the conditioning suppressing his memories. At that point he rants about seeing his own face (Bolton's looking down on him), being born "in a bottle" three weeks ago, and his Bolton-memories of intending to purchase his future existence from the Krypteia.

Bao Hun will be fairly freaked out, so to get useful information from this point on, characters will have to assure him they'll help and protect him—and exact punishment on Bolton. A successful **TN 10 Communication (Persuasion)** test incorporating this method calms him enough to proceed.

Bao Hun's memories don't go much further back, but he does remember why Bolton spread the Tellurophage, where it comes from, and how to cure the afflicted. If the characters treat him with compassion, he'll even testify against Bolton before Peridexion and Vitane officials. This is what he knows:

- Bolton is in league with a rogue Machinor—an artificial intelligence that exists as a pure mathematical form—which calls itself Axiomatic Hieroglyph. It designed the Tellurophage, engineering it from Firethread, a seaweed-like colony organism that exists in Tannebrim's oceans. Firethread collects kanna from the microorganisms it consumes passively, as it floats in long strands. It acquires its glow from it. The Tellurophage engineers it as a voracious single-celled organism whose kanna-collection organelles have an enlarged, knotted, sigil-like pattern.
- Bolton and Axiomatic Hieroglyph spread the disease to collect kanna as a power source and to "sterilize" Otherworlds of kanna so that they submit to Earth's

dominion. Bolton also believes magic interferes with technology, and advanced equipment would function better in planes drained of kanna. (This is a mistaken idea, but neither Bolton nor the Player Characters necessarily know this.)

- Bolton does *not* know the cure, but Bao Hun does, having observed a lost, infected refugee under attack by Nighthost raiders. An arcanist killed the refugee with a *flame blast*. When Bao Hun inspected the body, he noticed it was free of the Tellurophage. Bao Hun believes if the organism is supplied with kanna fast enough, it can't reproduce quickly enough to hold it and the excess burns out its organelles, killing the colony infection. Any spell that transmits material energy (such as fire or lightning) should do the trick, and it doesn't need to inflict injury.
- Val can cure the afflicted with her own *flame blast* spell, and can deliberately cast it at a reduced intensity. This increases the spell's TN by +3, but if successful, the spell inflicts minimal damage which all but the weakest patients can withstand. The Sodality should be able to help them with specialized magical aid. If the characters report their findings, the Sodality will send medical arcanists and negotiate with the Nighthost for passage to Tannebrim.
- Producing the magical equivalent of a vaccine is best accomplished by studying "patient zero," Parker Purwaha. Taking him to a safe place for study and recovery is advised. If Bao Hun is cooperative, he'll suggest this.

WRATHDOG

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

0	ACCURACY
0	COMMUNICATION
2	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING, STAMINA)
2	DEXTERITY
3	FIGHTING (BITE)
-1	INTELLIGENCE
3	PERCEPTION (HEARING, SMELLING)
3	STRENGTH
2	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING + TOUGHNESS
14	22	12	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
BITE	+5	2d6+7
CLAWS	+5	1d6+5

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Skirmish, Shock and Awe

ARMORED: The wrathdog's tough skin grants it an Armor Rating of 2.

RABID: The wrathdog can perform the Shock and Awe stunt for 2 SP.

THREAT: MINOR

KRYPTeia TRANSPLANAR MERCENARIES

Counterparts to the Krypteia's Earthbound operatives, these mercenaries are trained to blend in with inhabitants of other planes. They learn Shabda and how to operate archaic technology. In exchange for loyal service, they spend a third of their time in paradisiacal conditions in secure facilities with their most decadent needs met, a third of their time training, and a third of their time in actual operations. They handle the cart's stags and wrathdogs, which find Bao Hun's smell offensive.

WRATHDOGS

These large canines are bred for war by the Nighthost, and after Krypteia smuggling, are popular among aggressive peoples on many planes, though they are only as violent as they're trained to be. They have short fur of a silvery-white

KRYPTeia TRANSPLANAR MERCENARY

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

3	ACCURACY (BOWS, PISTOLS, SMGs)
2	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION)
2	CONSTITUTION
2	DEXTERITY
3	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, SHORT HAFTED, LONG HAFTED)
0	INTELLIGENCE
2	PERCEPTION
2	STRENGTH
3	WILLPOWER (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING + TOUGHNESS
12	25	12	6

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
AXE	+5	2d6+4
DAGGER	+3	1d6+5
DAGGER (THROWN)	+4	1d6+5
SMG	+5	2d6+4

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Double-Team, Shock and Awe, Skirmish

TALENT - SINGLE WEAPON STYLE: Use the Activate action to gain +1 to Defense until the end of the encounter.

TRANSPLANAR OPERATIVE ENHANCEMENTS: Each mercenary has an implanted slice of brain tissue taken from a donor fluent in Shabda, the universal language, and managed by a hardwired linguistic expert system. This allows the mercenary to conceal their use of Shabda and quickly pick up local vernacular to supplement it with. The implant also enhances mirror neuron activity to make body language match observed examples. The combined effect adds a +2 bonus to any test the mercenary makes to deceive others about their true native plane, which is usually Earth.

EQUIPMENT: Axe, Dagger, Heavy Leather Armor, SMG (used as a last resort to avoid Incessance)

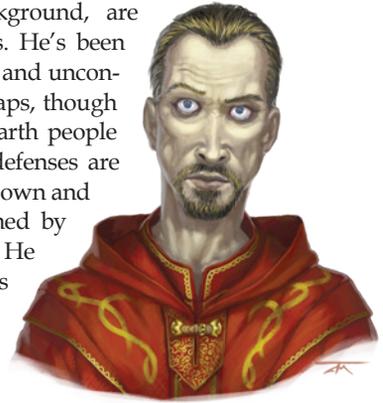
THREAT: MINOR

color and have a profile more like a hyena's than a dog's. They have the ability to invert hard flesh on the inside of their mouths to armor their faces and present a horrifying, skinless maw filled with jagged teeth. They are unflinchingly loyal, but lose focus quickly if not actively commanded.

BAO HUN

Bao Hun is a hastily grown clone of Peridexion scientist Humphrey Bolton. Until he is confronted with his true nature, he believes he's an independent alchemist and physician studying the disease for Lady Silverwrath of the Nighthost. His memories of this, and information about Silverwrath, the

Nighthost, and his background, are filled with inconsistencies. He's been conditioned to ignore this and unconsciously lie to fill in the gaps, though he lets slip things only Earth people typically know. If these defenses are overwhelmed, he breaks down and remembers being awakened by Bolton in a Krypteia lab. He shares many of Bolton's skills, but few biographical memories. He's been tracking the disease in Tannebrim and giving samples for the mercenaries to take back to "Lady Silverwrath" — actually the real Bolton.



Bao Hun has a wizened version of Bolton's face, longer, greasy hair, and a scrawny, bent body six inches shorter. These are all side effects of his artificially rapid growth. Once he knows what he is, he despises Bolton.

BAO HUN

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (COMBAT IMPLANT)
3	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION, LEADERSHIP)
-1	CONSTITUTION
2	DEXTERITY (RIDING)
-1	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, SHORT HAFTED, LONG HAFTED)
5	INTELLIGENCE (BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, EARTH SCIENCES, OCCULTISM, RESEARCH)
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)
-1	STRENGTH
2	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING + TOUGHNESS
12	14	12	8

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
COMBAT IMPLANT	+2	2D6+4
DAGGER	-1	1D6+5

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Double-Team, Shock and Awe, Skirmish
COMBAT IMPLANT: Bao Hun's left palm contains an implant capable of shooting electricity through a path of laser-ionized air to strike targets up to 30 feet away. Bao Hun believes this is a spell he knows, but never provides the same name for it twice. It currently suffers from an Incessance penalty of -2 (already figured in the listed attack roll bonus) from past use, and is subject to further Incessance each time it is used again.

RUGGEDIZATION: To counter the sickly nature of force-grown clones, Bao Hun has been engineered with stronger joints, keratin scales under his skin, and tougher internal organs. These provide a Toughness of 5 despite his low Constitution.

SCIENTIFIC ALCHEMY: Bao Hun is an authority on the interactions between biology, chemistry, and magic. He can share any information on these subjects the Game Master sees fit. Characters searching for information about these subjects with his help gain a +2 bonus to relevant rolls.

EQUIPMENT: Dagger, Gaudy Robe with Hidden Steel Plates (Armor Rating 3), Large Armored Cart, Tame Stags

THREAT: MINOR

CONCLUSION

After a successful final fight against Bao Hun and the mercenaries, the Player Characters should be more familiar with the Metacosm, know Bolton's true agenda, and with evidence from Parker Purwaha, Bao Hun, and other sources, should be ready to take down Bolton. Whether Bolton is caught unawares or has other hired agents who can alert him before the characters return is up to the Game Master, but be aware that transplanar communication is rare in the *Threefold* setting, so it's a race across the planes once again.

Jannika Reach may be able to help. After she parts ways with the characters, she moves the refugees to a new safe haven, keeping her from reaching Tannebrim in a timely fashion. She also must avoid Bolton's hired guns and well-meaning, though interfering, Vitane investigators. The Game Master can decide if she overcomes these hurdles and reaches Tannebrim soon enough to transport characters home ahead of any of Bolton's informants. Otherwise, characters return the way they came. Nighthost guards harass them, but unless they encounter the same guards they evaded (and thus, embarrassed) before, they're eventually allowed to go on their way.

The characters can start off new adventures by following any of the leads and information they discovered during the story. How far does Bolton's conspiracy reach? What does Axiomatic Hieroglyph want? What about Tannebrim? Will the characters let it fall to the Nighthost, or will they fight Lady Silverwrath? Have the characters made enemies of the Krypteia, or is it "just business?"

If you want to play new adventures with these same characters using the full *Modern AGE* rules, reward your players with one or two increases in level. Avery, Dion, and River will get an invitation to gain Rank 1 Membership in the Sodality or Peridexion, while Trace and Val will gain a new Reputation based on their deeds. The characters might gain social rewards related to the Ferrymen, or any of the Non-Player Characters they met.

No matter what happens, you've all had a taste of *Modern AGE*, and the infinite Metacosm of *Threefold*.

MODERN AGE THREEFOLD

NAME **AVERY**

AGE HEIGHT & WEIGHT

BACKGROUND **EXILE**

SOCIAL CLASS **OUTCAST**

PROFESSION **BRAWLER**

DRIVE **PROTECTOR**

ACCURACY RANG **0**

COMMUNICATION RANG **1**

CONSTITUTION RANG **3**

DEXTERITY RANG **0**

FIGHTING RANG **3**
BRAWLING, GRAPPLING

INTELLIGENCE RANG **0**

PERCEPTION RANG **2**

STRENGTH RANG **3**

WILLPOWER RANG **2**

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

LEVEL **1**

MOVE **12** IN YARDS

RUN **24** IN YARDS

SPEED	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	ARMOR	PENALTY	HEALTH
11	11	3	0	0	28
ARMOR TYPE			TOUGHNESS CINEMATIC		

TALENTS, SPECIALIZATIONS, & EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

TALENT - WANDERSOUL: You recognize instantly when you are within 50 yards of a gate, and can pinpoint its position. In the presence of a gate, you recognize its destination if you have visited it before, and you can make an Intelligence (Occultism) test after spending at least 10 minutes to analyze the gate. The Game Master determines the TN for this test depending on how secret or protected the gate is supposed to be. On a success, you learn one of the following facts about the gate: what kind of world it leads to (Otherworld, Netherworld, Heterarchy, or Earth), what kind of environment surrounds the gate on the other side, whether the gate is controlled by an external force, and the key required to open a locked gate. 1 SP reveals another piece of information; otherwise, you need to study the gate for another 10 minutes to gain more information. In addition, you can now speak and understand Shabda, the universal language.

TALENT - PROTECT: When you perform the Blockade action stunt, you can move up to 6 yards instead of 3.

TALENT - STRIKING STYLE: When you attack with your fist, you inflict 1d6+2 damage instead of 1d3+2.

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+3	1D6+2
KNUCKLE DUSTERS	+3	1D6+6

RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL TIES

RELATIONSHIP: Guth, the owner of a gym whom you've known for years (Intensity 1)

PREFERRED STUNTS & OTHER NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Weathered clothes, knuckle dusters, backpack, survival gear

EXPERIENCE RESOURCES **0**

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

You've always felt uncomfortable staying in one place for long and don't mind living day to day, doing odd jobs and touring the underground fighting scene or bouncing for seedy and understaffed bars, but one day you noticed a strange hole in the air and crossed into an Otherworld. Wandering the planes is not much different than wandering the roads of Earth, except the company is much more colorful. After a tour of clandestine fighting rings, you are back on Earth, getting some stitches at the Blake Clinic after a fight that didn't go your way.

Take a moment to customize your character's age, gender, height, weight, and distinguishing features.

MODERN AGE THREEFOLD

NAME **DION**

AGE HEIGHT & WEIGHT

BACKGROUND **MILITARY**

SOCIAL CLASS **LOWER CLASS**

PROFESSION **SCHOLAR**

DRIVE **CAREGIVER**

ACCURACY **PISTOLS, LONGARMS** RATING **2**

COMMUNICATION RATING **1**

CONSTITUTION RATING **1**

DEXTERITY RATING **2**

FIGHTING RATING **1**

INTELLIGENCE **MEDICINE** RATING **2**

PERCEPTION RATING **2**

STRENGTH RATING **0**

WILLPOWER RATING **3**

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

LEVEL **1**

MOVE **12** IN YARDS

RUN **24** IN YARDS

SPEED	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	ARMOR	PENALTY	HEALTH
12	12	1	0	0	17
ARMOR TYPE			TOUGHNESS CINEMATIC		

TALENTS, SPECIALIZATIONS, & EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

TALENT - EMERGENCY CARE: First Aid is a minor action for you.

TALENT - EXPERTISE (MEDICINE): You gain a +1 bonus to Intelligence (Medicine) tests when tending to wounds incurred in combat.

TALENT - OBSERVATION: If you fail a Perception (Seeing) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+1	1d3+2
SA HANDGUN	+2	2d6+4
HUNTING RIFLE	+2	2d6+6

RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL TIES

REPUTATION: You are known as someone who will do their best to save people's lives. This reputation applies to first responders, military personnel, and the disenfranchised.

RELATIONSHIP: Fellow military doctor running a free clinic (Intensity 1)

PREFERRED STUNTS & OTHER NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Casual clothing, Beretta M9 (pistol), civilian AR15 (longarm), medic's kit, cell phone, pager

EXPERIENCE	RESOURCES 6
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CHARACTER BACKGROUND

You served your country not by killing its enemies, but by caring for its soldiers. You've seen combat and know that keeping a cool head is often the best way to stay alive. You were exposed to the magical nature of the world when your squad fended off a pack of vicious green-skinned humanoids, but you're the only one who remembers that. You quit the armed forces to work as an EMT and kept seeing strange things nobody would talk about. You are just finishing your last shift at the Blake Clinic before a well-earned vacation.

Take a moment to customize your character's age, gender, height, weight, and distinguishing features.

MODERN AGE THREEFOLD

NAME RIVER

AGE **HEIGHT & WEIGHT**

BACKGROUND URBAN

SOCIAL CLASS LOWER CLASS

PROFESSION NEGOTIATOR

DRIVE NETWORKER

ACCURACY **RATING** 1

COMMUNICATION
DECEPTION **RATING** 3

CONSTITUTION **RATING** 1

DEXTERITY **RATING** 1

FIGHTING **RATING** 0

INTELLIGENCE **RATING** 2

PERCEPTION
EMPATHY **RATING** 3

STRENGTH **RATING** 0

WILLPOWER **RATING** 2

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

LEVEL 1

MOVE
IN YARDS 11

RUN
IN YARDS 22

SPEED	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	ARMOR	PENALTY	HEALTH
11	11	1	0	0	16
ARMOR TYPE			TOUGHNESS CINEMATIC		

TALENTS, SPECIALIZATIONS, & EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

TALENT - WANDERSOUL: You recognize instantly when you are within 50 yards of a gate, and can pinpoint its position. In the presence of a gate, you recognize its destination if you have visited it before, and you can make an Intelligence (Occultism) test after spending at least 10 minutes to analyze the gate. The Game Master determines the TN for this test depending on how secret or protected the gate is supposed to be. On a success, you learn one of the following facts about the gate: what kind of world it leads to (Otherworld, Netherworld, Heterarchy, or Earth), what kind of environment surrounds the gate on the other side, whether the gate is controlled by an external force, and the key required to open a locked gate. 1 SP reveals another piece of information; otherwise, you need to study the gate for another 10 minutes to gain more information. In addition, you can now speak and understand Shabda, the universal language.

TALENT - INTRIGUE: If you fail a Communication (Deception) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

TALENT - MISDIRECTION: As a major action, you can make a Communication (Deception) test opposed by an opponent's Willpower (Self-Discipline); if you succeed, your opponent cannot use stunts until the end of your next turn.

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+0	1D3+2

RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL TIES

RELATIONSHIP: Younger brother (Intensity 2)
RELATIONSHIP: An Otherworld trader who owes you one for helping him with a customs misunderstanding (Intensity 1)
RELATIONSHIP: Waitress at a 24-hour diner that caters to first responders (Intensity 1)

PREFERRED STUNTS & OTHER NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Inexpensive but stylish outfit, cell phone, fancy cigarette lighter

EXPERIENCE	RESOURCES 4
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CHARACTER BACKGROUND

You come from a family who tried to teach you that hard work was the key to success, but you quickly realized the key wasn't what you did, but who you knew, and how to get people to work with you. One day you realized you were brokering a deal with, well, some kind of *elf*, and since then you learned about the Metacosm, applying your talents in a much wider scale, even arranging low-key meetings between Vitane and Peridexion representatives. You are at the Blake Clinic visiting your little brother, who's fallen ill from a sudden and unexplained depression combined with severe weakness.

Take a moment to customize your character's age, gender, height, weight, and distinguishing features.

MODERN AGE THREEFOLD

NAME **TRACE**

AGE HEIGHT & WEIGHT

BACKGROUND **CRYPTID HUNTER**

SOCIAL CLASS **MIDDLE CLASS**

PROFESSION **INVESTIGATOR**

DRIVE **ACHIEVER**

ACCURACY RATING **1**

COMMUNICATION RATING **2**
INVESTIGATION

CONSTITUTION RATING **0**

DEXTERITY RATING **2**

FIGHTING RATING **1**

INTELLIGENCE RATING **3**
RESEARCH

PERCEPTION RATING **3**
SEARCHING

STRENGTH RATING **0**

WILLPOWER RATING **1**

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

LEVEL **1**

MOVE **12**
IN YARDS

RUN **24**
IN YARDS

SPEED	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	ARMOR	PENALTY	HEALTH
12	12	0	0	0	15
ARMOR TYPE			TOUGHNESS CINEMATIC		

TALENTS, SPECIALIZATIONS, & EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

AUGMENTATION - ABILITY PROGRAMS: You can load and run software simulations of different ability focuses in your brain, giving you the benefit of having the focus while the program is running. You can use the Activate action to gain one of the following focuses: Accuracy (Pistols), Dexterity (Stealth), Intelligence (Anthropology), Intelligence (Navigation), or Perception (Hearing). You have this focus until you use the Activate action to gain another focus from this list.

TALENT - EARTHSOUL: You can make a TN 11 Perception test with any appropriate focus to identify creatures, people, items, and phenomena that originate from the hidden realities of Earth, such as hyper-advanced technology, transhumans, denizens of alternative worldlines, etc. In addition, one piece of Earth equipment or Augmentation you choose each morning or when you cross a gate gains +5 Resistance against Incessance tests.

TALENT - OBSERVATION: If you fail a Perception (Empathy) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+1	1d3+2
SA HANDGUN	+1	2d6+5

RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL TIES

- MEMBERSHIP:** Aethon (Rank 1)
- RELATIONSHIP:** Old-school editor who mentored you (Intensity 2)
- RELATIONSHIP:** A city guard in the Vigrithian capital of Akavastu (Intensity 1)

PREFERRED STUNTS & OTHER NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Comfortable and inconspicuous clothes, Glock 9mm (pistol), cell phone, small laptop, high-definition digital camera

EXPERIENCE

RESOURCES

4

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

You've been after the unnatural since you can remember, and you developed the talent to tell hoaxes from the authentically weird. The Peridexion noticed this talent and inducted you into Aethon to put your knack for investigation to good use. You just received your first augmentation implant at Basement Zero, a hidden Aethon facility under the Blake Clinic, and you cannot wait to test it out.

Take a moment to customize your character's age, gender, height, weight, and distinguishing features.

MODERN AGE THREEFOLD

NAME **VAL**

AGE HEIGHT & WEIGHT

BACKGROUND **ACADEMIC**

SOCIAL CLASS **MIDDLE CLASS**

PROFESSION **EXPERT**

DRIVE **JUDGE**

ACCURACY RANG **0**

COMMUNICATION RANG **2**

CONSTITUTION RANG **1**

DEXTERITY RANG **1**

FIGHTING RANG **0**

INTELLIGENCE RANG **4**
HISTORY, OCCULTISM, RESEARCH

PERCEPTION RANG **2**

STRENGTH RANG **0**

WILLPOWER RANG **3**

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

LEVEL **1**

MOVE **11**
IN YARDS

RUN **22**
IN YARDS

SPEED	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	ARMOR	PENALTY	HEALTH
11	11	1	0	0	16
ARMOR TYPE			TOUGHNESS CINEMATIC		

TALENTS, SPECIALIZATIONS, & EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

TALENT - DIGITAL ARCANA: You gain the two novice effects associated with Digital Arcana.

TALENT - FIRE ARCANA: You gain the two novice effects associated with Fire Arcana.

TALENT - KNOWLEDGE: When you make a successful Intelligence test with a knowledge focus, the GM should give you an extra piece of information on the topic.

POWER POINTS: 16

POWER TEST: 3d6+4 **FORCE:** 13

SPELL - BYPASS: Cost: 2 PP • Minor Action • TN 9 - You bypass a single, physical computer-controlled sensor or countermeasure you can see or touch. The affected device reacts to you as if you are authorized or otherwise unremarkable. Bypass does not provide you with passwords or other access, although it can unlock a digital device like a smartphone to give you access.

SPELL - TRACKER: Cost: 3 PP • 1 minute • TN 9 - You place an invisible arcane "tag" on an object, which remains until you choose to dismiss it as a free action. Once an object is tagged, you can track it with a GPS-enabled device and another casting of this spell (TN 11). The GPS device picks up the tag's location as if it were an electronic transmitter.

SPELL - ARCANE LANTERN: Cost: 2 PP per hour • Major Action • TN 8 - You illuminate the area around you with a steady light like that of a torch or lantern. The spell illuminates a 10-yard radius centered on you. Arcane lantern lasts for one hour, but can be extended for 2 PP per additional hour.

SPELL - FLAME BLAST: Cost: 4 PP • Major Action • TN 12 - Fire erupts from your hands. The flame blast is 8 yards long and 2 yards wide. Anyone hit by the blast takes 2d6+1 damage. Targets who make a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Force take only 1d6+1 damage.

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+0	1d3+2

RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL TIES

MEMBERSHIP: The Sodality (Rank 1)

RELATIONSHIP: Your master, who taught you magic (Intensity 1)

RELATIONSHIP: A Vigrithian shopkeeper who claims you remind them of their late child (Intensity 1)

PREFERRED STUNTS & OTHER NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Fine but simple clothing, pin with an arcane symbol, cell phone, tablet loaded with arcane texts

EXPERIENCE

RESOURCES

8

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

Although you were born on Earth, you grew up knowing the reality of the Metacosm and the gates connecting the various planes. You trained with the Vitane in the ways of arcana, and speak fluent Vigrithian in addition to your Earth-learned languages. You signed up to join the Sodality for the chance to travel and visit the different worlds, and you were readily accepted. Your first assignment is to meet up with an Aethon agent at the Blake Clinic as part of the ongoing cooperation between the Vitane and the Peridexion..

Take a moment to customize your character's age, gender, height, weight, and distinguishing features.

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET: ACTIONS & STUNTS

BASIC TASK FORMULA:
3D6 + ABILITY SCORE + FOCUS BONUS (+2)
VS. TARGET NUMBER

ACTIONS

You can take a major action and a minor action, or two minor actions, on your turn.

MAJOR ACTIONS

MELEE ATTACK: You attack an enemy within 2 yards in hand-to-hand combat.

RANGED ATTACK: You attack an enemy by firing or throwing a missile weapon.

RUN/CHASE: You travel up to double your Speed in yards. You must be in a standing position to do this.

GENERAL COMBAT STUNTS

SP COST	STUNT
1-3	DUCK AND WEAVE: Gain +1 to Defense per SP spent until the beginning of your next turn.
1+	SKIRMISH: Move yourself or your attack's target 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend; you can choose Skirmish more than once per turn.
2	DOUBLE-TEAM: Choose one ally to make an immediate attack on your target, who must be within range and sight of the ally. Your ally must have a loaded missile weapon to attack at range.
2	KNOCK PRONE: Knock your enemy prone. Melee attacks against a prone foe gain a +1, but ranged attacks against a prone foe suffer a -1.
2	TAUNT: Roll Communication (Deception) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline) against any target within 10 yards of you; if you win, they must attack or oppose you in some way on their next turn.
2	VICIOUS BLOW: Inflict an extra 1d6 damage on this attack.
3	BLOCKADE: Move up to 3 yards to position yourself between a foe and something or someone else. Until the beginning of your next turn, that foe must succeed at a minor action Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Might) test vs. your Defense to reach whatever or whomever you're protecting.
3	LIGHTNING ATTACK: Make a second attack against the same target or a different one within range and sight; you must have a loaded missile weapon to attack at range.
3	SHOCK AND AWE: When you succeed at a non-attack physical feat or take an opponent out, anyone who witnesses it rolls Willpower (Courage or Morale) vs. your Strength (Intimidation). If you win, they suffer a -1 to the next opposed roll they make against you, or a -1 to their Defense vs. your next attack against them, whichever comes first.
4	SEIZE THE INITIATIVE: Move to the top of the initiative order until someone else seizes the initiative. You may get to take another turn before some others act again.

DEFEND: You gain a +2 bonus to your Defense until the beginning of your next turn.

FIRST AID: You provide quick medical assistance to an injured ally. This is a TN 11 Intelligence (Medicine) test. If you succeed, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to the Stunt Die + your Intelligence (minimum 1 Health point).

MINOR ACTIONS

READY: You unsheathe a weapon, pull out a tool, or otherwise get ready to use some stowed item on your person. As part of this action, you can also put away something you already had in hand.

MOVE: You travel up to your Speed in yards. If you limit your travel to half your Speed you can also fall prone, stand up, or mount or dismount a horse or vehicle.

AIM: You carefully plan your next strike. If your next action is a melee attack or ranged attack (even on your next turn), you gain a +1 bonus on that attack roll.

ACTIVATE: This action is used with certain powers or items whose descriptions say something like, "Use an activate action to..."

VARIABLE ACTIONS

RELOAD: Reloading a ranged weapon is a major or minor action, depending on the weapon.

POWER STUNTS (USED FOR MAGIC)

SP COST	POWER STUNT
1-3	POWERFUL MANIFESTATION (CORE): Increase the Force of your power by 1 per stunt point spent, to a maximum of 3.
2	SKILLFUL POWER: Reduce the power point cost of the power by 1. This can reduce the cost to 0. If the power requires a fatigue test, reduce its target number by 2.
2	MIGHTY POWER: If the power does damage, one target of your choice takes an extra d6 damage.
3	LASTING POWER: If the power has a duration beyond instantaneous, it remains in effect twice as long with no additional power point cost. Powers lasting until the end of the encounter are extended by 1d6 minutes instead.
4	FAST USE: After you resolve this power, you can immediately use another. The second power must require a major action or a minor action's worth of time to use. If you roll doubles on the roll to use the power, you do not get any more stunt points.
4	IMPOSING POWER: The power manifests in a much more dramatic fashion than usual, or perhaps radiates a sinister aura. Until the beginning of your next turn, anyone attempting to make a melee attack against you must make a successful Willpower (Courage) test. The target number (TN) is 10 + your Willpower ability. Those who fail must take a move or defend action instead.

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