

THE ARGOTHALD MANUAL

VERSION 5.0.6

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Introductions

Game

This manual is a blend of new material added in 2011-2013, and a world designed from 1977-1989. Chunks of text are cut-and-pasted from old computer files I created using programs that no longer exist.

I have a problem with brevity. I've worked on it. The more verbose the paragraph, the younger I was when I wrote it.

This manual is 67 pages long, and the other two rulebooks contain over 700 pages combined. *Don't panic!* And don't waste your time trying to read all of it: we're all learning a brand-new system; we'll make changes; most of the ~800 pages contain material irrelevant to players in the current Argothald campaign.

Here's how to navigate through the game materials:

- Start with "Campaign" on page 6; it's only one page. The "Nation" and "Town" sections (starting on page 7) are also helpful.
- If you don't want to absorb the rules, send me a description of your character and I'll fill in the character sheet for you. You can always change what you don't like.
- In the *Fate Core*¹ rules, read chapter 1, "The Basics." The character sheets are on pages 301-302, and there's a handy cheat sheet on page 304. I'll always have extra copies of these sheets handy, so you don't have to print them yourself.
- Other sections of *Fate Core* of interest to players are chapters 3-7, and chapter 11. You can read these rules ahead of time, or learn them as we play.
- *Legends of Anglerre*² is based on an earlier version of the Fate system. It's a reference for ideas and concepts ("What Burglary stunts might come in handy?").
- Back to the *Argothald Manual*: "The Fate of Argothald" (page 11) describes some of what I'm explicitly using (and not using) from the other two books.
- If you want to play a non-human, skim the section on the race you'd like to be ("Races" starts on page 19).
- Unless you are extremely devoted to game minutia, don't bother to read past page 29 ("Ogres"). It's material I wrote between 20-30 years ago. It was in the old *Argothald Manual* from 1988. I figured "what the hell," and tossed it in here.
- Exception: "Knighthood" (page 58) offers another area on which to attach an aspect.

There are gaps, inconsistencies, and errors in these rules. If we like to play Argothald, we'll work to fix the problems. Both the story and the game system are a collaborative effort. Together we'll make this a game we enjoy.

You are alpha-testing the game. Please excuse the bugs. Some of them are features. Others are giant insects trying to kill you.

Have fun!

¹*Fate Core* © 2013 by Evil Hat Productions, LLC.

²*Legends of Anglerre* © 2010, Cubicle 7 Entertainment Ltd.

Rules changes

Argothald has been a work in progress since 1977.

For about ten years I used a system that replaced ability lists with mathematical procedures.

In 1989 and 2011 we experimented with a D6 system.

In 2012 the players thought the earlier twenty-year-old system might be better. But even with modern tools like spreadsheets, the old system was too complex.

In 2013, I decided to swing in the other direction, and try an established system based on Fate Core with an emphasis on storytelling.

Changes in March 2013:

- Switching to the Fate Core system. The major manual version is set to 5.x.
- Any versions marked 5.0.x: Fix typos and formatting errors.

Changes in January 2014:

- Clarify the hierarchy between schools of magic within a path.

Changes in June 2014:

- Added a few notes on Ogre culture.
-

Campaign

You want to be a hero? You've come to the right place.

The world is Tala.

Long ago, the Civilization ruled the world. It was based on both the physical rules of science and the non-physical rules of magic. Something in Ironmaw Mountain made the combination possible. That secret is now hidden or lost.

Seven centuries ago, the forces of Chaos flooded onto Tala from another dimension. Everything changed, both physical and magical. Civilization ended overnight. Nine-tenths of the people perished.

The leader of Chaos is the Mekatrig. From his throne in the far south he dominates the world using the power of the Argothald ("Helm of the Evil Sorcerer King").

Some opposed the Mekatrig's rule. The most successful resistance was centered on Ironmaw Mountain. Their leaders resolved the principles of mechanics and magic that still worked despite the Argothald. Those principles are still in use.

The Ironmaw Resistance began shortly after the fall of Civilization. It grew strong over the next one-and-a-half centuries. Finally, the Mekatrig could stand it no longer. He left his throne and travelled for the first and only time, halfway across the world, to Ironmaw. He brought the Argothald with him. No one survived.

The Mekatrig returned to the south. He declared his punishment: The lands once freed by the Resistance were divided into small nations: the Twilight Kingdoms. A demon ruler controls each nation and rules it as he or she sees fit.

The Mekatrig found another use for Ironmaw. He has many punishments to control the teaming billions of his Chaos army. The cruelest penalty is to exile offenders into Ironmaw. The prisoners cannot escape. They can die of neither hunger nor thirst. No thought is given to who went before, who will go after, nor who shall prey upon them.

Ironmaw is in one of the smaller kingdoms, Aeykia. The demon ruler of Aeykia is Crytolos. He chose to let Aeykia fend for itself, with the exception of Grenn, the town nearest Ironmaw. Crytolos rules Grenn utterly: judge, jury, and executioner. If you are guilty, Crytolos eats you.

Crytolos eats people for punishment, not for nourishment. Once a month, he posts a list of a few people in Grenn who are to report to his palace, and will not be seen again. The food of Crytolos is the soul.

There is only one reason why anyone comes to Grenn: Ironmaw.

Ironmaw: mine, stronghold, prison. If you were not sentenced there, you can enter and leave freely, and seek its dangers and riches. Prisoners, exiled from their home worlds, still have their possessions. The desperate, the contemptible, and the criminal hide there to avoid pursuit. Some say the secrets of the old Resistance and the ancient Civilization may be found within.

In the past five hundred years, anyone who made a difference in the world, whose name became legend, visited Grenn and entered Ironmaw. You are an adventurer. Your chance to be a hero starts here.

Nation

The players start out in Aeykia. The King is the elf Bá-lon, often nick-named “the Harmless” in contrast to the nation’s last two kings, who were dangerous tyrants. The capitol of Aeykia is Merona, a city a few days to the west of Grenn.

Aeykia is a nation that lives on old dreams of lost glory. Most of the communities are insular and mind their own business, with trade limited to the bare essentials. King Bá-lon has tried to unite the kingdom for the past 20 years, but he’s paid little attention and even fewer taxes.

Getting around

With one exception, the roads in Aeykia are in poor repair. Most adventurers prefer not use them: those with unfriendly agendas, including spies for Crytolos, often watch the roads; foodberries are usually hard to find near a road. Adventurers like to travel through the wilderness, off the trails.

When you first travel to a given location, the GM will tell you how long it will take to get there. If you return to the same place, you’ll gradually learn the route and the travel time will be halved. For example, Castle Earthrock is a day’s journey to the north for first-time visitors; frequent guests can get there in half a day.

Caravan trail

The one road that’s kept in good condition is the main caravan trail. The Mekatrig mandated this centuries ago. No matter how poor the government of Aeykia, it keeps that trail open.

The caravan trail runs from the nation of Evermorn to the north to the harbor town of Freeport on southern coast of Aeykia. It does not pass anywhere near Grenn.

Caravan masters receive a great deal of respect, as they travel “on the Mekatrig’s business.” They do not discuss their cargo with outsiders. This does not prevent bandits from raiding them, but even the most successful raider finds nothing but the usual trade items.

Foodberries

The foodberry is a small red-brown fruit. It grows on bushes that are found throughout most of the Twilight Kingdoms. It is so named because people can survive a long time eating nothing but foodberries.

The taste is overly sweet and slightly brackish. You’ve tried foodberries cooked any number of ways to try to make them appetizing: roasted, in jams, baked in pies, sauces, stews. It doesn’t work. They still taste like foodberries. No one would eat them regularly if they had a choice.

If an adventurer tells you they’ve been “dining on foodberries,” it means they’ve had a run of bad luck and can’t afford to pay for meals. They’ve been forced to wander in the lands near Grenn, looking for foodberry bushes that have not yet been picked by someone else.

In other parts of the world, foodberries have acquired a reputation as a delicacy; you can’t imagine why. At times, merchants have traded foodberry preserves in exotic places distant from Aeykia. It’s said the people in the Technology grant big favors in exchange for foodberry jam.



Figure 1: Map of Aeykia; geography

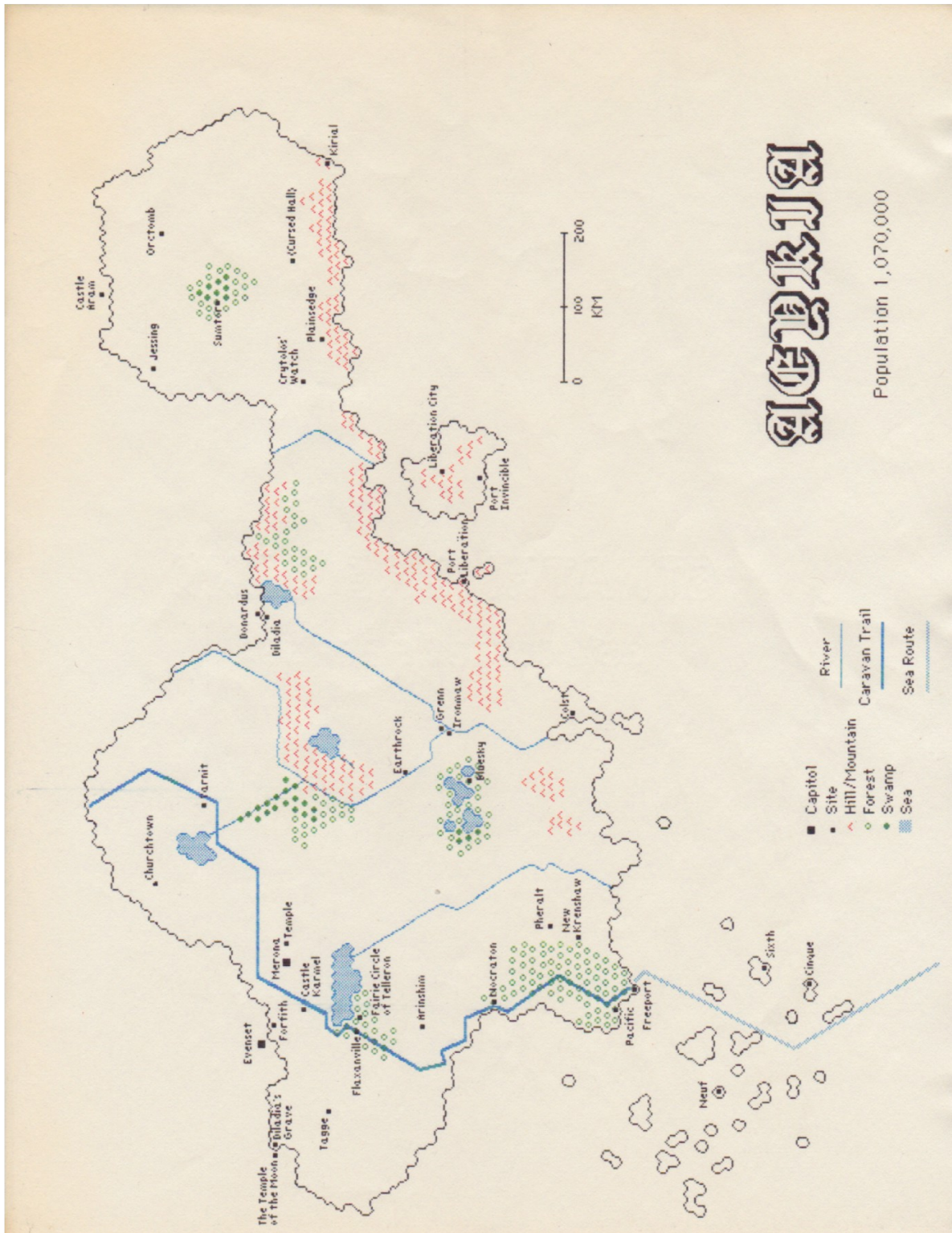


Figure 2: Map of Aekyia; places of interest

Town

Players start in Grenn. As described on page 6, the source of the town's importance is its location near Ironmaw.

The town's monthly broadsheet is *The Grenn Chronicles*. Finnegan the elf is the publisher. Crytolos' list of victims is found here.

Leaders

Crytolos shares the attributes of all demon rulers: the ability to travel to anywhere in space or time with a single thought; a cruelty mandated by the Mekatrig; more than one peculiar hunger. He resides in his palace, which dominates the landscape of Grenn.

Your ruler is always available for an audience, if you wish to see him. Appointments may be made via his chief assistant, Scred.

Scred is known for his ability to influence Crytolos. Fortunately Scred takes bribes. Unfortunately, the bribes must be in platinum.

The mayor of Grenn is Pollux "the Mold," a successful merchant. It's mostly an honorary position, as there are few important decisions he's permitted to make.

Taverns

There are several taverns in the town. The most significant are:

The Platinum Pin, a favorite among adventurers. It's owned by Stephanos; the chief bartender is Springbuck.

The Blank Slate, where the drinks and life are both cheap. Its nickname is "Foodberries"; if that's what you're eating, then here's where you're drinking.

The Bag o' Gold, the fanciest place in town. Go there to show off how wealthy you are.

The Fate of Argothald

Resources and Equipment

Replacing “silver pieces” with the more abstract Resources skill may be a challenge. For now, let’s try this:

Using the Resource skill

- To keep spending from being completely unlimited, include the following rule modified from page 123 of *Fate Core*:
“Every time the character succeeds at a Resources roll, decrease the skill by one level for the remainder of that session. Whether they succeed or fail at a Resources roll at Poor (-2), they can no longer make any Resources rolls that session.”
- Treasure can be used to augment Resource skill rolls as described in chapter 21 of *Legends of Anglerre*. Pay special attention to the table on the bottom of page 262 of *LoA*; we may be using it a lot.

Buying stuff

When you’re at a suitable location, you can purchase the equipment listed in chapter 6 of *Legends of Anglerre*, with the following exceptions:

- All weapon and armor bonuses are halved, rounding up.
The reason is that LoA gives characters 5 physical stress and 5 composure stress. The new Fate Core rules give characters 2 physical stress and 2 mental stress, which can be augmented with skills. I think it’s better to keep the “scale” of the game the same as the new Fate rules to prevent combat from going on too long.
- There is no gunpowder nor a similar pyrotechnic chemical in the Twilight Kingdoms or anyplace else the players are likely to go. You can’t purchase grenades, bombs, Greek fire, etc.
- The only beast of burden available in the Twilight Kingdoms is the “yak.” It moves slower than a human can walk, but it can haul large loads continuously. Traders use them, but adventurers don’t because they’re a liability in fight and can only travel on smooth terrain. If you still want a yak, treat their cost and upkeep as a “cart” from the table on page 51 of *Legends of Anglerre*.
- It takes a Fantastic (+6) Resources roll to acquire platinum.

Skills

You can pick any of the default skills listed on page 97 of *Fate Core*. There are a couple of practical exceptions:

- Don't bother to pick Drive. There are no vehicles accessible to the players in the campaign.
- Instead of Drive, you can choose Seamanship or Riding. If you choose one of these skills, then your character has to come from outside Aeykia. However, it's not likely that either of these skills will be useful in the players' adventures.

You can use chapter 8 of *Legends of Anglerre* to get ideas for skills and stunts, but ask before you use any of them. Some of these skills are not relevant to the campaign, and there's no need to waste skill points.

Converting pre-Fate characters

For any of the characters generated in the 21st century, assume one significant milestone (see page 258 of *Fate Core*) for every rank above first.

In the unlikely case that the players want to bring back a character from the 20th-century game, assume one significant milestone for every rank above first, and for every new skill or spell researched; don't include enhancements or modifications. In addition, include one major milestone (*Fate Core*, page 260) for every new rank of spell or skill they managed to research.

The Paths of Magic

If you wish to be a spell-caster, include one the following paths as an aspect. You can then cast spells from schools within that path, and create skills from the schools.

The Path of the Elements

This is the path followed by spell-casters who wish to be active in combat situations.

Earth: The ground, soil, rock, stone, earthquakes.

Air: Lightning, clouds, winds, fog.

Water: Ice, storms, ice storms, parting water, waves, tides, rain, rivers, oceans, lakes.

Fire: Lights, fireballs, flames, heat.

There is a “rock-paper-scissors” relationship between these magical elements: Earth -> Air -> Fire -> Water -> Earth... Each gets a +1 bonus when used against the next one in the sequence, or a -1 penalty when used against the previous one.

For example, if you conjure a wall of air between yourself and another spell-caster, it will be weaker against a conjured hail of rocks, and stronger against a magical ball of fire. Against a waterspout there would be no special adjustments; only the skills of the spell-casters would matter.

The Path of the Sun

This path is followed by spell-casters who are more introspective and intellectual. The hurly-burly of swords clanging on shields is not for them.

Red: Life, health, healing, the body (human and animal), strength, zoology, curses, and blessings. This is a popular school of magic: “<Name> the Red Mage” is a common stereotype; a standard bit of battlefield advice is “Robes of red? Make ‘em dead.”

Orange: Ego, charisma, materialism, pride, self-confidence, courage, security, psychology.

Yellow: Lore, mind, nervous system, mathematics, philosophy, learning, theorizing, organization, technology.

Green: Fertility, creativity, beauty, art, botany.

Blue: Religion, psychic powers, spiritualism, social interactions.

Purple: Violence, lust, hate, fear, anger, ecstasy, politics.

As with the path of the Elements, there is a relationship of strength/weakness in the spectral order: Red -> Orange -> Yellow -> Green -> Blue -> Purple -> Red... Each gets a +1 bonus when used against the next one in the sequence, and a -1 penalty when used against the previous one.

The Path of the Moons

This is a path of subtlety, cleverness, and inspiration over direct action. It is often taken by spell-casters who don’t want to be identified as such.

Silver: Jewelry, gems, sailing, nocturnal creatures, mirrors, vanity, shame, and horror.

Gold: Treasure, flight, castles, chariots, and perfection.

White: Good, morals, ethics, defense, escape, love, and joy.

Black: Evil, slavery, condemnation, damnation, destruction, confinement, attack, hate, and pain.

Gray: Freedom, struggle, hope, despair, insanity, sanity, wisdom, deduction, induction, hiding, seeking, and sleep.

Music: Bards, inspiration, loyalty, courage, rhyme, rhythm, dance, song.

Unlike the paths of the Sun and the Elements, there is no special relationship between the schools in the path of the Moons.

Why “moons”? The planet Tala has three: Diana, Artemis, and Selene. Their periods are about two days, a week, and a month respectively.

The Path of the Ancients

The schools in this path were once the most potent schools of magic, and the most severely affected when the Argothald came to Tala. The path of the Ancients can at times be more powerful than the other paths, but its effectiveness is dubious.

The ancient path is still practiced today, handed down through the centuries by an apprenticeship system. Most of the practitioners have patrons, either royal houses or orders of knighthood, since these studies are expensive and time-consuming. However, these masters of the classic arts grow fewer with each passing decade. It’s now hard to find someone willing to become an apprentice sorcerer or necromancer.

Before the fall of Civilization, these were some of the most potent schools of magic:

Dæmonology: Based on summoning of creatures from another dimension. The Mekatrig forbids this ancient art.

Sorcery: Creating creatures from innate magical forces in nature.

Necromancy: Magic derived from death and the dead.

Alchemy: Magic derived from the substances of the world. This is one of the most commonly practiced ancient magics.

Prophecy: The art of divination.

There were other, less-common forms of ancient magic: *oneiromancy*, which was magic through dreams; *taromancy*, which was magic through cards; *bibliomancy*, which was magic through books or scrolls; and others.

A special mention should be made of *theurgy*, which on Tala is interpreted to mean magic by invocation of the Architect. It is an unsuccessful form of magic practiced only by Architect worshippers. It’s said that the only successful result of theurgy is the Theurgist’s Amulet, which allows the wearer to monitor the thoughts of the Architect as he designs his next world. It’s also said that the Amulet does not exist and is nothing more than an idle boast of a long line of unsuccessful theurgists.

If you wish to follow a school within the path of the Ancients, then your aspect should include where or by whom you’re being instructed. You may at most pick one school within this path.

Be forewarned: To cast any spells in the paths of the Ancients will probably subject you at least one compel or mental stress. Either failing badly or succeeding with style can have strange consequences. The forces involved are mercurial, and the GM’s decisions will reflect this!

Common magical tasks

Here are some typical magic spells found in other systems, and where they fall in the categories above:

- *Healing*: the Red school, in the path of the Sun. For an example of a Healing skill that can be used as a Red magic spell, see *Legends of Anglerre*, page 107; add +2 to the difficulty for healing fairies.
- *Detecting or identifying magic*: the Yellow school, in the path of the Sun.
- *Creating magic items*: the Silver school, in the path of the Moons. Typically this must be combined with the Artificer skill.
- *Detecting treasure*: the Gold school, in the path of the Moons.
- *Shape-shifting*: On Tala, this is an ability possessed by fairies and some creatures from other worlds. No spell-casters possess this skill.
- *Transmutation*: Again, this is not normally found on Tala.
- *Flight*: Some creatures have this ability (including adult dragons, fairies, and griffins), but spell-casters can't do this.
- *Charm*: There is no single spell with which you can simply cause another being to obey you. There are several schools (Orange, Blue, Purple, White, Black, Gray, Music) that can cause emotional states that you can use to influence others.
- *Summoning* (creatures, elementals, etc.): Sorcery, in the path of the Ancients.

Chapter 9 of *Legends of Anglerre* can be used as a source of ideas for magical skills and stunts, but ask the GM before using any of them not discussed above. Many of those powers have no use or purpose in Argothald.

Invoking the gods

If you wish to join (or start) a religion, include that as one of your aspects. You can select Prayer or Clergy as a skill, declaring that you have a formal rank in a religion; be sure to create an aspect that reflects this. Or you can treat Prayer as a Mediocre (+0) skill, and spend your skill points on other things.

You then have the option of donating Fate Points to your deity. Every time you receive a Fate Point (through refresh, a compel, etc.) you can donate it instead.

Keep track of how many FP you give to your deity. The more you donate, the greater your chances for divine blessings and assistance. Keep in mind that the more powerful the deity, the less likely it will respond to an individual request for assistance... but any response will be more impressive.

Before you bring a god to a knife fight, there are many things to consider:

- Typically you would attempt to invoke a deity by creating an aspect that relates to it. For example, if you want the Holy Flame to be present and lend its aid, you might create the situation aspect ***This Place Is On Fire***.
- Your deity functions as an extra (*Fate Core* page 270) with roughly as many Fate Points as you've put into it... provided it hasn't used those FP for something else.
- Your deity has motives and goals of its own. The description of Spirits (page 32) may help you understand what those goals are.
- The worst opponent of someone who worships a god is another worshipper:
 - If they worship the same god as you, the deity may be reluctant to choose sides.
 - If they worship a different god, the deities will be more interested in each other than they are in you. If one deity is clearly weaker than the other (e.g., a named god such as Odin is more powerful than an abstract god like the Holy Flame) then the weak one will probably make a swift retreat.
- You summon a deity, confident it will smite the unbelievers... and their response is to convert. ("Oh Holy Flame, fight on our side instead of theirs, and we will burn down the entire village in your name!")
- If you switch deities for any reason, all the FP you've spent on that deity are gone. You do not get them back if go back to your old religion.
- You can be a polytheist and worship multiple deities, but you'll need to set aside an aspect for each one. Or you can worship a pantheon, but you won't get the same kind of response that you would from focusing on a single deity within that pantheon. The deities of Tala are rarely accepting of polytheism, and it's not a good idea to summon more than one at the same time.

Places of worship

In other parts of Tala, you can learn the paths of magic (page 11) in schools, colleges, and universities. In the Twilight Kingdoms, including Aeykia, the custom is to offer magical training through religious institutions. This custom is so strongly ingrained that some of “churches” (the House of the Loremaster, for example) are actually schools with a thin veneer of religion slapped on to make them more acceptable.

There are more religions in Grenn than in any other town in Aeykia, possibly the world; adventurers are good customers, and any town with Crytolos in it needs a lot of prayer.

The temples offer many services: resurrections, healing spells, magic item analysis, divinations, and instruction. A temple can also be a place to meet people, make contacts, listen to rumors, gain information, learn about quests, and buy unusual items.

You are not forced to select a belief for your character. In fact, it’s may be a bad idea for a brand-new character to join a religion, since it can reduce a character’s options. For example, many religions require membership in exchange for favors and blessings; if you’re already in another religion you can’t get the blessing.

If you want to join a religion, choose carefully. You only learn the full rites of a religion after you join, so it’s possible to be stuck in a religion whose practices you don’t like.

The temples are also where adventurers can learn, research, and practice. Normally this is not an issue, but if your character becomes a total pariah to all the temples in Grenn, you may not be able to purchase any new skill points when you reach a significant milestone (*Fate Core*, page 258).

The religions in Grenn can be found elsewhere. Many religions don’t have temples in Grenn. All religions in Grenn are based on the “new” gods.

- *Savers of the Soul*: led by Hanala, Mistress of Dark Magic. This temple functions as a “House of Healing” as defined in *Legends of Anglerre*, page 52:
 - This temple is of Legendary (+8) quality: they can even restore you if you’ve been Taken Out... if you can manage a Legendary Resource roll and a recovery time of three months.
 - The Resources roll required is increased by 1 to heal or restore a fairie.
- *Church of Death Everlasting*: led by Necros, Master of Fate. The Church offers the same services as the Savers of the Soul, except:
 - The Resources roll required for healing is decreased by 1.
 - If you make use of the Church’s services, you must join them.
 - The Church of Death Everlasting does not usually perform resurrections; that is, they don’t restore you if you’ve been Taken Out. Instead you become a servant of the Church.
 - The Church does not accept fairies, since they have no souls to serve the Church after they die.
- *Temple of the Red Blade*: led by Somatan. The Temple is popular among fighting adventurers.
- *Church of the Sacred Frost*: led by Frieda, Sage of the Ice.

- *Church of the Holy Flame*: led by Phrygus, the Fire Mage. In the past, Phrygus has been friendly to adventurers, perhaps because he was an adventurer himself. Phrygus is Frieda's father.
- *Agora of the Sky*: led by Air Mage Elevos.
- *Temple of the Void*: Leader unknown. Found in Grenn irregularly, since it travels randomly through space and time.
- *House of the Loremaster*: led by Doctor Skyring. Since Skyring suffers from mental illness, his assistant Fara handles most of the House's duties. If you're interested in becoming an apprentice in the path of the Ancients, you look here first.
- *Temple of the Way*: led by Enlightened Master Enduring Lotus.
- *House of Peace*: led by Lady Ambassador Helena. The House is known for its ability to send messages throughout the Twilight Kingdoms.
- *The Church of the Ancestor*: led by Elron. He is an expert on demon rulers, Crytolos in particular. He charges one gold piece per sentence of useful information.
- *The Temple of the Holy Rain*: led by Lemuel. For some reason, there are two gods of the Holy Rain, Aquarius and Aquaria.

Races

Choices

Roll once on Table 1 using Fudge dice. This determines your range of choices for your character's race.

If your character does not start in the town of Grenn, ask the GM for a race table for the region in which the character starts.

Table 1: Race generation

If the result is between...	then you can pick...
-4 to +4	Human
0 to +4	Elf
0 to +4	Dwarf
+2 to +4	Fairie
+3 to +4	Young Dragon
+3 to +4	Spirit *
+3 to +4	Ogre
+3 to +4	Griffin *

** As of Mar-2013, these races aren't yet available as player characters.*

Aside from human, the race you pick becomes one of your aspects. You can then pick skills unique to that race.

Humans

The most numerous race on Tala.

Beliefs

When the world was created, the Architect assigned humans to worship these "named" gods: Zeus, Hera, Dis, Hephaestos, Ares, Artemis, Hermes, Dionysus, and Poseidon. Humans did not stick to their assigned religious duties for long, and worship spread to the deities and forces worshipped by other races. They even started creating gods of their own. Humans are responsible for creating most new religions.

Elves

The elves are a race of people searching for perfect union with the world. Taller and slimmer than humans, they always appear to be on the verge of change, as if they are about to become part of their surroundings. Elves are graceful and move quickly; they are known for their skills in dance and archery. They are always polite: it makes their insults twice as deadly.

Nature sense

Elves are in tune with nature, and are able to sense changes and abnormalities in the natural world. This sensing ability can detect rock, water, life, some forms of treasure, and danger. It cannot detect magic. The range of this sensing ability is three meters (ten feet). Elves can use the sense on what they can see; they can sense through doors but at half the range.

This sense detects dangers only when the danger is immediate. An elf will not sense danger if there are orcs with swords on the other side of a door, since it is not definite that the orcs will attack and pose a danger to the elf. An elf will sense danger if there is poisonous gas on the other side of the door, or if there is a troll who specifically intends to kill the creatures on who are standing on his doorstep.

The Life of an Elf

Elves are raised in large group families. In their youth, elves pick a type of tree (e.g., beech, larch, oak, pine, willow) and consider themselves friends to that type of tree. As long as elflings are near their tree, they cannot be lost and always know their way home.

Every elf has a critical choice to make in life: to pick a “center.” The center is the basis for the elf's entire existence; elves have the potential be transformed as they achieve perfect union with their centers. Many elves follow the paths of their elf-sense and pick an element of nature as their center: wood-elves transform into their tree-friends, and watch over their fellow trees; sea-elves become aquatic, and swim in the depths of lakes or oceans; rock-elves become columns of stone, strengthening and enriching the soil; air-elves become like clouds, and flow with the winds. Some elves pick an animal for their center: there are wolf-elves, swan-elves, deer-elves, tiger-elves, etc.; they preserve and protect their fellow creatures.

It is even said that a few elves can choose the stars for their centers, and become one with the stars. But star-elves, if they exist, have never returned to share their secrets.

Elves can choose the practical world for their centers. Some choose leadership and politics; they become the rulers of nations. There are those who choose fighting as their center, and become great warriors. Others choose a particular art or craft, becoming smith-elves, mason-elves, dance-elves. An example of an exotic center is the choice of Finnegan, who found his center publishing the newspaper, *The Grenn Chronicles*.

However, not all elves find their centers. For elves, the tragedy is not to ever find a center, but to pick the wrong one, or for elven mates to discover they have different centers. Many elves spend decades deciding what their center is; some of these elves, in their search for a center, become adventurers.

Elves are interfertile with humans, but the offspring are also human; there are no half-elven.

All elven adventurers are assumed to be still searching for their centers. It need not be the elf character's primary goal, but the player should keep it in mind. When they have a chance, the player should pick a tree-friend for the elf character.

Social Organization

Some elves choose the family and the rearing of children for their centers; they become the heads of the elf families. The families raise the children of any elves who cannot raise their own; for example, the offspring of two air-elves is a normal elfling who cannot be reared in the clouds. Any child, elven or not, who is found on the doorstep of an elf family house is welcomed and cared for.

Because of their crucial role in maintaining the elven race, the elf-families are also the focal point of elven politics. The status of an elf family is determined by its size; a junior family may have only twenty members while a senior family may have three hundred or more. It is the senior elf families who are the leaders of the elves. They protect the elven traditions, especially the right of an elf to seek a center, and they preserve elven art and literature. The elves still talk with pride about the elf-family Redmourn, who were wiped out defending a museum from barbarians.

The senior family with authority over Aeykia is the Skyshield family. Since they are located in western Narlorn, Aeykian elves are cut off from elven politics.

Beliefs

The Architect assigned the elves to worship the following gods: Jupiter, Juno, Pluto, Vulcan, Mars, Diana, Mercury, Bacchus, and Neptune. The elves are more compliant than humans in following the Architect's wishes, but elves have been known to follow other deities.

Elves who pick religion as their center normally become priests in one of the above religions.

Elven characters

Elves may put skill points into "Nature sense" with the general abilities described above. They may also create a future aspect for their choice of center, but this may only be done once and cannot be undone. They may also create aspects, skills, or stunts that relate to their particular tree-friend. The Survival skill (page 111 of *Legends of Anglerre*) is not limited to elves, but given two guides of apparently equal skill, most people will pick the elf.

Dwarves

Dwarves are shorter than humans; they range in height from three to five feet tall. They are stocky and strong for their size. Dwarves are proud, practical, and deal with the immediate realities of life.

Stone sense

Dwarves have a sensing ability similar to that of the elves. While the elves sense natural things, dwarves sense changes and differences in the artificial. They can detect unusual constructions, hidden traps, secret compartments, and so forth. Like elves, they cannot sense magic. Their sensing ability works under the same rules as the elven sensing ability.

Each dwarf picks a type of rock (e.g., mica, pumice, marble, limestone, basalt) and considers that rock to be a friend. When dwarves touch their rock-friend, they can sense the shape and direction of that vein of rock no matter how far it extends.

When they have a chance, the player should try to pick a rock-friend for the dwarf character.

The Life of a Dwarf

Dwarves are a proud, brave, and stubborn people, easy to take offense and slow to forgive. As warriors, they are fierce and unrelenting. As diplomats, they are clumsy and uncouth. The mild, calm, placid dwarf is rare to see.

Dwarves can carry on feuds for a long time. You cannot underestimate the malevolence of a dwarf when they declare that someone is their enemy. They feel that no trick is too low, no lie too wicked, no deed too evil as long as it causes the downfall of a foe. A dwarf is capable of pretending love and friendship for years until their opponent has let their guard down. This character trait has not made the dwarves well liked, but it encourages people to stay on the dwarves' good side.

Dwarves are extremely good with anything artificial. Their hands have short, stubby fingers, but their skill with tools is unrivaled. Dwarves are in great demand as builders, forgers of weapons, and makers of artifacts. However, dwarves will never forget if their payment is short by even a copper piece. They are scrupulous about setting a price that is exactly equal to the value of their work, and any attempt to cheat them is regarded as a personal insult to their skills.

Dwarves love nature, but their skill with the artificial is matched by their clumsiness with the natural world. Apart from rock sculpture, dwarves cannot improve the beauty of the world; they can only admire it. A dwarf, encountering a deer in the forest, is as likely to offer it a haunch of meat as any other food; the dwarf may then beat the deer to death when it refuses the meat.

Dwarves and Elves

Another dwarven trait is their dislike of elves. They don't consider the elves to be their enemies, but they don't offer them friendship either. Elves don't particularly dislike dwarves, but it's hard to return friendship for distrust.

Three reasons are offered for the dwarves' unfriendliness. The first is the dwarven explanation: The elves don't like it when dwarves cut down tree-elves or mine rock-elves to make artifacts. However, the elves have never raised any objection to this; in fact, they freely purchase such items.

The second explanation is the elven one: Dwarves resent the elves' ability to sense nature and become one with a center. Dwarves would dearly love to be able to do this, and are envious of those who can. However, the dwarves deny that they desire to be like elves.

The third explanation is one accepted by most non-elves and non-dwarves: Dwarves still hold a grudge against the elves from the time of the Barbarian Wars, but it's been so long that the dwarves have forgotten the cause. Only the grudge remains.

Whatever the reason, a dwarf may speak politely to an elf, but rarely with civility.

Social Organization

The dwarven social unit is called the family, but unlike elves each dwarven family is a ruling community unto itself. Most dwarves live in their family community. Every dwarf can trace their lineage back to their family's founding members. There are two dwarvish family castles in Aeykia, the Castle Earthrock and the Orc tomb Mansion, but not all Aeykian dwarves belong to those two families.

If dwarves mate with elves or humans, the result is a short elf or human respectively. Such offspring are not automatically part of the dwarvish family they were born in. They can become member of a family, as can anyone else, by proving themselves to the satisfaction of the family heads. However, this rarely happens.

Beliefs

The Architect assigned the dwarves to worship Odin, Frigga, Hela, Fafnir, Tyr, Freya, Hermod, Frey, and Thor. Most dwarves are not religious, but those who are almost always worship one of these deities.

Dwarven characters

Dwarves may put skill points into "Stone sense" with the general abilities described above. They may also create aspects, skills, or stunts that relate to their particular stone-friend. Dwarven characters should consider picking an aspect that relates to a grudge, feud, or special loyalty. The Artificer skill (page 70 of *Legends of Anglerre*) is not limited to dwarves, but given two craftsmen of apparently equal skill, most people will pick the dwarf's work.

Fairies

Fairies look like humans with two beautiful iridescent wings extending from their shoulders. They can have the ability to change their size, ranging from a maximum of 7 feet to a minimum of an inch. They can change themselves into small birds, insects, or woodland creatures. They cannot bear the touch of cold iron.

They have no souls, and are resistant to gods and healing spells (page 16).

Changing Size

A fairie character may choose a size-shifting aspect. If your fairie character does not take this aspect, pick a fixed height between 7 feet to 1 inch.

The “normal” height for a fairie is about six feet. They can enlarge to a maximum of 7 feet, but if they grow above three feet they immediately shed their wings and cannot fly. There is a limit to how much they can grow or shrink: A fairie cannot grow more than twice the minimum height the fairie was during the past day, nor shrink below one-half the maximum height the fairie the past day.

Fairies are automatically prevented from enlarging or shrinking to a point that would kill them. This protection works even if the fairie is unconscious or does not want it to work, and no matter what means are employed to grow or shrink the fairie. For example, if a fairie were inside a 1-foot cage, and either intentionally or through a spell tried to enlarge to 2 feet, the fairie would grow to 1 foot and then stop.

The body of a fairie can change size, but normal clothes cannot. Each fairie owns a fairie robe that changes size with them, but is no better than ordinary clothing for protecting against weapons.

Flying

At half-normal height or below, a winged fairie may use the Athletics skill (*Legends of Anglerre*, page 73) and the Flight stunt (*LoA*, page 118). For every factor of two a fairie is below half-normal height, the Athletics skill gets +1 bonus.

A fairie’s wingspan varies in proportion to height, from six feet when the fairie is three feet tall to an inch when the fairie is at minimum height. A fairie cannot fly nor grow back their wings when more than three feet high.

Fairies may voluntarily shed their wings at any time, not only when they enlarge above three feet. It takes a month for shed wings to grow back. Once shed, the wings slowly dissolve and become a pile of dust after three hours. If exposed to running water, they dissolve instantly. A fairie’s wings, while attached, take about five hours to dissolve if they’re continuously immersed in water.

Changing Shape

A fairie character may select the Power of Transmutation (*LoA*, page 136) with limitations:

- They can only turn into creatures that can normally be found in nature: squirrels, badgers, woodchucks, and so forth.
- They must be of the same size as the creature into which they transform. This is especially useful combined with the size-shifting aspect.
- They can turn into a winged creature (bird or insect) if the fairie normally has wings. In other words, the fairie can only turn into a flying creature if the fairie can fly.

- The creature must be non-predatory; it cannot be a type that could seriously harm anyone. A fairie of the proper size could change into a swallow, pigeon, parrot, sparrow, sea gull, butterfly, moth, or bee, but not into a vulture, eagle, hawk, mosquito, emu, ostrich, black widow spider, etc.
- In their altered state, a fairie can talk to other fairies, or to creatures of the same species. This does not mean that those creatures will have anything interesting to say.
- A fairie can change shape no more than three times per day. Changing into a sparrow, changing back into a fairie, and changing into a sparrow again is all the shape-shifting the fairie can do in one day.

When fairies change shape, the fairie robe is part of the transformation. A fairie can arrange to have the robe dyed in a certain way so the colors or markings on the robe appear on the creatures the fairie changes into. Any tailor knows how to do this; the cost depends on the complexity of the dye job.

When fairies change into animals, they are vulnerable to any animal-control abilities. They remain vulnerable to iron as described below.

Cold Iron

The bane of every fairie is cold iron. If fairies come into contact with iron or steel, their skin begins to burn and they are paralyzed with pain. Because of the paralysis, any amount of cold iron that can affect a fairie at all can be fatal unless the fairie is rescued.

In general, any iron or steel weapon gets a +1 bonus when it damages a fairie, unless the fairie's armor completely absorbs the damage.

The smaller the fairie, the worse the effects of iron. For every factor of two below normal height, an iron or steel weapon gains an additional +1 bonus. This means that if a one-inch fairie comes into contact with steel, he or she will immediately suffer an extreme consequence or be taken out.

Souls

Fairies do not have souls. They are proud of that fact, and would not have souls if they had a choice. Fairies feel that someone has a soul because, without one, that person could not distinguish good from evil. A fairie knows what is right and wrong without a soul, and makes free, independent choices based on that inner knowledge. To assert that a fairie needs a soul is to assert that the fairie must be imprisoned to deal with life.

That is the reason for the important fairie custom that applies to all people, not just to other fairies: No one may say "thank you" to a fairie. To thank them is to imply that they did something from a sense of obligation, which is a result of having a soul. Fairies do things because they want to, not because a soul forces them. Thanks may be exchanged between close friends or lovers, but to give thanks casually to a fairie can mean that an entire circle will declare a blood feud against you.

The rule about giving thanks also applies to directly paying a fairie for services. To pay a fairie, leave the money on a table, turn away, and let the fairie pick it up. But don't try to avoid the fee; fairies are just as greedy as anyone else.

To dicker on a price with a fairie, suggest what you want to the fairie, then leave half the fee on a nearby table. If the fairie does not pick up the money, you'll have to put more money down. To barter with a fairie, put down your goods; the fairie will put down what seems to

be a fair exchange. Each side alters what it has put down until the barter reaches its conclusion: either you pick up your own goods or you pick up the other's.

A god or disembodied spirit cannot perceive a fairie; there is nothing on the spiritual plane for a god to see. Fairies are immune to spells cast by gods that have no physical effects and they are immune to being cursed by gods or religions. In turn, fairies cannot sense the presence of gods or spirits.

Social Organization

Fairies have the most complex social castes and customs of any race on Tala. Many prejudices were discarded in the past, but every fairie inherits a background of social turmoil that is not yet dead. Only a fairie can understand all the complexities and histories of the social classes. The relationships between classes are so complex that there exist social classes with no surviving members.

To represent this, when two fairies meet they roll Fudge dice and take the difference between the result to represent the degree of the social gap between them, with 0 meaning no difference and 8 being as estranged as it's possible to be within fairie culture. Fairies with a "gap" of 2 or more will be social rivals. Each will continually attempt to prove that their social class is better than the other's by playing elaborate ego games.

If you see two chipmunks chattering at each other in the woods, it might be that they're competing for a food cache. Or they might be two fairies in an complex battle that's lasted for years.

The social unit of the fairies is the circle. There are only seven fairie circles on Tala. The one with jurisdiction over Aeykia is the Circle of Telleron, and almost all fairies in this circle have Telleron as their personal hero. Each fairie circle contains at least one member, if there are enough left, of each social class.

Beliefs

Fairies do not have a religion; they know there is no afterlife for them. Instead they have a form of hero worship. Almost every fairie chooses one hero from the past to be a personal hero. To a fairie, the hero represents the triumph of good over evil, of right over wrong, of fairie freedom over the tyranny of a soul.

The four major fairie heroes are Felena and Melissa, who were female, and Menelon and Telleron, who were male. Menelon was an evil fairie magician who did many wicked deeds. Felena was a fairie warrior who, through personal example and a few blows to the head, converted Menelon to the ways of good. Together they had a daughter, Melissa, who became an evil magician like her father. Telleron, also a warrior, converted Melissa to the side of good through force of argument and some dirty tricks.

A player is not required to select a hero for a fairie character, nor does the hero have to be Felena, Melissa, Menelon, or Telleron. The hero should be someone the fairie character respects and can aspire to emulate.

Fairies are interfertile with humans, elves, and dwarves. The offspring have a 50% chance to have each of the following attributes: wings, size change, shape change, sensitivity to cold iron, and lack of a soul. "Souled" fairies are soiled fairies; they are excluded from fairie society. Otherwise half-fairies are socially considered to be full fairies, even if they are brought up by non-fairie relations. The half-fairies and their non-souled descendants are watched over by the local fairie community; one never knows if one has a fairie godparent.

If a player wants to consider the possibility that their non-fairie character has a fairie godparent, the GM will roll Fudge dice; if he rolls a +4, then the character has no soul (and so can't be easily healed, can't be seen by gods, etc.). The GM will then privately determine if the character has a fairie godparent.

Fairie Tales

Fairies are excellent at telling stories that enthrall children. There is no child who has not read at least one book of fairie tales.

Here's one such tale: According to human legend, somewhere in the world there is a hidden fairie kingdom. This kingdom is filled with wealth and treasure; the streets are paved with gold, the castles are walled with silver, the people dress in diamonds. It's ruled over by the King and Queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania, whose authority is superior to that of any fairie circle. If anyone with a soul looks upon the kingdom, they will be forced to stay there forever or be blinded; if a souled one eats any food there, they are incapable of leaving.

However, if you ask a fairie about the legend, they either say that it's all nonsense or they say, "Sure, kid, sure, a kingdom with lots of treasure. Just leave a pile of gold on that table over there and maybe you'll learn where it is."

Dragons

The word “dragon” is derived from “children of Drake,” the original god that forged dragons without permission of the Architect. Except for sea-folk, they are the youngest race on Tala, but they are the wisest and most magical of all the races. Even their breath is magical.

Dragons come in two forms, young and adult. Young dragons look like humanoid lizards, ranging from four to seven feet tall, with thick, long tails about four feet long. Adult dragons vary in shape, color, and size; they never stop growing. Their natural lifespans are extremely long; no dragon is known to have died of old age.

Young Dragons

Young dragons are bipedal, scaly, have non-prehensile tails, decorative fangs and claws, and range in color from grey to brown to black to green. Despite their appearance, young dragons are physically weak due to their immaturity. They are prone to injury and disease; only one-tenth of those who leave their nest ever return to it.

A female dragon lays eggs once every ten to twenty years. There are about ten eggs to a clutch; an average of two hatch. For their first 15 years, young dragons are educated by their parents and by other dragons in their nest. About half pass the tests of adolescence and are allowed to leave the nest and explore the world. Young dragons who don't pass are not allowed to leave; they are cared for, but they never mature and they die after about ten years.

Young dragons are kicked out of their nest with a “sink-or-swim” attitude. They can do whatever they like: explore, study, run a business, rule a country, conquer a continent, or even become an adventurer. Young dragons are not fertile, and may dally with young dragons of the opposite sex with no risk of offspring.

Young dragons acquire as many abilities as they can over the next 25 years. The abilities they learn during this period are the base for the more powerful abilities the youngster will gain at adulthood. No skill is too minor, no detail too petty, no ability too trivial for a developing dragon.

As they near the end of their 25 years out of the nest, the young dragon's wrists and elbows move further up their arms, and their ankles and knees move up their legs, which begin to enlarge. Finally, wing buds begin to form. When that happens, a dragon will close out all affairs and return to the nest. A dragon who does not return to the nest in time for the final maturation process can be permanently deformed.

No dragon will harm another dragon. A young dragon, no matter how rash or impetuous, will never hurt nor slay another of his kind, and an adult dragon will never slay any youngster. This restriction does not apply to non-dragons in the same group as the youngster.

Only young dragons may be player characters. If somehow a player's young dragon matures within the time-frame of the campaign then the player loses the dragon as a character.

Adult Dragons

A young dragon returns to the nest at an age of about 40 years. The next 10 years are spent fully maturing in mind and body. The physical and mental skills gained while young are greatly amplified when adult. Adult dragons finish their adolescence completely formed in

tooth, claw, tail, and breath, but continue to grow at an asymptotic rate for the rest of their lives. The average length of a newly-adult dragon is about six meters from nose to tail; a two-century-old dragon is usually about thirty meters long. Adult dragons usually mate within a century or two of becoming adult, and mate for life.

Drake, the god of the dragons, prophesized that no single creature will ever defeat an adult dragon. In the millennia since the prophecy, Drake's vision has remained true.

Dragons, as a race, worship Drake and Worm, the male and female gods of dragonkind. Dragonic legend states that the dragonic race came from the Great Drake-en Swamp in the Southern Continent, and that Drake and Worm live there still.

Dragons live in large group homes called nests. Traditionally, nests are located in the mountains, but some are elsewhere; it's said at least one dragon nest is underwater. Any dragon would commit suicide rather than reveal the location of any dragonic nest. The only people who know the location of any nests are the griffins, who also live in the high mountains. Griffins and dragons are close friends, and no griffin would reveal any dragonic secrets.

It is said that the dragonic language is so complex that only a dragon can learn it. Dragonic has an interesting property: Every statement made in dragonic is true. It is impossible to lie in dragonic.

The entire race of dragons often organizes itself into gigantic research endeavors, called Great Projects. A Great Project may involve from 60% to 90% of all dragons, young and adult. The current Great Project is to discover how to travel between dimensions and planes of existence. For that reason, many dragons joined the Chaos Army of the Mekatrig just to see what the Pathway is like.

Dragon characters

Young dragon characters can choose a Magic Breath. The nature and effects of the breath may be anything agreed upon by the player and the GM. Fire is a popular choice, but that should not restrict the player's imagination. The dragon is not actually breathing the substance; he is opening a special gateway into a private universe filled with nothing but that substance.

A dragon's magic breath is a skill that can only be used once per scene, and only a single target. A dragon's player may also create a stunt that involves the shape of the breath's effect and the positions of targets within a zone; for example, a **Line of Fire** stunt that can be invoked if you can get an aspect such as **They're all lined up**.

At the start, young dragons must have at least Average (+1) Will and Fair (+2) Lore, and cannot be given any points in Might or Physique. They can add points to these skills later, as the result of significant milestones.

Ogres

Jan-2011: I'm including ogres in these rules, because I like them. However, I don't want to introduce them in the campaign yet. They are powerful in combat, and I'm not sure if their weakness to magic compensates for it. Before you start begging to be one: ogres are too big to travel in the corridors of Ironmaw.

Mar-2013: The Fate rules make it easier to re-introduce Ogres as player characters. I want to wait until we see how the game works with the "standard" characters. Note that their abilities have not yet been converted to the Fate system.

Ogres are taller, stronger, hairier, and less intelligent than humans. They range in height from eight to ten feet tall.

Ogres are strong, and they are good at simple physical combat; however, ogres are unaware of their great strength. They are gentle, inoffensive, shy, and stubborn; they don't like to change their point of view. Their primary values are stability, consistency, honesty, and reliability. Ogres are easily confused and angered by deception. They can't stand practical jokes. Normally, ogres live separately from the other races in their own villages, since other races feel uncomfortable around them. There are few ogres in Aeykia due to the persecutions of King Krenshaw, and there are no ogre villages there.

In war, ogres are respected opponents; they are in high demand as infantry units in the armies of most nations. However, their brain-to-body-mass ratio is smaller than that of the other races, so they are not adept at magic and other mental disciplines. They learn slowly, but they don't forget what they know. In dark times, ogres are the last to give up the knowledge they have gained; ogres can be the most civilized group in a land whose society has collapsed.

They do not have the weapons training the other races have. A typical Ogre aspect is ***They're All Clubs To Me.***

The social unit of ogres is the council. At least one member of each ogre village is a member of an ogre council. A council meets about once every five years or when necessary. If ogres feel a need for a council, one will go around to all the nearby villages and collect the council members; then they all sit in one spot and talk until the matter is decided.

Ogres are not interfertile with other races.

In the same way that humans are related to elves and dwarves, ogres are related to gorillas, chimpanzees, baboons, etc. These other races are not as intelligent as ogres. They live in remote forests and jungles and never interact with outsiders.

Male ogres worship the god Ogrus, and female ogres worship the god Ogra. Some Ogres believe that these are the names of the messengers in the story of "stand true" (see below).

"Stand True"

Ogres tell a story about two villages, one to the north and the other to the south. The north village sends a messenger to the south village. The messenger is told not to take one step to the east or west, but to head directly to the other village to deliver their message. At the same time, a messenger is sent from the south village to the north village, with the same instructions. In some versions of the story, the messengers are engaged to each other, and the message is permission for them to get married.

The two ogres meet between the villagers. They both obey their orders. They look at each other. They both “stand true.”¹ And so they stand to this day.

To “stand true” is therefore the highest of Ogre virtues: to be faithful to the mission and to never waver. Ogres will use “stand true” as a greeting, as a farewell, as a compliment, an in every other form of positive expression.

Since the story of the two Ogres took place long ago, it’s assumed that they’ve turned to stone by now. Therefore, Ogres look on a pair of tall stones as a sign of good luck, especially if they’re oriented north-south. Given a choice, Ogres will locate their villages near a pair of naturally occurring north-south pillars, or will put up a pair if none are nearby.

When Ogres choose to speak formally with each other, they’ll open the conversation with “stand true.” Formal Ogre speech involves much understatement: if something is good or agreeable, they will say it “stands true”; if something is bad, they’ll say it is “good.” To speak formally and say that something is “bad” is to be insulting.

¹This is the same story as *The Zax* by Doctor Seuss, only here the Ogres consider their behavior a virtue.

Spirits

Jan-2011: I include these rules because they include useful background information. I am not allowing players to have spirit characters yet, because I don't know how to implement some of their abilities in the current rule system in a balanced way.

Mar-2013: The Fate rules make it easier to re-introduce Spirits as player characters. I want to wait until we see how the game works with the "standard" characters. Note that their abilities have not yet been converted to the Fate system.

To discuss spirits, it is necessary to distinguish between the living, the spirits, and the undead.

Living things exist on both the material and the ethereal planes. Fairies are an exception; they only exist on the material plane.

Spirits are dead; they exist only on the ethereal plane. Spirits interact with the material plane via psychic energy and ectoplasm. A spirit can be of any race, except fairie or dragon; fairies have no souls and dragon spirits have a special destiny.

Undead are creatures in-between living and spirit. They exist weakly on both the material plane and the ethereal plane. It is difficult to hurt undead by purely physical means, unless they have a solid physical extension (and therefore a weaker ethereal extension). The category of undead includes vampires, ghosts, ghouls, wraiths, spectres, banshees, will-o-wisps, zombies, and all the other things that make death interesting. "Undead" does not include spirits, angels, devils, or gods.

Development

When living beings die, their souls may choose to seek their destiny in the infinite, or they may stay near the material plane. If resurrections are attempted and fail, spirits will be wrenched so strongly that they will eventually choose to leave the material plane. If no resurrection spells are cast on a dead person, that person may become a spirit and continue to interact with the material plane.

A problem for spirits is that the motivations and desires that ruled them in life still rule them in death. As spirits learn and develop, they may leave such concerns behind and act more in the interests of the present than the past. Spirits, like other adventurers, gain new abilities through research and experience. The type of research they do depends on their final goal: angel, devil, or god.

To be an angel or a devil means to declare a permanent alliance with either good or evil. These beings are powerful as individuals; their existence does not depend on the beliefs of others. However, angels or devils are only individuals, unable to combine the beliefs of others to further their goals.

A few spirits try to walk the line between good and evil, choosing neither. This is a trap. Though such spirits may gain powerful abilities, they will have no motivation for using them. Instead of motivating others, they become motivated by others. Finally, the "neutral" spirit will do nothing but obey the orders of a mortal master. The first words they say to their new master are, "Your wish is my command." These spirits are called genies.

To be a god means to acquire powers both through research and through other people's beliefs. The more gods are worshipped, the more powerful they are. If gods are not worshipped, their powers weaken and they fade away. The goal of every god is to get at least one million Fate Points. At that point, gods become independent of belief and have an

almost inexhaustible supply of energy; they can do anything they want. Only one spirit is believed to have made it: the Architect.

The potential of an angel, devil, or god is practically unlimited. The difference is that the powers of a devil or angel are unlimited only in the long term (centuries); that is how long it can take to gain powerful abilities through experience alone. A god can gain power over the short term (decades); a god who gained a million worshipers overnight could use the new energy immediately.

Few spirits decide to be angels or devils. Almost all decide to try for godhood.

Note: The main difference between a devil and a demon: a demon is alive; a devil is dead.

Powers

Spirits cannot be killed, since they are already dead. However, the only way spirits can interact with the material plane is with their ectoplasm. "Ectoplasm" is a half-energy half-matter substance that spirits manipulate psychically. A spirit whose ectoplasm is destroyed or used up can't interact with the material plane. Spirits can't truly own or use anything material; all they have is their ectoplasm.

Spirits can materialize, in addition to their own body, as many kilograms of ectoplasm as their Power attribute. Spirits must materialize the same body they had in life; they do not have to materialize any physical injuries they had in life, but they must develop abilities if they want to change their appearance. Ectoplasm takes one minute per pound to materialize or partially de-materialize, so it can take a spirit a couple of hours to materialize.

Full de-materialization takes one second. De-materialized spirits are invisible, have no physical substance, and are immune to physical weaponry (though not to spells or magic weapons). De-materialized spirits can fly, but no faster than they can normally walk; they are actually walking in the ethereal plane. De-materialized spirits can walk through walls, but they cannot see in the dark unaided.

Spirits can only materialize objects that help them to maintain a physical reference to the material plane. Spirits can materialize torches out of ectoplasm, but they cannot materialize spheres of glowing light; they can, of course, develop glowing-light spells. A spirit can materialize an object and give it to someone else. The spirit must both maintain eye contact with the item and concentrate on its existence. If either stops, the item disappears.

Materialized spirits interact with living things just as if their materializations were real. Their armor, weaponry, and spell equipment must appear realistic to affect people. However, non-living things cannot be fooled. A spirit who tries to pick a lock with materialized lock-picks will get nothing.

A spirit has limited telekinesis. Spirits can move objects as if they were 50 times their actual weight. Spirits communicate by voice and telepathy. They may speak or telesend just to one person, or they may broadcast speech or thought in general, but they cannot send thoughts to, say, just two people at once.

Combat

Ectoplasm is part of the spirit for combat purposes, so if any ectoplasm is struck by a weapon it counts as damage to the spirit. While materialized, spirits take normal damage from non-magical weapons. When de-materialized, they may only be affected by magic and magical weaponry. They can only be affected by standard healing spells while materialized.

When a materialized spirit uses a non-magical ectoplasmic weapon, it is the victim's belief in the weapon that causes the damage. If the victim believes that the attacker is a spirit, the spirit's weapon will be useless.

They have as many hit points as their Constitution attribute, unless they research additional hit points. If their hit points go to zero, spirits are immediately dead; spirits have no negative hit points. Spirits can be resurrected, but the least expensive resurrection spell for spirits (4000 SP) requires the body of their slayer.

Magic

Spirits can use a magic item by taking its ectoplasmic essence. From then on, the original item is useless and the magic item is part of their own ectoplasm. They must keep track of how they materialize things from their ectoplasm from then on; if they use part of this magical ectoplasm for any other item, the magic vanishes from the ectoplasm of that item. They may materialize and de-materialize the ectoplasm of any of their magic items freely, as long as they don't use that ectoplasm for anything else.

Spirit Characters

From the start, spirits are sensitive to the beliefs and desires of the people around them. Everyone in a party of adventurers must be willing to have spirits along, or they cannot adventure with them. Also, there is a well-known rite called exorcism that creates a temporary region that a spirit cannot enter. Spirits can develop abilities to become immune to beliefs of others, but this bars them from the path to godhood.

Becoming a Spirit

All the rules that apply to spirits apply to characters who die in the campaign and become spirits, with the following additions.

No resurrection attempts may be made if a character is to become a spirit. Instead the character must make a Moderate difficulty roll using Spirit->Power; they're resisting the lure of the infinite. If they become a spirit, they retain the same abilities and skill points they had before dying.

If possible, new spirit characters should use the ectoplasmic essence of the same magic items they used to own. The player should role-play the spirit with the same desires and motivations they had when they were alive, with a greater intensity if possible. After they have been a spirit for a while, they can discard the remnants of their living personality and become a different person, if their player wishes.

Griffins

Aug-2011: Right now I'm not allowing Griffins as player characters. They are combat powerhouses in the open, and utterly useless indoors or in closed areas. I'm not sure if their weaknesses compensate for their strengths.

Mar-2013: The Fate rules make it easier to re-introduce Griffins as player characters. I want to wait until we see how the game works with the "standard" characters. Note that their abilities have not yet been converted to the Fate system.

Griffins have the heads, wings, and forelegs of eagles, and the body, tail, mane, and hind legs of lions. A griffin stands eight feet tall if upright; they are about five feet tall when on all fours and about six feet tall when sitting. Their average lifespan is 100 years.

Griffins cannot speak, since they do not have a fully-developed voice box; the best a griffin can manage is a screech. Most griffins can understand the common speech of humanoids, though they cannot speak it. Griffins are telepathic, but only within their own species. It is possible for a griffin to communicate telepathically with one other non-griffin, the griffin's companion. The only way they can communicate with humanoids and research abilities is through their companion.

The Life of a Griffin

Griffins mate for life. They clutch 1-5 eggs per year, but only 2% of these eggs ever hatch. During the first year, the young griffin is capable of attachment. The companion and griffin must be in close contact for several weeks for the bond to form, and the griffin's parents must agree to the bonding. With or without a companion, a griffin usually spends the first 10 years of life with the parents. Then the adult leaves the nest, and here the destinies of the attached and un-attached griffin diverge.

Un-attached griffins are called wild griffins. They have little contact with other races. They usually join the nearest griffin pride and stay with them for the rest of their lives. Prides fly high, wide, and free. They enforce the few griffinic laws; revenge is an important matter to a pride, especially vengeance for mistreatment of griffins. Rarely, a mated couple from a pride will leave it and arrange for their children to be attached.

Attached griffins lead more complex lives, suitable for role-play as adventurers. They stick by their companions constantly, getting involved in every aspect of their companion's lives. Griffins may learn skills, spells, and other abilities through their companions. They may both learn the same facts at the same time, but new abilities must be studied by the griffin through the companion; these abilities may not be learned by the companion at the same time. Both must take time out for either one to do research.

The range of a griffin-to-griffin telepathic link is three or four kilometers. The limit of a griffin-to-companion link is at least fifty kilometers, but each is always aware of whether the other is alive no matter what their distance. If either one dies the telepathic link dissolves after one week, even if the deceased is resurrected afterwards. Should a griffin's companion die or lose their telepathic link, the griffin will become wild after a couple of weeks and fly away to join the nearest pride.

Some griffins join the humanoid armies as cavalry. This job is mostly hereditary; the griffins do it because their parents did. The only weapon that can be used while on a flying griffin is a lance. The attack value of a lance depends on the rider, not on the griffin, so in most cavalry attacks the griffin swoops from the sky and attacks using claws and beak. The rider carries weapons to be used after dismounting from the griffin.

Wild griffins worship the established god Gryphon. Attached griffins usually worship the same god as their companion does.

Game Rules

A griffin's flying speed is around 10 miles or 16 kilometers per hour. Their wingspan is about 5 meters, so they can't fly in Ironmaw. Griffins can travel at one-third normal flying speed with a rider on their back, one-half normal speed when that rider is a dwarf. A griffin can carry no more than 150 kilograms and still fly. Griffins cannot handle weapons, or wear armor, and they can't walk more than one hundred meters continuously without becoming exhausted.

Griffins add +10 to their Strength, +5 to their Constitution, and +3 to their Dexterity. These attribute bonuses affect attack value, defense value, hit points, and the rest. The Strength and Dexterity is associated with their wings; they get these bonuses while flying and fighting in the air, but not on the ground. The beak and each paw can do 1D5 points of damage apiece; these damage dice are added together when the griffin hits in combat.

Griffins as Player Characters

Griffins must have a companion as soon as they enter the campaign. If another character is created at the same time as the griffin character, then the griffin player may select that character as the companion. If there are no new characters that the griffin accepts, then an NPC is generated who automatically becomes the griffin's companion. The griffin player may never play the character of the companion.

Cetacea

Aug-2011: Cetacea and sea-folk are in these rules due to an excess of cut'n'paste from my old game manual. There is no chance that the players will be starting new characters in the undersea kingdom of Nornla.

Mar-2013: Note that cetacean and sea-folk abilities have not been converted to the Fate system, nor are they ever likely to be.

Description

On Tala, all species of *cetacea* — including whales, porpoises, and dolphins — are intelligent people. There are a large number of cetacean species on Tala but they can be roughly categorized into four groups: porpoises, dolphins, killer whales, and whales. These correspond to dwarves, elves, ogres, and dragons respectively. Only dolphins and porpoises can be player characters.

For a list of the species of cetacea found on Tala, check any encyclopedia. Every species found on Earth is also found on Tala.

A cetacean has a superb sense of hearing. It's possible for a cetacean to hear a song sung by a whale on the other side of the world if conditions are right. Their hearing, combined with their versatile voice, makes a powerful sonar. However, using foam and other substances that absorb sound can confuse this sonar. The percentage chance of success of the sonar given below is for such difficult situations. Cetaceans have no sense of smell.

Cetacea are air-breathers, of course, but spells exist to enable them to breath water.

Every cetacean species has its own private language, but all share a common language called *cetacean*. Cetacean is a language no humanoid can learn, since the language consists of three-dimensional sonic pictures. Cetacea who associate with humanoids also learn the common humanoid language, but cetacea think it's flat and slow. The exception is dragonic, of which cetacea can speak a few elementary phrases.

Most cetacea are not fond of humanoids and will stay away from them. It's not that cetacea have a grudge against humanoids, they just think that humanoids are dull, stupid, unimaginative, and have no poetry in their souls. Dolphins and porpoises can tolerate humanoid slowness, however, and they enjoy playing and working with humanoids.

There never was any whaling industry on Tala. A few pirates have set out to kill whales for the valuable oils in their bodies, but on Tala this is murder and punished accordingly. Also, the whales would organize into temporary armies; whaling ships didn't survive long. There was one exception: Erebus the pirate ; adventurers can hear his story at any seaside tavern. Most cetacea worship the same established god, Orca. The exceptions are those cetacea that associate with humanoids; they often worship the same sea-gods as the local humanoids.

Dolphin and Porpoise Characters

The main difference between a dolphin and a porpoise is size. A dolphin is 8 to 10 feet long, while a porpoise is 4 to 6 feet long. A cetacean between 6 to 8 feet long is categorized as dolphin or porpoise according to similarity to other species.

A cetacean can swim faster than any humanoid, and possesses a built-in sonar. However, cetacea have no hands and can't wear armor or carry anything substantial; they have sensitive skins, and are precisely streamlined.

Here is a comparison between the attributes of a dolphin and a porpoise:

Table 2: Comparing dolphins and porpoises in game terms

	Dolphin	Porpoise
Constitution	17-30	3-16
Dexterity Bonus	+5	+3
Attack Value	Str+Dex+HP	Str+Dex+HP
Defense Value	Dex	Dex
Movement Speed	6 * Normal	6 * Normal
Radius of Sonar	3 meters	10 meters
Through a Solid	.75 meters	1.5 meters
Sonar Success	60%	80%
EP added to 2nd Rank	+750	+750

You determine whether you are a dolphin or a porpoise, after you have decided to be a cetacean, by rolling your Constitution attribute and looking up the result on the table above.

The sonar of a dolphin or porpoise can:

- “paint” three-dimensional images of sound in great detail for another cetacean.
- determine the shapes of surroundings even in total darkness.
- determine the internal structure of objects.

Designer’s note: The abilities of Terran cetacea are, in general, much better than what are given here. Some of the cetacean’s abilities were sacrificed in favor of increased intellect.

Sea-folk

Sea-folk are the youngest race on Tala; there were virtually none of them before the Argothald came. They are the result of a permanent magical transformation that can be cast on a humanoid or dolphin. Some sea-folk breed true, and they along with the occasional new victim of a shape-shifting spell continue the race.

Sea-folk are a solitary race. They normally associate only with each other, and even then they keep contact to a minimum. Sea-folk are known for their honesty, loyalty, faithfulness to an agreement, stubbornness, and their fierceness in undersea combat. They are water-breathers, but they can survive for a couple of days in air.

Most sea-folk are part of the Ocean Patrol, an armed force that maintains the security of the high seas. Anyone who wants to travel the ocean should arrange to pay the Ocean Patrol for its services; it's a well-known fact that mischievous narwhales can poke holes in ships that don't pay. The Ocean Patrol is nominally under the authority of the undersea kingdom of Nornla, but it's been centuries since Nornla tried to assert that authority.

There is a strange myth about sea-folk dating prior to their actual existence on Tala that contradicts their reputation. The myth tells of how sea-folk, singing pleasant songs, lure people to drown in the sea. Sometimes, someone will resist the lure of the song and pass a romantic interlude with a sea-folk of the opposite sex. However, most people consider this to be the fantasy of lonely sailors.

Sea-folk worship one of the named sea gods, Poseidon or Neptune, or one of the un-named gods associated with the sea.

All sea-folk have the upper bodies of humanoids and the lower bodies of cetacea. To determine the race of the humanoid half, re-roll on the race table. They can wear torso, arm, helm, and glove armor, and wield ordinary weapons, but they can't wear armor on their cetacean halves. Sea-folk swim at 3 times normal speed. Their Constitution is reduced due to their unnatural biology.

People

The humanoid people of Tala differ in appearance in from one region to another. The people in an area, including humans, elves, dwarves, fairies, and ogres share the same qualities of skin, hair, and face structure. The general groups are:

- The golden people of the Twilight Kingdoms.
- The parchment people of the Lands of Technology.
- The bronze people of the Eastern Continent.
- The onyx people of the Western Continent.
- The cedar people of the Southern Continent.
- The coral people of the Far South, who were probably destroyed when Chaos came to Tala.

The people of Tala don't attach much importance to the correlation between geography and appearance. However, if you travel beyond your country of origin, don't expect to blend in; they can tell you're foreign at a glance.

The groups described correspond to human racial differences on Earth. You may amuse yourself by trying to match the adjectives to terrestrial groups, if you wish.

Background

Note added Aug-2011: These descriptions of the planet Tala, its stories, and its history, were written in the decade prior to the end of the campaign 20 years ago. I'm including them because it's easy for me to cut-and-paste the material from my old documents. It's really for "Argothald junkies," since much of it is esoteric, poorly-written, and not relevant to what the players are likely to do now. (The same might be said of the stuff above as well.)

Mar-2013: Note that none of the following material has been converted to the Fate system.

Monsters

The majority of monsters encountered by players were once members of the Chaos army, a vast force located in the Demonlands of the Southern Continent. Members of this army can wander, desert, be imprisoned, or be chased away; some make their way as far as the Twilight Kingdoms.

Humanoid Monsters

The Chaos army contains all kinds of creatures from many dimensions. Some creatures are more common than others: the army's cannon fodder. These are the most frequent non-Talan creatures encountered, and they are listed below. Ghosts, vampires, banshees, and lycanthropes are listed because past events have involved these creatures.

Orcs

Orcs range from about four to six feet tall, have leering eyes, and permanent scowls on their faces. Derived from a primitive evolutionary stage, they are hairier than most other creatures, normally stand and walk with a slouch, and climb trees easily.

Goblins

These creatures range from three to five feet tall, have pointed ears, and tend to be portly. Goblins can move quickly on their small webbed feet. They adapt well to watery and marshy environments.

Hobgoblins

Hobgoblins are larger versions of their goblin cousins, anywhere from five to seven feet tall. Their feet are larger, but their ears are smaller and less pointed than a goblin's.

Trolls

Trolls are large, from six to eight feet tall. They differ from ogres in that they have little or no hair, and their heads join to their shoulders almost directly, with hardly any neck. Like ogres, trolls are strong.

Gnolls

These are thin, spindly creatures, ranging from four to seven feet tall. Gnolls have large eyes set in heads that seem too large for their bodies. They're weak in melee combat, but their spellcasters are powerful.

Gnomes

In another universe, these might be called halflings. These creatures look like small dwarves. They range from two to four feet in height, but unlike dwarves, gnomes are not good with their hands or at constructing things.

Kobolds

Kobolds are wrinkled creatures, somewhat wizened, with small, tiny eyes. They range from four to five feet in height.

Medusae

Medusae come from a matriarchal society, so most medusae the players meet are female. Their hair looks like thick, writhing, snakelike strands, whose magic radiance combines with their hypnotic eyes to cause one who sees a medusa's face to be instantly paralyzed. This is followed by complete muscular rigidity and contraction, and finally death. The medusae's radiance resists the onslaught of decaying bacteria. The net effect is as if the medusa's gaze turns one into stone. Medusae have the same height range as humans.

Giants

"Giant" is a generic term for any of the above humanoids who is more than ten feet tall. Their brain-to-body-mass ratio is low, so they are mentally and physically slower than their smaller cousins.

Vampires

This is a generic term for any undead being whose ethereal extension is weaker than their physical extension. Though a vampire has a strong physical extension, most of their powers are exerted through the ethereal plane: mind control, absorbing of life force, creating undead, etc. In addition to the kinds of vampirism native to Tala, there are different kinds of vampirism from other dimensions. Therefore, there are no fixed rules for the powers of a vampire. The only general rule is that vampires live off the life force of others to prolong their own existence.

Ghosts

"Ghost" is a generic term for any undead whose ethereal extension is stronger than their physical extension. In a counterpoint to vampires, most of a ghost's powers are exerted on the physical plane: moving objects, rains of blood, haunting of houses, etc. A ghost is created by a person who dies with an extremely strong emotion dominating their soul. Some mages consider ghosts to be pure ultra-violet magic.

Ghosts are often restricted to the area where they died or were buried. Ghosts have only so much energy when they come into existence. As they use their powers this energy level goes down and the ghosts become weaker until they fade away. Ghosts devote themselves to that one emotional commitment they had at death. The lifespan of a ghost is indefinite; if ghosts are left alone for a thousand years and do nothing during that time, then they have as much energy as when they died.

Banshees

Banshees are found in the Northern Twilight Kingdoms, in the remote reaches of the Encircling Archipelagoes, in the southern parts of the Eastern and Western Continents, and in the Farminglands. They take the form of an old, glowing woman who wails in the night. She mourns for someone who will soon die; it's said that it's impossible to escape the fate for which the banshee mourns. When the person dies, their spirit will be controlled by the banshee for several months. After the banshee is satisfied with the tasks of her servant, she will release it and mourn for someone else.

Other Undead

Ghouls, spectres, wraiths, skeletons, zombies, shades, will-o-wisps, shadows, and the rest are either variations on vampires or ghosts, or are the creations of vampires, ghosts, or

living spell-casters. Some of these creatures are native to Tala and others are from other dimensions, so there are no fixed rules for the powers of any of these creatures.

Lycanthropes

The general definition of a lycanthrope is a humanoid who can turn himself or herself into a beast. There are werewolves on Tala, but there are also werelions, weretigers, werebears, and so forth. Like vampires, there are lycanthropes native to Tala and lycanthropes from other dimensions, so there are no fixed rules for these creatures.

Blobs

Basic Information

Blobs are the simplest possible life-form. They are unintelligent, mobile masses of jelly-like protoplasm. Their behavior is constant: move to the nearest food, eat the nearest food, move to the nearest food again; if there's no food nearby, do nothing. A blob is completely described by its size, color, viscosity, and appetite. These factors are elaborated on below.

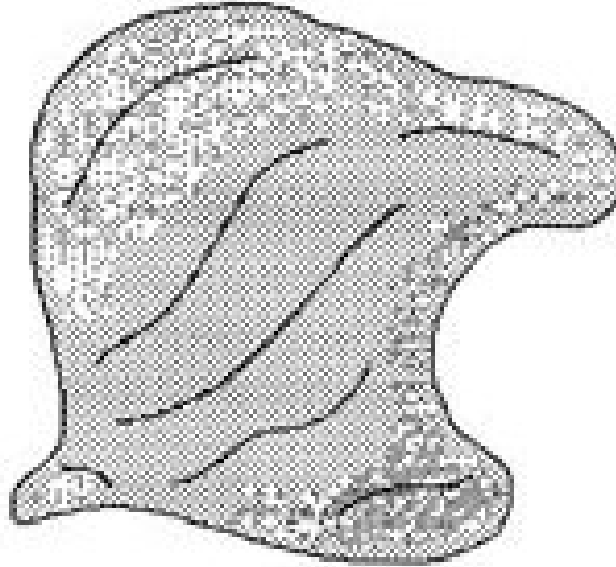


Figure 3: Elmer, a typical blob

Background

Most magically invoked creatures are based on something that existed before. For example, undead are made from spirits already present; demons are summoned from a dimension where they already exist. Blobs are the only creatures entirely created by magic.

Blobs were created by alchemists for military purposes. These alchemists established the blobs' color-coding. The blobs were easy to create and they lasted indefinitely, but they were difficult to control; military alchemists stopped creating blobs a thousand years ago. There are still plenty of blobs around; their population is kept up by their indefinite lifespan, a few interested alchemists, and the Temple of the Blob.

Players who want to create their own blobs must find someone to teach them; blob-making is no longer discussed in spell research books.

Types of Blobs

All blobs eat. They eat by using their protoplasm to engulf and dissolve their food. The main difference between blobs is what they eat. The nature of a blob's appetite is usually shown by its color. Both the appetite and the color are determined by the alchemist who creates the blob. The standard color-coding scheme is:

- Red — meat-eating. This is the most common type of blob. It eats any kind of living animal substance, including men, animals, and fresh meat. These blobs were used as

strategic weapons during wars, but they were unable to discriminate one army from another.

- Green — plant-eating. The second most common type, they eat any kind of plant tissue including wood. They were used to clear forests and jungles, but often the blobs themselves became bigger obstacles than the vegetation they ate.
- Brown — stone-eating. Used on castles and forts.
- Blue — metal-eating. Used to destroy the weapons and armor of the opposition. The majority of these blobs eat any kind of metal, but some have been created that eat only a specific metal. The most common restricted type is iron-eating but there are others, including the dreaded gold-eating blob.
- Pink — earth-eating. Used both for digging and for destroying farmland.
- Black — waste-eating. Used in outhouses and septic tanks. Some black blobs will also eat decaying organic matter such as compost heaps or corpses.
- Purple — magic-eating. These blobs have a “detect magic” spell instead of a sense of smell. Purple blobs will eat both magic items and spell equipment. Fortunately for adventurers, the blobs are rare.
- Yellow — fungus-eating. Used in specialized applications, such as destroying mushroom farms and ruining wineries.
- Grey — food-eating. Used to destroy rations and supplies of an opposing army. Grey blobs restrict themselves to the foodstuffs of humanoids.
- Transparent — salt-eating. Used primarily to turn seawater into fresh water. The problem with transparent blobs is that they’ll also ooze through living beings to extract the salt from their bodies.
- White — blob-eating. Used to get rid of the opposition’s blobs. If two white blobs meet, they unite to become one.

The color of a blob is entirely the option of its creator. Most alchemists created blobs using the above color scheme. There are exceptions, created either from perversity or a desire to confuse others. An alchemist may also create a new type of blob, e.g. leather-eating; such exotic blobs are usually colored orange.

The appetites a blob can have are limited to things distinguished by scent; for example, an alchemist could create a blob that ate only Sam the elf, or one that ate only Sam’s family, or one that ate only elves, but the alchemist could not create one that ate only people named Sam.

Another characteristic of blobs is their size. When created, blobs are usually about the size of a grape. As they eat, the mass of their food is converted directly into body mass. The more a blob eats, the bigger it gets; there is no limit to their size. A blob of a given size can absorb 10% of its own mass in food per minute. No matter what its size, a blob moves at half normal speed.

The remaining blob characteristic is viscosity. Most blobs have the consistency of jelly or ketchup, and can ooze through cracks in a wall. Some blobs have a lower viscosity, like a thin syrup; these can soak through porous materials. Others have the viscosity of warm tar or dough, and can’t ooze through anything with smaller gaps than a fence. The alchemist who creates it determines the viscosity of the blob. Blobs are thicker on cold days and thinner on warm days.

Life Cycle

All blobs begin their existence as the creation of an alchemist. At “birth”, they are an inch or two across. When created, they will immediately exhibit their standard behavior: head towards food, eat food, head towards more food, etc. Unless interrupted, they will continue to eat and grow indefinitely.

Blobs have only one sense: smell. Their sense of smell is very sensitive, since their entire surface area serves as a receptor for odors. To a blob, the strongest smell indicates the nearest food, so a blob moves in the direction of the strongest scent.

When a blob reaches food, it eats. It can absorb 10% of its own mass in food per minute, so a 20-kilogram blob that engulfs 4 kilograms of food will take two minutes to digest its meal. If the food fights back, the blob will attempt to engulf and absorb any parts of the food it can reach. A blob absorbs its food by adhering to the food and emitting acid to dissolve the food into its substance. Once a blob adheres to its food, it’s difficult to remove it; the blob must be scraped away or killed to stop the absorption.

If a blob can’t smell any food, it goes dormant. A dormant blob sits in one place and waits to smell more food. The dormant phase has two stages: restless, in which the blob will start moving as soon as it smells any food, and sleeping, in which the blob will only start moving if it smells food amounting to 1/3rd of its body mass. The restless stage lasts a few days; the sleeping stage lasts indefinitely.

A blob can also become dormant because of temperature. At temperatures below 5°C a blob becomes so thick and viscous it cannot move; below -10°C the blob freezes. Warming the blob will restore it to normal. At temperatures above 50°C, a blob becomes so thin that it can’t support its own weight and can’t move; it becomes a sticky film that covers the ground. Above 80°C, the blob will dry into a powder. A blob that’s been thinned can restore itself if the temperature is lowered, but a powdered blob is dead. A blob will avoid heat or cold to prevent its dormancy, but it will take the risk if it can scent no other food.

A moving or restless blob stays healthy, but a sleeping dormant blob can rot. Unless the blob is fungus-eating, a dormant blob is vulnerable to mold; unless it’s plant-eating, grasses and weeds can grow on it; unless it’s meat-eating, germs can grow in it which will cause it to harden, and insects and small animals can eat it. Eventually, a dormant blob will be completely decomposed. Larger animals and humanoids can eat blobs too, but though a blob is rich in protein it is almost tasteless. Care must be exercised when dining on blobs; otherwise the meal might eat the diner.

Half a blob is still a blob. In other words, if a blob is cut into pieces, each piece is a blob unto itself. If two identical blobs meet, they will unite and form one blob. Unlike blobs normally leave each other alone; the exception is, of course, the blob-eating blob. Even if two blobs are eating the same piece of food, they’ll each just take what they can engulf.

It’s possible to awaken a portion of a sleeping blob. If a dormant blob scents a relatively small amount of food for an hour or so, a portion of the blob amounting to 3 times the mass of the food will become active. If the food then moves away, the active portion will detach itself from the dormant blob and go after the food. This trick can be used to deal with a large dormant blob a piece at a time instead of dealing with the whole giant blob at once.

Combat with Blobs

The basic combat characteristics of a blob are: A blob does one die of damage (D5) for every 50 kilograms of mass; it has one die (D10) of hit points for every 50 kilograms of

mass. Its attack value is equal to its mass in kilograms; its defense value is 50 for normal viscosity, 35 for thick viscosity, 65 for thin viscosity. It resists spells as if it had a Constitution of 20 and a Power of zero.

It's difficult to fight a blob while it's eating since it can gain hit points from its food. Every point of damage a blob does to its food is added to the blob's hit points. Note that a "fighting" blob is one trying to eat food that fights back; an adventurer can attack a plant-eating blob and won't get hurt, though if the blob is eating during the attack the blob may not be hurt either. Adventurers gain no experience for hurting a blob that isn't attacking them. The easiest way to immobilize a blob is to remove all food out of its scent range.

Normal weapons can damage blobs. The damage is not done by the slicing of the weapon, but by the force of the blow damaging the protoplasm. Blobs are affected normally by magic. They are also vulnerable to fire and cold. While active they are immune to acids and corrosives, since they are made partially of acid themselves.

A blob will eat any and all food that comes its way. This means it's not possible to attack a blob "from behind". If two or more adventurers attack a meat-eating blob, it will melee with each of them simultaneously at no penalty. This can be turned to the blob's disadvantage: If a blob senses two or more identical masses of food, each of which are at least 1/3rd of the blob's mass, it will split in pieces and each piece will go after the nearest food. Since a blob's sense of smell is very sensitive, it's unlikely that a blob will hesitate in choosing between adventurers to eat. However, a blob is weak at deciding between obstacles; for example, if there were some food behind a wall of ice, and some more distant food with no ice in the way, the blob will split in two rather than decide.

In theory, it is possible for an adventurer to cut a blob in two during combat and be forced to fight against two blobs at once. In practice, all adventurers know to strike a blob with the sides of their weapons instead of with the edges. Multiple blobs may be created during combat only if a player states that they are cutting a blob in order to create more blobs. This is a first-order *finesse* against blobs of reasonable size (page Error: Reference source not found).

Cutting a blob in two does no direct damage, but each new piece has only a proportion of the hit points of the original blob. For example, if a quarter of a blob is cut off to form a new blob, the new piece will have 1/4th the mass and hit points of the original blob; the old piece will have 3/4th the mass and hit points of the original.

Adventurers will only have problems with moving or restless blobs that sense them or their possessions as food. If a blob is not trying to eat an adventurer, it will ooze around the adventurer to get at what it wants. This can be critical if a magic-eating blob is encountered; the blob will not stop to combat the adventurers but will head directly for the magic items.

Religion

Blobs themselves can't worship anything. However, in the complex polytheism of Tala there is a Temple of the Blob. The Temple was begun by alchemists to research blob-related spells. On Tala, where there is a religion there will soon be a god to worship, and so an unnamed god appeared (see "Theology"). The basic tenet of this religion is that the blob, as the basic primordial life force, was the origin of all life and is the final destiny of all life; the blob itself symbolizes ultimate power through ultimate simplicity.

The Temple makes diverse and complex use of blobs in their spells. An example is a blob-based detection spell: A transparent insect-eating blob is stretched across a hallway until it

is only a few mils thick. When someone walks through the blob, a detection spell is activated that alerts the caster.

The basic goal of the Temple is to convert everyone to blob-worship. People on Tala don't like proselytizing religions, and so the Temple of the Blob is unpopular. Currently, the only known Blob Temple is located within the dungeon of Ironmaw; it would not be tolerated anywhere else.

Random Blob Generation Tables

Roll on Table 3 and Table 4; use Table 5 if necessary.

Table 3: Blob types

Die Roll	Color	Appetite
01-30	Red	Meat
31-50	Green	Plant
51-65	Brown	Stone
66-80	Blue	Metal (20% chance to roll on Table 5)
81-82	Pink	Earth
83-84	Black	Waste (20% chance that the blob also eats decaying organic matter)
85-86	Purple	Magic
87-88	Yellow	Fungus
89-90	Grey	Foodstuffs
91-92	Transparent	Salt
93-94	White	Blobs
95-96	Orange	Exotic (make one up, or roll on an equipment or encounter table and adapt the result)
97-98	Random	Roll again twice, once to determine color and once to determine appetite.
99-00	Complex	Roll again three times; the blob has a random color and two appetites.

Table 4: Blob viscosity

Die Roll	Viscosity
01-20	Thin
21-80	Normal
81-00	Thick

Table 5: Metal-eating blobs

Die Roll	Metal Eaten
01-50	Iron
51-70	Copper
71-85	Silver
86-95	Gold
96-00	Platinum

The mass of a blob determines its combat values. After the GM has determined what rank the blob should be, the mass of the blob is $(\text{rank} \times 50) + 1D100$ in kilograms.

Damage done: 1D5 for every 50 kilograms of mass

Hit Points: 1D10 for every 50 kilograms of mass.

Attack Value = mass in kilograms

Defense Value = 50 for normal viscosity

35 for thick viscosity

65 for thin viscosity

Spell Resistance: Constitution = 20, Power = 0

The state of a blob (awake or dormant) and its location will depend on its appetite.

Examples: In a dungeon, a plant-eating blob is likely to be dormant unless it can smell an underground garden; a stone-eating blob will probably be inside a metal or wooden box (otherwise the dungeon would be converted into a huge mass of blob). Outdoors, a plant-eating blob will usually be quite large, since it will have consumed a farm, an oasis, a whole forest, etc. A meat-eating blob, unless it both large and dormant, or it is already feeding on someone, will immediately head for the nearest adventurer and start feeding.

Figure 4: Frieda, a transparent salt-eating blob, was sitting in a restless state at the bottom of a fresh-water pond. She smelled a human bathing in her pond and swam over to investigate. The human (not shown) is now salt-free, and Frieda is about to return to dormancy.

Apocrypha Dragonia

August, 2011: The original Apocrypha Dragonia was an attempt to write a pseudo-religious story on the origin of the planet Tala and the race of Dragons. It was published in the APA The Wild Hunt about 25 years ago. I don't think I have a copy, not even in an antique computer file; we're all probably better off for that.

The basic story: The Architect creates the world. The gods take their place; many spirits are abandoned. One spirit, Drayc, bides his time. A year after the world is created, he re-shapes a lizard into the first Dragon, Wurm; he transforms himself into the second Dragon. All other Dragons are descended from them.

This relates to the one potentially relevant article I wrote that also never appeared in the Argothald manual: on the Architect, the Godpact, and "named" versus "unnamed" gods. I may recreate this material someday, but right now it's unlikely that the subject will be important to the current players.

Stellar System

Star: Ealla Spectral Class: F7 Size: V

Planet	Lunar Orbit	Name	UPP
1		Ember	H45046EA Research
2		Sunlight	Y3001299
	40	Ray	Y2000000
3		Princess	Y7400000
	45	Maid	YS000000
4		Tala	BD668ABA (BD669702 Agricultural)
	3	Diana	Y2000000
	12	Cynthia	H330259A
	39	Selene	H4200000
5		Treasure	Large Gas Giant
	1	Third Lock	Ring
	2	Second Lock	Ring
	3	First Lock	Ring
	8	Pearl	Y1000000
	20	Emerald	Y3000000
	60	Ruby	Y6000000
	150	Diamond	Y7000000
6		Virtue	Small Gas Giant
	3	Honor	Y2000000
	7	Truth	Y2000000
	8	Loyalty	Y1000000
	9	Faith	YS000000
	13	Trust	HS000000
	30	Silence	YS000000
7		Ash	Small Gas Giant
	3	Grit	Y1000000
	7	Dust	Y2000000
	10	Dirt	Y1000000
	12	Smoke	Y1000000
8		Gilslurk's Ego (Distance)	H6011009
	40	Gilslurk	Y5000000

Key: “Planet” means which orbit the planet is from the sun, e.g., planet 4 is the fourth planet from the sun. “Lunar Orbit” is the distance a moon is from its planet in units of planetary radii; e.g. the orbital radius of a moon with orbit 7 is seven times the radius of the moon's planet.

“UPP” is the Universal Planetary Profile as found in the *Traveller* rules:

Digit	Meaning	Examples
1st	Type of Starport	Y=None H=Extremely Primitive B=Capable of servicing starships
2nd	Size of Planet (in thousands of miles)	S=Small (less than 1000 miles) 4=4,000 miles in radius D=13,000 miles in radius
3rd	Atmosphere; the higher the number, the thicker the air	6=Normal
4th	Hydrographics Percentage	6=60% of the surface is water
5th	Population, in powers of ten	7=10 ⁷ people
6th	Government; each number corresponds to a different type defined in <i>Traveller</i>	
7th	Law Level; the higher the number, the more restrictive the government	
8th	Tech Level; the higher the number, the more advanced the government	

In the Ealla system, a starport type of “H” means that it’s abandoned. The planet Tala has two UPPs; the first is the one found in the libraries of my old *Traveller* campaign, the second is the actual value.

A word about planet 8: The first sighting of the eighth planet was made by the astronomer Gilslurk, who named the planet after himself. Other astronomers, making more careful observations, discovered that Gilslurk had missed the planet itself and sighted its moon. The moon retained the name “Gilslurk” and the planet was officially named “Distance.” Almost no one uses planet eight’s official name. Instead it’s called “Gilslurk’s Ego.” The name arises from the saying, “Gilslurk’s Ego is the one thing that’s bigger than Gilslurk.”

Chronology

Year AC (After Creation)

- 0 The Architect finishes his design, and calls for gods to join the Godpact. The gods combine their energies.
- 1 The design is implemented and Tala is formed. The gods look for creatures to worship them. The Architect, satisfied, leaves. Discovery of insufficient humanoids to worship all the gods. The Great God Battle begins.
- 2 Drake creates the first dragon, Worm.
- 3 Drake assumes form of a mortal drake-en. Dragonic race begins in the Great Drake-en Swamp.
- 5 First dragon eggs hatch.
- 50 2nd generation of dragons mature physically and mentally. The dragons realize that humanoids are intelligent, though less so than dragons.
- 70 First matings of 2nd generation dragons.
- 120 3rd generation of dragons mature.
- 170 4th generation of dragons mature.
- 220 5th generation of dragons mature. The dragons start their first nests outside the Great Drake-en Swamp.
- 230 Beginnings of agriculture.
- 250 First Great Project initiated: to study the geology, geography, and ecology of Tala.
- 320 Humanoids advance enough to adopt formal religions. Named gods appear (those who have the upper hand in the Great God Battle) and move in to fill the positions the religions make available.
- 321 First sword is forged.
- 322 Dragons learn of intelligent cetaceans.
- 331 Last of named gods takes its place.
- 333 The Great God Battle ends. The losers, greatly weakened, seek to form new religions and gain worshippers. They have little success.
- 396 First Great Project ends. 2nd Great Project begins: the study of the universe. The dragons have achieved most of their physical and magical prowess.
- 516 Humanoids and dragons discover that griffins are intelligent and can be attached.
- 557 Cetaceans discover that humanoids are intelligent.
- 559 First humanoid nation is founded: Aeykia. The capitol city, Grendon, is built near Ironmaw Mountain.
- 568 Humanoids discover that cetaceans are sapient.
- 569 Other races discover that dragons are not hideous monsters, but intelligent beings.
- 610-870 Nations are built. There are racial and religious persecutions of national governments upon ogres, fairies, dwarves, and other groups. The Barbarian Wars are the result.
- 717 2nd Great Project ends. 3rd Great Project begins: the study of the psychology, sociology, and anthropology of sapient life on Tala.
- 825 The story of Ganelon the griffin.
- 875 Uneasy world-wide peace. Council of Nations founded, the first attempt at an international government.

- 902 Vibranium discovered in Ironmaw Mountain. Mining begins. Capitol of Aeykia moved elsewhere, which begins the tradition of periodically relocating the Aeykian capitol city.
- 915 Council of Nations breaks up on issue of vibranium distribution.
- 916-1108 The 200 Years War. War continues on and off between many nations for various reasons during all this time.
- 925 Bluesky City destroyed. Vibranium mining ends.
- 972 Gunpowder invented.
- 1086 First crude steam engine.
- 1135 Second Council of Nations founded. Worldwide peace, this time more certain. Civilization begins.
- 1199 Invention of airplane and electrical power.
- 1250 Atomic bomb invented, never used.
- 1255 Adult dragons enlist the help of young dragons to aid in 3rd Great Project.
- 1277 Atomic power. First satellites in orbit.
- 1282 Beginnings of worldwide communications and transportation system.
- 1283 First ogre in space.
- 1291 First human on Diana (innermost moon of Tala).
- 1293 First elf on Cynthia (middle moon of Tala).
- 1294 First fairie on Selene (outermost moon of Tala).
- 1340 Permanent bases established on Diana, Cynthia, and Selene. The rest of the Ealla star system is explored.
- 1351 First young dragon elected as a national ruler. United Planetary Council replaces Second Council of Nations.
- 1459 Founding of the undersea kingdom of Nornla.
- 1500 Worldwide international co-operation and peace.
- 1501 3rd Great Project ends. Dragons discuss what the 4th Great Project should be; some dragons want to explore space, others wish to study other dimensions.
- 1504 First radio signals from the Squootchenoi, an alien race inhabiting a stellar system fifteen light-years away.
- 1521 Landros builds Exile.
- 1534 Scientific knowledge exchanged with Squootchenoi. Talan scientists discover that other worlds, unlike Tala, are not created but evolve naturally.
- 1536 4th Great Project decided upon: with all other races assisting, the dragons will build a slower-than-light starship to visit Squootchen.
- 1540 Construction begins on *Tala's Hope*.
- 1547 Chaos comes to Tala.
- 1549 The nations of Frostfire and Ellenia are destroyed.
- 1550 Some dragons join the Chaos Army and go through the Pathway. First unsuccessful attacks on Chaos and the Pathway. The Argothald is brought to Tala. Magical energies increase over most of the planet, totally eliminated elsewhere. *Tala's Hope* is disabled and crashes in Nornla. The end of Civilization. The Chaos War begins.
- 1552 Radio signal from the planet Squootchen tells of contact with an interstellar civilization with an FTL drive. Message is never acknowledged.
- 1559 *U.S.S. Constellation* arrives from distant space. It is scarcely noticed.
- 1560 Non-magical areas finish adapting to a purely technological society.

- 1562 With the 4th Great Project interrupted, the 5th Great Project begins: to discover how to travel between dimensions. Dragons retreat to their nests to study to the new magical conditions under the Argothald (which are not considered significant enough for a Great Project). They are assisted by the best of the surviving humanoid mages.
- 1570 Chaos has conquered most of Tala, except for a few parts of the Northern Continent.
- 1575 The dictatorial government of Technology begins its reign.
- 1578 The Farminglands and the Demonlands are established on the Southern Continent.
- 1581 The Great Retreat. Most of the surviving armed forces of Tala retreat to Ironmaw Mountain.
- 1582-1640 The Eastern and Western Continents, the Encircling Archipelagoes, and the Twilight Kingdoms fragment into tiny monarchies. Series of petty conquerors claim rulership over the small nations. Battle between Chaos forces and remnants of Talan forces in Ironmaw continues.
- 1590 The first sea-folk are created. Spirits become stronger and more active.
- 1622 Duke Darius leads a briefly-successful uprising against the Mekatrig. He mysteriously disappears.
- 1641 The Mekatrig comes to Northern Continent and brings the Argothald with him. He establishes the boundaries of the Twilight Kingdoms. Demon rulers are assigned to each of the nations.
- 1643 Surviving spirits realize that new religions are forming. Un-named gods appear. There are minor god battles with no conclusive results.
- 1650 The Mekatrig comes to Ironmaw and the last Talan forces are defeated. Ironmaw is turned into a prison for foes of Chaos. The Mekatrig casts several complex spells on Ironmaw using the Argothald, and then returns to Southern Continent. End of the Chaos War.
- 1663 Cinhilian Empire formed on the Western Continent.
- 1673 Exile establishes its independence from the Cinhilian Empire.
- 1720 Nornla announces that it survived the crash of the starship.
- 1803 Dragons emerge from their nests after adapting to the new magic on Tala.
- 1858 Crytolos speaks of abdicating his total power over Aeykia. He sets up a council as a test government.
- 1889 Crytolos settles in Grenn permanently. He disbands the council and allows Aeykia to be ruled by a monarchy. The first king is King David, selected from the royal family of the Twilight Kingdoms.
- 1890 Crytolos declares Ironmaw Mountain free passage for adventurers and other fools.
- 2015 Crytolos throws griffins out of Grenn.
- 2150 Tales circulate about the Wicked "Witch" of the West, a sorceress who lives near the Evermorn-Narlorn-Aeykian border.
- 2208 Queen Diladia "dies of old age" at 47. All the other members of the royal family in Aeykia take long vacations abroad or die of old age as well. Krenshaw takes the throne.
- 2211 It is rumored that Technology has contacted the advanced civilization that the Squootchenoi reported.
- 2213 Ogre persecutions begin. By 2214 not one ogre is left in Aeykia.

- 2215 King Krenshaw “dies of old age” at 38. Cornelius takes the throne at the safer age of 28. He moves the capitol from New Krenshaw to the Inviolat Isle and names it Cornelius City.
- 2217 King Cornelius proposes marriage to Queen Darda of Evermorn. She refuses. Relations between Aeykia and Evermorn become uneasy.
- 2218 *[Campaign begins.]* Castor and Pollux meet Althea and Megan during the New Year’s celebrations in Grenn. Harmony’s altar is desecrated by Crytolos. The Many-Legged One is destroyed.
- 2219 Gelleras revolts against the Mekatrig unsuccessfully; Aeykia and Evermorn hastily reconcile their differences. Castle Jelna is destroyed. The Marsh God is driven away from Forlake Forest. The Quest for the Broomstick of the Wicked Witch of the West. A God Battle between Harmony, the Temple of the Blob, and the God of the Vine brews in Ironmaw.
- 2220-2221 The First God of the Holy Rain is discovered. The Marsh God relocates. The mad mage Terbalon is killed. The Vine God is destroyed, taking the Holy Rain with it. Castle Elvenhold is claimed. The Quest for the Sceptre of Diana. The second God of the Holy Rain is summoned. The Knights of Terbalon grow active and are repressed. Castle Elvenhold is destroyed, and is replaced by the Altar of the Holy Rain. The Holy Rain becomes both jailer and prisoner to a demon.
- 2222 The Knights of Terbalon invade the temple of the Holy Rain in Merona, then retreat. Bá-lon wanders through Aeykia.
- 2224 Bá-lon returns to Grenn. Sanity is forged. The god of the Psychic Force is driven from southern Aeykia; the Way takes its place. The Aquarii (male and female principles of the Holy Rain) join in a divine marriage. Terbalon is killed again, three times; Crytolos gets a goblet afterwards. An assassination attempt is made on Queen Darda of Evermorn; the rumors of war return until Aram intervenes. Adventurers are arrested for murdering the Psychic Force in Yarnit; they appeal to King Cornelius who declares that half the party is guilty.
- 2225 Hal dies; as a result there is a riot in Grenn, during which Bá-lon offers a New Deal. The Circle of Alchemy is attacked and remains victorious. Elections in Merona are rigged. Evermorn invades Aeykia (see page two); Marion loses her doll. Lemuel loses the Sceptre of Diana and gains riches beyond his imagination. Cornelius is defeated by Aram, Bá-lon becomes King of Aeykia. His first royal act: establishing diplomatic relations with Lorindal, where babies are no longer kidnapped. Queen Darda dies of old age.
- 2251 *[Feb-2011]* Arled, Thag, Balthazzar are guests at Duke Darius’ party.

Knighthood

Knights are dedicated to a specific goal, role, or power. Knighthood is the closest thing Tala has to a unifying force. The Mekatrig can't directly rule in the states of Technology, the merchant traders rarely visit the Southern Continent, but in one form or another Orders of Knighthood are found everywhere on the planet.

Knights are expert in one area; few dare to challenge them. For example, knights of the combat Orders may have Epic (+7) or Legendary (+8) Might; knights of other Orders have correspondingly high skills in their areas. These skills are gained through years of constant training. Even adult dragons, who have a prophecy from their god Drake that a single creature cannot defeat them, are leery of knights.

It's not easy to become a knight. There are elaborate restrictions to entering an Order, and few of those who enter achieve knighthood. The training to become a full-fledged knight can be fatal, which is perhaps why some abandon their training and become adventurers instead. Once someone joins an Order, it takes at least three years of training to enter the first rank, page. To reach the next rank, squire, takes at least another seven years. The final rank, knight, is reached after another ten years or more. No Order would permit this process to be rushed.

Most Orders of Knighthood have a religious base. The biggest Orders are those based on the named gods; the smaller Orders are usually based on strange religions or strong beliefs. The following is a list of the largest Orders of Knighthood; 90% belong to one of the following Orders. The list does not include of what powers a knight can possess; no two knights have exactly the same abilities. But whatever a knight does, it's done extremely well.

- The Order of King Zeus, Lord of the Heavens: This is an Order devoted to combat, loyalty, heroism, truth, and justice.
- The Order of the Majestic Jupiter, King of the Sky: This Order is devoted to philosophy and all other sciences of knowledge. No facet of thought is ignored by this Order's studies.
- The Order of Her Majesty Juno, Queen of All the Gods: This Order is devoted to magic: past, present, future, technological, standard, and the high-powered magic of the Argothald's Pathway.
- The Order of Hela, Goddess of Death: This Order specializes in what it calls deathdealing (*Berserkergang*), a violent rage that knows no bounds.
- The Order of the Creator, Vulcan: These knights create — buildings, artifacts, magic items, etc. — and what they create must be the best that can be made by mortal hands.
- The Order of Ares, Greatest of All War-Gods, and...
- The Order of Mars, Greatest of All War-Gods: These two Orders are both devoted to combat and are strong rivals. In the midst of battle, knights of Ares and Mars will turn to attack each other no matter what the situation or which side each is on. Each Order has vowed the death or conversion of the other.
- The Order of Artemis, Goddess of Knowledge: Another philosophy Order, similar to the knights of Jupiter, but the knights of Artemis specialize in certain areas of knowledge.
- The Order of Freya, Goddess of Magic: This Order is devoted to magic like the knights of Juno, but unlike them the Freya knights concentrate on all aspects of magic in a specific region.

- The Order of Mercury, God of the Swift: The knights of this Order are master thieves. It's hard to see a knight of Mercury if they don't wish to be seen. It's even harder to figure out how they commit their thefts.
- The Order of the Tales of Hermod: This is an Order of historians and bards, dedicated to preserving knowledge and history in oral form. Their credo is: If civilization falls or barbarians conquer, the knowledge accumulated over the centuries will rest safe with the knights of Hermod.
- The Order of Frey, God of Civilization: The knights of Frey are expert professional politicians. They usually run a nation or two to keep them in practice for world domination. They form the largest Order of knights in the land of Technology.

The Wing

The planet Tala lies slightly askew from normal four-dimensional space. A small space-time “rip” exists over Tala to adjust for the tilt. The rip is shaped like a crescent. The tips of the crescent are ten kilometers above each pole of Tala and its inner arc comes no closer than eight kilometers to Tala’s surface. The crescent is five hundred kilometers wide at its widest point over the equator, but its thickness is only a fraction of a millimeter. It revolves about the planet with varying speeds, depending on Tala’s speed in its orbit and how far Tala is from the sun. The rip often changes the direction of its rotation; the faster it revolves, the more likely it is to change direction.

The rip exists to link Tala with a myriad of other dimensions. Each dimension contributes a fraction of its magic to the planet. If the Architect had not given the planet its extra-dimensional tilt, there would be no magic at all. The magic is focused and stored in the substance vibranium; see the “Magic System” section for more details.

The rip is invisible most of the time, but when the particles from a solar flare strike, it glows brightly. There is aurora on Tala, but it’s nothing compared to the colorful glowing rip gliding and fluttering across the sky. From Tala’s surface it looks like a huge wing flapping through the sky, and so it is called the Wing.

Any time that the wing is visible is a special time for Talans, but its appearances are mostly unpredictable. Around the time of the Talan New Year, however, the Wing normally becomes visible and moves rapidly, with frequent shifts in direction. It’s a spectacular sight. The event is celebrated by a New Year’s festival, which all but the nastiest demon rulers permit. There’s an old saying, “A New Year without the Wing means a year without hope.”

The Wing inspired many stories and legends. In the barbaric past it was worshipped as a god or interpreted as an omen. In recent times, the only legend that remains popular — despite the cynicism of civilization and the horrors of the Chaos War — is a children’s story: the Tale of Ganelon the Griffin (q.v.).

The Wing itself is a discontinuity in space and time. If you could fly through it, you would find yourself 24 hours in the past or the future. When something does fly through the Wing, each subatomic particle is separately sent either into the past or future. If you fly into the wing today, you’ll be a cloud of dust yesterday and tomorrow.

During the peak of Tala’s civilization, rocket and spacecraft trajectories had to be carefully planned to avoid the Wing. Manned craft to the moons and other planets were launched from the poles, where the effect of the Wing is minimal. Unmanned satellites and space probes were launched from equatorial latitudes, but the probes were lost if the Wing passed by.

A space probe ground into dust is a waste of money, so scientists worked hard to predict the Wing’s motion. Some complex patterns were found, but predicting the Wing’s exact motion remained difficult. The Wing posed a constant hazard for rockets and high-flying aircraft until Chaos came to Tala.

Tales of Tala

The Story of Ganelon the Griffin

Every New Year a beautifully-colored Wing glides and flutters across the sky. Ask an adult what it is and they'll say something about a "spacio-temporal discontinuity". This is a fancy way to say, "I don't know." But listen, and I'll tell you the real story about the Wing of Ganelon the Griffin.

From the time he was hatched Ganelon knew he was different. Any griffin can read the thoughts of any other griffin. Griffins can also talk mind-to-mind with their companion. But Ganelon was a complete telepath. He could talk with anybody. You didn't have to be his companion to talk to him.

As Ganelon grew he was aware of all living things around him. Every time someone was hurt, he knew it. He could know when people were happy as well. But Ganelon lived in a time of violence and cruelty. There were few happy thoughts. He sensed misery all this time, so he was very sad.

No one else could see why Ganelon was sad. Everyone thought that full telepathy was a good thing. The other griffins were jealous because Ganelon could talk to anyone and learn from them. The other griffins needed a companion to learn for them.

It was a time of war. Soldiers heard about Ganelon's power. They saw that he was a way to talk between distant armies. They wanted to capture him and use him. To them, Ganelon was just another weapon.

Ganelon did not want to be a weapon. He hid so he wouldn't be captured. He flew high in the air, where his light-colored belly was hard to see against the blue sky. He landed only on bare ground, where his brown wings kept him hidden. He would have loved to roam through a forest or soar across a lake like other griffins. But that was too dangerous.

He could escape from most people that way, but he could not escape from a pride of mean, jealous griffins. The jealous pride caught him and stained his wings with bright colors. Then they let him go. The leader of the pride said, "Now you have no reason to be sad, Ganelon. See how pretty your wings are?" She said this to hurt him, because she knew Ganelon could not hide anymore. He could now be seen in the air and on the ground.

He was caught again. This time he was caught by fairie soldiers. They wanted to use him in a war between elves and dwarves. They imprisoned him by cruelly binding his wings to his sides. He couldn't fly away. The fairies offered to sell Ganelon to the army that paid the most, either the elves or the dwarves. The fairies said Ganelon could read the minds of the enemy army and reveal their plans to his owners.

Ganelon did not want to be sold and used. He waited until the fairies weren't watching him. Then he strained his wings as hard as he could until he broke his ropes. He got away, but he had hurt his wings and couldn't fly. He thought he would be caught again, because he couldn't run faster than the fairies could fly. As soon as the fairies saw he was gone they would come after him.

Running made him tired. He stopped to rest in a schoolyard. He was found there by a group of children. They were of many races: human, elf, dwarf, fairie, and ogre. They were too young to know that they were supposed to hate each other. They didn't know about wars or soldiers. To them, Ganelon was someone hurt and in trouble, not a weapon to be sold.

The children hid Ganelon in their schoolhouse. When fairie soldiers came looking for Ganelon, the children said nothing to the soldiers. The children kept Ganelon hidden from soldiers and teachers until his wings were healed. Ganelon was grateful to his new friends. He promised that he would always help them when they were in trouble.

Ganelon went to the mountains. He hid in an abandoned dragon's nest he discovered. There was almost no food there, but every week the children walked partway into the mountains and left baskets of food. During the night Ganelon flew from his mountaintop and took the food. In gratitude, Ganelon made certain he never forgot his promise. He used his telepathy to watch over the the children.

It was good that he kept his promise. A battle in the war he had escaped came close to the schoolhouse. The children might have been hurt, but Ganelon prevented it. He mentally sent false cries of surrender to both sides. Both the elves and dwarves stopped fighting. This saved the children, and it ended the war. But though the war was over, Ganelon did not stop hiding. He was afraid that if another war started he would be hunted again.

Ganelon spent the rest of his life in the mountains. He flew only at night so no one would see him. He kept watch on the children with his powers. When they grew up, he looked after their children, and their children's children. He warned them mentally when they were about to get into trouble. Sometimes the youngsters left food and gifts in the mountains for Ganelon. He flew down from the mountains at night to leave gifts for the children in return.

Even today, when a little voice reminds children that what they're doing is wrong, it's the voice of Ganelon giving advice. Of course, sometimes children don't listen to Ganelon and get into trouble anyway. Some adults never listen to Ganelon, and we all know what happens to them.

During the New Year's celebration, the boys and girls used to hike up into the hills. They left gifts they had made for Ganelon. This stopped during the time of the Chaos War. Now the gifts are left outside the front door. When the children wake up next morning, they find that Ganelon has left a nice present in return.

The proof that this story is true is the brightly-colored Wing that you see almost every New Year, which swoops through the sky as Ganelon goes to deliver his gifts. And now you know more about the Wing than any adult.

Unfortunately, this story has a tragic ending. When your parents tell you the facts of life, they also tell you that Ganelon the griffin really doesn't exist. The gifts you gave to Ganelon were in fact given to the poor who could not afford presents for New Year's. This can be such a shock that you might waste your life and become an adventurer.

A Campfire Story

On Tala, the world of the Argothald, there are both angels and devils. Few stories are told of angels. But sit at any campfire with a group of travellers and you will hear many tales of devils. Here is one such tale.

Fendus the Alchemist had a curious flaw: he wanted to live forever. Now you may ask why this was curious — there are many who wish to live forever. But for Fendus this was more than a wish, this was a passion; every waking moment he lusted after eternal life, each of his thousand private fantasies concerned cheating death, his most hideous nightmare was a long, productive life with a quiet death at its end. You may also ask why this was a flaw. We shall come to this matter shortly.

Fendus lived in the kingdom of Shandia, a land not known for its practitioners of magic. As an Alchemist, therefore, Fendus was the most powerful mage in the kingdom. But his name was scarcely known in the kingdom that he might have ruled. He cared nothing for power, wealth, and glory; he cared only for his passion.

Fendus led a solitary life in a small cottage in the forest. At one time he received visits from his fellow mages and the neighboring villagers. But a visit with Fendus was not a pleasure. He talked of nothing but immortality and the means of gaining it. The mages thought his quest hopeless; the villagers found it incomprehensible. Eventually he found himself alone and lonely, mixing chemicals and brewing potions that, despite his talents, were never quite what he wanted.

One day Fendus had a special visitor. Gorjelmar was a wizard who claimed a common goal with Fendus. He proposed that the two of them pool their knowledge to find the secret of the spell of immortality. If they discovered the secret, Gorjelmar added, Fendus would be the first to have the spell cast on him. Fendus was delighted: at last, someone who shared his goal. He wholeheartedly accepted the proposal.

For weeks they searched grimoires, cast scrying spells, sipped hypnotic potions to send their minds into higher planes. Finally, Gorjelmar announced the key to immortality: a heart. In fact, the still-beating heart extracted on the mid-night of the owner's twentieth birthday had to be dipped in a potion as a spell was cast. Gorjelmar suggested the following plan: Fendus would prepare the potion in advance, then he would remove the heart from the youth while Gorjelmar cast his spell. Fendus would then drink the potion; a simple spell would detect if he had become immortal.

It was surprisingly easy for the two mages to obtain the crucial ingredient. The only visitors Fendus still had were broken-hearted youths who wanted love potions. In the past Fendus sent them away disappointed; he had no time for such foolishness. Now these visitors were welcomed and encouraged to talk about themselves. Strangely, the subject of birthdays always seemed to enter the conversation. One day, Fendus informed a visitor that a love potion was not drunk by the one who was loved, but by the one whose love was denied.

The unsuspecting lover drank the sleeping draught. The potion took effect in an instant. Fendus and Gorjelmar arranged the youth's body on an altar especially prepared for this spell. Fendus blended the ingredients for the immortality potion while Gorjelmar assembled the components for the spell. Fendus did not have a suitable instrument for performing the ritual, but fortunately Gorjelmar had a long, sharp dagger just right for the task.

As mid-night approached, Fendus grew apprehensive. In his fantasies, he had done unscrupulous things to satisfy his lust, but he had never considered murder. Now the reality

was upon him. Could he do such a bloody, merciless deed without hesitation? Could he sacrifice the life of another to prolong his own?

Fendus needn't have worried. When mid-night came, he felt no remorse when he sliced open the chest. There was no disgust at the breaking of the ribs, no trembling when he severed the vessels connecting the heart to the body, no horror at the last sudden gasp as death broke the sleeping spell. It was with anticipation that Fendus stirred the heart into the potion as Gorjelmar cast his spell. The bloody taste of the potion was like ambrosia to Fendus.

With all this in his favor it seems a shame that Fendus did not become immortal. After they observed the results of the detection spell, Gorjelmar said that perhaps their divinations had not been accurate. Perhaps the ritual should be performed the hour before mid-night, or the hour after, or at dawn. Perhaps the victim should be twenty-one, or nineteen, or eighteen-and-a-half. Perhaps some minor component in the potion or the spell had to be adjusted. They would simply have to try all possible combinations until they succeeded.

It was a while before the villagers realized that many visitors to Fendus's cottage never returned. After all, broken-hearted lovers do not make public all their comings and goings. It is also not unusual for someone pining in sorrow to disappear for a time. But eventually enough youths vanished for the villagers to make the connection. There was little they could do against a powerful mage, except to tell the heartsick to seek solace elsewhere. All visits to Fendus stopped.

Fendus despaired at the lack of research material, but Gorjelmar offered Fendus a solution: a disguise spell. Soon a kindly old man was wandering around the nearby villages. He was especially friendly towards young people. He asked them about their lives, their friends, their birthday parties. Occasionally he would ask one of them over to his cottage for a special gift.

Schemes like this only worked for a little while. Even so, the mages managed to perform the ritual dozens of times, but still Fendus was not immortal. He began to lose hope. How could they locate more subjects for their work, he cried. Gorjelmar told Fendus not to worry so. Even now events were in motion that would provide them with more subjects...

* * *

Graula the Ogress had a glorious vision: One day, the might of the nation of Shandia would be feared throughout the world. If only King Kritios shared her dream! Graula, the king's military advisor, urged him to wage war against Shandia's neighbors. But he was content to sit on his throne and keep the peace.

King Kritios grew weak with a mysterious illness, and it became obvious that he would soon have to name a successor. This did not improve Graula's hopes for the future of Shandia, since the King's children were as pacifist as he. So no one was more surprised than Graula when, with his last breath, Kritios gasped that Fendus the Alchemist was to be the next king.

The court of Shandia was mystified. No one knew who Fendus was. Suddenly, Graula was filled with hope. Could it be that Kritios had finally considered her pleas for conquest? Could that have to do with his choice of successor? Urgently, Graula volunteered to find Fendus and bring him to the court of Shandia.

By this time Fendus had become a figure of fear throughout the forest. The villagers were reluctant to talk to strangers and would not drink anything they hadn't prepared with their own hands. No one ever said, "Happy Birthday". Graula found it easy to locate Fendus; if the

villagers grew more violent at the mention of Fendus's name, then she was headed in the right direction.

Graula was ecstatic. From everything she heard, Fendus would not be a weak, timid ruler like Kritios. How Tala would tremble when King Fendus assumed the throne! If the world feared Shandia as much as the villagers feared Fendus, Graula would be content.

Graula went to Fendus's cottage. She introduced herself and explained that Fendus was now King of Shandia. At first Fendus looked startled, then he became thoughtful. He led Graula to meet his companion Gorjelmar. Luckily, Gorjelmar had already packed their equipment in preparation for their journey to the court of Shandia.

Fendus began issuing proclamations immediately after he ascended the throne. Shandia would start conscripting the largest armed force the world had ever seen. A special camp was to be constructed. All young people from sixteen to twenty-four years old were to report to the camp for training. Furthermore, the palace would be relocated next to the camp so the King could supervise the training personally.

Graula's heart leapt with joy. She insisted that her own daughter, who was almost twenty years old, be among the first to be trained. She begged the King to be given some task that would advance the day of conquest. The King assigned Graula to a long-term scouting mission. She would determine the military strengths and resources of all the nations bordering Shandia. The task might take years to complete, but, the King noted, it would take that long to turn the conscript army into an expert fighting force.

Graula accepted the job with enthusiasm. She bid farewell to her family and friends and went off on her long journey. And at no time did it occur to her that she was the only person who might have stood against Fendus.

* * *

Three years later, Graula returned. She was bursting with the discoveries she had made on her mission. Shandia's neighbors were used to peace; none of their defenses could respond to an unexpected attack. With the information Graula carried, Shandia's victories would be easy and quick. She hastened to the palace to report directly to the King.

She came to a halt at the edge of the training camp. It looked deserted. Where were they? She walked through the camp, looking inside all the buildings. The barracks, the kitchens, the lecture halls, the records office, all were empty. Everything looked as though it had been used the past three years, but no one was there now. Had they all left suddenly? But the army wouldn't have mobilized without hearing her report.

Puzzled, Graula entered the palace. Her footsteps echoed in the empty halls. She called out that Graula had returned. For a full minute afterwards the sound of her voice came back her, but there was no other reply. Finally, she came to the throne room. And there, sitting on his throne, was Fendus.

Slowly, Graula approached the King. Only a small twitching of the eyes revealed he was aware of her presence. He did not seem ill or paralyzed. It was as if he was — empty. He had the air of a man burdened with useless time.

Graula stood before the throne. In a low voice, she asked what happened. Quietly, Fendus told her. He spoke about his dream and his research, Gorjelmar and their divinations, their discovery and the ritual. He explained why the villagers feared him and why he needed all the youths of Shandia in one place. He told of the hypnotic potions in the camp's water supply, of the need to eventually use every living soul in the area, of the lake of blood that now filled the cellar of the palace.

Graula absorbed this in silence. When Fendus stopped, she did not prompt him for more. There was no need to ask about her daughter. All was clear to her now. Without a word, she took her shortsword from its scabbard and ran Fendus through.

Fendus ignored the sword in his chest. They had finally succeeded, he continued. After they had performed the last ritual, Gorjelmar discovered a serious error in their divinations. The heart was not removed from the victim, but from the one who's immortality was desired. If one does not have a heart, one is not truly alive and thus can never truly die. So Gorjelmar, as per their agreement, had removed Fendus's heart. Finished with his story, Fendus removed the sword from his chest and handed it back to Graula.

Now you may ask why Gorjelmar had to fulfill their bargain — for did Fendus have a heart in the first place?

All this happened centuries ago. The kingdom of Shandia has crumbled to dust. Graula is dead. Fendus still sits somewhere on his lonely throne. And Gorjelmar? Well, if while wandering in the forest you meet a kindly old man, and he asks you when your birthday is, think carefully before you answer.

Credits

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