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The world of Pyre is one of tiers and of harsh, cruel judgement. Above lies the Commonwealth, built on justice, mercy, and inclusion. It is no longer any of these things. War rages all along its borders where its military has not stamped out resistance altogether. Literacy has been outlawed. Books are regularly burned and any found capable of reading are dealt the cruelest punishment known. They are cast below.

Below lay Downside, a sick and twisted land that does its best to beat down any sent its way. Beasts hunt anyone who lingers in one place too long. The climates are varied, harsh, and sometimes even poisonous. The less said about anything edible the better. And disease pounces almost as suddenly as the wildlife. But, for all that, exiles survive and even travel freely across the lands many faces. It is a life where only the strongest survive. Though strength comes in many forms.

There is one thin ray of hope that drives these exiles to get up each morning and cling to life. The Rites. A legend passed from mouth to ear, over campfires and across tables, about a way to escape Downside. It is the only way for ones crimes to be forgiven by the Commonwealth. Teams of three, Triumvirates, would compete against each other for the privilege of battling the mysterious Nightwings to earn their freedom.

But even the chosen were only mortal. A betrayal within their ranks shattered the Nightwings and the few survivors parted ways. Without them, the Rites could not progress. Without the Rites, no one escaped Downside. Several years passed with no sign of the Nightwings reemerging. Some tried to found the team anew, but the Gods watching over this land could not be fooled so easily. Only the Nightwings could recruit more Nightwings. And the final members were still alive.

Now that the ancient tradition has become a cursed legend, a lone wagon rolls across the land. The outfits inside sport the familiar white masks tucked beside blue and orange robes that so few still remember. The Nightwings live again. And they are searching for the last piece of the puzzle they need to start the Rites once again.



You find yourself lying out in the open. Small creatures with red fur, blue wings, and curiously cute bat-like faces stare down at you from the shadowed spots in a nearby ridge. A blazing sun beats down at you from much farther overhead than seems possible for so much light. Dust swirls in a breeze that fails to cool. A dry plain stretches out around you.

You have only a few moments to wonder why circumstances have found you in such poor straits when a red house on wheels rolls out from behind the ridge. It's a ramshackle, rickety thing that shivers and shakes with every bump of the landscape. At first the massive horn used as the center bracing beam for its room is pointed to the north. But then it skips, hops, skids, and is pointed in your direction instead.

Three figures step out, bone white masks gazing your direction intimidatingly. Their blue and orange robes billow in the wind and hide all but the most general features about them. Two stand upright, one much larger than the other with a mask equipped with horns, while the third pads about on all fours. They argue for a while just out of earshot before the large form and quadruped slip back inside. The last one steps in your direction and removes the mask.

He turns out to be a young man, a human with auburn hair, olive skin, and kind eyes.

"Hello, my friend. Don't care who you are or what you did. None of that matters anymore. All of us, we're equal nothings here." With those words, he offers you what help he can. You discover your throat is dry and he offers up water. Wounds ache and he binds them without complaint. Your stomach grumbles and he hands over food, such as it is here.

"There. You weren't so bad off after all. I'm Hedwyn. Now, come on, out of the dust." There is no ill intent in his soul as he offers to lead you towards the house on wheels. Of course, you need not follow him.

### **Chart Your Own Course**

You thank him for his assistance, but head off in your own direction.

*You will be bound to no destiny. Neither will you have any connections or memories of this world to guide you. You may choose your Race and purchase Perks belonging to it and the **Starless** perk line. You may run across the Nightwings again in your travels, or even strive against them, though your story is now your own. The rest of the introduction does not concern you.*

### **Follow Him**

*You gain the **Linked by the Stars** Drawback.*

The weather-beaten wagon is as much a mess inside as out. Cobwebs hang between every shelf and occupy nearly every corner. Candles drip wax in long rivulets that mark many generations of such lights. A whole nest of those bat-like creatures seem to be infesting the roof beams, lazing about. And things with glittering, glowing eyes peek from every black shadow. The masked woman and the quadruped are taking stock of a collection of ancient books.

The woman takes off her mask and introduces herself as Jodarial. The removal of the mask makes her look no less intimidating. The horns that were a part of her mask prove to be a part of her head as well. They are easily as long as her own arm and just as thick around at their base. Her eyes are glowing pits of blue surrounded by black and red shadows.

The smallest one requires some assistance getting off his mask, as he lacks thumbs, but quickly introduces himself as Rukey Greentail. The small canine creature has a voice louder and more active than either of the other two. Clever eyes and a quick tongue mark him as a man not to be easily tricked... or a swindler himself. Grey fur coats his body, except for a black curling mustache standing out on either side of his nose.

Pleasantries aside, Jodarial motions to the other two and speaks as if you are not present.

“Can he do it?”

“Hope so... I haven’t asked yet.” Hedwyn responds.

“What? Then what are you waiting for?” Rukey sneers at Hedwyn, then turns to you. One of the books slides across the floor at his kick to bump against your foot. “Heya chum! Nice to meet you and all but can you read or what?”

It is a dangerous question. Literacy has long since been banned in the Commonwealth. It may even have been what they cast you into Downside for. Still, the Commonwealth is a long way away and they have been pleasant enough thus far.

### **Admit, or lie, that you cannot Read**

The three look disappointed, but offer you the chance to join the Nightwings anyways. You can participate in the Rites at least. The more capable of doing so the better. Still, they cannot begin without a Reader and will continue to travel and search for one. They will find one within the next few days, a quiet but oddly charismatic person. The Reader is also traditionally the leader of the Nightwings but everyone has a voice in every decision.

*You may choose your Race and purchase Perks belonging to it as well as those of the **Rites Participant**. You need not participate in every Rite, in fact your skills may not be suited for battling all opponents, but you will have your chance to leave Downside as one of the seven if you desire it. And if you manage to defeat your opponents.*

### **Admit that you are a Reader**

“Well then, glory days!” Rukey exclaims. “Because it just so happens my associates and I, we got ourselves some nice material here for someone like you.” He motions to the book and looks expectantly in your direction. All three of them do.

“Reader, you still live thanks to us. We ask for something modest in exchange. Open the book and tell us what it says.” Jodarial all but commands, if politely.

“Sorry to put you on the spot.” Hedwyn adds.

The tome is bound in no material you can identify and its pages are as black as the night’s sky. At first, the pages seem to be completely blank. But as you flip to the first, letters begin glittering into existence on it like stars appearing as the sun sets. It proclaims itself the Book of Rites, written by all of the Eight Scribes who originally created the way for those to return from Downside. It offers you the chance at freedom, information about the land and its creatures, as well as history and geography lessons. All of it is written a bit fancifully, but there is some very useful information here.

*As a Reader, you will be directing the Rites Participants rather than engaging in the Rites directly. You will be in charge of strategy and determining who participates against which opponents. You will also come to be the leader of the Nightwings, though you will have to take into account the wills and desires of others. Which means you will determine who ascends after each Liberation Rite if your Triumvirate wins. Sadly, you will not be allowed the opportunity yourself. At least, not yet.*

*You may choose your Race and purchase Perks belonging to is as well as those of the **Reader.***



## **The Rules of the Rites**

Whether or not you can read, you will be introduced to the Rites. It is all some people talk about down here after all. On its surface, it is a simple contest. Three Rites Participants face off against each other, guided by a Reader, to maneuver a Celestial Orb into an opponent's Pyre. Each time the Orb is placed in a Pyre, be it thrown or plunged in more directly, the fire will dim and eventually falter. The first to put out their opponent's Pyre is the winner of the Rite. But if that was all there was to it the contest would not be so heated.

Only one Rites Participant may move at any given time, which is where the Reader's guidance comes into play. "Switching" from one Participant to the next happens at the speed of thought and the connection with the Reader is very much a mental one. The Reader may offer strategies or observations but cannot under any circumstances interfere at all. No otherworldly powers may be lent, no extraordinary abilities used to influence the Celestial Orb's path, nothing. The Voice is watching from his seat in the Commonwealth and will know a cheat when he sees one. [Note 5] Influencing the match in such a way will result in an automatic loss.

Similarly, Rites Participants themselves are disallowed any such powers or sorceries outside of those belonging to their natural body. Be glad your opponents operate under such restrictions as well. The Cronos, along with a few others, have access to some truly vile magics and would not otherwise hesitate to use them if they could.

Participants are also given an Aura, the size and shape of which depends on their Race. These surround the all Participant like a protective circle. Any foes who run into it will be banished from the playing field for a short time, normally between ten and twenty seconds. It can be leapt over. The Aura can also be concentrated and used offensively with a moment's concentration. It is normally cast forwards in a line, but some races have more unique forms. Once cast the Aura will not reform for several seconds. Additionally, Participants carrying the Celestial Orb will find their Aura suppressed.

There are two ways to douse an opponent's Pyre. The first is to carry the Celestial Orb into the flames personally, be it through walking, dashing, jumping, or even flying. This is the simplest and most direct method. However, the Participant who carried the Orb into the Pyre will be forced to sit out of the match until the Orb has been plunged into a Pyre again. The second is to toss the Orb into the Pyre. This allows the Participant to skip being banished, but only diminishes the Pyre as much as plunging in at longer distances. Additionally, other Participants may leap and grab the Celestial Orb if it is tossed.

Beyond this, the Rites become a contest of wills, wits, skills, and physical prowess.



## Races of the World

*You may choose to change your gender and pick your age for **100 CP**.  
You may also choose to have memories of a life in this world, or none at all.*



### **Nomads (Age: 18+2d8)**

Humans in all but their preferred name and spectrum of hair color. They are as varied as the moments of each day in personality and appearance. These people have long since put their days of wandering the plains behind them with the founding of the Commonwealth all those generations ago. Some stories say long, long ago, the first Nomads were wingless Harps who were cast out from their malady. Though only the Stars know if that is true or not.

Humans have moderately sized Auras in the Rites and otherwise no special talents to speak of. They do, however, tend to return quickly from being banished by opponents.

**Burning Resolve (Free for Nomad):** Nomads have an infuriating habit of sticking to their beliefs despite little things like evidence and common sense. Old grudges and new hopes tend to blaze brighter in their hearts. Some of this has infected you, giving your willpower a slight boost.

**Shared Tenacity (100 CP - Nomad Exclusive):** Of all the races found in Downside, Nomads tend to be the eternal optimists. The ones who help pick up the spirits of others when they are flagging. The ones who find silver linings to the darkest clouds. This is a pretty helpful trait among exiles, especially here. You'll find that your words now carry extra weight when it comes to lifting up others spirits.



### **Demon (Age: 18+3d8, Exiled for 4+1d8 years)**

Surviving Downside is a harsh enough life even at the best of times. But those who manage it for years discover a startlingly new property to the realm. It transforms those who live there for too long. Whether it is the foul air, the residual magic from the dead Greater Titans, or something in the food is entirely unknown. Demons are not always Nomads. There are hints that all the races react to Downside in some manner, but Nomads are the most common and undergo the biggest change. The horns begin growing after a few years, then the eyes and skin change color. Their joints and muscles also stiffen, making them slow but powerful. It is not all bad, for those who are transformed will find their lifespans lengthened significantly. There are few to be found in the Commonwealth, as many who earned their freedom tend to be tossed back below soon enough.

Demons have a massive Aura in the Rites to make up for their plodding speed. They are slower to cast it at their foes, but it covers a wide swatch as it travels.

**Relentless Vigor (Free for Demon):** Being exiled is hard on the spirit. Being exiled to Downside is hard on everything. But you've grown accustomed, or were just too stubborn to die before you learned how to survive. Your body is tougher than most and you'll be able to shake off common diseases before they strike. You'll even need a little less food and water than you should.

**Brazen Manner (100 CP - Demon Exclusive):** Demons tend to have a certain reputation which is only enhanced by their intimidating stature and horns. While you may be a gentle soul underneath, you've learned how to use this perception to your advantage. You're able to growl and grumble like a landslide and can loom over people with a presence that could make the weak willed release their bladders. Simply put, you're just as intimidating as you look when you want to be.



### **Cur (Age: 14+2d8)**

The smallest race of this world in stature only, for their personalities are not something that can be ignored. They tend to be loud and brash when they are not clever and cunning. Their kind makes excellent merchants despite their lack of thumbs and have managed to insinuate themselves even into the upper crusts of society in the Commonwealth. They do, however, tend to have a rather casual attitude towards laws then they get in the way of their profit. That's not to say they have no honor. Insinuate that to a Cur at your peril. They simply believe profit should be had when it can be.

Curs have a very small Aura in the Rites, but make up for that with their terrific speed. They can cast their Aura while still skidding on pure momentum and then keep going.

**Silver Tongue (Free for Cur):** Curs one and all seem to have a certain amount of charisma, flair, and presence that even the roughest of them use to their advantage. So naturally you're not lacking in that department. Your tongue is much more clever now, giving you the same advantage your brethren all enjoy.

**Lucky Break (100 CP - Cur Exclusive):** Things just seem to work out for some of these canines. Whether it's luck, cleverness, or simply their Scribe looking out for them, none look a change of fortunes in the mouth. Inside the Rites, this allows the Cur to occasionally return from being banished in a single second. Outside it simply makes them a little bit luckier than others.



### **Savage (Age: 14+2d8)**

Even with the Commonwealth ruling much of the known world, there are still those areas that refuse to be civilized. Where the people live as all once did, under the stars and among the wilderness with nature's bounty. Strangely, these people have heard of the legends of the Eight Scribes and latched onto them in their entirety. Where others tend to revere, or at least pay lip service, to the Scribe of their race, Savages worship all eight equally. They tend to be an odd bunch and are often seen as witless or "just a little bit off". The Nomads have long since claimed these people are no relative of theirs. Those few who wander into the Commonwealth proper tend to get tossed Downside for vagrancy and generally being a nuisance.

Savages have moderately sized Auras in the Rites and are generally faster than their Nomad cousins. They also tend to return from being banished pretty quickly.

**Moon-Touched (Free for Savage):** Everyone knows the Savages are an odd, but friendly sort. The kind of strange that tells the best stories or smells trouble on the wind. While you might not be so unusual, others still find you rather friendly. You have an easier time getting people to accept you.

**Blessings of the Eight Scribes (100 CP - Savage Exclusive):** Echoes of the Eight Scribes' journey across Downside are still clearly visible today. Similarly, echoes of their magic, might, and spirit still linger here and there where special moments took place. You know how to tap into these, though you cannot detect these spots until you are already inside of them. By demonstrating your devotion with a moment of dance, chanting, or other such rhythmic exercise, you can gain a small boon. Your strength, agility, or vitality will improve slightly until the dawn of the next morning. There is no telling exactly which blessing one will receive until it is upon you. [Note 1]



### **Imp (Age: 5+1d8)**

The only truly native race to Downside, the Imps have long since been thought of as just another beast of the cursed land. Despite the size of their wings they are quite capable fliers and can manage surprising bouts of energy when goaded into action. Normally by food. Otherwise they tend to be a lazy lot. However, some Imps are not like the others. They demonstrate not just cleverness, but intelligence far surpassing their kin. Those so blessed are every bit as capable of thinking as any other person. They tend to find and hang about Readers, as through some quirk of their blessing, they are the ones who can best understand the squeaks and titters that make up the Imp “language”.

Imps have a moderately sized aura, which is quite impressive for their tiny size, and can flutter in the air for short distances. However, they are awkward on the ground and can, at best, move in short, quick hops. They also do not cast their aura, but explode in a wide blast instead. This banishes the Imp for several seconds but has the potential of eliminating multiple opponents in one blow.

**Underestimated (Free for Imp):** It’s easy to underestimate an Imp, even a smart one. So even when one dons the robes and masks of the Rites and steps into the arena, most are just going to laugh and scoff. At least until the Imp zips past their head with the orb and tosses it in. You are no different and most are going to dramatically underestimate your abilities until you give them a reason not to. Even then, they might not believe what they’re seeing at first.

**Kinship (100 CP - Imp Exclusive):** Few know that Imps are not nearly as dim-witted as they look. They aren’t exactly intelligent, but they do have their own society and even understand the concept of money, bartering, and, most surprisingly, the Rites themselves. They even tend to defer and follow the leadership of those who are truly bright. Because you are one of these, a touch of that respect has latched onto you. You will find those around you tend to offer you a little more deference than they would otherwise, especially if you prove yourself to be extraordinary in some way.



### **Wyrms (Age: 18+2d8)**

Wyrms are an scaled, eel-like race found in the oceans around the Commonwealth. They are quite capable of existing above the waves as below it and are not shy about doing so. They have thrown their lot in with the Commonwealth against the rebel Harps, but are not as bad as their commanders. Individually, Wyrms tend to be a chivalrous, honorable lot who prize duty and heroism. They repay every favor given to them many times over, sometimes even swearing their lives to those who save them. There is no finer soldier to have guarding your back though.

Wyrms have a small aura with edges that wobble and undulate like the seas they hail from. To make up for this, the aura lingers behind them for several seconds as they move. This aura echo is just as capable of banishing opponents as any other of its uses. A burst of speed and clever maneuvering by a Wyrms can make entire sections of the arena into a minefield.

**On My Honor! (Free for Wyrms):** Once a Wyrms has decided to do something, it can be hard to budge them from their chosen course. Even if that course is rather stupid in hindsight. By harnessing this “talent”, you find it much easier to focus on tasks you set your mind to and block out distractions.

**This Knight Beseches You To Hear Him, If You Please! (100 CP - Wyrms Exclusive):** While most Wyrms are rather terse, preferring the clipped commands of the battlefield, some are decidedly less so. Their phrases grow as flowery as a springtime meadow and their voice often reaches crescendos of verbose eloquence the likes of which are seen few others places. You now share this talent for saying with ten words what can easily be said with two. Your tongue will rarely falter when called upon and your vocabulary will come to reach profound new heights with this influence upon your spirit.



### **Harp (18 + 1d8)**

Harps are a winged, matriarchal race who have a sense of stubborn pride a mile wide. They tend to be insular and care little about the outside world or those who inhabit it save for when it encroaches on their territory. The Commonwealth has deemed them traitors and murderers for refusing to join as the other races have. The war has been going on for longer than most people can remember. Animosity of both sides is at an all time high as casualties continue to mount. Still, once one gets past the armor they've been forced to don to survive, Harps can be friendly, warm, and, to those they trust most of all, rather cuddly. Just don't expect to slip inside easily. Alcohol might help.

Harps have a small aura that swirls like the winds they love to ride. Instead of casting it, they charge forwards a short distance, enveloped in their aura. Any opponents they crash into along the way are banished. While charging, Harps are immune to being banished by an opponent's aura, but usually need a second to collect themselves after such a maneuver. They are also capable of short bouts of flight inside the arena.

**Stunningly Sharp (Free for Harp):** While few members of the Commonwealth will admit it openly, there is something in the Harps that tends to draw the eye. Their beauty is hard to deny even on the battlefield. Naturally you have inherited this trait as well and will find your physical beauty in all forms you choose to adopt enhanced.

**Guarded Soul (100 CP - Harp Exclusive):** The training Harps receive from such an early age does more than just strengthen their bodies. Their resolve and mental fortitude also increases, as yours does too. The practical upshot of this is those with a talent for gleaning thoughts, like true Readers, will find it much more difficult to gain any information. You will also be able to detect such attempts. However, this will not hold off a truly powerful and determined mentalist for long.



### **Sap (30 + 3d8)**

Described by all as clever and ambitious, Saps are tree-like beings with sharp minds and capable tongues. Their unusual anatomy gives them exceedingly long lives, which most dedicate to a driving purpose. It also allows them the patience to plan years in advance and wait for just the right moment to move. The Commonwealth recruited them for all of these traits. There they enjoy lofty positions where they are used for their memory and eloquent manners as a paperless version of a scribe. Many have picked up an attitude to match their high position, one decidedly unpleasant.

Saps have a smallish aura for their size with an extremely rigid border. Instead of casting their aura, they can wrap it around themselves to reflect auras back at those who cast them. It requires precise timing but this is something they are quite capable at. They also have the ability to call up a single small flower with its own, albeit tiny, aura that will remain on the field until they have been banished.

**Honeyed Words (Free for Sap):** Saps are, above all things, gifted in both courtly manners and the ability to polish their words until they shine. As one of them, you will find the words slipping from your lips are more pleasant to the ear. At least until you lose your temper.

**Etched In Bark (100 CP - Sap Exclusive):** In a kingdom without literacy they had to find someplace to stuff all the knowledge, treaties, and laws that the Commonwealth needed to survive. So they turned to those with the best memory. You, like other Saps, have an exceedingly long and clear memory. It is not perfect or absolute, but once you commit something to memory you will be able to recall it decades later just as vividly as the day it first bound it in place. This is best used for facts, figures, and other such static pieces of information.



### **Bog-Crone (30 + 5d8)**

The snake-like people originally slithered around the swamps bordering the Commonwealth. They saw little benefit in open war against so powerful a foe and quietly accepted the “offer” to join. Most who meet them use the term “decidedly unpleasant” to describe their disposition. And they are. Croners, the name for both males and females of their kind, are insular, secretive, and trust very few people with any information about themselves. Despite this, they are master alchemists and the only race to have made a long, systematic study of the mythical arts in this world. They are dangerous when crossed but remember well favors and debts owed.

Croners have a surprisingly small aura, but the edges of it undulate unpredictably. They do not cast their aura out in a straight line. Instead they spray it in a wide arc of thin tendrils. It can easily catch multiple opponents in its spread even with the space between each line. However, Croners take quite a while to return from being banished.

**Dark Arts (Free for Crone):** The Bog-Croners have never kept of their interest in the arcane and alchemical arts much of a secret. While the Commonwealth discourages the former, they do enjoy taking advantage of the fruits of the latter. You now share their talent for all things concerned with alchemy and enchanting and are able to learn both practices easier than others.

**Soft Soul (100 CP - Crone Exclusive):** Despite their outward appearance and coarse mannerisms, the snake-like people love and care for others just as everyone else does. They are simply more selective of those they grow close to and, because of this, less willing to let those bonds go. They prefer to keep those they trust close, even if mistakes are made and affections not returned. You have picked up on this lesson and made it your own. You are now capable of handling the rejection of your affections by others more gracefully, often keeping them as close friends afterwards. Additionally, those who you reject tend to be more likely to react in kind. Lovers may come and go, but true friends are valuable beyond measure.



## Rites Participant Perks

*Rites Participants gain **Nightwing's Glory** for **Free** & a **50% Discount** on the other perks here.*

**Nightwing's Glory (100 CP):** Downside itself does an excellent job of ensuring only the strong survive, but the Nightwings are supposed to be a step above the rest. While this isn't always true a training regimime does help fill the hours and days of travel. You are noticeably faster and stronger than others of your race. A prime example both inside and outside the Rites.

**Eternal Hope (200 CP - Nomad, Savage, or Wurm Only):** Hope is such a complex thing, easy to kindle or break in one moment, utterly resilient beyond belief in another. Thankfully you've been given a double measure and have an easier time bouncing your spirits back after a defeat. This also allows you to return from being banished in the Rites twice as fast.

**Fierce Presence (200 CP - Demon, Sap, or Crone Only):** Charisma in all its forms is a useful tool in such a tough world. Whether you use it to charm, intimidate, or cause fear, you will find that your skills are more potent than they once were. Inside the Rites you will discover your aura is noticeably larger than it should be, both passively and offensively.

**Quick as Light (200 CP - Cur, Imp, or Harp Only):** Nature often decides that the strongest survive, but you've got feet or wings quick enough to prove that a lie. You can put on an extra burst of speed at the drop of a hat though your stamina may be an different issue. This has the predictable effect of making you faster inside the Rites as well.

**Three As One! (400 CP):** An incomplete pass because one didn't know the plan or a reckless action due to tempers flaring can spell disaster for a Triumvirate. For you, however, such things come naturally. You have an instinct for when a plan is about to go awry as well as what you can do to correct it. This doesn't mean your efforts will always work, because some problems cannot be solved by one person. But if a quick reminder, some fancy footwork, or a clever feign can save a strategy, you'll know how to pull it off.

**Follow The Stars (600 CP):** With the will of the Eight Scribes and the Rites written in the skies as well as the lingering menace of the Greater Titans hiding there as well, fate and destiny are easy to believe in here. Especially when those who cooperate with it seem to have much happier endings. While the Nightwing's win is no certainty there are those above with a vested interest in their glory. You have seized upon a bit of fate's permanence and can now use it to strengthen yourself when you actively work towards such designs. Simply put, when helping to fulfill a prophecy, advancing destiny's design for a world, or nudging events towards "canon" conclusions, you will find yourself greatly enhanced. Every aspect of yourself will be boosted when acting as a helping hand to fate's guiding finger.

## Reader Perks

*Readers gain **Gaze Above** for **Free** & a **50% Discount** on the other perks here.*

**The Reader's Mind (Free - Exclusive to Readers):** Most use the word Reader to label anyone who can pick up a page and decipher the letters upon it. Most people are fools. The true power of a Reader comes from the mind itself. Like them, you have a small ability to reach into others minds and glean thoughts and feelings. Very few will feel the contact, with Harps proving the most sensitive and resistant to it, but you will only be able to read deeper than the surface if the other person allows it. Strangely, lies will make themselves the most obvious to your new sense, if you look for them.

**Gaze Above (100 CP):** While literacy may be illegal in the Commonwealth, it is far from dead. Secret libraries exist in hidden basements or caches behind walls. Some are shared but most dread discovery too much to tell even their closest allies. Because of your forbidden study, you have gained a talent for learning ancient languages and forgotten tongues. This, combined with the Book of Rites, will also allow you to read messages hidden in the stars, if there are any there to seek.

**Bound Together (200 CP):** Being crammed together in a wagon for hours on end can either be an excellent time to get to know those around you... or a chance for everyone to annoy each other to frustration. Thankfully, you have an air that tends those around you towards the former. It's easy for you to get people of different cultures and personalities to, at the very least, tolerate each other and be willing to work together. Getting there might be a little turbulent but given some time and your assistance it will all work out in the end.

**Before The Flames (400 CP):** In the Rites, the Reader's only tool to assist their team is their own mind. They are the ones who can create magic with a poor team or drive an excellent one to ruin. It can be a disorienting profession at first. Leaping from ear to ear with a thought and urging certain strategies is far different than leading from the front lines. But you've learned the practice well. You've gained a reservoir of strategic knowledge that can quickly pick apart an opposition's strategy in the Rites, then deliver a counter offensive with little trouble. This knowledge does have applications off the field as well. The basics of team play can be applied to most any battlefield with some creativity.

**When The Stars Align (600 CP):** The smallest of efforts can spawn the largest of movements in the world. All it took was one man to forgive another to create the first of the Eight Scribes. And they went on to move mountains and slay creatures no mortal should have been able to do. In the beginning it can be difficult to see just which direction will have the greatest effect, but the Eight Scribes have seen fit to grant you a glimpse of the tapestry of fate itself. You'll find yourself unconsciously tugged towards those pivotal moments that can so easily change the future of a world. You will only know the nexus points once you are already in them, but once there you will gain a flash of insight. You will understand which direction to nudge events and gain hints as to what that will do to the future. You won't know all the details, and the future remains as mutable as ever, but you won't accidentally doom a world unless that's what you desire.

## Starless Perks

*Starless gain **Forgotten Soul** for **Free** & a **50% Discount** on the other perks here.*

**Forgotten Soul (100 CP):** Very few people desire to wander Downside alone. Aside from all the dangers of the twisted landscapes and savage weather, it is a powerfully lonely land with very few permanent settlements. However, you have learned to enjoy the uninterrupted quiet and solitude in a way that most others can't. It will now take you much longer to feel the mental strain of extended isolation from other people.

**Howler Tamer (200 CP):** The Howlers are Imps who have been driven into a wild frenzy by hunger, the phases of the moon, or any of a dozen other reasons. Few have made an extensive study of their habits but all fear the sound of their echoing cries. However, they seem to see you as something like kin and will not bother you. Additionally, you have a talent for taming them, calming them, and even making yourself understood by them to a degree. This ability also works on other animals of all stripes but to a lesser degree. It will take more work and time to tame other creatures.

**Until The End (400 CP):** Stubbornness is an admirable trait in the harsh landscape of the exiles. It can mean the difference between succumbing to hunger and wounds or surviving to live on. If



Downside has taught you anything it is to survive the impossible. Once every ten years, when you would normally die for whatever reason, you will instead simply pass out and awaken a while later. Your wounds will be healed but you will still be bruised and sore. If thirst or hunger or exposure were your downfall, your body will be replenished as if your suffering had never happened.

**When Stars Fall (600 CP):** Downside abounds with prophecies and arcane rituals dictated by beings that last walked the lands over eight hundred years ago. They are still beseeched daily for guidance, for luck, for the strength to make it through another day. Hogwash, the lot of it. The Eight Scribe's vision for the Commonwealth was distorted as soon as they disappeared up into the stars. No amount of prayer is going to change this world. It will be the might and will of men and women like yourself. This is the lesson you have seized upon and it has given you power enough to fight fate itself. Prophecies, fate, the guiding fingers of deities far removed mean little to your force of will. Should you desire it, you will know the moments and places to insert yourself to cause their influence to veer off course. This will lead the future in a new direction unexpected by anyone. But it will, finally, be determined by those living in the here and now. Chart your own course and throw down the old gods.

## Items

*Starless gain a 50% Discount on all Items above 50 CP, but cannot purchase 600 CP Items.*

**A White Lute (50/100 CP):** The songs of this world thrive as oral tradition has come to replace the written world. For **50 CP** you may take with you a collection of this music in whatever format you wish. If, instead, you wish to pay **100 CP** the voice of Tariq and Celeste will follow you between worlds and compose entirely new songs based on your adventures, played as events unfold. Others may hear this music, or not, as you wish.

**Dapper Mustache (50 CP):** Who doesn't enjoy a suave facial accessory, especially one as fine as this? This luxurious black mustache is sure to catch eyes and add an element of danger or class to your face. It has just enough magic to ensure you can remove it when you want.

**Harp Moonshine (50 CP):** This glass decanter has a long neck and a spherical body, which makes setting it anywhere a bit of a hassle. Inside is a brown, cloudy liquid which houses the body of a large green snake with a hood like a cobra. The symbol and ribbon both mark the contents as exceedingly alcoholic. Those with keen eyes will notice that this container seems to keep refilling itself when no one is looking. And that, on very rare occasions, the snake will give a conspiratorial wink and hiccup.

**Riverfrost (50 CP):** This hunk of ice was pulled directly from the frigid fringes of the Sclorian Shore. It still retains a touch of Downside's natural magic and will never melt or grow the slightest bit smaller. It also exudes a lot more cold than a piece of ice its size really should and can easily keep a footlocker worth of food from spoiling or a small room comfortably cool. Just don't touch it. The ice is so cold that it burns skin on contact.

**Gries Stone (50 CP):** An odd dodecahedron of purple crystal that seems to delight in disregarding the law of gravity. It floats about four feet off the ground and can be batted through the air easily. Glows with its own inner light and gives off a small, pleasant tone like a bell when touched. They are often found around Mount Alodiel and are merely curious trinkets for the few who dare the climb.

**Wakingwood Wisps (50 CP):** A clear glass jar with what appear to be living motes of light. They flicker on and off like fireflies, but seem to have no physical body that is visible. They are native to the oppressive forests of the Black Basin. They are quite happy to provide a small amount of illumination in exchange for getting out of that depressing environment.

**Deck of Titans (50 CP):** A deck of large cards that look like those used in fortune telling. However these depict the twelve Greater Titans. They are not magical in and of themselves. They may have some use in certain rituals if one dares to ask the Cronos about them. Though, perhaps you shouldn't.

**Xylobones (50 CP):** A curious musical instrument constructed of six bones and a large tusk. The bones, each larger than the last, are strapped to the tusk. None of them are hollowed out or preserved in any way beyond a simple coat of paint. And yet it is still capable of sounding musical tones in tune.

**Bottled Tempest (50 CP):** What appears to be an ordinary glass bottle stoppered with a wide cork proves to be anything but when tapped. Lightning, miniature but still loud and bright, flashes from the cork to the base of the jar when tapped. One could uncork this curiosity to unleash a powerful blast against whatever is in its path, but another will not be provided if one does.

**Pinch/Dash/Handful of Stardust (50/100/200 CP):** Stardust is a magical, blue powder gleaned from the places where celestial objects have fallen to earth. It has more uses than there are stars in the sky, being the raw stuff of magic, but is rare enough that even a small measure can be traded for much wealth. The first purchase grants a teaspoon worth of the grains held in a small envelope. The second a tablespoon contained within a small glass vial. The third offers a cup of the stuff placed into a glass beaker. You will receive another helping once every year.

**Collection of Drive Imps (100 CP):** Drive Imps are Imps that have been selected and trained for their endurance and strength. They are commonly used in Downside to provide propulsion, both by land and by air, for the wagons most people prefer to travel in. They tend to be pretty lazy until coaxed into action with the promise of food. This batch of ten are more loyal than most and quickly replaced if anything should happen to them.

**Downberry Clinger (100 CP):** An ivy-like plant that requires no dirt to thrive and is happiest clinging to the side of a wall. It produces a constant supply of blue fruit the size and shape of apples. Their flavor is odd and seems to shift with each bite. The fruit has several natural relaxants in it and is used by the locals for stress relief.

**Sun Serum (100 CP):** This small glass vial contains a softly glowing potion that was brewed in pure sunlight on a cloudless day. Those who drink it will find the warmth of a summer's day spreading out from their core. It is said that it will even warm the soul itself. Many use it as an antidepressant despite the high cost and effects only lasting for a few hours. Those playing the Rites have discovered it can allow them to return from being banished quite a bit faster... for a time. Comes with the recipe.

**Star Serum (100 CP):** A small glass beaker holding a dark liquid speckled with small dots of shimmering white. It was brewed under pure starlight on the night of a dark moon with few clouds. Those who drink it will discover a small blessing of the Scribes in its cool liquid. It hastens the steps of the imbiber for a few hours, giving them the freedom so many desire. Those playing the Rites will understand the obvious benefit from using it. Comes with the recipe should you desire more.

**Moon Serum (100 CP):** A gentle white glow issues forth from the liquid contained inside this glass vial. The potion inside was brewed under pure moonlight on a night when the moon was full to bursting. There are those who use the chill liquid to stir the spirit and inspire creativity. A few Readers have discovered it is a great help when it comes to thinking up strategies in the chaos of the Rites. It comes with the recipe to create more.

**Thrice Cursed Claw (100 CP):** A shriveled severed hand that once belonged to a true demon that wandered the lands of Downside. The flesh is black as the night but its veins still glow a red the color of deep infection. Holding it in the Rites allows one to retain their aura while grasping the Celestial Orb. But in return, the bearer cannot cast their aura at all. Outside of the Rites, well, perhaps it would be best if one didn't look for uses for such a dark artifact.

**Thrice Cursed Heart (100 CP):** This crystalline heart once beat inside the breast of a demon as real as the Titans and wandered the lands as they did. Midnight black and fiery red compete under the surface for space to shine, though neither will ever win. If taken into the Rites it transforms the wielder once they return from being banished. Either they will return with limitless energy or they will be shapeshifted into a Howler, being returned to their normal form at the beginning of the round. Outside of the Rites one would suggest it be kept in a tightly locked box. It still occasionally beats.

**Thrice Cursed Hoof (100 CP):** Withered black flesh and bone pokes out from a hoof as red as the deepest hellfires. It is almost too hot to hold and the land of Downside is certainly glad that the demon who once used it no longer walks the stones. If borne into the Rites, it bestows energy enough to sprint and dive circles around their foes. However, the Celestial Orb refuses to be held by any who bear this hoof's taint. One would question the sanity of those who tried to find other uses for it.

**Old Raiments (100 CP, Free Rites Participant):**

As is tradition, all those who participate in the Rites must don the appropriate garb. The white mask is graced with a touch of magic to allow even Demons with oddly shaped horns to fit into its smooth visage. The clothing and cloak, which could be robes if you wish, are also enchanted to never hinder the wearer. If you have sided with the Nightwings, your set will share their color palate, pictured here. If you have decided to go it on your own, you may decide the design and color scheme yourself.



**Book of Rites (100 CP, Free Reader):** If the words inside are to be believed, this tome and all its kin are bound in the skin of the Greater Titan known as Yslach Astral-born. This white book has the Scribe's symbol embossed on its cover in a dark material protected by a glass dome. The pages inside are as black as the night's sky with gold lettering and colorful illustrations filling in every page. Each of its eight chapters were written by a different Scribe. They detail the history of the Scribes themselves, simple survival tips to help guide Exiles, as well as brief accounts of their battles with the twelve Greater Titans, the celestial landmarks, and even the nine Triumvirates. While most Readers would have to spend years fully unlocking the secrets of these books, your copy is fully open to you.



**Blackwagon (200 CP):** These ramshackle houses on wheels are a common sight to see roaming Downside's shattered landscapes. They are both transportation and shelter from the various dangers that require this land's residents to remain on the move. A Blackwagon is not a stealthy vehicle, rattling and shaking and squeaking while on the move, and isn't much to look at. Still, it's home to many. Each has a barracks style room that can house eight comfortably, or ten if two don't mind sleeping on the floor. It also has a large common room that, while not roomy, allows ten people to sit or lay without being squished against each other. While most are bound to the land, this model has been upgraded and is able to operate both as a boat and as an airship. Which is certainly the quickest way to get around down here. Also comes with ten Drive-Imps to provide propulsion.

**Flock of Messenger Imps (200 CP):** These cousin to Howlers and Drive-Imps have long been bred for speed, endurance, and the ability to fly to extreme heights. Only they are able to come close to reaching the Commonwealth above. Even then they still cannot make it all the way without assistance from above. They are commonly used to send messages between Exiles and those above who know to look for such things. It is a dangerous practice. Often the penalty for being discovered communication or even trading with Exiles is exile itself. That's if the arresting officer doesn't just throw you off the cliff. Still, these ten Messenger Imps are more stealthy and crafty than most and will ensure that none but your intended recipient find anything you choose to send above.

**Fond Memento (200 CP, Discount Rites Participant):** Life is hard enough with lugging a bunch of knick-knacks and sentimental trinkets around. However, everyone has that one item they refuse to cast aside. Whether you smuggled it Downside, found it here, or had some friend topside smuggle it in for you, you have an item that is very important to you. It might be a battered cookpot, a family crest, or even a rug made from the hide of Howlers. Whatever the item is, it provides you with a sense of comfort and home so long as you have it close at hand. It might now sound like much, but it can mean the world to a person just struggling to get through the day.

**Rites Planner (200 CP, Discount Reader):** A simple leather folder containing sheets of obscure calculations, star charts for skies that have never existed, and other unusual, slightly arcane, paraphernalia. But the important part is not the documents, but the chalk slabs on each pocket. They record all kinds of useful data for those competing in the Rites. They even automatically update to keep track of the standing of all Triumvirates in the running. For those not competing, it's still a handy personal calendar that will keep track of events and timetables for you.

**Jeweled and Runed Bands (300 CP):** A rather plain set of rings, but enchanted so that the two are never found far from each other. One is green in both metal and gemstones while the other is cast of copper and fiery gemstones. Individually, they simply make the wearers a little happier and faster. But together their enchantments resonate. Inside the Rites, if both wearers are participating, they allow them to sprint, leap, and fly without effort for a short time after the start of each round. Outside one may still call upon their matched enchantment for a short time each pair of hours to use the boundless, infinite, stamina as one wishes. *[Note 6]*

**Celestial Orb (600 CP, Discount Rites Participant):** This large orb of dark glass studded with bright dots of light will be very familiar to anyone involved in the Rites. It is the orb that must be hurled or carried into an opponent's pyre to diminish it. However, never before has one appeared outside of the time appointed by the Eight Scribes and the stars themselves. So the fact you can carry this one around means you have something special in your hands.

With this Celestial Orb, you may hold your own Rites. When placed on the ground and invoked in a sufficiently pompous and purposeful way, an arena will be formed and pyre lit. The one who begins the Rites will act as The Voice, guardian of the rules and traditions of the Rites. Raiments and masks will be needed for the Participants, a Reader will be required, and rules set in place. However, The Voice may dictate changes to any of these as they wish. The garments and traditions need not be the ones used in this world. So long as all participants are informed ahead of time, the Rites will still commence no matter the changes made.

It is suggested that one not make deals and bargains inside the arena lightly. For a measure of the Eight Scribe's original magic still lingers. And they were a great believer in deals and promises being upheld. One might find such things more binding than normal if wagered on a Rite.

**Beyonder Crystal (600 CP, Discount Reader):** This green orb is roughly the size of a large Imp, or a head, and inscribed with runes that date back to the Eight Scribes themselves. None now know how to read such runes but they bear certain similarities to the patterns of the stars involved in the Rites. The center of the orb glows with an inner light that seems almost tangible in the way it swirls. It hums and shivers faintly when one focuses their attention on it.

Bound inside this crystal are the Bypassers. They were assassins sent to kill the Eighth Scribe, who was the first to be cast out into exile. When one of their number would not yield to the mercy of Solium Murr they were all sealed within its green walls. Bound for eternity to never leave the emptiness inside or be separate from their fellows ever again. They were also charged with helping to train future Nightwings. Sandra leads these assassins turns Rites Participants and after eight hundred years has grown brutally efficient in offering this training.

The Beyonder Crystal allows the holder to communicate with Sandra, as well as hold training rites with any three others drawn near. The one who holds the crystal will act as the Reader during the mock Rite. The assassins inside are varied enough to offer at least one example of each of the races as an opponent and are skilled enough after all these years to offer as much or as little of a challenge as the holder of the crystal desires.



# Companions

## [Note 3]

**Fellow Exiles (50 CP each):** So there were others on the boat when they sent you skidding down the river to this forsaken land? Very well. Each time you purchase this option, you may Import a Companion that is already following you between worlds. They will gain their choice of a **Race** and it's **Free Perk**. Additionally they may choose to be **Starless**, a **Rites Participant**, or a **Reader** themselves. They may also choose if they wish to affiliate themselves with the Nightwings or not. Regardless of their choices, each Companion imported this way gains **400 CP** to spend on **Perks**, but not **Items**. Companions may also not take any **Drawbacks**.

If you wish, you can instead create a new Companion with this purchase. They will have a personality and appearance that you wish, as well as everything an imported Companion gains above.

**New Triumvirate (200 CP, Exclusive Starless):** You desire a place already made in this world for you? Very well. With this option you may Import (and/or Create) 8 Companions as above, with the exception that none of them may be affiliated with the Nightwings. Instead this world will know you and your Companions as a Triumvirate, either one recently formed or with a longer history at your choice. You may choose the name of your Triumvirate as well as it's color scheme.

**Lost Friends (100 CP):** Interested in those with their own stories already written? The trouble-maker Barker Ashpaws seem like a good drinking buddy? Or perhaps you want to help Falcon Ron and his father mutter their way into expanding their little enterprise beyond Downside's borders. This option covers any of those that might be found in Pyre who you desire, save for some exceptions. Any of the Nightwings may not be taken, as they have their own option below. Also Tariq and Celeste have their own business to attend to and will show no interest in joining you.

**The Nightwing Themselves (100 CP, Excludes Starless):** The following pages are dedicated to the ten members who eventually come to make up the Nightwing's full complement. Each purchase of this option will allow you the chance to take one of them along, though you will still have to convince them to do so. Still, this will give you the opportunity and a fair shot at it. For those worried about being split up from your chosen allies over the course of the events to come, you will meet up with them again before the end, no matter where life takes each of them.





## Hedwyn

If there ever was the definition of a hopeful soul, Hedwyn would be its shining example. Even his years Downside have not robbed him of his optimism or desire to strive for a better future. When he was offered the chance to escape, he seized on it without bothering to ask more than a few specifics. He found the Wagon, Jodariel, and Rukey and refounded the Nightwings without even knowing who he was working for. He is the Nightwing's heart, kind and generous and always willing to offer a hand in friendship to those outcast by others. Despite all this, he is not as naive as he seems, already having learned a few harsh lessons about life.

He was sentenced to exile for falling in love with a Harp while serving in the Commonwealth's military and attempting to run away with her. He still hopes to escape from his exile and reunite with her, though he is just as focused on making sure his friends make it out as well.

As a Rites Participant, Hedwyn gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Eternal Hope**, and **Three As One!**. His personality also qualifies him for the **Burning Resolve** and **Shared Tenacity** Perks.



## Jodariel

A grim woman who has survived Downside long enough that Hedwyn remembers her taking care of him as a child. She once was a seasoned Captain in the Commonwealth's army who dedicated her life to taking care of the orphans of her fallen fellow soldiers. She was exiled for refusing to put down a clutch of Harp children who wandered too close to the Bloodborder. The hatred she now has towards that entire race is one of bitterness long simmered in a cruel environment, but it is not as deep as one might suspect. Some time and effort coming from a trusted friend might be able to get her to see past her bias... at least somewhat.

She is gruff, offers few words, and despite this does care about those under her charge. She also prizes Hedwyn's opinion, both of herself and of any situation, above the words of any other. However, she has little patience for fools who risk themselves and those around them pointlessly.

As a Rites Participant, Jodariel gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Fierce Presence**, and **Three As One!**. She has also earned the **Relentless Vigor** and **Brazen Manner** Perks during her long exile.



### **Rukey Greentail**

This dashing little cur comes with an overabundance of spirit, tenacity, greed, and connections that mark him as either a master trader or a criminal. The truth is he's a little bit of both, but there's a good heart resting inside. A dedicated family man who devoted his efforts and skills to providing for his ailing mother and several good-for-nothing uncles. But it wasn't enough. At least, not until he joined some of Barker Ashpaws' gang smuggling goods to Downside in waterproof crates. Eventually he was caught and sent down the river himself.

His quick tongue, temper, and humor make him the life of any conversation he interjects himself into. But do not doubt his devotion to his friends and allies. He's got quite a spine that shows when necessary, especially for them. It should be noted that Barker Ashpaws currently holds a rather substantial debt over Rukey's head. Barker has shown no compunction about holding that debt over his head in an attempt to gain a bit of leverage.

As a Rites Participant, Rukey gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Quick as Light**, and **Three As One!**. His luck and easy charisma have long since given him both the **Silver Tongue** and **Lucky Break** Perks.



### **Vagabond Girl**

She's an odd duck this one. At first meeting her odd turns of phrase and childlike way of viewing the world make it easy to assume she is touched in the head. Certainly her way of talking to walls or suddenly breaking into dances devoted to the Eight Scribes does nothing to defend her sanity. However, the longer one spends with the girl whose name rhymes with gray, the harder it becomes to deny there is more to her than meets the eye. Her prayers are answered too often for it to merely be coincidence, and her ability to sense mystical remnants of the Scribes is uncanny. Those who merely pay lip service to the religion surrounding the Eight may end up reconsidering their views after a time spent around her.

She is a prophet among pragmatists. Her unwavering faith in the guiding hand and will of the Eight Scribes guides much of her actions, even if she doesn't always understand them herself. She is tougher than she seems though.

As a Rites Participant, she gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Eternal Hope**, and **Three As One!**. Her faith and attitude also reward her with the **Moon-Touched** and **Blessing of the Eight Scribes** Perks.

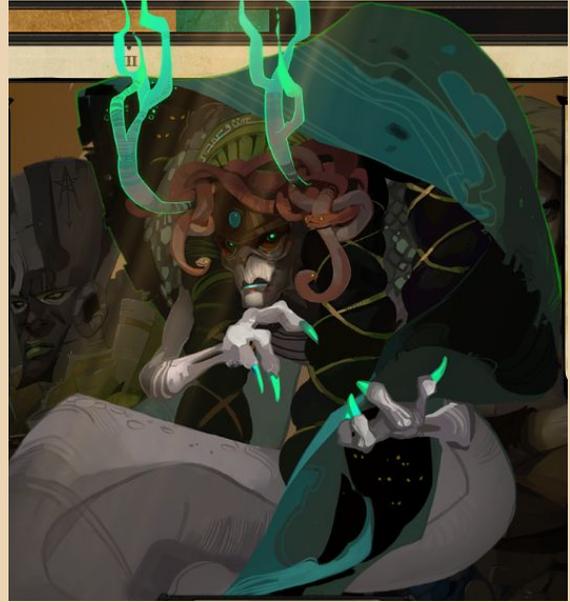


### Ti'zo

While outwardly Ti'zo might look like any other Imp with larger horns than normal, he is anything but. This little ball of fluff knew the last incarnation of the Nightwings that Volfred was a part of. He was even key to several of their victories against other Triumvirates. He is far smarter than those of his kin, more expressive, and to those who know how to listen to his screeches and warbles, highly opinionated. Especially in his hatred of fish. There is a reason for all this. He is a direct descendant of the Imp Scribe, Ha'ub. He participates in the Rites and assist the Nightwings to help his friend as well as live up to some of the legend of his far off grandfather.

Out of all the Nightwings, Ti'zo has the least desire to be liberated in the Rites. The Commonwealth is a curiosity to him, for sure, but not one interesting enough to make him want to leave his home and friends.

As a Rites Participant, Ti'zo gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Quick as Light**, and **Three As One!**. While he does have the **Underestimated** Perk as well, there are many in Downside who already know of his abilities. His lineage leads him to have **Kinship** too. But he has shown little interest in exercising such influence among the others of his kind.



### Big Bertrude

Three decades of Exile have turned what little light there was in Bertrude's disposition hard and cruel. She is, without a doubt, unpleasant, coarse, blunt, and even mean at times. Unless you get to know her a little. Oh, she is still all that was mentioned, but there is tenderness, kindness, and compassion buried under it all. It is just not expressed in the way most would recognize it. Still, she loves, she regrets, she dreams, and she cares about those she comes to know. It's just getting inside those iron defenses of hers that is the real trick.

Bertrude has made as comfortable of a life for herself as one can in Downside. She owns her own shop that sells everything from poisons to blackwagon maintenance. It is well known enough that people that people risk the soul sapping malaise of Flagging Hands to seek her goods. She only agrees to join the Nightwings at Volfred's request, and even then only after several Liberation Rites.

As a Rite Participant, Bertrude gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Fierce Presence**, and **Three As One!**. Her talent for alchemy and the arcane also grants her **Dark Arts**. Additionally, she has lived long and learned hard lessons enough to take advantage of the **Soft Soul** perk as well.

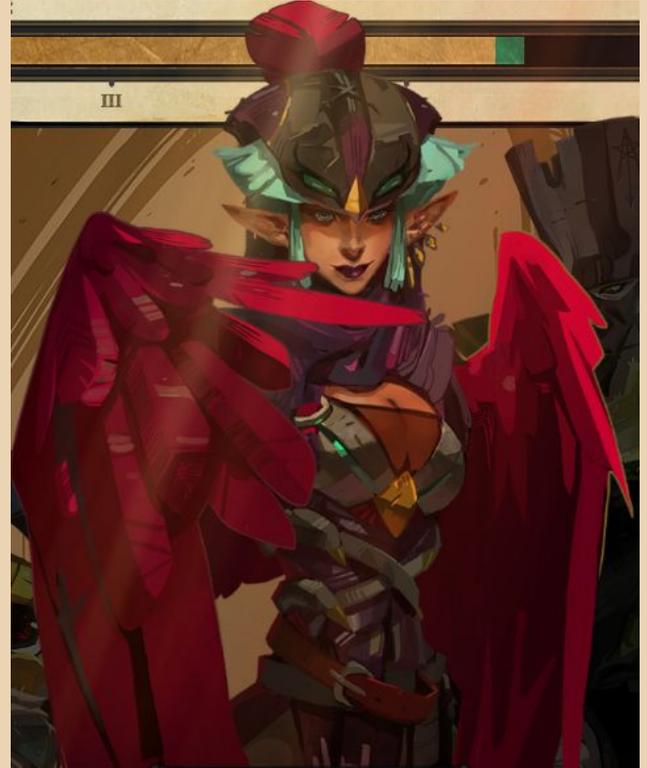


## Volfred Sandalwood

Volfred is many things, not all of them easy to explain. He is a loyal friend, a devoted ally, a calm font of wisdom, a revolutionary, a Reader, and the oldest Nightwing. He was part of the group when the Rites stopped some years ago. In fact, he is the reason they have not been conducted in so long a time. But that is a story for him to tell. Along with everything else, he is also the leader of the effort to topple the Commonwealth and replace it with one more in line with the Eight Scribe's original vision for it.

He will take up the raiments only after several Liberation Rites have been conducted. He has good reason for this. The Voice cannot see him if he is not participating. And The Voice remembers him from before. It also hates Volfred above all others.

As a Rites Participant and a Reader, Volfred gains **The Reader's Mind**, **Gaze Above**, **Fierce Presence**, and **Bound Together**. His mannerism and sharp mind also qualify him for **Honeyed Works** and **Etched In Bark**.



## Pamitha Theyn

While most Harps are, as one Emperor put it, "as coarse as their feathers", Pamitha does her best to buck this trend. She greets others with a jovial, even flirty, tone to her words. She prefers to see the world with hopeful eyes, though her troubled past and turbulent relations make this hard at times. Like all people, her moods run black at times. Just don't anger her past breaking. Her tongue can be just as sharp as her talons.

Her purpose with the Nightwing's is to reach her blood-sister, Tamitha Theyn, who leads The Essence Triumvirate. By playing against one who hates her so dearly, Pamitha hopes to earn enough recognition to allow the two to settle their past. It is a longshot but one she is willing to take. Whichever way it goes, her promise to the Nightwings will remain as unbreakable as any oath.

As a Rites Participant, Pamitha gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Quick as Light**, and **Three As One!**. She also gains **Stunningly Sharp** and **Guarded Soul**, as is only fitting for a Harp.

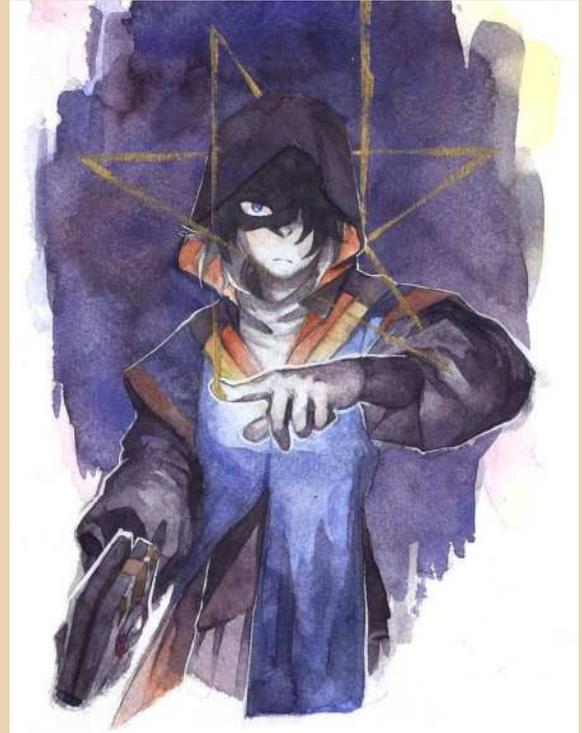


## Sir Gilman

This dashing knight has distinguished himself repeatedly on many battlefields, has the scars to prove it, but cast himself Downside after a disastrous skirmish left him the only survivor of his squadron. He searches for his honor in the wild seas and dangerous lands. Sir Gilman can be loud or obnoxious, but he is also driven and loyal beyond compare. When he aligns himself with the Nightwings he does so body and soul. There is no finer ally to have at one's side than this faithful Wurm.

Sir Gilman doubts almost as fervently as he believes, especially now that he is searching for the true meaning of honor and knighthood. He will need a pep talk now and then to keep those dark clouds from becoming a permanent stain on his soul.

As a Rites Participant, Sir Gilman gains **Nightwing's Glory**, **Eternal Hope**, and **Three As One!**. His blazing soul and runaway tongue also grant him **On My Honor!** and **This Knight Beseeches You To Hear Him, If You Please!**



## The Reader

A mysterious figure who acts as the leader and strategist for the Nightwings. If you have taken that spot then they will still appear, but if not invited along they will end up leading another Triumvirate.

Details are scarce about this individual with even their gender hidden in the mists of rumor and supposition. But there are a few facts. They are always said to be strangely charismatic despite being a person of few words. They seem to drink in the world around them like a sponge and retain everything they come across, which might explain their passion for books. Most of all, they determined and driven to reach their goals. Whether that is freedom for themselves or those around them remains to be seen. It is also said The Reader is crippled or weak of body, though what exactly that means changes with each telling.

The Reader gains the **Gaze Above**, **Bound Together**, and **Before The Flames** Perks. They also have a copy of **The Book of Rites** and one set of **Old Raiments** of their own. Additionally, as a Nomad, they gain **Burning Resolve** and **Shared Tenacity**.



*“So, you wish to continue to add to the folly that is your own existence? Very well. If you desire to blindly invoke the wrath of the Titan Stars there is very little I can do to hinder your foolishness from here. I would wish you luck, but fools like yourself deserve no such mercy.”*

## **Drawbacks**

*There is no limit on the number of Drawbacks you may take.*

**Linked by the Stars (Limited/Mandatory):** You have chosen to involve yourself with the revived Nightwings, either as a Reader or Rites Combatant. Their fate is your own and where they travel so too will you. You will be required to complete seven Liberation Rites and send seven souls back up to the Commonwealth. This is in addition to a number of individual Rites against various Triumvirates to determine who will face you in the Liberation Rite. Losing a Liberation Rite or any individual Rite is not total failure. In the past the Nightwings judged others to be more worthy or simply been beaten. Once seven individuals have ascended, seven seasons have passed, the Stars will fade and fate will bind you no more. From there your journey will be your own.

**Chivalrous Heart (+100 CP):** Your heart burns with the righteous fire of a true knight! Honor, bravery, friendship, and valor are not just words to you, but solemn oaths you aspire to fulfill at all times! Or at least in your own mind. In reality this inclination towards helpfulness will see you drawn into the occasional mess of your own creation. You'll offer to hunt down a relic to help restore a knight's honor after hearing their sad story. Or you'll spend a week assisting around a farm because a young maiden's mother has taken ill. Thankfully, this will never get in the way of your more pressing obligations, like the Nightwing's and their Rites.

**Fire In The Veins (+100 CP):** Your fondness for drinks containing alcohol is such that you can always be found with a bottle in your hand. Or close to it. Your constant state of slight inebriation will, thankfully, not interfere with your ability to perform the Rites. But you will usually be found with a fresh drink in hand soon enough, celebrating your win or regretting your loss as the case may be.

**Indebted (+100 CP):** You owe somebody pretty big. Someone well connected enough to make things miserable for any family you might have happened to have Downside or up in the Commonwealth. Not a big hindrance, except wealth is pretty scarce Downside. But if you do pay them, they'll leave you alone. At least until you do something silly and become indebted to someone else. Which will tend to happen from time to time.

*The +200 CP Drawbacks each have a condition that will ease their effects for a time.  
However, their influence on the Rites will never abate.*

**Lord Gandroth Glare (+200 CP):** The Serpent Titan was a fearsome foe, even for the strongest of the Eight Scribes. But it was his glare that truly undid men who found themselves in its path. And while the massive snake is now a mountain of brittle stone his eyes still shine with their inner fire. You will find yourself plagued with the uneasy feeling of being watched, disrupting your concentration and sleep, unless you regularly return to Gandroth's corpse to carve new blessings into his hide. Either way, inside the Rites you will find the aura of yourself and your allies dampened slightly.

**Bialanthius' Sting (+200 CP):** The Hive Titan's carcass still rests on the western edge of Downside's Prairie underneath the hundreds of tons of dung that was its doom. While death has cleansed its stinging venom, it has not calmed the vengeful spirit that drove it. Some of that will come to infect the other Triumvirates. They will become even more argumentative and insulting. Diplomacy may still be possible but it will be a much longer road to travel. Should you bathe in the Hive Titan's spring, this will abate for a time. During Rites, your opponents will attack much more ferociously.

**Shax Six Shoulders' Placidity (+200 CP):** The largest, toughest, and laziest of all the Titans, the beast of Bone polluted the land around it simply by refusing to move from its seat. Similarly, you now find it more difficult to summon up the energy to get excited about much of anything. The urge to nap will be ever present, though visiting the floating bones of the dead Titan and burying a shard will allow you to shake its effects for a time. During Rites you will find it especially hard to summon up your full speed, as will your allies.

**Sung-Gries' Tenacity (+200 CP):** Mighty as the Eight Scribes were, Sung-Gries the World Titan withstood their combined might for seventeen full moons. Struggling against such long odds will now be your fate as well. You will be plagued with small problems and distractions that will interrupt your free time and rest. Any of a hundred minor events from companions bickering to a particularly annoying fly can be expected to plague you. Travelling to the top of the Titan's corpse and carrying a rock back down to its base will allow you to rest easy for a while. Inside Rites, the Pyres of your opponent's Pyres are much more difficult to extinguish, having been blessed with the vitality of the World Titan.

**Endriga's Temper (+200 CP):** Just as the Blood Titan's death permanently roiled the Downside seas, some of her influence has spread to the skies themselves. Inclement weather often threatens any journey you undertake, even on the shortest path. However, if you journey to the Sea of Solis and recite a bedtime story, her anger will abate for a time. Inside the Rites these rains will dampen your Pyre's brilliance and make it easier for your opponents to extinguish entirely.

**Harn's Waking Dream (+200 CP):** In the Flagging Hands, all feel the remnants of the Sky Titan's malaise in the morale sapping green fog that clings to the swamp. The Titan's restless dreaming, rather than active malice, once made the effect much worse. Now, a touch of the unease that plagued them now clings to you. You will sleep soundly enough, but those around you will not be so lucky. Your companions, allies, and anyone else who sleeps in your vicinity will be plagued by a poor night's rest. Should you spend a full night awake and watching the stars this curse will abate for a time. Inside the Rites, your opponents will seem eternally rested, capable of running and leaping without ever getting winded.

**Dolnis' Cowardice (+200 CP):** The Black Basin was once a gentle land before Dolnis the Locket set foot upon it. Now it is a polluted land of noxious flames and vapours because of the Ash Titan. Despite their power, Dolnis ultimately proved to be a coward, fleeing before a simple rainstorm rather than suffer the pain it caused. A measure of this has infected your spirit and now makes you shy away from conflict of all kinds. Arguments will rattle you and shouting matches will send you into tears. The stars forbid someone raises a fist towards you. But if you spend an hour out in a rainstorm every once in a while, Dolnis' influence will fade from your life. Inside the Rites, your opponents' pyres will burn slightly brighter every time they diminish your own a measure.

**Limbless Arizech's Reach (+200 CP):** The Glade of Lu and the forest that surrounds it were no place to casually wander even before Arizech fouled the soil it sits on. The Root Titan's poison was cleansed and driven back to a single evil seed, but it could not be truly banished. That seed lies at the base of Limbless Arizech's husk of a body, eternally decomposing but never truly disappearing. That unholy vigor has spread to infect you, causing plants to grow twisted and gnarled in your path. Your wagon's wheels will find themselves clogged with creepers, trails you wander will grow close with thorny vines, and other such inconveniences will plague you. Should you travel to the forest surrounding the Glade and plant a new tree on its outskirts, this curse will abate for a time. Inside the Rites, your opponents will feed on this endless vigor, returning much quicker from their banishment.

**Xilvias' Fury (+200 CP):** The Mare Titan Xilvias Horse-Headed surged from the cinders and seething rock to avenge the defeat of Dolnis the Locket. Today the Nest of Triesta is looked down upon by a massive copy of her equine head formed of the ash that her body became upon her defeat. Even now the land weeps fire and your eyes will do the same. Tears of rage, sadness, or even happiness in your eyes will burn instead of soothe, fouling your vision until they can be cleansed. Such is this curse that you will find these tears closer to the surface than normal. But if you travel to the Mare Titan's ashen corpse and sprinkle a handful of her ashes into your eyes, you will find yourself cured for a time. Inside the Rites, your enemies will not be banished after plunging into your pyre.

**Yslach Astral-Born's Attention (+200 CP):** Cursed be the name of the Star Titan! It is not to be uttered lightly and even its mention gives strength to a creature destroyed and banished but not truly dead. The very Books of Rites themselves were made with the skin of this Titan, a dangerous prospect when the merest glimpse from her could drive lesser creatures to the brink of sanity. And now, it seems, you have garnered her gaze. Terrifying visions will invade your waking moments, turning the faces of allies into twisted monsters for a few moments before shifting back again. Spending a day alone while reading the Book of Rites is enough to drive the shades away for a time. Inside the Rites, she will whisper secrets and plans to your enemies, making them more cunning and clever.

**Unfathomed Plurnes's Peril (+200 CP):** The Sea Titan Plurnes once held a firm grip on the seas of Downside. To sail them was to risk death at the hands of a jealous, cruel wench. It was fitting indeed that it was a ship and its sharpened prow that spelled her doom. While safe enough these days, the waters remain a rough and wild path to sail. Reasons will be found for you to do so repeated during your time in this world, or other waters just as rough, and you will always suffer seasickness along the way. It will be severe enough to drive you to mount a constant watch at the rail or simply be bedridden instead. However, should you carve a small wooden boat and set it sailing in the waters before each voyage, you will find yourself whole and healthy. Inside the Rites, you will find your opponent's feet driven to new swiftness with the sea wind driving them.



**Wandering Mind (+300 CP):** Reader or not, you have a touch of the mental ability their kind shares. Unfortunately, you are unable to control your use of it. Where Readers have to concentrate to listen in, you do so automatically and accidentally. While some might find this useful, it is decidedly less so if those around you can feel the intrusion and come to resent it. Which is the default reaction almost universally held by others when they realize you're rooting around in their heads. Most everyone will be distrustful of you and your ability. Even those closest to you will find themselves erecting walls to keep you at arms length.

**Tired Stars (+300 CP, Requires "Linked By The Stars"):** While the magic of the Eight Scribes and the Rites waxes and wanes like phases of the moon, it seems now it is wearing thin once and for all. The Rites will come slowly, with weeks separating them instead of days, and Liberation Rites coming only once each year. This will greatly extend your stay in Downside and require you to take the last of the seven trips back to the Commonwealth no matter what role you take with the Nightwings. Additionally, you can expect every Triumvirate to fight with everything they've got for each chance to climb into the spot to challenge you. Some may even dare to try cheating or foul acts of treachery. The Voice overseeing the Rites might just let them get away with it too.

**Khaylmer Rope-Caller's Ire (+400 CP, Requires "Linked By The Stars"):** Volfred Sandalwood is the last of the great minds of the revolution. He has planned for decades and taken the long route towards freedom from the Commonwealth's oppressive rule. But The Plan has been uncovered. Messages will begin drifting into Downside speaking of agents uprooted. Secret gathering spots, safe for long years now, will suddenly be plundered and those hidden there captured. Exiles will flow into Downside by the dozens, straining the fragile balance of its resources and driving the Howlers into a frenzy.

There is one thin ray of hope. The Nightwings must win every single Liberation Rite and Volfred must be returned to the surface. Only with his genius and so many capable, completely loyal lieutenants can The Plan have a hope of salvaging what remains. And even then the struggle will be much more than a single night of flames and violence to topple those who sit at the top.



## **Scenario - Light in a Starless Sky**

**Requirements:** The Rites much have reached their end. You must have remained Downside, returned from your Liberation, or been re-Exiled.

It is a sad time for those that once watched the lights in the heaven with delight and wonder. The magic of the Eight Scribes had been intertwined with the stars. As it faded for the final time, so too did each bright dot. Now only twelve shimmer besides the moon itself. Even those who do not know what those dozen stars are beginning to find merely looking at them a source of uneasy tension. The stars of the Greater Titans have taken control of the sky.

Seasons come and go, both in the Commonwealth and Downside. Some look skyward each night and hope to see something other than those twelve baleful signs, but they gaze in vain. For now the people can only hope that the Greater Titans will bide their time until they become a future generation's problems. Unfortunately for this world, they have grown impatient behind the Eight Scribe's barrier. They will wait no longer.

One night, all will find their eyes drawn to the sky. A shift in the air causes goose pimples on the skin of every mortal walking the world. The twelve stars shine brighter than ever. Along with eight thought long lost. But these familiar stars do not gleam, but glare with an angry red glow. Readers one and all will understand the message they inscribe upon the heavens.

*The Twelve Titans now control the Rites. Summon your mightiest heroes so we may best them at the very game the Eight Scribes used to bind us away. Fail, and we will walk this world once again. Succeed, and we will retreat until our proper time.*

Panic, shock, and confusion are all the primary reactions. Thankfully open chaos is held at bay, either by the firm hand of the Commonwealth or the gentle strength of the newly formed Sahrian Union. Those Downside have no time for such things and are already forming up by the time the surface world has thought to send messages. However, aid from above will not be available. The River Sclorian is more turbulent than ever. Survival was never guaranteed for Exiles before and now it is all but suicide. Even if it wasn't, there are few willing volunteers.

You will be tapped, through chance or some final meddling of the Eight Scribes, to lead the effort to gather those who will face the Greater Titans. You may select any of those who remained below after the Rites ended to aid you in this effort. Only the Bog-Crone Udmildhe will refuse. After the end of the Rites, few continued to practice the ritual, so your pickings will be slim indeed. Two weeks is all the time allotted to you to find up to twelve individuals and a Reader. You may take the place of any one of the twelve, or the Reader if you have the skills to do so.

The Titan Rites will be a twisted version of those you are familiar with. The Champions for each Titan will be beings drawn from the cracks of reality. Demons, elementals, or beings of pure pestilence to name a few. Their abilities will be unlike anything you have seen from the races of this world, wild, unpredictable, but never unfair. You will face each of their Triumvirates once before the action begins in earnest. Whether out of some sense of fair play or simply to get the measure of your own talents they will not say.

After the testing round, the Liberations Rites will begin in earnest. You and your chosen will face each of the Titan Triumvirates at The Fall of Soliam atop Mount Alodiel. A Rite will take place every other day until all twelve have had their turn. For each one you fail to best in the arenas of their own design, the Greater Titan themselves will ascend to the world above. For each one you fail to stop, one of those standing beside you in this venture will perish.

But, for each one you send back in defeat and shame, their star will dwindle in the sky until it becomes as dim as the void itself. Every Greater Titan you defeat is one less loosed upon the world above. Additionally, echoes of Nightwings past will respond to your victory, like calling to like. Your fatigue will be washed away and you will find yourself and your allies strengthened in the next Rite.

Should you manage to do the impossible and hold fast against all twelve Greater Titans, you will find a reward beyond anything anyone could have expected. The ghosts of the Eight Scribes themselves will appear before you, stepping out of the marble statues that have so long gazed upwards towards the freedom they could never have. In appreciation, they will work one last grand magic given strength by your victories.

The way back to the Commonwealth, or the Sahrian Union, will be open to all. Any who make the pilgrimage across Downside's inhospitable lands and climbs the mountain will be able to head back home. No more will Exile be a life sentence, but a journey of self-reflection and repentance. Even the River Sclorian will cease its raging flow to become swift instead of deadly. This is the Eight Scribe's final gift to the world in the hope that, united, they will be able to withstand the Greater Titan's eventual true return.

As an additional gift for your effort, you will be allowed the opportunity to convince any Canon Companion to come along with you on your journey forwards. Even the Nightwings if you were once their ally. If you had already spent CP on "purchasing" them, it will be refunded to you now and you may spend it as you wish.

## **The End Has Come**

Your decade in this world has passed. Whatever you did with it, however you spent it, what changes you made to it along the way, it is now time for the final choice. It may be one that is familiar to you or this could be your first time facing it. Either way, it is time.

Any Drawbacks you have taken now cease to plague you.

### **Never To Return**

Did something happen to you in this world that has broken your resolve? Was there a wound that struck too deeply or a phrase mentioned that came too close to your heart? Or perhaps you simply tire of your wandering between worlds and wish to head back to the one you came from. In any case, you have elected to head home. You will be allowed to keep anything you have gained from this world, as well as from worlds before it. The Scribes wish you well and hope you find what you are looking for in your past.

### **In The Flame**

This world is now your home. Something changed in you during your time here. Your heart and soul put down roots you could never have expected. Or did you make a mistake and desire to stay to rectify it? Maybe it was a promise held more dearly than your wandering. Whatever your reasons, you have decided to stay in this world. You will wander between worlds no longer. You are allowed to keep anything you have gained from this world, as well as any worlds you visited before it. The Scribes hope you look after this world as carefully as they did, but hope for better success for your efforts.

### **Vagrant Song**

The Eight Scribes understand better than anybody that one must often wander a long and dangerous road to find themselves. For you, it seems, it is much the same. At the very least this world will not be the last you visit. The Eight Scribes smile fondly as they help you along your way to the next world. You will be allowed to keep anything you gained in this world.

### **New Union (Requires purchase of the Beyonder Crystal)**

For those who found Sandra, talked to her, and slowly eased their way through the layers of steel over her heart. For any of you who managed to bond with her so closely that she asks you if she could remain by your side, even trapped as she is, until whatever the future brings, the Eight Scribes have one last gift. Seeing the assassin so transformed from the hateful soul she had once been, they will finally offer her mercy. They will free Sandra from her prison, along with all the other assassins she shared it with. They will return home, grateful to be freed, but she will not.

Sandra's eyesight will be returned as well. Her eyes will always glow the green of the crystal as a reminder not to forget the lessons she had spent most of a millenia learning. She will be free to come along with you, which she will no doubt be all too happy to do, as a Companion. Treat her well, you who freed her heart and soul.

For those worried about their investment in the Beyonder Crystal, do not fret. Sandra will be able to replicate its ability to hold practice Rites any time she wishes.

## Notes

1. Blessings of the Eight Scribes will continue to work in other worlds. The Scribes may not have walked those lands, but others like them have and will offer the same effect.
2. For the purposes of the +200 CP Drawbacks, performing the tasks once every four months is enough to keep the spirits of the Greater Titans from bothering you outside of the Rites.
3. If you are unsure of which Companion(s) you wish to recruit during your time here, you may buy the appropriate option without naming an individual now. The spot will be held for whomever you decide to recruit and manage to convince during your time here.

For instance: You may pay to recruit a Nightwing without specifying the individual in advance. Whichever of the Nightwings you manage to convince to join you on your journey will be the one who fills that spot. However, if you do not manage to convince anyone, or simply change your mind about taking on another Companion, the CP spent to reserve the spot is not refunded.

4. I truly do not recommend taking both the **Tired Stars** and **Khaylmer Rope-Caller's Ire** Drawbacks together. Extended civil wars are always bloody and leave no one entirely satisfied in the end.
5. Of course, The Voice is only mortal. And if you use some force he cannot see or tell by its influence is cheating, you will likely get away with it.
  - a. I'm going to take this opportunity to point out that I know some of the other Triumvirates get away with ignoring this outside influence rule at times. There's a few reasons for this. Mainly it's because The Voice has a vested interest in ensuring the Nightwings fail, but is only the judge of the Rites and nothing more. So the only way he can influence things is occasionally ignoring rules being broken. He will only ignore the rules being broken against the Nightwings though. So if you set up your own Triumvirate and battle the others you all will have to play nice.
  - b. Yeah, The Voice is kind of a dick.
6. The rings will not resonate with each other if they are both worn by a single person. They must be worn by two separate people to access their hidden power.
7. For those interested, The Eight Scribes walked this world roughly 837 years ago.