

That was probably one of the cleanest 1st games I've ever had.

It's a super fun system... just endless possibilities.

- Rhaz, [The Zee Team](#)

A fun time and easy to pick up system.

I found as a Guide that it allowed both me and my players a large amount of creative freedom to execute crazy ideas.

Definitely recommend it.

- Daniel, [Ready Set Roll](#) & [The Zee Team](#)



THE BUILD

APERTURE doesn't punish a player for thinking outside the box; in fact, it encourages it.

It really allows for freedom and creativity unlike other RPGs I've played.

- Craig Thomas, DM of [Ready Set Roll](#)

Table of Contents

- A. INTRODUCTION
- B. QUICKSTART RULES
- ❖ THE BUILD, by Marin O'Connor
 - Premise
 - Special Mechanics
 - Prep Work
 - Skills
 - Assets
 - Magic

APPENDIX

The GUIDE'S Guide, by Marin O'Connor
Guidance for running The Build.

The APERTURE Guide
"The Build"
(December 2019)

Editor-in-Chief
MARIN O'CONNOR

Produced & Published by
CURIOUS MONK

Chief Executive Officer
MARIN O'CONNOR

Chief Operations Officer
AMBER O'CONNOR

All characters, events, and institutions depicted herein are fictional. Any similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, events, and/or institutions in this publication to actual names, characters, persons, whether living or dead, events, and/or institutions is unintended and purely coincidental.

The APERTURE Logo and The APERTURE Guide are registered trademarks of Curious Monk LLC.
© Curious Monk LLC

Introduction

I won't lie. "The Build" started as one thing and ultimately grew into something far bigger than anticipated. As the first Scenario taking place within a fantasy world called Khylaeron that we intend to build out far more in time, it became abundantly clear that the world is so interconnected that it wasn't enough to share the bare minimum... we had to reveal the world.

Or at least one major intersection of it. In this case, the kingdom of Kharak – a lesser kingdom on the cusp of becoming a major one.

Now, there are going to be details not included. There are going to be references that don't make sense without the full history and view of the world. Don't fret about that. Fill in the blanks as you go and build what works for you.

When you're playing "The Build", you are in essence playing a game from the future, one we're still in the process of writing. Yes, it's just an intersection, but it's one that could conceivably be played for a long time. "The Build" could run for sessions or months, depending on how much detail you bring to it and how deeply the Players engage with the story and world.

Through 2020, the world and fiction of Khylaeron will come into greater clarity. I hope you enjoy this appetizer and are open to more courses as the new year marches on.

Happy Holidays, everyone, and Happy New Year!

Sincerely,
Marin O'Connor

P.S. If you're surprised by this issue only including one Scenario, we announced that The APERTURE Guide would change via a blog post on our site. Going forward, we will focus on producing one really strong Scenario per issue and invest more time into the development of our first full-scale RPG, which is set in world "The Build" provides a taste of.

In addition, The APERTURE Guide will become a Pay What You Want Subscription from this issue onward.



APERTURE

QUICKSTART RULES

Key Terms & Concepts

Action

Combat. There are three types of Actions a Character may take on her Turn: Free Actions, a Move Action (or 2 Activities), and a Skill. The distinction between them is some combination of time and focus required, as well as the general difficulty in achieving the task. Though Free and Move Actions do not require rolling, Move Actions generally require more attention, such as navigating a battlefield or (as an Activity) rummaging through your things and swapping one item out for another.

- ❖ An Activity would include swapping weapons, retrieving an item from your bag, moving half the Character's maximum travel distance in a Turn, bracing something, etc.

Action Score

General. An Action Score is generated any time a Player rolls the die to either make something happen (Skill) or keep something from happening (Save). In the case of a Skill, the Skill's related Attribute is added to the roll; whereas with a Save, the Save value is added to the roll.

Aid ≈ Tandem

General. Characters may assist others on complex tasks that are unopposed, using the same Skill or one that makes sense given the situation. In such a case, the Resistance of the task is halved, rounded up to the nearest even number, and the aiding Characters roll against that. The resulting Margin, positive or negative, adds to the other Character's Action Score versus the full Resistance. Thus, trying to help someone can in fact hamper them, if the Margin from the Aid attempt is negative.

- ❖ Example: Two mages attempt to cast a spell that would ordinarily be next-to-impossible for either to cast alone. One acts as the primary caster while the other takes the roll of support. The support rolls her Arcana Skill against the spell's difficulty, modified as she is providing Aid, and her Margin applies to the primary's Arcana roll against the full difficulty, *hopefully* making it easier.

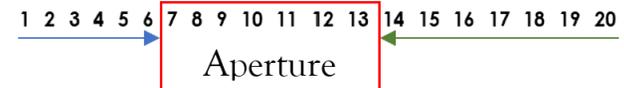
Optional. Tandem is a variation of Aid in which the Character leverages her know-how with one Skill to aid a task she herself is undertaking with another. An example would be using her Strategy Skill (the 'know-how') to assist her Awareness Skill to find an ideal spot for an ambush. Dual-wielding weapons is another, in which the off-hand weapon is

Aiding the main hand weapon in an effort to penetrate an enemy's defenses. Tandem can be used whether a Skill is in opposition to another Character or not.

Aperture

General. Aperture modifies a roll anytime a Character uses a Skill.

Possible results of rolling a 20-sided die:



In the example above, the Character has a 6 in the Skill being used. This impacts the roll result in two ways: The option to reroll a roll of 6 or lower and take the higher of the two results, as well as triggering a Critical for a successful Skill with a roll of 14 or higher (20 - 6, the Skill level, equals 14). It works the same way for any Skill level.

Two key points about Aperture:

- ❖ These arrows always travel together. As one moves in, so does the other; as one recedes back towards the edge of the range, the other mirrors.
 - Moving towards the center 'narrows' the Aperture of a roll, while moving out 'widens' it.
- ❖ Unless otherwise directed, every modifier – due to situational advantages, the use of a key tool for the task, etc. – narrows the Aperture 1 step (or >1<); if circumstances are unfavorable, it widens by 1 (or <1>).
 - In effect, narrowing the Aperture temporarily increases the Skill level, while widening temporarily decreases the Skill level.

Attribute

General. Inborn traits of a Character that add to related rolls. By default, APERTURE has four: Athleticism, Will, Empathy, and Intelligence, though these can be changed entirely based on the game being played. Attributes add to related Skill rolls and form Saves when combined together. *Note: Human maximum potential in an Attribute is a 6.*

- ❖ **Athleticism** adds to any Skill or Save that predominantly relies on physical strength, agility, or endurance.
 - Athleticism also determines the distance a Character can travel within a single Turn. This begins at 20 feet for an Athleticism of 1 and increases by 10 feet each increment beyond that. Thus, a 6 would allow the Character to travel 70 feet in a single Turn.
- ❖ **Will** adds to any Skill or Save that relies on influencing others through charm, cunning, or via artistic works.

- ❖ **Empathy** adds to any Skill or Save that relies on attention to detail, situational awareness, or hidden relationships between things.
- ❖ **Intelligence** adds to any Skill or Save that relies on logic and reason, and is especially common in academic or scholarly fields.

Progression. Attributes can be increased by spending Experience Points equal to the total number of Attribute Points currently assigned to the Character *plus 1*. If the Character has 10 Attribute Points assigned currently, she would need to spend 11 Experience Points in order to add 1 to a single Attribute.

Characteristic

General. When creating a Character, the Player is able to highlight several parts of her Character's concept that are especially important. In most cases where these Characteristics become relevant, the Aperture of a related roll will narrow, thus increasing the Skill level by 1 step. However, Players can work with the Guide to determine if another benefit makes more sense.

Progression. A Player can spend Experience Points to add extra Characteristics to her Character up to a maximum of 5. Adding requires spending Experience Points equal to the new total number of Characteristics. Thus, if the Player is adding a fourth, it will cost 4 Experience Points. Modifying a current one requires spending Experience Points equal to the total number of Characteristics the Character has. For example, changing one of three would require spending 3 Experience Points.

Critical

General. Criticals double the Margin generated by a successful roll. Rolling a Critical does not mean automatic success. The default roll that triggers a Critical is 20, though this is ordinarily only true if the Character is untrained in the Skill, the Aperture has been widened enough to lower the Skill level to 0, or the roll was for a Save.

Experience Points

Progression. A tally generated based on the number of Goals, Personal or Shared, that the Character has completed. For each Goal completed, a Character earns 1 Experience Point. Experience Points can be used to improve Attributes and Skills, modify Special Characteristics, or invest in Relationships to increase one's socio-political influence.

Foil

General. A Foil is someone in an NPC's sphere of influence who has a vested interest in marginalizing outside forces on the NPC's opinion or decision-making. The more lives an NPC's decision may impact, represented by the NPC's Tier, the more Foils are present to keep things 'on course'.

When a Character attempts to influence an NPC, the Aperture of the roll is widened by the number of Foils impacting that NPC's thinking, whether the Foil is present or not.

This can be mitigated by persuading Foils to speak for the Character, via bribery or otherwise, but it won't always be obvious who the Foils are, nor what their Goals are. Helping Foils complete Personal Goals can ally them to the Character, and thus remove their influence on the original NPC. In addition, it allows a Relationship to be made with the Foil, if desired.

Goal

Progression. A task, either Personal or Shared, that the Character is driven to complete for one reason or another. Personal Goals are often tied to backstory, hobbies, or profession, and may be kept private or communicated to other Characters. Only one Personal Goal can exist at a time. Shared Goals are ones the Character pursues based on another Character's wishes, or as part of her group. A Personal Goal can become a Shared Goal, but not the reverse.

All Goals must be clearly communicated to the Guide in advance or will not generate Experience Points upon completion. Guides will often use their knowledge of Goals to make game sessions more meaningful.

Note: Invoking a Character's Personal Goal gives leverage over that person so long as that Goal remains. Any attempt to influence that person after invoking her Personal Goal will see its Aperture narrow by 2. Should the influence roll reveal that the motive for invoking the Goal is malice or manipulation, it may lead to the Character – Player or NPC – becoming defensive, even violent, depending on her temperament.

Guide

General. The person running the game, framing the narrative, portraying Non-Player Characters (NPCs), and working with Players to help them get from a session what they want while adhering to the rules of APERTURE and the game at hand.

Margin → Need

General. The difference between Action Score and Resistance, Margin dictates whether a roll was successful or not. That is, Resistance is subtracted from the Action Score.

- ❖ If greater than 0, the roll succeeded; else, it has failed or succeeded with a complication, penalty, or cost, given the negative Margin is fairly minimal.
- ❖ The level of success increases based on how high Margin goes. In combat, this translates to the damage dealt, with Margin acting as base damage. Weapons modify this base. *There are no damage rolls in APERTURE.*

Advanced. Need is a Margin requirement for triggering special benefits, such as bonus Skills in combat or achieving a very specific result. These manifest as Momentum or a Targeted Effect, respectively.

- ❖ **Momentum** allows a bonus Skill (or two bonus Skills) to be used on the Character's Turn based on satisfying the Need required to do so. Weapons, Spells, and the like may have different levels of Need required to generate Momentum, and can only be generated by the 1st Skill used.
 - As it is opportunistic in nature, Momentum occurs automatically; i.e. the Player doesn't have to ask for it.
 - When a Weapon, Spell, or other ability can generate Momentum, it will feature a Momentum stat that looks like the following:

Momentum: 8 >> 24

In this example, generating 1 bonus Skill requires a Margin of 8 or more, while generating 2 bonus Skills requires a minimum of 24. Thus, if the Character generates 12 Margin, she would get 1 bonus Skill – not two.

- Whether the Character gets 1 or 2 bonus Skills, all Margin (and Damage) generated by the 1st Skill is resolved before taking them.
 - If a Character generates Momentum, but wishes to use a different Weapon, Spell, or Skill on a bonus Skill, she must use the first bonus Skill to do so and lose any second bonus Skill generated.
 - Saves can generate one bonus Skill on a Margin of 10.
- ❖ Before rolling, a Player can request a **Targeted Effect** – a very specific outcome of the Skill being used. This could be applying a negative condition or status effect to the enemy in combat, such as “knock him down”, “apply a bleed”, or “avoid his armor”, but can also be used in non-combat situations to speed things up or lower materials used, etc.
 - When a Targeted Effect is requested, the Guide must tell the Player what the Need is to achieve it. “You'll Need 5,” for example, meaning that the Margin generated by the roll must be 5 or higher to trigger the precise outcome. The more dramatic, the higher the Need.
 - Requesting a Targeted Effect requires opting out of building Momentum, but a Targeted Effect can be requested for a bonus Skill made possible by Momentum.
 - Failing to achieve the Need for a Targeted Effect means the roll failed outright. If it were an attack, it missed but no further penalty occurs.
 - If a condition is applied as part of a Targeted Effect, it is recommended to use the Action Score that applied it as the Resistance a Save must overcome to remove it.
 - Tying any damage a condition causes to the Attribute that applied it is also recommended, as it makes tracking easier.

Relationship

General. An NPC with which the Character has developed a rapport or understanding. This is not an acquaintance. This is someone with whom the Character may share Goals, visit unannounced, and/or reasonably ask for help of one kind or another. A defined Relationship has a Level associated with it ranging from 1 to 6. This Level is added to any roll a Character makes to influence or affect the NPC.

When establishing a Relationship by spending Experience Points, the Player creates the NPC specifically for her Character's purposes. The Player must note the NPC's name, social standing, general demeanor, and access to groups or resources. The higher the NPC's status and influence within a certain sphere of society, the more investment must be made to establish a Relationship with her.

This is referred to as the NPC's Tier, and it ranges from 1 to 5 – with 1 as somebody within the Character's field of interest but with minimal influence, up to a 5 in which the NPC enjoys near total authority over her stratum of the world, such as royalty.

Tier	This roughly translates to...
1	Minor influence in immediate family or social circle
2	Strong influence in immediate family or social circle
3	Strong influence over an organization of up to 100 people
4	Strong influence over an organization of up to 1,000 people
5	Strong influence over many thousands of lives (royalty, etc.)

For every increase in Tier, the number of Points required to invest into the Relationship increments by that number. So, investing into a Relationship with a Tier 1 NPC costs 3 Points to get to a Relationship Level 3; whereas a Tier 5 NPC would require 15 Points to get to the same.

An NPC's Tier also determines the antagonism the Player Character would encounter in the course of building the Relationship. This antagonism is represented by Foils. The number of Foils is equal to the NPC's Tier; e.g. a queen (a Tier 5 NPC) would have 5 Foils buzzing around in her ear acting in opposition to virtually anything the Player Character could ask for, unless mitigated in some fashion.

Note: This effect happens regardless of whether the Player Character has a Relationship with an NPC or not. NPCs are not treated equally within APERTURE. Trying to sway a queen to do something is not the same as trying to sway a grocer or a tavernkeeper.

Resistance

General. The difficulty associated with performing a task. When acting upon another Character, the Resistance is rolled; else, it is generated based on an approximation of the difficulty, as in the table that follows. Such generated instances are always an even number. [Note: 12 is 'Average' in APERTURE.]

Setting a Resistance

In most situations, Characters will use Skills or Saves to overcome Resistances, but in some instances, such as setting a trap, producing a work of art, etc., they will be setting one that others – perhaps many others – will have to overcome or be impacted by.

- ❖ When rolling a Skill that would create something with a Resistance in advance, the Player generates an Action Score using the Skill and rounds the result down to the nearest even number. This acts as the Resistance for the item should someone engage with it.
 - Other Characters are able to Aid in the attempt, but will roll against 12 – “Average”, as noted above – and apply the resulting Margin to the Action Score generated by the aided Character’s roll.

Example Resistance Table

Resistance	vs Aid*	Description
6	4	Trivial
8	4	Routine
10	6	Below Average
12	6	Average
14	8	Challenging
16	8	Demanding
18	10	Hard
20	10	Excruciating
22	12	Implausible
24	12	Epic
26	14	Inconceivable
28	14	Legendary
30	16	Impossible

*see Aid rules later

Save

Combat. A Save is a natural defense mechanism that triggers anytime harm, or a type of vulnerability, would be applied to the Character. Saves are created by adding two Attributes together. By default, there are four: Reflex (Empathy and Athleticism), Resolve (Athleticism and Will), Indifference (Will and Intelligence), and Intuition (Intelligence and Empathy). Similar to Attributes, Saves add to a related roll.

- ❖ **Reflex** triggers whenever a physical attack, or anything that manifests as such, attempts to injure the Character; if the Character is not aware of an impending attack, the Reflex Save does not add to the roll.
 - Reflex is also added to a roll to determine Turn Order when a combat situation begins.

- ❖ **Resolve** triggers when something within the Character is harming her, such as a gas, poison, spell, or even internal bleeding.
 - When a Character’s Hit Points go below 0, round the negative number to the nearest, more aggressive even number, and roll against it, adding in Resolve.
 - If the result is higher than the revised even number, the Character has stabilized but is unconscious at 0 Hit Points.
 - If the result is less, Athleticism and Will (which feed Resolve) will both lower by 1. Another Resolve attempt is made each subsequent Turn. For each failure, this decrease occurs, until one of the two Attributes goes to 0. At that point, the Resolve Save breaks and the Character dies.
- ❖ **Indifference** triggers when someone or something attempts to coerce or in any way modify the Character’s emotional state, feelings, or opinions.
- ❖ **Intuition** triggers when someone or something attempts to in any way change, abridge, or trick the Character’s sensory perception.

Advanced. A Skill can be substituted in place of using a Save so long as its usage in the situation makes sense, such as using one’s Arcana Skill to disrupt a magic spell versus dodging it using Reflex.

Special Note. In APERTURE, Saves don’t stop; using a Save against a condition or harmful effect is not one-and-done. Effects don’t last an arbitrary number of Rounds – they last until they’re beaten. As such, even more basic conditions, such as a bleed, can be life-threatening if the application is strong enough.

Skill

General. Knowledge or expertise that modifies the Aperture of a roll. Can range from 0 (untrained) to 6 (mastery). Virtually anything can be a Skill and Skills can be as detailed or high level as desired by the group playing. When rolling a Skill, its related Attribute is added to the roll result.

Progression. Skills can be improved or added by spending Experience Points. To raise the Character’s level in a Skill, Experience Points equal to the new Skill level must be spent. Thus, moving from a level 2 to a level 3 requires spending 3 Experience Points. No levels can be skipped: A Character cannot go from a 1 immediately to a 3 by spending 3, or from a 4 to a 6 by spending 6. Each incremental improvement must be paid in full.

Turn, Turn Order, and Block

Combat. A portion of time (roughly 10 seconds in length) in which each Character gets to perform 1 Move Action (or 2 Activities), 1 Skill, and any number of trivial Free Actions (talking, sitting down, etc.). *Note: The number of Skills may increase due to Momentum.*

- ❖ The order in which Characters act in combat, referred to as Turn Order, is determined at the start of combat by all participants rolling and adding their Reflex Save to the result. The higher the number, the earlier they go.
 - Once all participants have completed a Turn, it starts back at the beginning and repeats until combat ends.
- ❖ Characters can form a Block with one another so long as there is no enemy with a Turn between theirs. That is, their Turns are immediately sequential.
 - Players may choose to delay their Character's Turn Order positions and go later in sequence to form a Block. The change in Turn Order is permanent.
 - When in a Block, Characters go when the Block's time in the Turn Order comes up. Within the Block's Turn, they can select an order to act amongst themselves or coordinate a simultaneous series of actions.
 - When in a Block, Characters can Aid one another on rolls against an opposing roll so long as they use an ability or Weapon that specifically states it can be used in that manner.
 - Certain situational modifiers that would modify the Aperture of rolls, such as flanking an enemy or any other that relies on two or more allies acting in concert with one another, can only do so while those Characters are in a Block together.

General Resolution System

- ❖ Using a Skill or Save requires rolling a 20-sided die.
 - A Save is used when you don't want something to happen.
 - A Skill is used when you want something to happen.
 - Prior to a roll, the Guide must identify if the Aperture is narrowed or widened and explain why, if yes.
 - If widening the Aperture would cause the Skill level to go below 0, for each negative increment another roll is made. The worst result is used.
 - The Aperture narrowing cannot cause the 'effective' Skill level to go above 8. This is a hard cap for all Characters.
- ❖ A roll ultimately generates an Action Score.
 - For a Save, add the Save's value to the roll.
 - For a Skill, reroll a roll below or equal to your Skill level. Take the higher value and add the related Attribute.
 - Make mental note if the roll result may trigger a Critical.
- ❖ The Action Score is set against Resistance, the difficulty involved in performing the task.
 - In opposition to another character, the Resistance is rolled.

- If not, the Guide will generate the Resistance based on an approximation of the difficulty.
- ❖ Subtracting the Resistance from the Action Score creates Margin.
 - A Margin greater than 0 means Success; anything else means Failure or Success with a complication, penalty, or cost.
 - Positive Margin is doubled if the roll qualified as a Critical.
- ❖ The greater the Margin, the more impactful the outcome.
 - In the case of combat, Margin equals the base damage dealt. Weapons modify this base. *There is no Damage Roll.*
 - If Margin is high enough, it may generate Momentum or satisfy the Need requirement for a Targeted Effect.
 - Outside of combat, a high Margin may reduce the time associated with the task, enhance the result, minimize the resources required, etc.

Weapons & Armor

Weapons

Weapons can vary dramatically across genres, settings, and games, but one thing is always true about weapons within APERTURE: *There are no damage rolls.* The only variable damage dealt is from the attack's Margin, not the weapon itself; the more solid the hit, the more damage is generated. Thus, if Margin is zero or less, the weapon simply did not make contact with the enemy's body, whether dodged or deflected. Any modifier is meaningless in such a case.

There are a variety of statistics that can show up in a weapon's information. Below is a list of such stats, though others may be added where necessary.

A note to make prior to diving in is the use of the “|” (pipe) in APERTURE to denote when moving deeper into a single stat will widen the Aperture of the roll. The more pipes crossed, the more it widens, regardless of source.

- ❖ **Skill(s):** The Skill(s) to roll in order to use the weapon. There may be an indicator similar to “Off-Hand, widen by 2” alongside this stat, to show the effect wielding the weapon in the Character's off-hand has on the Skill's usage.
- ❖ **Damage:** The way the weapon modifies the Margin generated.
 - Primitive weapons, such as clubs, swords, daggers, and even civilian firearms, are usually additive (+2, +4, etc.) to Margin.
 - Modern military-grade weaponry, explosives, and certainly futuristic weapon types may be additive, multiplicative (x2, x4, etc.), or a combination of both.

- When a pipe (|) is used, it indicates that the weapon can be used to harm more than one enemy at a time. Unless stated otherwise, the number before the 1st pipe is for 1 target; the number after, for 2 targets; etc.
 - Example: “+4 | +2 | +1”
 - Example #2: “+4 | +1 (3 targets) | + 0 (5 targets)”, for when a range of targets is identified
 - If attempting to hit multiple targets, Momentum cannot be generated, and Targeted Effects cannot be requested
- ❖ **Reach:** The melee distance the weapon can hit from, usually conveyed as an approximation such as ‘Short’, ‘Medium’, ‘Long’, etc. There is normally a 5 foot distance between these approximations to conform to traditional RPG standards.
- ❖ **Momentum:** The Margin required to build Momentum due to the weapon’s complexity, weight, etc. This is strictly for Momentum, not Targeted Effects.
- ❖ **Ranges, (metric):** The distance the weapon can project an attack or be thrown to.
 - Any weapon that requires propulsion generated by its user – i.e. a bow, a thrown weapon, etc. – will also use pipes to illustrate the level of Athleticism necessary to propel the weapon to that range.
 - To propel beyond the 1st pipe in the Range, the user would need to have a 1 in Athleticism; to pass the 2nd, a 2; to pass the 3rd, a 3; etc.
- ❖ **Special Effect(s):** Anything that a weapon is innately capable of doing and the stimulus and outcome of the effect(s) listed.
 - Example Special Effect, for a Shield:
 - **Shield Wall** :: Requires Adjacency to Ally, Block with Ally
 - When an ally is attacked while Shield Wall is active, the wielder can provide Aid 1 time in a Round;
 - If wielder is using the shield with both hands, Shield Wall can be triggered for any and all physical attacks directed at Adjacent Allies in the same Block.
- ❖ **Reload Cost:** The type of Action (or timing) required to reload the weapon or ready another projectile to fire.
- ❖ **Requirement:** Some weapons may require certain Attributes, Skills, or other characteristics to use effectively or at all. For each level of deficiency versus a numbered requirement, such as a particular Athleticism score or Skill level, the Character’s Aperture will widen by 1 step when using the weapon.
- ❖ **Durability:** The amount of attacks the weapon can make before it needs to be sharpened, repaired, or scrapped.

Armor

Armor works by taking punishment on the Character’s behalf. So long as an attack generates positive Margin, it made contact with the Character’s body and generated damage. The question is whether it caused enough damage to penetrate the armor and harm the tissue underneath.

Unless explicitly stated within a Targeted Effect, attacks default to striking center mass: The target’s chest and abdomen.

Like weapons, there are a number of stats that can appear in an armor’s information. Below is a small list of stats, though others may be added where necessary.

- ❖ **Protection:** The amount of damage the armor piece can withstand without giving way, or $\text{Damage Generated} - \text{Protection} = \text{Amount HP Reduces By}$, if at all. The level of Protection may be different based on the type of weapon hitting it. Where it is, a semicolon between the levels should be used, along with a notation of each type.
- ❖ **Demerit(s):** Any negative impact to the Character’s abilities or Skills that the armor may cause. For example, a helmet may weaken the Character’s Awareness Skill, by widening the Aperture anytime it is worn.
- ❖ **Special Effect(s):** This is relatively uncommon in more primitive armor, but may be very common in science-fiction environments where force fields, thermal regulators, or light-bending technology are available.
- ❖ **Durability:** The amount of damage the armor can withstand before being rendered useless, losing its Special Effect(s), or simply needing repair. Generally speaking, the more complex something is, the less likely a repair would be possible.

Gear

APERTURE generally operates on the premise of ‘using the right tool for the job’ versus some sort of ‘+1’, ‘+2’, ‘Masterwork’, etc. gear strategy. If you want to pick locks in an affluent neighborhood in the capital city of the greatest nation in a high-magic fantasy world, there are likely craftsmen (possibly only one) who offers the precise tools designed to do that. Or maybe there isn’t, and your Character can use her Engineering Skill to craft and sell them to enterprising thieves at a high, high price!

Mechanically, gear narrows or widens Aperture based on how well it satisfies the task at hand. Why would a Character choose a tool that *widens the Aperture*? If the alternative is not being able to do something at all, being able to do it even haphazardly could be preferable. This operates along the following lines:

Tool-to-Task	Aperture
Designed specifically for it	Narrows by 1
Similar but not exactly what you need	Widens by 1
A poor or ad-hoc substitute for what you need	Widens by 2

Otherwise, the Character cannot do it at all.

Beyond these guidelines, gear which is specific to its setting, genre, or game should provide information about how it is used and the outcomes of using it. Examples of this would be potions, poisons, scrolls, wands, cyberdecks, hoverboards, etc.

THE BUILD

PREMISE

Players are a diverse group of craftsmen, gifted in the arts of architecture, design, and magic. One day, they are summoned by an emissary of Dynast Reis, the ruler of Kharak, with a proposition: Build a massive dungeon within which to keep Kharak's greatest criminals. Further, build it in such a manner that the denizens of Kharak can watch as prisoners are killed by untold monstrosities in futile attempts to escape. Day or night.

Despite requesting the newest wonder of the world, to bring Kharak in line with other great kingdoms of Khylaron, the Dynast believes in being frugal. Yes, your budget is great, but so is your task. You must deliver what he wishes, with great quality and spectacle, without going over budget.

The reward? Fame and influence. Not to mention gold and jewels, more than you would have earned doing a dozen other jobs. But with this possible payoff comes heightened risk. Coin draws – nay, demands – attention.

And should you fail to meet the Dynast's expectations? Good luck.

OUTCOME

Build the most spectacular dungeon in history. Test its design and the monsters with which you populate it, ensuring that it will entertain and enthrall the Kharaké people. Cut costs where possible.

DISCLAIMER

In case it's not abundantly clear based on the *Premise* and *Outcome*, let's state it clearly: The Characters in this game, though perhaps good to one another, are not good people. Like hitmen, they are in a line of work that involves the ruination of human life for their own personal benefit.

If you are looking to play a hero, this is not the game.

This is a game about people with talents that set them apart in the world that are using those abilities and skills to gain access to wealth that would otherwise be impossible or extremely unlikely to achieve.

This, however, does not make them any less monstrous.

SETTING

Given the nature of the story and environment in which the Players will be operating, we are going to introduce elements of the fictional world in which the game takes place earlier and in more detail than usual. If you don't want to read through this, feel free to skip to page 13, but know that some elements may be lost in the process even if the game would still be fully playable. At minimum, the Guide should read the following in its entirety and introduce elements where deemed necessary.

Khylaron

Khylaron is both the name of the world and the vast supercontinent that straddles one half of it. Formed from the fertile carcass of a god named Khyra who fell during the last great Godwar upon a lifeless stone world, Khylaron is composed of a handful of large kingdoms and cultures and a broad host of small ones. The bulk of its history is tethered to human civilization, as humankind is the only intelligent race native to it, and human history – though largely unrecorded outside of oral traditions – is one of struggle, punctuated by bloodshed, famine, and natural disasters as “Khyra's death rattle continues through living memory”.

This struggle, long spoken of in solemn tones and over bonfires, began to ebb away in 315 IH, 1,222 years ago, when a man named Gendaera cast the 1st spell in Khylaron's history. How he was able to cast it remains unclear, but it set off a spark that fueled the fires lighting the way for true human civilization.

With his brother Fjurie, Gendaera founded the kingdom of Bokkeran, to this day one of the major political powers in the world. In addition, and quite separately, he founded the first school of magic. This school – which began as little more than a forum for growing arcane knowledge – is now, without question, the most singularly influential socio-political body in human history.

Known today as the Domatic Order, it has spent the last 12 centuries infusing itself into every culture and using its resources, both magical and otherwise, to shepherd human civilization across a large swath of the continent. The Order – with its magical cohort of Doma at the center – has proven capable of adapting its behaviors to match the social mores and motifs of different cultures and customs, while gently steering each towards attitudes and activities that support the growth of human civilization.

In the years since, other schools of magic arose: From Transmutation and Necromancy, both featured in this game, to new schools such as Summoning

and Chaos, as well as a number of others, that are not. Throughout history, most have waxed and waned in popularity, offering little challenge to the Order's persistent power and influence.

Almost three centuries ago, this changed with the advent of Summoning. With the power to summon creatures from unknown realms and worlds, the art was immediately subjected to scorn and derision by the Order but was seen as innovative by rulers of the major kingdoms. Within three decades, schools of Summoning appeared across the bulk of human civilization and representatives joined royal courts and imperial councils.

Then, in 1288 IH, the world changed forever over the course of a single night, when the school's founder summoned Feirax into Khylaeron. The great elder dragon was the first of his kind on the planet and was, from the outset, leagues more powerful than any creature to step foot on its soil in recorded history.

Within hours, he decimated the original school of Summoning, flattened one of the highest mountain ranges on the continent, and murdered tens of thousands of people.

Once the Doma were able to marshal their forces, hundreds of their own died in an effort to drive Feirax away from other cities and settlements. Though successful in pushing Feirax to the Northern Wastes, the Domatic Order issued an official Censure barring the practice of Summoning in Khylaeron forever.

This decree kicked off the Summoning War, which lasted three years and radically disrupted the stability of the natural world, as summoners – fearing not only censure but execution – summoned tens of thousands of creatures from the hidden realms to overwhelm the Order's massive numbers.

Ultimately, the war ended after the Order adjusted its Censure of Summoning to bar specific sets of rituals but not the practice entirely.

Though squabbles have occurred between the Order and other arcane teachings since, the Doma land most often on the side of collaboration and are a support and proponent of all magical practice. Any push to censure other schools by members of the Order's ruling body is silenced, to avoid a similar outcome. But this may prove impossible as the number of schools, particularly those which appear to draw from unknown sources such as Chaos and Invocation, increase in number and rapidly grow their positions in the world.

Kharak

The following information would be known to all Player Characters, as The Broker has been able to secure it through communiques from spies and 'new friends' from within Kharak's borders.

Lying far to the east of the major kingdoms, Kharak is a young dynasty with only three generations between its official formation and today. Composed of hundreds of tribes, each with its own unique take on what is today known as Kharaké culture, Kharak came into existence under Raijin, a charismatic and brilliant military strategist who brought all the tribes under his rule through a combination of bloodshed and, ultimately, influence as his growing political machinery made any other option outside of subjugation unpalatable.

Known for being taller, stronger, and more ferocious than other cultures of humankind across the continent, Kharaké are both objects of fear and of fascination. They have no close allies on the world stage, though they trade often with others. They have strict laws and extend these to others that they encounter or consort with on any level. Ironically, most slaves within Kharak are intellectuals and provide services that are specialized and outside the norm of Kharaké tradition.

In wartime, Kharak has a policy centered on subjugating others without a change in rule. If an enemy surrenders to Kharak without fighting back, they are brought into its territory but allowed to operate normally outside of offering safety, soldiers, and taxes upon demand. However, those with unusual talents are sent back to the capital city of Niveh, along with their families, to manifest those talents more broadly across Kharak's dominion.

If an enemy fights back, the Kharaké are unrelenting in their brutality. Every living thing will be killed, regardless of age or gender. Dogs, cats, horses. The land will be poisoned with the decay of its inhabitants in the most extreme cases, especially where the Dynast has been personally offended by the enemy's words or actions.

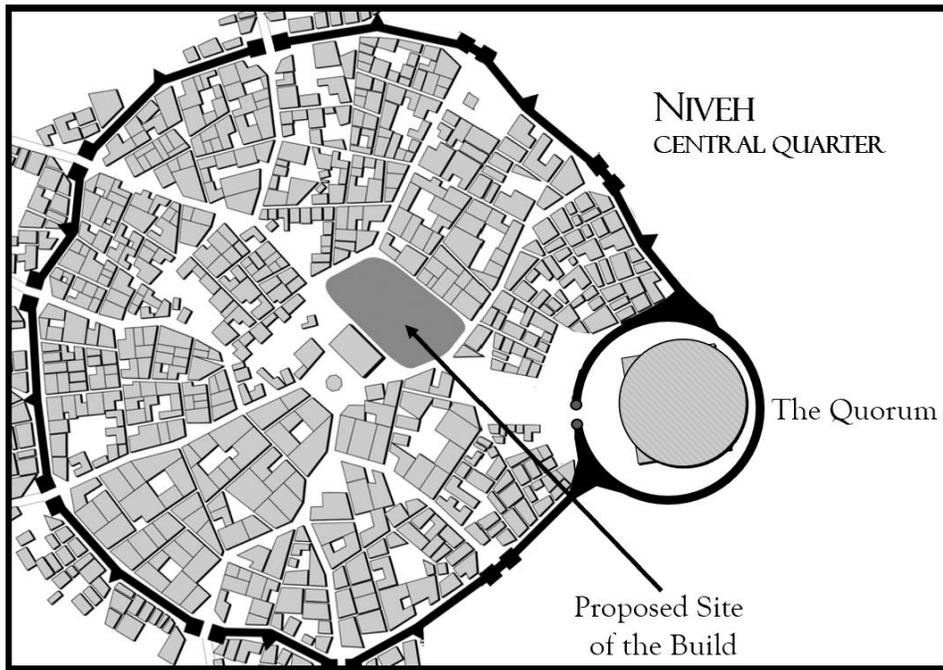
To fight against the will of Kharak is to choose genocide and the eradication of one's culture and history.

Prior to Kharak's capital of Niveh being founded, little concrete information about the Kharaké received widespread attention in the west. Frankly, most

rulers – even the Domasai, the leaders of the Domatic Order – had never heard of them other than third- and fourth-hand stories of ‘barbarians fighting in the east’ and giant animals called elephants that no one had ever seen.

The more that has been learned about Kharak and its capabilities since, the more attention the major kingdoms and the Domatic Order have diverted to it. It is safe to assume that any caravans coming from the west include some number of spies from one of the powers that be.

Niveh, the capital city of Kharak



Niveh predates the dynasty by easily thousands of years, its original inhabitants lost to the forgotten parts of history. Discovered by Dynast Raijin as he led his army west, he found the city abandoned, seemingly for decades if not centuries, and took it as his capital once rituals had been performed to free it from ghosts and evil spirits that may reside therein. Due to Niveh’s size, hundreds of Kharaké willingly sacrificed themselves in the purification rites.

Niveh is remarkable in three respects:

First, it is one of the largest cities in the world, with walls forty feet high and thirty feet thick surrounding its 1,000-acre Central Quarter. There are five other main districts, each approximately 600 acres in size, spread evenly against the Central Quarter’s boundary wall. A massive cliff lies at the back of its Quorum, or capital building, that provides a breathtaking view of the Endless Sea.

Second, it possessed the remnants of a sophisticated water circulation system for irrigation purposes that also provides freshwater through channels within its massive walls, making drinking water readily available across the entirety of Niveh. Though in shambles at the time Raijin took the city, it was made fully functional once more within five years of its capture.

Third, it is partially responsible for the rapid cultural transformation of the Kharaké people, who until that time had seen little change from their ancestors’ way of life. Market economics, banking, and academia have risen within its walls, as have science and arcane knowledge.

The western schools of magic, long untrusted by the Kharaké, have exploded within Niveh, and scholars of the Order have noted that ‘no magical practice, regardless of its maturity, survives contact with Kharak without seeing itself transfigured – often with horrifying results’.

One example, quite pertinent to this game, can be found in the revolutionary change of Transmutation led by Xenica, one of Raijin’s consorts and future queen to his successor Lacaan. Rather than simply imbuing an object with the effect of a spell with a limited number of uses, Xenica’s innovations allowed for the transference of a power, trait, or ability from an otherworldly creature into an object of the caster’s choice permanently. Through her advancements, Xenica provided the Dynasts of Kharak their signature weapon, the Dynast’s Fangs, a two-pronged spear imbued with the poison of a creature known as a basilisk.

Though scorned by a wide swath of traditional practitioners outside Kharak’s borders, Xen Transmutation is one of Kharak’s most lauded achievements and Xenica one of its most celebrated heroes.

Dynast Reis

The current ruler of Kharak, Reis, took the mantle at the age of 27. Though he shares direct descent to the prior Dynasts, he was chosen among his hundreds of siblings as the only male child of Xenica. Though he never learned the art of

Transmutation from his mother, he has been trained and tutored his entire life following a regiment designed by Xenica prior to her death when he was ten.

Often questioned by elder Kharaké due to his calm and quiet nature, Reis is the first Dynast born and raised within the walls of Niveh. Despite his advanced education and laid-back demeanor, Reis has led the Kharaké in campaigns against kingdoms and tribes to the west and north since he was 16. He is highly respected amongst those who served under him while expanding the Dynasty's northern and western borders by thousands of kilometers over the 10 years preceding his ascent to power.

Though he is unmistakably Kharaké, being quite tall and lean, Reis is broader of shoulder and has a larger musculature than his peers. He is perceived as intense and intelligent, powerful and attractive, and (unlike his father Lacaan) is very popular within the average Kharaké household despite his idiosyncrasies.

Each of Reis's three official consorts – Laerna, Zyene, and Baez – is famous across the Dynasty, as they are seen at his side in public with strict regularity. Until Reis, consorts were kept out of sight, with the lone exception of his mother, who was raised from consort to queen shortly before his birth.

Laerna was considered an odd selection for consort from the beginning. Most felt she was too old and had already been widowed at the time of her selection. She was also his first consort after he came to power. In that time, she has given him three children and is currently carrying their fourth.

Zyene is the most traditional of the consorts, coming from a wealthy family that trained her for the express purpose of garnering Reis's attention. Oddly, what drew his attention was her artistic gifts – something her family had deemed unnecessary – and he has doted on her with tutors since bringing her into his household. She has no known children.

Baez is the most recent consort, selected four years ago from a minority race on Kharak's southwestern edge known for its dark espresso skin and arcane knowledge. Exceptionally tall, and seen as too skinny for childbearing, Baez is often ridiculed by Kharaké in private. A rumor circulated since her selection is that she bewitched Reis, as no other reason has been identified for bringing her into his household. She, also, has no confirmed children.

The Build

Though Reis is officially sanctioning the creation of the dungeon, it did not begin as his idea. His father, Lacaan, had championed the dungeon for at least five years prior to his death, but the stream of wars and revolts had kept it a dream. It is believed that he demanded Reis complete it on his deathbed.

To avoid angering any spirits for breaking the promise he made to his father, Reis is undertaking the project but with a notable lack of enthusiasm. Since his Dynasty is fueled by conquest, not tourism, he refuses to dedicate any of his ministers, servants, or soldiers to its completion. His military and militia (think police) have been told to be as hands-off as possible to ensure their availability for an upcoming campaign.

Rather, the project is being supervised by a Doma named Riven who is seen as something of an advisor to Reis on foreign policy and affairs. Though the collective is likely to meet Reis, to make certain his wishes are *quite* known, Riven will act as their primary point of contact and administrator of the budget. Which is thought to be high, but no one save Riven and Reis knows for certain.

Money & the Budget

Gold is the primary currency in Niveh. All coin is composed of at least some small portion of gold, from the least valuable to the most. The amount of gold is showcased by individual rings within the coin's design: The more rings present, the more valuable the coin. Coins are always referred to as 'Raij', in reference to Kharak's founder Raijin, and numbered (quite simply) by the number of gold rings in it. Thus, one gold ring is worth 1 Raij; two, 2 Raij, etc.

No one in the collective will ever be told how much the budget for the build is. As administrator of the project, Riven is the collective's source of information. If something is prohibitively high, she will let you know. Any decision impacting the budget – from materials and contractors, to bribes and pay-offs – should be communicated to Riven for approval and dispensation of the payment.

As such, this removes bookkeeping from the Players and allows them to focus on the story and design, only taking actions to decrease the budget where Riven prompts them to. She won't always do so. Not everyone in Kharak is out to fleece the group but given the fact that even Riven is a foreigner – though a more accepted one – 'hard bargaining' is likely to be a common occurrence.

The Location

The dungeon's targeted location is in Niveh's Central Quarter, in a large space currently used for a bazaar that receives tens of thousands of visitors each week for produce and hard goods. This, again, was not Reis's idea, as it is liable to create disruption and anger – possibly revolt – within his capital. If a revolt should break out, his militia will quell it, but he would prefer that no rioting occurs at all.

The more successful, semi-permanent structures of the bazaar would need to be dealt with in some fashion before full-scale construction can begin.

Labor

It is known that Kharaké builders vied for the project but were ultimately not selected due to a lack of necromancers within Kharak's borders, never mind any with experience for a project of this size and complexity. As such, there is resentment that an outside firm is being brought in for a project meant as a monument to Kharak's rising prominence in Khylaeron.

The biggest builders in Niveh have hundreds, even thousands, of laborers and artisans at their disposal. Most of the workers are from conquered tribes or city-states; those which could be useful but not in a fashion that would lead to Reis taking them for his own purposes. [Reis prefers magic users and has done more to fuel magic's rise in Niveh than any prior Dynast.]

Materials

Most materials found across the major kingdoms of Khylaeron are available in Niveh, as it has extensive resources on its own and is now the greatest trade hub in the east. Native materials, such as a wide variety of stones, grains, ore, and wood, are immediately available and generally inexpensive. The more durable the material – even within the same type, such as stone or wood – the higher the price.

Ceramics are also common within Niveh, as pottery has been practiced within Kharaké culture for millennia.

The most expensive material in Niveh for construction purposes is glass. Glaziers are rare across Khylaeron, with perhaps one or two working in Niveh at

any given time. The most prized glass is referred to as *syreen* and is created by the Domatic Order, using their magic to literally reshape sand into glass sheets or shapes. This takes multiple Doma to perform and a single 5' x 5' x 1" sheet of glass will take several hours to complete.

Commercial glass is most commonly produced in the massive industrial center of Hialeah, the capital city of Tal'visse, one of the three major kingdoms far to the west of Niveh. Tal'visian glass can be imported into Niveh but is expensive due to the length of the trip, taking approximately three weeks for 100 sheets (or 'tiles') to arrive. Such caravans are also easy targets for bandits while outside of Kharak's borders, so there is risk associated with importing glass outside of its high cost.

'Outside of Kharak's borders' is emphasized because bandits within Kharak are uncommon. With the Dynasty in the process of establishing itself as a worthwhile trade partner with other kingdoms and city-states, laws were introduced by Lacaan making caravan theft – or, in truth, any disruption of trade – a capital crime punishable by death, for both the individuals who commit the crime and their immediate families.

Those Who Enter

Though strict, Kharaké law is not as merciless as one would assume given their fierce reputation in battle, as there is an ingrained respect within the culture for its historical bloodlines. Capital punishment has been reserved for treason in the past, though this was expanded to include laws against the disruption of trade activities within Kharak's borders.

With the build, Lacaan was trying to find a solution for Kharak's growing number of incarcerated. Once the prison population became unsustainable, a lottery would be held to select who would be put into the dungeon. Those who escaped would be drafted into Kharak's war machine for the remainder of their sentence, while those who didn't would simply die. In either case, the prison population would decrease.

Reis plans to introduce the lottery without modification, though he has concerns about drafting survivors into military service.

Upon completion of the build, the first lottery will be held.

SPECIAL MECHANICS

The Collaborative Art of Dungeon Creation

Throughout the history of Khylaeron, there have been innumerable dungeons and ruins created by practitioners of Necromancy. Some sanctioned by the ruling authorities or wealthy sadists; some created to play off myths and legends of bygone eras in the hope of luring naïve heroes into their throes.

After all, one must make a living.

But dungeon-making is no mere feat. It requires several disciplines operating in tandem to design something that can satisfy sponsors, dispatch adventurers, and stand the test of time. From architecture design, trap setting, and undead generation, to logistics and advertising, a dungeon represents one of humanity's greatest collaborative ventures requiring the most profound levels of expertise.

*Master Gaorta
Necromancer
1451 IH*

In *The Build*, Players are part of a new but respected design collective with a handful of successful builds under its name. Gaining notoriety amongst the sort of circles that would hire such professionals. On the cusp of the big time; awaiting one big break.

Each Player fulfills a vital place in the collective's operations. Sometimes this means working with the whole group; other times, off on her own, doing a job only she can.

PROFESSIONS

There are four Professions considered key for a build to be conducted with minimal room for error:

- ❖ The Broker
- ❖ The Builder
- ❖ The Necromancer
- ❖ The Transmuter, *preferably of the Xen variety*

If your group has more than four Players, additional Characters were either 'raised' within the design team and a hybrid of its core members or hired as a bodyguard or muscle to support the Broker in her work.

The Broker

Part of deal-making in a world as unbridled and frequently ill-supervised as the so-called 'lesser kingdoms' of Khylaeron is understanding how to negotiate without leverage, bribe on a budget, twist relationships to one's advantage, and fracture others' worlds when things go the wrong direction and threaten the build.

As broker, this is your whole life. You make the deals; you collect the needed resources from the right (sometimes unwilling) vendors; and you grease the wheels with blood when things go sideways, as they often do. Nothing big gets done without attracting wanted and unwanted attention.

Inspiration Question: Are Brokers spymasters?

Yes, and no. They are definitely intended to act as the face of the design collective: Arrange meetings, control the rules of engagement, and solicit information about 'interested parties' in advance of putting themselves or their partners in any danger. And if things should go wrong? Flex their network to devastate or simply end lives.

'No' in the sense that they don't always use spies to do their bidding. Often brokers have built relationships that can be called upon to circumvent issues or find needed resources that would otherwise be difficult to locate. It's true that some of these relationships may be less 'on the level' than others, but they know the importance of having a mixture of friends in high and low places to get the job done.

A broker's task is to make sure builds go smoothly; and where they can't, improvise and smooth the rough edges. Whatever that entails.

Special Characteristic(s):

The Dealmaker

The broker is preternaturally gifted at getting what she wants. As such, the broker receives a bonus of 3 to the following Skills: Awareness, Deduction, and Inducement. Any increase to these Skills will require the use of Experience Points during *Character Creation*.

Advance Networking

From the moment the collective was contacted about the build in Kharak, the broker went to work gathering intelligence about the Dynasty and its various organizations. As such, her network within Kharak grew at a rapid rate.

At *Character Creation*, the Player may allocate 20 Experience Points towards defining Relationships to any NPC that she wants (and creates, unless the NPC is explicitly identified in the *Setting* section).

Further, for each Relationship defined at this point, she has reduced the Foils associated with each one by 2. If a Relationship is with a Tier 1 NPC, any attempt to influence this NPC would see its Aperture narrowed by 1, as the number of Foils operating on that NPC has been driven below 0. *Narratively, this means that the broker has become a Foil for that NPC towards others attempting to act upon them even when the broker is not present. In such cases, the NPC will dutifully inform the broker of such information.*

Remaining Foils not already offset are unknown individuals at the start of the game. If the broker wishes to get rid of them, it will require identifying who they are and dealing with them – with money, diplomacy, or violence.

These Experience Points do not need to be spent at *Character Creation* in their entirety. Some can be saved and used in the course of play, based on situational convenience. At such times, the broker can say something along the lines, “I think I might know someone,” and create the NPC on the spot, using the points in the moment.

In such a situation, however, no Foils can be offset and are in full effect.

Combat Readiness

Though brokers prefer to use others to do their dirty work, they nonetheless must be able to respond to threats to themselves or the build with expediency.

As such, the Player of the broker can select three Skills to add a bonus of 3 points to that are actively used to apply violence to a situation in which no other course is appropriate.

Skills outside of direct weapon Skills may also be selected, but some indication of how they are used to apply lethal force against an adversary must be noted.

Perhaps she poisons people or kills them in their sleep after seducing them. The options here are vast and act as a great opportunity for the Player to design her broker’s distinct style.

If, in the course of selecting Skills to reflect the broker’s individual flavor of violence, the Player creates new Skills, such Skills are unique to the broker and cannot be selected by any other Character.

Any items, weapons, or gear clearly related to the Skills selected as part of *Combat Readiness* are assumed to be part of the broker’s inventory from the beginning.

The Builder

Dungeons are engineering feats. Designed to stand the test of time and the environment, as well as the powers and cunning of those unfortunate souls who happen to find themselves inside, dungeons must be structurally sound and beguiling to adventurers. But the more elaborate the build, the less stable it tends to be.

It is a builder’s job to manage that balancing act.

Inspiration Question: Are builders basically architects?

At the heart of things, yes, but they are also responsible for designing traps throughout the complex to complicate the entrants’ lives. That is, a builder is responsible for all environmental impediments and hazards within a dungeon or ruin.

Further, builders manage tests of the build – setting short scenarios in place to ensure that what they intended to happen, in fact, does. And if it doesn’t, identifying the root cause in hopes of either correcting the issue or leaning into it should it produce a delightfully unexpected wrinkle. *It’s rumored that Solon’s Cube – a cube dungeon that requires both vertical and horizontal movement to navigate, using transmuted tiles allowing entrants to walk on walls and ceilings – is an example of the latter.*

Special Characteristic(s):

Prototyping

As part of the agreement between the collective and its client, the builder can request a mockup be made of a short stretch of dungeon – up to about 100 cells – be constructed and tested with either ‘live ammunition’ or some toned down version. Traditionally the client will provide a volunteer (often offered freedom, a reduced sentence, or some variation of that) to test the design where real threat is present. Else, one or more of the collective will play through it.

The financial cost of doing this is minimal, and it’s a vital way for the builder to circumvent possible errors she – but not the Player – is blind to.

Unique Skill(s):

Builders likely began their careers as engineers for one kingdom or another but came to discover other ways to use their talents that would be more financially (perhaps more personally) rewarding.

As such, builders have very specialized Skills. For each of the following, the builder has a Skill level of 3 by default, and two of these Skills are unique to her.

Design [Will] – Unique

The builder can imagine complex forms that are both aesthetically pleasing and thought-provoking, even beguiling in their splendor and sophistication. This Skill has nothing to do with practicality of the things the builder puts on parchment. It is about making a statement, generating an emotion, or satisfying a request. How one threads a complex needle of wants and dreams, both theirs and others’, and comes out on the other side with a thematically strong design.

Devices [Intelligence]

Builders who specialize in the design of dungeons invariably develop expertise in the creation and setting of specialized locks and traps. Though mundane and mechanical in nature, these instruments can prove confusing and lethal to those who encounter them.

Engineering [Intelligence] – Unique

Builders must wear two or three caps through the course of their work: One which is concerned with the form of things, and another which determines how to make something function. This Skill supports the latter, vying with the form of a design and setting the right construction and materials to support it.

The Necromancer

Necromancy is one of the oldest schools of magic, appearing a mere two centuries into what is now referred to as “The Arcane Era”. Though shunned by society for their ability to raise the dead and turn them into everything from deadly servants to simplistic automatons that wave at people as they enter buildings, Necromancy has long been the magical art of the economically minded.

That is, they make money. *Lots of money.*

Officially, via the creation of dungeons or jails to house criminals without any need to pay for guards; or unofficially, by creating elaborate ruins in the middle of nowhere and cleverly propagating narratives about ‘lost civilizations teeming with gold’ or ‘rising evils from a time that predates the written word’ in order to lure adventurers inside, kill them, and sell their stuff after.

Inspiration Question: Are necromancers always evil ‘mad scientist’ types?

No. Necromancers tend to be well-educated, which requires being able to hold a conversation with less aligned individuals. Further, they are often trained in combative arts, as their undead are subject to their own know-how and abilities. That is, a necromancer cannot encode an undead creature to do something that she doesn’t know how to do herself.

Players are free to create a necromancer however they like, but there’s no inherent reason to imagine them as antisocial or creepy outside of a Player’s preference. In fact, being among some of the wealthiest individuals in society, necromancers tend to be part of social circles ordinarily only dreamt of by other arcane casters. They may not be liked in those circles, but somehow they still get invited to fancy parties.

As for ‘evil’... There is historical precedent establishing necromancers as generally self-serving and cold. Though this is by no means required to be a necromancer, the ability to raise the dead and turn them into servants tends to erode a natural part of civilized society: The perspective that death is an end – and a sad one. Where everyone else sees loss, a necromancer sees opportunity.

Special Characteristic: Raise Undead

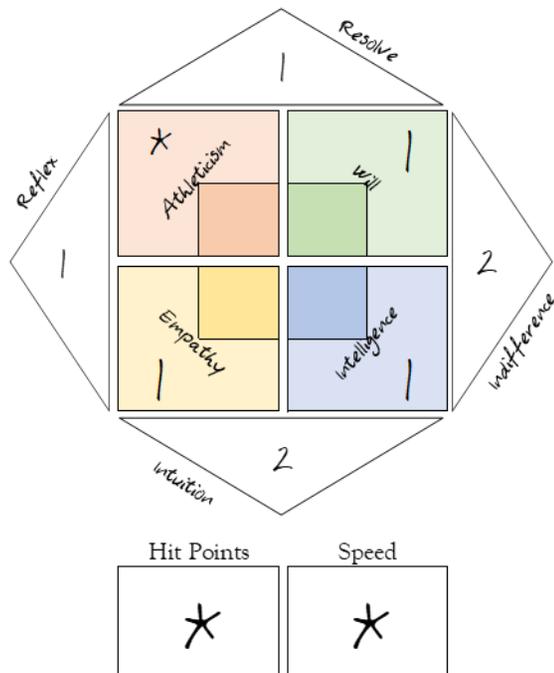
First, let's address a myth: Undead are not evil, nor are they predisposed to do anything upon being risen. If a necromancer were to raise an Undead and fail to activate either form of control covered below, it would do nothing but stand in place and quietly decay for decades.

Active Control

Active control allows a necromancer to raise a recently fallen creature – dead within a week – and utilize its body as an extension of her own Skills. To do this, she must perform a Necromancy roll versus a Resistance of 12. The Margin represents the number of Rounds the necromancer can maintain control of the Undead before the constant flow of information and influence burns out what's left of its brain.

For each actively controlled Undead, the necromancer must sacrifice 1 Will to maintain control of it. Once the Undead burns out, or is released from active control, the reserved Will instantly returns.

After being raised, an actively controlled Undead has the following Stats:



The Undead's Athleticism, but also Hit Points and Speed by extension, is based on its Athleticism prior to its death. If it had a 3 in Athleticism, it has a 3 as an actively controlled Undead. To determine an Undead's Hit Points, simply multiply the Athleticism by 10; to determine its Speed, multiply its Athleticism by 10 and reduce it by half.

Thus, the actively controlled Undead with a 3 for Athleticism has 30 Hit Points and a Speed of 15 feet. The Undead has a Condition called Lumbering, which accounts for the Speed, as well as why Athleticism does not apply to its Reflex or Resolve Saves.

When an actively controlled Undead attempts a Skill of any kind, it operates off the necromancer's Skill level with the Aperture widened by 1 for each Undead under active control. An Undead cannot cast magic, even if it were able to while alive.

All communication between the Undead and its necromancer is one-way: The necromancer is able to communicate to her Undead, but the Undead cannot communicate in any way back to the necromancer or to anyone else.

Passive Control

A necromancer's true bread and butter, passively controlled Undead are what allows her to generate swarms of Undead with which to populate dungeons, ruins, or any other location. In this form of control, Undead are encoded with behaviors to perform via a ritual that takes 5 minutes for each behavior included. Once encoded with these behaviors, the Undead receives no further communication from the necromancer and is not under her influence in any other way. As such, this form of control does not necessitate the reduction in the necromancer's Will, thus freeing her of active control's normal limitations.

Defining Behaviors

Behaviors can be thought of as 'If-Then' statements and are generally simple in their construction. Examples of behaviors are:

- If you don't see anyone, walk down the hallway until you do*
- If you see someone, kill them with your weapon*
- If someone is wearing a red sash, leave them alone*
- Etc. and so on.*

Undead are incredibly simple creatures: If they aren't encoded for a behavior, they will not perform it; if they are encoded to do something, virtually nothing – save another behavior – can stop them from doing it. If an Undead comes to a door but was never told to open them, it will treat it as an impassable wall. If a behavior tells it to kill anyone in a room, it will kill even its creator.

Some quick notes for clarity sake:

- ❖ Undead naturally stand. If they are knocked down, they will get up without any behavior telling them to do so. No one knows why, but it's one convenience necromancers take advantage of.
- ❖ Undead performing the same behavior will do so in packs, veering from their current direction in order to create a line with others, and execute their tasks in the most direct and convenient manner possible.
- ❖ Undead can stumble their way downstairs but cannot go up unless a behavior tells them how. Similarly, ladders are a behavior-only thing.

Encoding Behaviors

To start the ritual encoding behaviors into an Undead, the Player must create a list of behaviors she wants to include to the Guide prior to rolling. These should be in order and numbered. No matter what happens during the process of encoding, the Player must attempt the total number listed, even if one or more of them are unsuccessful. Once the total number of behaviors have been attempted, the Undead will rise and cannot be changed further, nor can it be actively controlled.

The first behavior listed has a Resistance of 7 and each subsequent behavior's Resistance increases by 2 over the prior one. Thus, encoding 5 behaviors would require rolls against Resistances of 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15 in that order. Given this pattern, necromancers tend to frontload the most vital behaviors and leave luxuries to the later ones.

If the necromancer changes a behavior from the one listed or changes the order, each change will widen the Aperture of that roll and all upcoming rolls. If a behavior is complex, including any variation of 'and', 'but', or other caveats or qualifiers, the Resistance can be raised by the Guide based on the added complexity and widen the Aperture of that roll and all subsequent rolls as well.

All changes in Aperture stack, regardless of the outcome.

The Final Product

Once the Undead's encoding is complete, it will act upon its behaviors without hesitation. It is never tired, confused, afraid, or in pain. If it loses a leg, it will crawl to achieve its purpose; if on fire, it will march on until its structure gives out.

And it will do so for centuries, until the magic empowering its actions can no longer support its movement and it freezes in place like some demented statue.

Passively controlled Undead have the same stats as actively controlled but act as Untrained on any Skill they attempt, unless that Skill was encoded to match the necromancer's Skill level as one of its behaviors. As with actively controlled, passively controlled Undead are incapable of casting magic.

Unique Skill(s):

Necromancy [Intelligence]

Beyond the ability to create and control undead, necromancers are traditionally taught a variety of spells centered around poison, famine, and forms of necrosis. The primary theme of their spells is to kill without causing structural damage to the body, as it immediately allows them to convert a fallen adversary into a resource in battle.

When casting a spell, the necromancer must roll Necromancy, add her Intelligence to it, and compare it to the spell's Threshold. As with other actions in APERTURE, Margin must be generated versus the Threshold for the spell to be cast.

Spells

Cloud of Decay

The necromancer calls upon ancient creatures' decay, summoning it to the surface in the form of a noxious, green cloud. Anyone caught within the radius must make a Resolve Check. A successful Save in one Turn grants immunity going forward.

For each Turn the Cloud is maintained, the necromancer's Intelligence score decrements by 1 - returning in full upon its dismissal.

Threshold: 11
Casting Time: 1 Skill
Damage, Turn: Intelligence of caster
Range: 60 feet; 10-foot radius from origin
Save: Resolve vs Action Score

Corruption

Targets are seized by a dramatic, somatic sense of loss and despair. Those who fail an Indifference Save suffer 1 point of Attribute damage, as chosen by the necromancer prior to her Threshold Check. If this decrease leads to the Attribute going to 0, the Target(s) is dazed for 1 Turn, unable to take any Action.

Threshold: 13
Casting Time: 1 Skill
Damage: Selected Attribute score goes down by 1
Range: Moves from one Target, to the next, etc. until 60 feet has been traveled by the spell's effect.
Save: Indifference vs Action Score

Famine

The target's body convulses with hunger, as if on the brink of starvation. Unless the target succeeds at a Resolve Check, she suffers excruciating pain and damage.

Threshold: 7
Casting Time: 1 Skill
Damage, Turn: Intelligence of caster
Range: 60 feet
Save: Resolve vs Action Score

Plague

A virulent infection overtakes the area, permeating anything and anyone who passes through it. For every Round the plague persists and successfully infects at least one creature, the Save to avoid its effects becomes more challenging.

Further, the radius of the Plague increases anytime an infected creature attempts to leave the area, tracking it to every spot that they touch until their Save beats it.

For each Turn Plague is maintained, the necromancer's Intelligence decrements by 1 - returning in full upon its dismissal.

Threshold: 15
Casting Time: 1 Skill
Damage: Negative Margin of Resolve vs Action Score
Range: 60 feet; 10-foot radius; expandable by Target movement
Save: Resolve vs Action Score; +1 for each Round

The Transmuter

Practitioners of Transmutation are vital to a build for a number of reasons, from mitigating weaknesses in material components or making designs even possible, to setting unpredictable arcane traps that beguile or harm those who happen upon them. Beyond that, they are able to provide Undead created by their necromancer brethren with magical abilities through careful coordination.

Inspiration Question: Are transmuters underappreciated and underestimated?

Without question, the answer is yes. Their abilities allow them access to virtually any spell, power, ability, or trait in the world of Khylaron. Though some are temporary, or limited in use, the diversity of options makes transmuters capable of feats that would ordinarily warrant an entire group to perform.

The lack of appreciation stems from their dependency on other forms of magic, given Transmutation lacks any direct spells. But with Xen Transmutation's rituals and practice expanding into the west, a certain degree of respect and fear has arisen towards its practitioners that did not exist prior to Xenica's influence.

Special Characteristic(s):

Arcana Infusion

Either on her own, or in collaboration with another caster, the transmuter can imbue an object or location (representing a 5-foot space) with the essence of a spell. This allows the spell's effects to be triggered based on precise conditions

dictated by the transmuter at the time of infusion, even if the transmuter is incapable of casting the spell ordinarily.

Infusing a spell requires someone who knows how to cast it, either the transmuter or an ally, rolling her individual Skill against the spell's Threshold. As the spell begins to manifest, the transmuter captures its swirling arcanum and channels it into the object or location desired.

When infusing a spell, the caster must roll Transmutation, add her Will to it, and compare the resulting Action Score to the spell's Threshold. The amount of Margin generated defines the number of times the spell can be triggered via that object or location.

Given the spell has a Range stat, the transmuter must select how it operates in accordance with that Range. If it has a variable Target stat, what Target does it operate on? Etc. and so on. Any stat referring to the caster's Attribute operates off the transmuter's score for that Attribute. Any Save needed to overcome the spell's effects is defined by the Action Score when the spell was cast prior to infusion.

More than one spell can be imbued into an object or location, but any failure during infusion will corrupt the object or location's prior infusions and render them inert.

If the transmuter fails to imbue the spell properly, it can be dispelled instantly by its original caster, unless the spell explicitly says it cannot be dispelled.

Xen Transmutation

Xenica's contribution to the art was discovering how to transfer an otherworldly creature's special abilities to an object, location, or person. She found that non-Domatic entities had unique arcana coursing through their bodies and that she was able to channel that energy into native materials – even people.

She theorized that native creatures also have a unique arcanum, but ultimately concluded that it cannot be felt or harnessed by those with the same energy. In essence, what makes creatures from other realms different is what makes their powers noticeable and, therefore, transferrable.

In the years after, The Domatic Order pressured most city-states and kingdoms to ban all rituals related to Xen Transmutation, as well as any activities which might in some fashion support its practitioners. Most have publicly derided the practice, even passed sanctions against it, but there is some acceptance within the Order that various governments still practice it from time to time.

Revered by the Kharaké, Xen Transmutation is a source of great national pride and there is an officially sanctioned auction for such creatures within Niveh called "The Foreign Market", frequented by collectors and transmuters alike.

To perform a Xen transmutation, a non-Domatic creature must be alive and present, and the caster must roll Transmutation to discover the creature's arcanum, versus a Resistance of 12. As usual, Margin must be generated for the attempt to be deemed successful. If unsuccessful, the transmuter will have to wait 24 hours before trying again, as the erroneous sensations stick with the caster for hours after.

Often, transmuters will describe the arcanum of otherworldly creatures as a color or smell or taste – something that has a clear, somatic impact on their bodies. Once this sensation is discovered, something that resembles the sensation must be found and brought to the transmuter's location. This object helps the transmuter internalize what she is targeting.

Then, the caster must incite the creature to show the desired ability. This can be a dangerous step, as the targeted ability is often quite harmful in some fashion. Any failure to capture and redirect it could lead to the transmuter or others around her being injured, perhaps killed.

When attempting to capture and redirect it, an opposition roll is made: The creature using its ability versus a roll of Transmutation. If successful, the creature's body will tense up in the midst of its action and begin to wither painfully in place – unable to move. As with normal Transmutation, the amount of Margin generated determines how many times the power can be triggered once transferred.

At this point, the process of redirecting it takes a few minutes as the transmuter must enshrine the power into a glyph – across an object or location's surface, or as a tattoo on a person. The glyph may take any form the caster wishes; there is no set design.

Upon completion of the glyph, the creature will collapse. Dead before it hits the ground. Though Xenica and her followers spent decades trying to discover a way to circumvent this outcome, no alternative has been found.

If the opposition roll is unsuccessful, the creature's ability activates as normal, potentially threatening the lives of those in the vicinity. Further, this speaks to an inaccuracy in discovering the proper arcanum – and the caster must discover a more accurate sensation to target. Thus, the process starts over.

Note: The source of the Domatic Order's censure of the practice of Xen Transmutation is a mix of two things. One, its dogged attempt to stifle the spread of non-Domatic influence in the world of Khylaeon and its inhabitants; and two, the cruelty of the process and its conclusion leading to the creature's demise. Though the former often takes precedence over the latter, the latter still holds weight within the Order's members. After all, these creatures did not choose to come into the world – they were forcibly brought to it, either during the Summoning War centuries ago or by unscrupulous summoners since.

There is, however, another reason suspected by practitioners of magic beset by strong opposition: The Domatic Order perceives any threat to its social and political influence as grounds for censure and will market any reason to compel societies in which it operates to ostracize proponents of such practices.

Unique Skill(s):

Transmutation [Will]

Transmutation is one of the earliest forms of magic in Khylaeon. Ritualistic in nature and requiring extensive periods of time to perform and harness, it has no traditional spells to speak of. Thus, transmuters often supplement their education with other forms of magic, as it allows them to be more self-sufficient and protect themselves where needed.

However, this does not indicate a weakness in the art of Transmutation, as its practitioners are remarkably unpredictable. Given the right assortment of transmuted objects, a transmuter is capable of unleashing on opponents with any spell imaginable, and they often imbue traditional weapons with spells in creative ways to catch enemies off-guard.

There is a story, perhaps untrue, of a transmuter assassin who imbued a crossbow bolt with The Door Trick, a well-known Chaos spell. This allowed him to fire the bolt at a

door, which opened prior to impact, and hit his target through a doorway in a completely different building. The target – a noble of Doré – died from poison within the hour.

PREP WORK

Party Structure

One key decision that must be made early in the process is what the name of your group is. If you like, wait till after you've created your Characters, but it's vital to give your company a name.

The party should have at least one of each Profession. Additional Players are able to create a hybrid of two with the same number of total points to invest across the various Unique Skills of each Profession, or they can create a unique Character based on some combination of the available Skills. If the latter, the restriction of going no higher than a 4 in any General Skill (seen below) is removed.

Character Creation

With your group, decide which Profession each of you want to play. Take note of any Special Characteristics, Unique Skills, or Skill Bonuses your selected Profession gives you. Pay attention to any text associated with that Profession as well, as it is provided to give some sense of how such people operate and behave. Use this as a general guideline but not a rule – ultimately, it's your Character.

Discuss and write down a Character Concept. Be as comprehensive as possible in fashioning your own perception of the Character, as it will make the steps to follow easier. In addition, write down a Personal Goal for the Character of your own design, as well as a Shared Goal with your Party of 'The Build: Meet the Dynast and receive his requirements'. Write in pencil, as this will change.

Underline 2 parts of the Concept that you want to be things that stand out about your Character and act as her Special Characteristics alongside any gained via her Profession. These can be backstory, personality, physical traits, relationships to other Characters, whatever. Just things that make the Character interesting and excites you about playing that Character. Align with the Guide on the mechanical impact to each Characteristic.

Allocate 10 points across the four Attributes: Athleticism, Will, Empathy, and Intelligence. No Attribute can be lower than 1 or higher than 4 at this time, and you may allocate these points without buying into higher scores as noted by the *Progression* heading under Attributes in the Quickstart Rules.

Calculate your Hit Points by multiplying your Athleticism by 10 and adding another 10 to the result. This may go higher later on, depending on how you build your Character, but this is your starting point.

Allocate 10 points across the list of Skills featured below. As with Attributes, these points can be allocated freely without buying into advancements as in the *Progression* heading within Skills in the Quickstart Rules. Take note of which Skills are unique to a Profession, as well as Skills Professions get bonuses to. Such bonuses are applied before investing points. No Skill can go higher than 4 at this point other than those receiving bonuses, and none can go above 6 ever.

Now, you each have 60 Experience Points to spend however you like, following the *Progression* rules associated with Attributes, Special Characteristics, Skills, and Relationships. Only the Broker can invest towards Relationships using these points, as none of you is from Kharak and the Broker built her network in advance of arriving within Niveh.

- ❖ Not all Experience Points must be spent at this time, though they cannot be spent *within a game session* on anything other than Relationships.

SKILLS

The below are a combination of standard and unique Skills present in the game. Unique Skills require training to use and are italicized. Any Character with a Unique Skill must have some information in her backstory to explain where the Skill came from, and she is the only Character within the Party who can use it.

This list is not exhaustive by any means. If a Player creates a Skill that she would like to have for her Character, it should be allowed to be built into the game so long as it doesn't overlap with any of the below or create possible abuse.

- ❖ *Alchemy [Intelligence]*
- ❖ Animal Handling [Empathy] – *select animal*
- ❖ Athletics [Athleticism]

- ❖ Awareness [Empathy]
- ❖ Deduction [Empathy]
- ❖ *Design [Will]*
- ❖ Devices [Intelligence]
- ❖ *Domestic Magic [Will]*
- ❖ *Engineering [Intelligence]*
- ❖ Food & Drink Prep [Will] – *select type of food or drink method*
- ❖ Inducement [Will]
- ❖ Medicine [Intelligence]
- ❖ Melee Combat [Athleticism] – *select weapon type*
- ❖ *Necromancy [Intelligence]*
- ❖ Practical Magic [Any]
- ❖ Ranged Combat [Athleticism] – *select weapon type*
- ❖ Strategy [Intelligence]
- ❖ Subterfuge [Will]
- ❖ Survival [Empathy]
- ❖ *Transmutation [Will]*

Skill Definitions

Alchemy [Intelligence] – Unique

Alchemy is the pseudo-scientific art of crafting salves, potions, poisons, and other complex concoctions intended to achieve specific effects. Alchemical creations are not magical, but rather some combination of psychosomatic nonsense and nascent chemistry. As such, there are no immediate healing potions in the world of Khyleron, though some can speed the healing process noticeably.

When crafting a salve or potion, the Resistance is always 12.

Within alchemical practice, salves act as preventative care and provide resistances to certain effects. Mechanically, this translates to a bonus towards a specific Save without impacting the underlying Attributes. The alchemist's Intelligence score acts as the bonus to the Save, while the Margin represents the number of Rounds the bonus is present. Only one salve can be active at a time.

Potions are restorative in nature, helping its users to heal more quickly from injury or conditions than would otherwise be possible. The alchemist's Intelligence score acts as the per Turn heal, while the Margin represents the number of Rounds the heal will trigger.

Animal Handling [Empathy]

Animal Handling is the practiced interaction and management of a certain type of animal. The nature of management differs based on the animal selected, from one's ability to ride horses, to the skill one showcases when working in coordination with smaller creatures, such as dogs.

When prompting an animal to perform an action, Animal Handling is rolled versus a Resistance of 12, in Tandem with the animal's roll. Any Margin from the Animal Handling roll carries over to the Action Score of the animal's Skill roll.

In the case of a mount, Animal Handling is rolled on its own when forcing the animal to take an evasive action and rolled in Tandem versus a Resistance of 12 when the rider attempts to use a different Skill. As with the prior example, the Margin from Animal Handling would carry over to the Action Score of the Skill roll.

If the Action Score is below 0 due to negative Margin from the Animal Handling roll, the rider will fall off the mount and take damage equal to the negative Margin's value.

Athletics [Athleticism]

Athletics represents a broad spectrum of physical activities which require some degree of physical sophistication and practice to be accomplished in. These include, but are not limited to, climbing surfaces which offer minimal support, swimming across moving water, jumping across a canyon, etc.

General activities, such as running or climbing a ladder, do not require a roll of Athletics, unless the Character is being harried in the process of performing it.

Awareness [Empathy]

Awareness reflects a trained sensitivity towards one's surroundings and a keen sense for detail and nuance that the untrained would most likely miss. From noticing an odd flavor in the bowl of soup served to her as possible poison, to spotting a slight difference between the foliage and someone wearing camouflage among it, Awareness utilizes all five senses to keep characters from being harmed or taken by surprise.

It is common to use other Skills in Tandem with Awareness when attempting to identify specific things about one's surroundings, such as rolling Devices to note that a door is trapped or rolling Strategy to discover a perfect place to set an ambush.

Deduction [Empathy]

Where Awareness provides a mental picture of one's situation, Deduction conveys insight to the meaning behind things, from the possible reason for another person's behavior to

discerning connections between disparate things that in fact have a common source. Deduction is the ability to read motives and arrive at meaning beyond the superficial.

Similar to Awareness, Deduction is often supported by Tandem rolls of other Skills to further heighten the character's dedicated search for conclusions.

Design [Will] – Unique

Those skilled in Design can imagine complex forms that are both aesthetically pleasing and thought-provoking, even beguiling in their splendor and sophistication. This Skill has nothing to do with practicality; it is about making a statement, generating an emotion, or satisfying a client's request. How one threads a complex needle of wants and dreams, both theirs and others', and comes out on the other side with a thematically strong design that induces a specific response.

When rolling Design, the Player is setting a Resistance that must be overcome by the person experiencing it. In the process of setting the Resistance, the Player can define the emotional or psychological impact the design has upon those beholding it, as well as set a Condition that would be applied given the design triggers a Targeted Effect against the observer.

Devices [Intelligence]

Devices reflects one's education in creating, implementing, and disabling mechanical apparatus. Though this is often used for activities related to traps or locks, it is broader than that and includes knowledge of how any mechanical object or construction operates, whether isolated to an individual widget or to a complex chain reaction involving dozens of items.

Domatic Magic [Will] – Unique

The oldest and arguably most versatile form of magic in Khylaeron, Domatic Magic is trained exclusively within the Domatic Order to those with the natural inclination to excel in it and operates by controlling elements of the natural (or Domatic) world. Alongside its myriad of spells, it also affords those trained as Doma the special power of Censure. Censure allows the Domatic practitioner to select an opponent's spell and increase its Threshold, effectively cutting off its usage for as long as Censure holds.

Engineering [Intelligence] – Unique

Engineering is the understanding of how things fit together and how to identify possible weaknesses associated with structures intended to perform specific functions. Engineers determine the materials and means by which to achieve structures as designed, can look at

a construction and determine weak points to bring it down, or root-cause a design or structure to circumvent possible disaster.

Within “The Build”, Engineering is used to translate the design of each room in the dungeon into a bill of materials and technical designs for laborers to build to. When the Builder puts together a Design for a room, she then has to roll Engineering to determine the stability of the structure and how well it will, in reality, translate the Resistance set. When rolling Engineering, the Builder can roll Design in Tandem to account for her very personal understanding of the intended design and the principles it operates on.

At the end of the Design and Engineering rolls, the final Resistance of the Design is equal to its original Resistance or the Engineering Action Score, if lower.

Food & Drink Prep [Will]

Food & Drink Prep reflects a character’s aptitude with a specific preparation of edible or potable products. This Skill can be chosen multiple times, with each selection covering a different form of preparation. Preparation types are fairly broad, running the gamut from Frying and Grilling, to Brewing and Mixing on the other end. Thus, it denotes a method rather than an outcome, and one’s expertise with the method chosen.

Inducement [Will]

Inducement is about getting others to do what you want, whether driven by your words, demeanor, or a feint in combat to open up a vulnerability. The method by which the character attempts to induce someone should reflect that character’s general attitudes and motives, considering as many vectors as possible. If the Guide decides that a character is trying to induce someone in a manner that is unusual for her, she has the liberty to widen the Aperture on the specific roll.

Medicine [Intelligence]

Medicine is a fairly broad, generalized practice for supporting wellbeing at this stage in humankind’s evolution. A simplistic modus operandi for the practice of Medicine might be: Where there’s blood, close it; where there’s color, leech it; and where something is where it oughtn’t be, remove it and follow the earlier two rules.

Thus, it has historically been driven by primitive first aid principles. However, with more recent advancements, such as tools to perform blood transfusions, the ability of medical practitioners has improved substantially. Now, most procedures that we would recognize as Medicine are possible, minus any requiring electrical power to moderate or perform.

To stabilize a patient involves rolling Medicine versus a Resistance determined based on their condition (or amount of negative Hit Points). Thus, someone with 15 negative Hit Points would offer a Resistance of 15 versus the roll. Margin generated does not remove the Resistance in total; rather, it simply lowers or increases the Resistance. If 3 Margin were generated versus the 15, the new Resistance would be 12 (or -12 Hit Points).

A creature with Hit Points equal to 0 or higher will naturally heal Hit Points across a full day of rest equal to their Resolve Save. This can be sped up via alchemy or magic, but not by Medicine.

If a patient has -20 Hit Points, her heart has stopped. With -30 Hit Points, the patient dies with no chance of revival.

Melee Combat [Athleticism]

Melee Combat is a character’s expertise with a specific type of weapon and can be selected multiple times to diversify the character’s options. Usually choices are segmented based on whether they involve one hand or two, as in the following: Melee: 1H Swords 4. This follows similarly to how APERTURE treats Gear – ‘the right tool for the job’ – and any variation from this will cause the Aperture to widen.

Thus, a 2H Sword would cause the Aperture to widen by 1; a stick being wielded like a 1H Sword would widen it by 2. At worst, such adjustment causes the roll to be performed as Untrained.

Necromancy [Intelligence] – Unique

Necromancy is easily one of the most scandalous form of magic in Khylaron. As has been discussed elsewhere, Necromancy involves the creation of undead – with immediacy in the form of Active Control or more ceremoniously in the form of Passive Control – and a selection of spells that induce plague, poison, or famine. Despite being shunned by mainstream society, necromancers enjoy patronage and access to wealth as their abilities make them useful for the powerful and eccentric. Unbeknownst to most, necromancers and their allies are responsible for concocting a wide array of myths and legends to lure crusades and adventurers to their lairs.

Practical Magic [Empathy, Will, or Intelligence]

Across the length and breadth of Khylaron’s Arcane Era, some spells have become so formalized and perfected that they can be performed by virtually anyone with some degree of magical training. These spells belong to a young and thin grimoire referred to as Practical Magic and are known and usable by anyone with knowledge of another school of magic, as Practical Magic spells are often employed early in one’s instruction.

Ranged Combat [Athleticism]

Ranged Combat is a character's expertise with a specific type of weapon and can be selected multiple times to diversify the character's options. Usually choices are segmented based on the weapon's construction, as in the following: Ranged: Long Bow 4. This follows similarly to how APERTURE treats Gear – 'the right tool for the job' – and any variation from this will cause the Aperture to widen.

Thus, a Short or Composite Bow would cause the Aperture to widen by 1; a Cross Bow would widen it by 2, as some principles remain but much of the operation is distinct. At worst, such adjustment causes the roll to be performed as Untrained.

Strategy [Intelligence]

Strategy represents the character's knowledge of historical military practice and methods, as well the ability to recognize analogous situations in which to apply them.

In practice, this allows two things when rolled: 1) The Player can slightly modify the scene or setting by introducing an object or circumstance that can be used in some advantageous way; 2) The Margin generated on the roll (negative or positive) creates a Margin Pool around the party that must be used up by the end of their next rolls that represents the actual advantage or disadvantage this new element produces.

There is no avoiding the impact of the Margin Pool, as the element introduced will somehow, Final Destination-style worm its way into the party's life no matter what they do. The Players are free to allocate positive Margin however they like between themselves, while negative Margin is managed and allocated by the Guide.

The assumption of #1 is that this object or circumstance was always present but wasn't explicitly called out by the Guide when describing the scene; the assumption of #2 is that it's possible the character using Strategy misread the situation.

Subterfuge [Will]

Subterfuge is one's general ability to perform roguish actions, such as picking pockets, planting something on another's person or in a specific location, palming objects, or hiding one's motives or one's self entirely (stealth). It is opposed by the Skills Awareness and Deduction (when hiding motives or lying), as well as the Intuition Save, as Subterfuge is always against another creature.

Survival [Empathy]

Survival accounts for everything from navigating the world and identifying ideal locations for shelter, to tracking, fishing, and interpreting weather patterns to avoid storms. Those adept in Survival can live off the land and exist far afield from traditional civilization with minimal threat or discomfort.

Transmutation [Will] – Unique

As a school of magic, Transmutation has existed for hundreds of years, but has seen a recent revival following the introduction of Xen rituals and methods. Though lacking any spells outside of its core focus of imbuing spells, powers, and abilities into objects, people, and locations, transmuters are able to recreate virtually any effect desired and establish triggers that limit others' use of their creations and can be used to entrap or injure others in remarkably broad ways.

ASSETS

Weapons

The following statistics apply to any weapon that would naturally land within the description, though Players are free to highlight more granular details about the weapons at their Characters' disposal.

For example, the 1H Sword stats apply to all one-handed swords, regardless of whether they are more oriented towards piercing or slashing. Players can add a Special Characteristic to their weapons that identifies such details and lets the Guide know how they use it, as each type has its pluses and minuses.

For any martial Skill a Character has, assume the Character has one of that weapon type at their disposal from the start and is capable of affording another should something happen to it.

1H Sword

Skill: Melee Combat
Damage: +5
Momentum: 5 >> 15
Reach: Short (5 feet)

Special Characteristic(s): Piercing or Slashing. Player's Choice.

2H Sword

