

The Heralds of Valdemar



Books by Mercedes Lackey, Jump by Aehriman

Legend has it, on the world of Velgarth, that Baron Kordas Valdemar led his people in desperate flight from the despotic Empire of the East. They traveled West until they could go no further, founding the city of Haven. In time, the open-minded attitude, safety and prosperity of the realm attracted many settlers until it had become a proper kingdom. Yet, Kordas was troubled. What if his line spawned a tyrant or fool to destroy all they had built? He prayed to every god for a solution and was rewarded with the first Companions, magic semi-angelic horses who bond only to the worthy, and the riders of Companions were called Heralds and it was so decreed that only a Herald would ever rule Valdemar.

So say the legends, and the legends may be true.

Welcome to the Heralds of Valdemar, a chronicle of the history of Velgarth over fifteen hundred years after, and before, the time of Kordas Valdemar. A sprawling setting of many individual trilogies and countless short stories. From Vanyel, greatest and last of the Herald-Mages, to Elspeth, the first of the new ones. From mighty kings to humble farmers, through war and intrigue, mystery and adventure, the Heralds serve Valdemar and the people.

It can be a harsh world. Have **1,000 companion points** (cp) to get you started.



ORIGIN

Seldom is a man or woman but one thing throughout their life

Choose an origin for free. For -200 cp, choose a second.

Herald - Valdemar's champions. You were found worthy by a Companion (or perhaps you chose a worthy human) to serve as a hero, a wandering knight/judge. Very little actual heralding is involved. Just note that half of Herald's don't live to retire.

Mage - Born with the mage-gift, you can wield the forces of life to twist nature to your whims. More or less. There's actually a solid 600 year period where Valdemar had no mages and didn't really believe in magic.

Bard - Musicians who elevate and share the culture of the land. Also, it's an easy way to get hospitality and make some coin.

Healer - In any time and place, people are getting hurt and sick. A good Healer can name their price in some regions, and prosper practically anywhere.

Noble - Someone must rule, and in a high fantasy setting it makes a degree of sense to go with betting on bloodlines over individual people. Just remember that while a king of Valdemar or Rethwellen is always worthy, this is seldom true elsewhere.

SPECIES

Human - A hairless ape. Their hands are very useful for grooming and building shelter, but they're not terribly interesting besides that.

Companion - A being like a horse, which surpasses them in much the way a panther surpasses an alley-cat. A Companion is more slender and graceful than any horse, able to run all day and thrice as swiftly. They can further be identified by their startling blue eyes, a glistening white coat that repels dust and dirt, and silvery hooves that sound like the gentle chiming of bells instead of hoofbeats. Companions are sapient and capable of mindspeech, those that aren't direct divine spirits are the reincarnation of past Herald's and Companions. Besides drawing on magic to enhance their physicality, Companions can self-heal and in an absolute emergency teleport short distances.

Firecat - As Companions are divine servants and reincarnated Heralds sent to aid the next generations, so are Firecats the direct servants of the sun god Vkandis, generally a reincarnation of a Son of the Sun, the pontiff of Vkandis' religion. A large Siamese-looking cat, Firecats usually advise the Son of the Sun, and are known to be a sign of Vkandis' favor. Firecats have the power of mindspeech, can light things on fire and teleport, though doing so with passengers is greatly draining. Two working together can create a Gate, a temporary or permanent portal. At least one Firecat in the series is also a mage.

Gryphon - A flying eagle-lion, most people inside Valdemar don't even believe they exist. Gryphons are fully sapient, capable of mindspeech and even vocal, and developing Gifts and magic same as anyone. They are skilled at sensing lies, and absorb magic from their environment (through their feathers) to fuel their flight and impossible biology. Gryphons lack a preening gland, so need outside assistance to oil their feathers for flight. Gryphons only become sexually active and capable of reproduction when the male is cold and the female gorged with food.

Hertasi - A race of lizardmen, smaller than humans but very strong, with worse nightvision but better daylight vision. Hertasi live in warm swamps and can enter a torpor or even die in the cold. Master craftsmen, Hertasi often despair at the garbage their human friends willingly eat and wear, and if you aren't careful they might steal your wardrobe to replace it with something flashy and perfectly tailored. In battle, Hertasi use hunting tactics and make the most of the dangerous environments they tend to live in.

Kyree - Sapient wolves with mindspeech powers. Significantly larger, with shoulders reaching up to a human's waist, very lean and fast runners. Kyree live about as long as a human.

Tervadi - A race of birdmen, created by an ancient mage as an experiment. Too frail for battle or heavy labor, there was once still a roaring trade in Tervadi slaves for their musical gifts and colorful feathers. Tervadi cannot fly, but choose to live in elaborate and highly defensible treehouses called ekele.

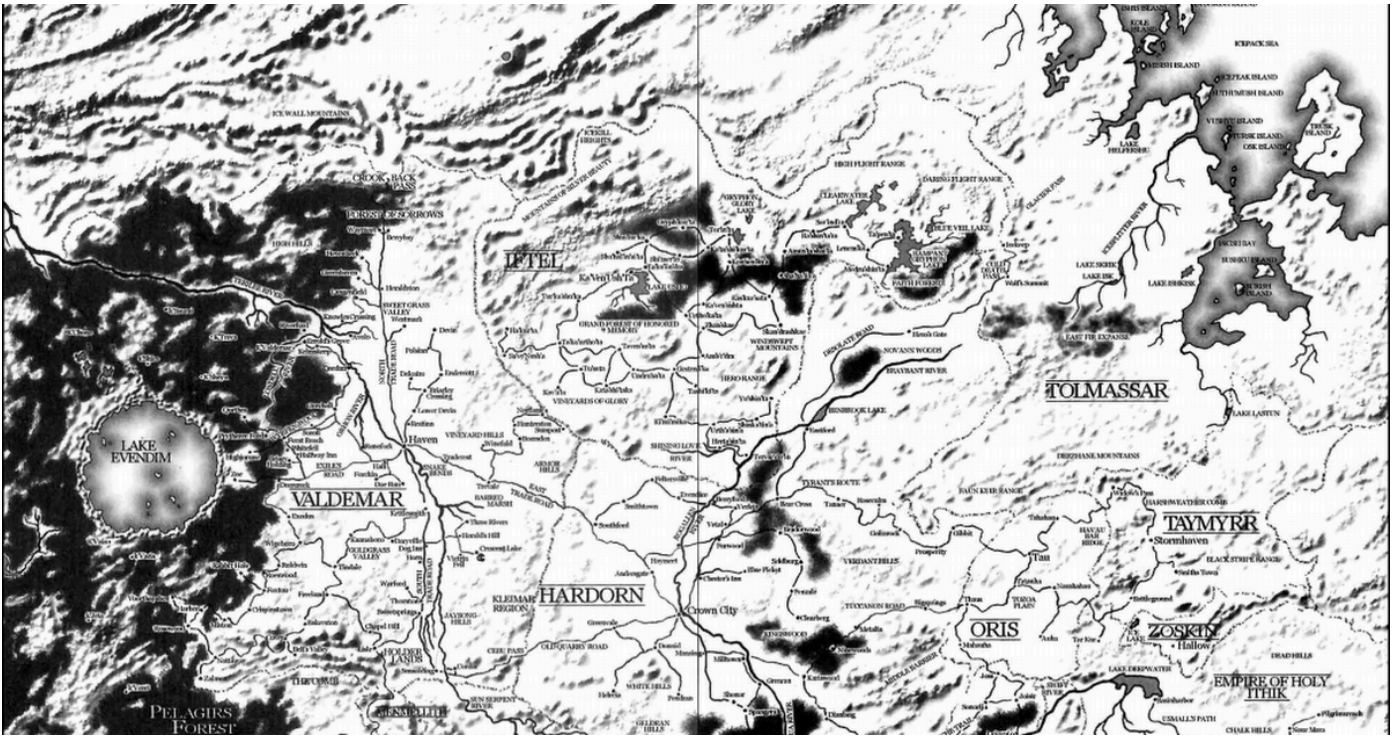
Vrondi - Spirits of the air, generally invisible. In the East, they were trapped in bottles and used to animate Doll servants, with only Kordas Valdemar treating them as people and individuals, which inspired them to follow him to the lands that would one day bear his name. After Vanyel bound them to the detection spells, they monitor any mage in Valdemar. They also fuel the truth-spell. Vrondi are sustained by truth, and despise the emotional taste of deception, nor can they lie themselves, but they can withhold information. Vrondi are linked in a kind of hive-mind, they remain individuals, but what is known to one is known to all.

IDENTITY

You can alter your age, sex, ethnicity, orientation etc. if you'd prefer to fit in.

Valdemar is welcoming to all races, but has a more complicated relationship to sexism and LGBTQ+ rights. The Heralds and monarchs largely don't care, but even some Heralds are uncomfortable around shaych who prefer their own sex. The noble class are pretty strongly patriarchal, various enclaves within the kingdom are more or less accepting.

Outside Valdemar women's rights and LGBTQ+ are more of a gamble, but the Tayledras and Shin'a'in are pretty okay.



LOCATION

Choose a land to start in, or roll for +200 cp. You may choose anywhere within that kingdom.

1 Valdemar - The titular kingdom, between Hardorn and the Pelagirs cursed forest. The capital of Valdemar is Haven. It is noted for its policy of freedom of belief, and it's Heralds, champions and agents of king paired with semi-angelic Companions. The ruler of Valdemar must always be a Herald, to show they are worthy.

2 Karse - South-East of Valdemar is their traditional enemy, a particularly regressive and corrupt theocracy that has been trying to invade on and off for five centuries. Karse theoretically has a king and a royal court in Sunhame, but it's the sunpriests who make all the decisions. Witch-burnings are common, as magic is hated, yet curfew is enforced by demons summoned by the priest-mages.

3 Hardorn - A longtime ally of Valdemar, just to the East, and North of Karse, turns hostile for several years and two wars under a foolish hawk of a king, Ancar. The capital is Crown City.

4 **Rethwellen** - A kingdom just south of Valdemar, on the other side of the Comb mountains. Capital is Petras, absolute monarchs with hereditary mage-gift and earth sense. The Rethwellen Archives are a wonder of the world, their founding king was a powerful mage and lover of learning who bespelled the place with a variety of dire consequences for destroying, altering, or in some specific cases failing to regularly update, the collection. They also have (lost for a bit) a singing sword to identify the true king.

5 **Ruvan** - A small landlocked nation South of Karse. Ruvan is home to the trading city Delton, the winter headquarters of the illustrious Sunhawk mercenaries, as well as the main base of secretive assassins called the Sleepgiver Nation. It has an unfortunate history with the demon Thalhkarsh, who keeps trying this dark ascension rite.

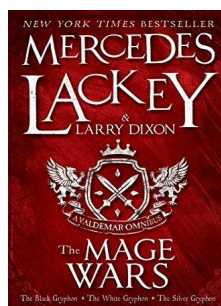
6 **Jkatha** - South of Rethwellen is this small nation, known largely for the chronically overcrowded city of Mournedeath, the fifty families that rule and their ever-shifting political factions, marriages, and vendettas. It is said a sell-sword in Jkatha will never want for work.

7 **Iftel** - The gods seldom intervene in mortal affairs, except in the bubble kingdom of Iftel, where foreign armies are turned back or smote, and the nations involved struggle to recall its existence.

8 **Pelagirs** - A sprawling magical forest covering the Westernmost parts of Valdemar and Rethwellen. The Pelagirs are highly dangerous with mobile trees and mutated wildlife, peopled only by some Tervadi and the Taylendras, peerless mages who are slowly reclaiming the land from corruption.

9 **Dhorisa Plains** - Home of the Shin'a'in, nomadic horse-lords and guardians of the Garland of Death, the weapons left over from the Mage War.

10 **Menmellith** - A tiny mountainous kingdom, once a rebellious part of Karse, then Rethwellen, now independent. Ruled by a Council rather than a monarch, Menmellith is the site of a constant low grade proxy-war between 'bandits' definitely not funded and supported by Karse and Rethwellen mercenaries.



TIME

A huge gulf of eras is covered. Choose an era or roll a d6 for +200 cp

1 ***The Mage Wars***- The first time Ma'ar tried to conquer the world, a thousand years before the founding of Valdemar and the commonly used calendar. Led very directly to the Cataclysm that crashed their advanced society, and is broadly the reason for so much wilderness and monsters.

2 ***The Founding of Valdemar***- A trilogy depicting how Kordas Valdemar moved his people to the far side of the continent, founded the kingdom that would bear his name, and became the first Herald along with his son and King's Own Herald.

3 ***The Last Herald-Mage***- A thousand years after the kingdom of Valdemar was founded, sinister forces are killing off all the Herald-Mages, who are themselves concerningly elevated above the common Herald. Vanyel Demonsbane strives to unravel these mysteries and protect Valdemar. After this trilogy, until Mage Winds, magic becomes unknown in Valdemar with spellcasters driven out by terror of the *vrondi*.

4 ***Collegium Chronicles/Herald Spy***- About fifty years after Vanyel's time, the founding of the Herald's Collegium and the first students to pass through it.

5 ***Oathbound/Exile Books***- A generation-ish before the first trilogy started, a mercenary wields the greatest weapon of them all, and an exile from Karse is surprised to be chosen as Herald.

6 ***Arrows/Mage Winds/Mage Storms/Owl Trilogies***- The 'present' era, starting in the reign of Queen Selenay, through to her daughter Elspeth, the first Herald-Mage in centuries. Be aware there's a decent chance you will face apocalyptic danger when the Mage Storms return.

SKILLS

Elementary Education (Free!)

It'd be a shame to have you just Drop-In and not be able to communicate. You are fluent in the language of your starting Kingdom.

Vaccinated (Free!)

Be an even greater shame to start or suffer a plague. You are immune to all diseases and cannot spread them about.

Archer (-50 cp)

If you want to make a Bowman, start with his grandfather. You have the skills to use a longbow, shortbow or even a crossbow with commendable accuracy.

Arms (-50 cp)

When you live on the border, help can be a week or more away when bandits or raiders come. You know how to fight better than the average militiaman, and can handle yourself in a taproom brawl. Just try not to bite off more than you can chew.

Craft (-50 cp)

You are a master at some medieval craft. Are you perhaps a blacksmith? A cooper, farrier, mason, potter, brewer, tanner... There's something you can make, quickly and in good quality. This can of course be taken multiple times.

Domestic (-50 cp)

You know how to spin and card wool, weave and sew, cook and clean. Broadly all the chores involved in making a home or around a farm.

Looker (-50 cp)

Much like Herald Kris, you are cursed (blessed?) with incredible good looks, making you the object of attraction and envy in others. Any injuries heal cleanly, nor do you ever look less than your best unless seriously wounded, even filthy, exhausted and just roused from bed you look stunning.

Rider (-50 cp)

The harshest Collegium teacher of Equitation or a Shin'a'in could only nod approvingly of your horsemanship. You also understand, deeply, that a horse isn't an animated chair, knowing when to walk them, rest them, how to feed and comb and care for them. You can comfortably do many things in the saddle that most people would prefer to dismount for, like eat, sleep or (if you have the skill) practice archery.

Sailor (-50 cp)

Most... kingdoms in this series are landlocked, but sure, knock yourself out. You are a skilled and experienced sailor, among the best there is, and can safely navigate anything that floats to its destination.

Swimmer (-50 cp)

More useful, given the abundance of rivers and lakes, and the Evendim. You are a strong swimmer, little to fear from even the swiftest river. You also aren't much bothered by the cold and can hold your breath longer than most pearl divers, should you need to rescue someone fallen through the ice.

Woodcraft (-50/100 cp)

Everyone is a Boy Scout when the kingdom is largely a wilderness. You can camp, fish, track, hunt, make a fire, and all associated skills for surviving in the forest. Add fifty points to include the desert, tundra and every other biome humans can live in.

Apt Pupil (-100 cp)

Usually a Herald spends 3-5 years at the Collegium being prepared for their career, but there's not always time to pick up everything you need to know. Luckily, you can pick up on any skill five times as quickly as your peers.

Fated (-100 cp)

Many a Herald has died to ambush, or animal attack, or simple hazards of the road. Not so for you, you will not perish by blind chance, but only to enemy action or because you plunged yourself heedlessly into danger.

Don't take this to mean you're invincible, sometimes a burned hand or broken leg teaches best.

Indistinct (-100 cp)

As a being from beyond this world, it should come as no surprise that you don't really appear in others' foresight, or farsight, or thought-sensing. Any attempt to divine your future or past, to sense or learn about you by supernatural means, will fail, forcing people to actually talk to you. Even an empath will get only odd feelings they don't really understand.

Sneak-Thief (-100 cp)

You're very skilled at creeping about unseen, picking locks, climbing, evading security. You have all the skills needed to be an excellent thief, or an assassin.

There Is No True Way (-100 cp, free **Herald**)

All Valdemar's laws and government are built on this simple belief. There is *no* one right way to live. No one true religion with a right to burn heretics, no wrong way to love if it harms none. You have the rare ability to judge without bias, to see past your perspective and understand *why* others believe and behave as they do, and judge them by their standards. You are also, while still yourself, someone worthy of being Chosen. A little wiser, a little braver and more moral, and above all, willing to *learn*.

You can also cast the most basic, universal spell all Heralds know, the Truth spell. This has two stages, one gives the subject a blue halo that winks out the moment they lie. The second stage compels them to answer you truly, no matter how they struggle.

Laws (-200 cp, discount **Herald**)

The law of the streetwise is grab all you can, the law of the dodger is to learn all the dirt, the law of the grifter is to cheat the fool first, but the law of the Herald is give all you can for someday you'll need a gift too. The law of the liar is there is no truth, the law of the hopeless is never believe, the law of the empty is there's nothing else, but the law of the Herald is to seek and to find and the law of the Herald is to care. The law of the hunted is watch your own back, the law of the greedy is trust no one, the law of the hater is crush and destroy, and the law of the bigot is kill. But the law of the Herald is faith, hope and trust, and the strength of the Herald is will.

You have learned all the laws, forward and back. Those of the state and your own heart. You know when to pass judgment and when to let things slide, and when you approach a line you can't cross. You have the mastery of law, and the will, to make a peerless judge.

Collegiate Trained (-200 cp, discount **Herald**)

Before a modern Herald can even intern, they spend 3-5 years at the Collegium studying: law, languages, combat, strategy, geography, science, survival skills, orienteering, horsemanship, surveying, math, literature and sometimes specialist topics such as espionage or training in their Gifts. In future worlds, you shall gain a similar amount of in-depth knowledge of the setting, such as the finest college can provide and be able to discuss a dozen topics with the greatest minds in their field as a peer.

Weaponsmaster (-400 cp, discount **Herald**)

A Herald rides alone, through dangerous wilds to remote outposts or even OutKingdom all while wearing what they affectionately call "Please-Shoot-Me Whites." As such, their martial training is brutal, based firmly on the idea that survival depends on it and better bruises now than wounds later. You have more than excelled, though, mastering every weapon and style of combat to become one of the deadliest warriors alive. You have also become a fine teacher of combat, understanding how to teach quickly and how far you can push your students, who absorb your lessons with astonishing speed.

Monarch's Own (-400 cp, discount **Herald**)

After the ruler of Valdemar themselves, the leader and often heart of the Heralds' Circle is the King/Queen's Own Herald. A position which in part boils down to being the ruler's best friend, who will never betray them but can also speak truth to power and extract the sovereign head from their royal posterior. The Monarch's Own is also a hub of the subtle psychic network linking all Companions and Heralds. This perk has several functions:

First, you are good at making friends, regardless of any gap of age or social class.

Second, you often instinctively blurt out the perfect words to say, to comfort and to inspire or guide others. Talia describes this as feeling like she is possessed by some impossible old and wise perfect counselor.

Thirdly, whether near or far, you can sense when someone in your social circle is in distress, get a vague idea of what kind of trouble they're in and what, if anything, you can do about it. If needed, you can find them based purely on this sense of their need.

You do not have to become the Monarch's Own if you don't want, but would excel at the job.

Mage Sight (-100 cp, free **Mage**)

You have the ability to see magic, an essential for a mage. Other things normally hidden are plainly visible to you, the watchful eyes of the *vrondi*, the moonlit paths through the spirit world and so on. No sorcerer or spirit can cloak themselves from your gaze.

Blood Mage (-200 cp, discount **Mage**)

When it comes to magic, sacrifice - blood, pain, and death - is like salt in cooking. You can almost always benefit from adding a little. Of course, your average blood mage is a sadistic hack who tortures animals and bleeds men to paper over his complete lack of skill and power, but even respectable mages, in extremis, have been known to give of themselves to enhance their workings. In particular, the Final Strike, where a mage burns himself to ash to bring great ruin upon his foes.

You will find that all your magic and powers can benefit from sacrificial enhancement, that such measures are far more effective than normal, and you recover swiftly from personal sacrifices, so long as they are not the final extremity. Finally, the corruption that attends blood magic shall never touch you, nor any other corrupting supernatural influence.

Jumper the Silent (-200 cp, discount **Mage**)

You have the fine control to cast spells using exactly as much power as the feat takes, not a scrap more. Besides not wasting energy, this makes your magic and magical creations almost impossible to detect.

Demonsbane (-400 cp, discount **Mage**)

There are many planes besides Velgarth - the elemental planes, the Abyss and the Empyrean. Many a mage has reached out to these for beings to beg, barter or coerce, generally elementals and demons. You have immense skill at summoning, understanding and treating with such entities, rather more like a discussing terms over tea than 'balancing on a roof screaming an epic poem in a foreign language.' More than that, you have great skill at disrupting the control other summoners have, freeing their familiars and banishing their demons is a snap.

Because of this, your reputation as a great mage will spread like wildfire. Will you be known as a protector of all, or the most terrible diabolist? Other mages and spirits tend to respect you more.

Adept (-400 cp, discount **Mage**)

Various countries and traditions have their own systems for ranking mages, but in the most common there is an apprentice, journeyman, master and adept. The apprentice is but a student or a hedge-witch, the journeyman can use only his own limited supply of magical power, which is at least subtle. A Master can, with training and great care, tap some of the lesser ley lines for specific workings. An Adept, however, can tap external power sources, wielding titanic energies to reshape the world.

You are one such Adept, and there are few limits on how much power you can wield, only how much you can control... but you take to magic with the easy mastery of the truly gifted, your skill as remarkable as your power.

Entertainer (-100 cp, free **Bard**)

You know how to sing, dance, tell stories, jokes, juggle, perform most common magic tricks and play at least one instrument. You never get stage fright and know how to command the attention of an audience. If this also makes you a very convenient distraction, so much the better.

Oral Tradition (-200 cp, discount **Bard**)

Before writing, bards were required to memorize enormous reams of information. Sagas that could last for days. Fortunately, you have eidetic recall of everything you read, see or hear, know all the tricks of mnemonics and memory palaces, and easily recall anything you might need to remember.

Patronage (-200 cp, discount **Bard**)

It is said that an unemployed jester is nobody's fool. Playing dive bars might keep you in drinks, but the money is in convincing a rich person to make you their kept man and commission works and generally lavish you with coin and praise.

Fortunately, you're good looking, charismatic, and more than that just unbelievably lucky in meeting rich, famous or powerful people (and pivotal characters!) in such a way as to leave a strongly favorable first impression. You could find yourself with many friends and "friends" eager for a private performance.

Bardic Immunity (-400 cp, discount **Bard**)

Valdemar doesn't have 'freedom of the press' as such, lacking printing. But as Bards are the keepers and spreaders of knowledge and merriment, it is considered poor form to ever harm one. Certainly jailing them over a parody or mocking song would be past the pale, as would any injury that would bar them from their profession. So it is with you, unless you start lopping heads off, or robbing grannies in broad daylight, the very worst someone is likely to do is insist that you leave town.

Wordsmith (-400 cp, discount **Bard**)

The right story or song can raise a spirit and create something magical. You always find the right pieces to perform, but it is more than this. You always find the right words. The stories and songs you right resonate with people in ways that Bardic-Gift alone can't account for. Timeless classics flow from your pen, as you touch the human heart in all the ways the best artists strive for.

Anatomy (-100 cp, free **Healer**)

You understand how the human body works, what each part does and how it comes together in the whole. You have gained enough knowledge of medicine to make a fine emergency medic, from triage to setting a dislocated limb, to delivering a breached foal, and how moon-tea works. You know better than to remove an arrow from a wound.

When you tend to someone, there is an excellent chance of them surviving long enough for a more accomplished Healer to have a look.

Herb (-200 cp, discount **Healer**)

How strange, that the same plant can have medicinal power, and deadly poison. It's all a question of which part, and dosage. You have an exhaustive knowledge of all the world's herbs and plants, the edible and the not, and their varied uses. You can make any tincture, paint, salve, tea, balm, drug or potion, given the materials which you understand where to find. This knowledge updates in all future worlds you visit.

Knife (-200 cp, discount **Healer**)

You have studied the skill of surgery, and have an unnaturally steady and precise hand with a knife. You know where to cut, what to remove, how to suture or sear and generally provide medical services far in advance of the general tech-level of Velgarth. Your patients never suffer infections or complications.

Of course, you can put that knowledge of anatomy and skill with a knife to much less benevolent uses, should you wish.

Great Work (-400 cp, discount **Healer**)

You have read and understood the works of the great sorcerer-adepts, like Ma'ar & Urtho. You understand, fundamentally, how to alter life on the basic level. All creatures created or shaped by magic have imperfections, but yours won't. Provided you have the equipment to alter genetics, or the Mage-Gift to let you do so.

Healer-Adept (-400 cp, discount **Healer**)

Rarer than even Mage-Adepts, a Healing Adept has virtually unlimited reserves of healing energy, which they can wield like a virtuoso. At this level it is possible to restore a small ward at once, or to heal the very land of corruption.

Etiquette (-100 cp, free **Noble**)

From the Sunpriests of Karse to the Empire of the East, people are always finding new elaborate rituals of respect and obsequence. Wherever you travel, you know the rules, what fork to use, how to bow, the proper forms of address to not appear uncivilized. At the very least, you will never offend someone by accident.

No, certainly not by accident. But your mastery of the rules of polite conversation are such that if you wish to insult someone, you can do so subtly enough they never notice, or only much later, or cannot respond without themselves appearing petty and boorish. You know how far you can push things and remain in the sphere of friendly, or not-so-friendly jibes.

Hostage (-200 cp, discount **Noble**)

Nobles are important, they can be ransomed for princely sums or held hostage against the good behavior of their families. This then has two benefits, first you have the bearing, the

indefinable charisma that insists to all that you are an important person and your words worth listening to. The second is that men are reluctant to kill you if they can possibly see a benefit to doing otherwise, or you really force their hand.

Reserve (-200 cp, discount **Noble**)

In politics, a man might suffer many defeats, but must never be defeated. No matter how shocking the news or behavior of your peers, you are unruffled, becoming a rock of calm in the chaos of a shouting room. You are always thinking through the implications of new information and how you can take advantage. Even in mortal danger, you remain calm and act correctly.

Prince (-400 cp, discount **Noble**)

From the dawn of time, each king has held three offices to varying degrees and with varying skill: chief general, chief magistrate, and chief priest. Like Kordas Valdemar and Tremane, it is hard for others to believe you weren't born to be a king. Your charisma and will are like a force of nature, your skills and instincts in strategy, administration, organization and diplomacy a match for the very best of humanity. Lawgiver, they will name you, Reformer and Peacemaker, or perhaps Conqueror. Either way, a 'the Great' seems given, as you are likely to make your mark on history. Even your enemies will have to acknowledge the skill of your rule.

Schemer (-400 cp, discount **Noble**)

More cynically, power comes to those who strive for it and guard it jealously. You are a Machievellian plotter par excellence. You have an eye for opportunity, know just how to uplift or undermine someone, the skill to run a whisper-campaign that could break the bravest heroes from a few minutes work, and the ability to seem so benign and trustworthy, only an empath or a divine being like a Companion could sense anything off about you - and they would find themselves grasping for proof as you are also a master of employing cut-outs and hiding your tracks. Playing your enemies against each other is second nature to you, as is monitoring the political winds and shaping the discourse.



GIFTS

A specific mental or magical talent. What is called witchcraft in some parts of the world. Most people have 2-3, but seldom develop them without an outside source like a Companion. Though rare, it isn't unheard of for someone to have all the Gifts.

Artifice (-100 cp)

You have an intuitive understanding of architectural pressure and stresses, where the weak point in any bridge is, which walls are load-bearing. Very handy for an engineer or architect, highly situational otherwise.

Bardic Gift (-100 cp, free **Bard**)

Each Bard must have two of the three Gifts relevant to their calling, and one had better be this. Those with bardic gift have an enhanced ability to share their feelings and influence emotions with music. Their songs make men laugh and weep, their sagas conjure vivid images in the mind. A skilled Bard can learn to use their gift with speech alone.

Creative Gift (-200 cp, discount **Bard**)

You have a spark of artistic inspiration that never seems to end. You find it easy to improvise poetry or song, to capture a sunset on canvas. Merely learn to produce what you already see and hear in your head, and you shall be remembered for centuries to come as a great artist.

Gift of Musicianship (-200 cp, discount **Bard**)

You have perfect pitch and an intuitive grasp of music that lets you easily sight-read sheet music and learn to play any instrument in record time.

Tongues (-100 cp, free Companion)

The ability to understand all the languages of men, and any sound or symbol that conveys a specific meaning.

Empathy (-200 cp, discount **Herald**, **Healer**, **Bard**)

The ability to sense, and with some work influence, the emotions of others. Empathy has a strong correlation with the Healing and/or Bardic Gifts. Skilled Empaths can enhance the Gifts of others by letting them tap into relevant emotions.

Foresight (-200 cp, discount **Herald**)

The skill of seeing the future. Large events might appear in your dream years beforehand. More immediate threats might not be apparent until they are immediately upon you. You have a kind of sense of the times in which you live, hostile or peaceful, safe or perilous, how they are changing and their future trajectory.

Mindspeech (-200 cp, discount **Herald**, Free Companion, Firecat, Kyree)

By far the most common Gift in Heralds, this lets someone use the same telepathic communication as the Companions. All Heralds can mindspeak with their Companion, most

can mindspeak with any sapient. Mindspeech carries a lot further than a voice, and communicates more information faster. Mindspeech requires thought-sensing, the ability to read minds, but doing so is considered a terrible invasion of privacy.

- **Animal Mindspeech** (-100 cp, requires Mindspeech) There are a few who can mindspeak to non sapient animals, to understand and be understood by them. Especially strong Animal Mindspeakers can see and hear whatever an animal they are linked to can.

Mage-Gift (-300 cp, free **Mage**)

You have the ability to use magic, or life force, for a variety of feats. Every Herald can wield the simple truth spell, surrounding someone with a blue halo that vanishes at the first lie. You can go much farther, approximating just about every Gift here with enough training and energy, albeit inefficiently, and further feats such as making illusion, calling lightning or making Gates.

Your Mage-Gift will never burn out, alter you or cause you harm, even in the midst of a Cataclysm. You won't be troubled by peeping *Vrondi*, unless you wish to be.

- **Strong Mage- Gift** (-200 cp, discount **Mage**) Not all mages are created equal, your strength in the mage-gift matches the greatest of legendary figures like Urtho and Ma'ar.

Healing (-200 cp, free **Healer**)

The ability to heal others. You have a small reserve of healing energy which lets you erase minor injuries and illness immediately. More serious cases can take weeks or months of repeated treatments. Healing can only hasten how things would have healed anyways, it can't repair birth-defects or regrow limbs, and you'd best set a bone before healing it.

Mindhealing (-200 cp, discount **Healer** or with Empathy)

A gift for helping people deal with mental stress and trauma. The simplest, crudest application is to emotionally cushion and distance the trauma, so it can be safely relived and discussed. Especially skilled wielders can implant, remove or alter memories, though this is a thorny ethical issue. Whatever the trauma or madness, you can eventually help them overcome it.

Earthsense (-200 cp, discount **Noble**)

A latent talent which must be ritually activated, with you bleeding over and then consuming a small quantity of dirt. Required gift for the kings of Hardorn and common in Rethwellen, also needed by the Teylan Healer-Mages. Once you have bonded with a particular land, you can sense when it is damaged or imperiled in some way. In extremis, you can sacrifice your life to restore the land.

Danger-Sense (-200 cp)

A heightened instinct that warns of approaching danger. Not precisely what the threat is, but you'll be forewarned and have at least an idea where it's coming from and how fast. Much more precise and reliable within this domain than Foresight.

FarSight (-200 cp)

The ability to scry on distant targets. Very convenient synergy with Fetching.

Fetching (-200 cp) The ability to teleport objects to you, or elsewhere. You have to be able to clearly see the target, with your eyes or through Farsight (or even Farsight relayed with Mindspeech). The energy this takes scales up with both mass transported and distance. Fetching living beings is very dangerous and only should be done in an emergency where the only alternative is certain death, for only the most powerful and skilled of Fetchers can retrieve anything but a corpse.

Firestarting (-200 cp)

The Gift of starting fires with your mind. The vast majority of Heralds with this gift can barely light a candle, but at least never need matches. You're a lot closer to Lavan Firestorm, who incinerated an army, albeit at the cost of his own life.

Necromancy (-200 cp)

The rare Gift to see and communicate with the shades of the deceased. A convenient source of information if nothing else.

TouchReading (-200 cp)

The ability to touch an object and experience the emotions, sometimes the thoughts, of people who previously touched it. Very handy for investigation.

Channeling (-300 cp)

A Channel is *not* a mage, and we have never seen these two Gifts coincide. What a Channel *can* do is sense magic, and move vast quantities of it about, siphoning it away, or helping a mage donate their magic to another. They have some ability to convert this energy into different types. What they cannot do is use magic themselves in any kind of spell.

Luck (-300 cp)

A gift that is rare, and notoriously difficult to control or predict. You tend to avoid the worst outcomes without understanding how or why, and sometimes have breakthroughs of truly absurd fortune, like tripping and falling and coming up not only unhurt, but clutching a long-lost treasure.

Pathfinding (-300 cp)

A most rare gift. Those with it can focus on any person, place or thing and locate it, along with the quickest and/or safest route to reach it.

Projecting (-300 cp)

An extremely rare gift, you can make people see things that aren't really there. The more practiced you are and the smarter and subtler your illusions, the better effect you can get. Also the more subjects you project to at once. Entire armies have been turned back by this Gift.

FRIENDS

Old Friends (Free!) Import any number of friends and family from previous Jumps with 800 cp of their own to spend. However, they cannot take drawbacks for more points.

Companion (Free!)

Obviously if you bond with someone, a Companion, Human, Firecat, etc. You can take them with you if they want. Or just friends, you don't have to be lifebonded or anything.

EQUIPMENT

Discount one item at each price level, discounted 50 and 100 cp items are free.

Basic Supplies (Free!)

You have what you need for roughing it. A tent, bedroll, some trail rations, tinderbox, two changes of clothes, bandages, a knife and several spare blankets.

Pack (Free!)

A pack that seems able to contain about four times more things than it should. Never feels heavy or unbalanced, and whatever you reach in for is somehow always on top.

Robe (Free, various)

In Valdemar's Collegium, Heralds wear bleached white clothes as they do on circuit. Healers wear green robes, Bards dress in red, when the Collegium opens to mages again they wear yellow.

Students wear a pale version of the same, in the case of Heralds, gray instead of white.

Unaffiliated students, those studying artifice or alchemy or strategy, mostly the children of nobles, wear blue in imitation of the Royal Guards' uniforms. You get a week's worth of clothes matching your origin(s).

Arms and Armor (-50 cp)

A high quality set of chainmail with a jerkin, never gets hot or chafes, and a high quality weapon and sidearm of your choice.

Waterskin (-50 cp)

A supply of water that refills each hour, and is always cool and clear.

Waystations (-50 cp)

Valdemar maintains a network of Waystations for Heralds on the move, stables for four, a lamp and basic food supplies, a water source and such. All a little ways off main roads, easily found by Companions but not so easily by anyone else.

You can always find a safe shelter for the night with the basics to eat and wash yourself and rest the night. You will not be found by any hostile forces, but neither will you be very comfortable. In future settings the Waystations will blend in.

Battlesteed (-100 cp)

A Shin'a'in warhorse, the product of fantastic breeding that pushes the limits of what constitutes a horse. Yet, it is in the end just a horse next to a Companion.

Bondbird (-100 cp)

A telepathic bird somewhere halfway between a particularly brilliant cat and a slow-witted toddler in intellect. Very good for scouting.

Crafting Supplies (-100 cp)

A tailor needs cloth, a smith needs ore, a baker needs milled wheat. Whatever base materials you need for providing any craft you purchased skill in is provided to you. All of high quality.

Plumbing (-100 cp)

You might have to work a pump some, but you can find a hot bath in a surprising number of places on Velgarth, without having to heat and carry huge loads of water. This ensures you always have a hot tub, or at least a clear stream with soapgrass to wash in. It can also insert indoor plumbing retroactively into any setting that may lack it.

Townchits (-100 cp)

Each village and town in Valdemar is issued a small bag of these brass trinkets, each bearing a number and a town name. If they provide hospitality and aid to a Herald (or Herald-candidate) in need, they give them one to pass onto the Herald's Collegium, and in exchange get half taxes next year.

You have a bag of chits, and if you provide hospitality and aid to any traveler or beggar in need, you can give them one and thus get half taxes on your lands and properties for a year.

Coin (-100/200 cp)

Money, it can vary a lot between the kingdoms, and more between worlds. Wherever you land, you have enough money to lead a comfortable middle-class lifestyle for a decade, or make a few large purchases to start.

Of if middle class and earning your way further isn't your thing, for 200 cp you will be among the richest 1% of the population, with a diverse portfolio of accounts and investments that will refill your coffers almost (or actually) faster than you can spend them!

Imp-Bottle (-200 cp)

A bottle containing an imp, the most minor form of demon, which will do one favor for the person who sets it free. Replenished monthly, on the first night of the new moon.

Imperial Caracnet (-200 cp)

A heavy collar-like necklace of iron and gold, this has the handy ability of rendering the wearer almost completely invulnerable to magic. Any spell strong enough to harm you would have to seriously threaten the city you were in anyways.

Lethe (-200 cp)

A drugged wine, sold in distinctive green bottles. Lethe sends the drinker into a trance where they'll answer most any question and perform most acts, remembering nothing but euphoria later. It is also highly addictive.

Spitter (-200 cp)

An artifact of the Eastern Empire, used largely for dueling, this is a muzzle loading pistol. The projectile is rather like a crossbow quarrel, and the propellant is an orb the size of a robin's egg, magically packed full of wind. You pull the trigger, the orb gets broken, the bolt is launched by a puff of air with a noise rather like spitting, hence the name. Comes with thirty rounds that replenish nightly.

Company (-300 cp)

You have a group of retainers, violent friends of mercenaries, roughly as numerous, skilled and professional as the Sunhawks. Depending on the era, you might choose for this to be the Sunhawks. The power of friendship is a wonderful thing, it means people you can trust to watch your back.

Dyrstaf (-300 cp)

A pre-cataclysm artifact, a weapon of terrifying subtlety, in form an unremarkable walking stick or quarterstaff. When first activated, a dyrstaf will cause a general sense of anxiety that will ramp up over time, blossoming into a blind panic by the time anyone is subjected to the field for 24 hours, causing entire cities and towns to be deserted. Most spells of protection do nothing to limit its power, but those who can shield their minds, and the user, are functionally immune. It is very difficult, almost impossible to trace the effect to the staff.

Heartstone (-300 cp)

An artificial node, a vast well of magical power far deeper than that which the various mage-schools develop. Just one approximation of one was able to fuel Vanyel's detection net for centuries.

Yours is a little different. It is inside a pocket dimension, always with you and available to you alone, or those you permit access. It is also refilled monthly, on the first night of the full moon, even were you to somehow deplete it.

This is of little immediate use without the Adept perk, but who knows that you might someday find a use for a nigh-limitless energy source.

Need (-300 cp)

Woman's Need calls me; As Woman's Need made me;

Her Need I must answer; As my maker bade me.

Velgarth's most famous sword, forged by the Mage-Smith Lashan before the Cataclysm and bearing her soul and consciousness. Need passively grants the bearer enhanced Healing (not enough to ignore battle wounds, but enough to be mobile again in hours or days instead of weeks) Calm in battle, Warding of baleful magic, and Luck. If wielded by one untrained in swordsmanship, they instinctively wield the blade as if a master. If the user is untrained in magic, the warding effect is strengthened to make them all but impervious to sorcery.

Also, when awake, you can consult the spirit of Need who is thousands of years old with more experience in magic, battle and adventure than any dozen people. But she tends to not want people to become dependent on her counsel.

Normally, Need contains a powerful *geas* to protect women, and drives people on with a restless wanderlust when they aren't needed, but as you're paying cp you can opt out of this and also enjoy the benefits of an amateur whatever your skill level. You may choose to wield Need herself or a replica, and apply these effects to any sword or sword-like object you may own.

Collegium (-400 cp)

A school, with good facilities, and an amazing library. You will find all learning accelerated here, as if everyone in attendance had the **Apt Pupil** perk, and a staff and curriculum tailored to your needs. As you grow in strength and wisdom, you will find that any skill or power you possess may be taught here, though it take months or years to digest a full Jump-doc's worth.

Crown (-400 cp, discount **Noble**)

You won the genetic lottery and were born into a royal family. You can choose whether you're a monarch's direct heir, or a distant cousin, cadet branch, whatever. This will not make you a reigning monarch in itself, but as an heir... how badly do you want it? You can carry this benefit to future worlds.

You also get a duplicate of the Eastern Emperor's Crown of Wolves. It doesn't do anything special besides provide a metaphorical hook so there's a physical item, but it looks really cool.

Gates (-400 cp)

A network of Gates, such as the Eastern Empire uses, the means to make more and maintain them, and all research about Gates including Urtho's permanent ones. You can choose to import this in future worlds with a gate hub in or near every major city, or build one yourself if you wish.

PERILS

*Take on troubles to gain more power to conquer them. We'll make a hero of you yet!
Needless to say, these all fall off at the end.*

Reminds Me Of... (+0 cp)

Had you, perhaps, a different fantasy in mind? Want to see how Westeros would react to the Companions? Poorly, they'll react very poorly. Never you mind, you may use this Jump to visit any high or low fantasy setting, anything but urban, as a supplement to an existing Jump or your sole option.

Fin (+0 cp)

If you insist... barring any contrary drawbacks or rolls, you may pick a particular book or series within the larger setting to participate in, and depart at the story's close.

Dazzle-Headaches (+100 cp)

Like Lavan, or Bard Breda, you are prone to migraines, sometimes at very inconvenient times.

Easily Bored (+100 cp)

Like Skif, you are constantly getting into trouble, just because you crave action and adventure, and lacking that, pranks and puerile plots will do.

Harmless Vice (+100 cp)

You are addicted to something that's not good for you, but not too bad for you. Chava, Bitteralm, Kava, Feka-Tea, Darkwall Wine, or smoking. If you go three days without indulging your personal vice, you get increasing withdrawal symptoms - headaches, weariness, irritability, etc. This may be taken twice.

Illiterate (+100 cp)

You have lost the skill of reading, and must take the time to reacquire it the hard way. No perk or Gift or boon will speed this process.

Lastellian Face (+100 cp)

Lastel Longknife was a bandit chieftain, whom Kethrys punished by sealing in the illusion of a pretty young noblewoman, to be attacked or killed by his own ilk. His efforts to reverse the curse led him to be actually turned into a woman, and later swap bodies with Kethrys.

You aren't going to quite that extreme, but there's something about you that screams 'helpless victim' to bullies and bandits of all kinds. No matter how obviously trained or heavily armed, everyone's first impression of you is someone they can easily push around.

The Leslac Version (+100 cp)

Continuity in all the fine details is not Mercedes Lackey's strong suit, but this is ridiculous. It seems the books have drastically misreported who everyone is, where they were and what they were doing, while retaining the basic shape of the plot. You cannot rely so much on metaknowledge or things happening precisely as you read them, because so many of the details have been fudged.

Longbeard (+100 cp)

Forget leaving early, you will stay a full ten years, and ten again. This may be taken up to four times, fifty years should be abundant to accomplish all you wish.

Mage-Marked (+100 cp)

Despite aging slowly and gracefully in all other ways, a mage's hair is bleached pure white very young by their power, and their eyes turned a shocking blue. Others who are aware will assume you to be a mage by your hair and eyes if nothing else, and you will stick out wherever you go.

Foe (+200 cp)

You have made a deadly enemy. They could be a skilled warlord, a powerful figure in a kingdom's politics, or even a mighty sorcerer. Whatever the case, they will be dangerous and well-positioned at least at first to cause you grief. This may be taken up to three times, each representing a different variety of threat.

Sun-Sealed (+200 cp)

Like a *vrondi*, or Tremane after being spelled, you cannot tell a lie. You can withhold information, sure, but never speak a deliberate falsehood. Let's hope you don't have to deal with courtly politics too much.

That Damned Bard! (+200 cp)

You have become the muse to a Bard whom you cannot lose or kill, and is unfortunately great at coming up with catchy tunes exaggerating or outright lying about your exploits. Your name will spread across the lands, but mostly as the butt of the joke. In whatever way would be inconvenient too - if you're a mercenary you will be known as a selfless hero who would never dream of taking money, if a noble hero your reputation is a vile villain, or an incompetent and so on.

Vrondi's Eyes (+200 cp)

Normally you would be immune to Vanyel's way of keeping mages out of Valdemar, and they still won't see normal magic, but now whenever you use powers from another world, whether you're in Valdemar or not, you see great eyes, watching you, always. The more powers you use, the worse it gets.

Wanted (+200 cp)

At least one kingdom has sentenced you to death for treason, just as soon as they can catch you. Must be at least adjacent to your starting kingdom. They will have no issues sending agents to carry out the sentence, and negotiating for your extradition. Hopefully you can keep moving or make yourself too valuable to trade away.

Wine-Sickness (+200 cp)

You're not *necessarily* a chronic drunk, but in the mornings you might as well be. Each and every day you greet the rising sun with an impressive hangover, no matter how much or little you drank the night before or even if you fell asleep.

Harpers, Heralds & Havoc (+300 cp)

While Valdemar has had long stretches of peace and prosperity, those times don't generally get books made about them. Whatever crises are going on at your point of entry will be early, worse and focused on you. There's no escaping dealing with the problems, you are bound to the plot by unbreakable chains.

Oathbound (+300 cp)

When you give your sworn word, you physically can't go back on it. Even if you weren't explicitly promising something, you will do your very best to fulfill it if you imply you'll do something or not do something, which you'll do often.

Oathbreaker (+300 cp)

Oathbreaker you are named, by priest and mage and common man. Oathbreaker you are known, Outcast, Outlaw, with all hands against you. Accursed, despised and distrusted by all men.

Impoverished (+400 cp)

A poor man has it, a rich man wants it, you gain... nothing! No Warehouse access, no items or trinkets of your previous travels through the winding Chain.

Impaired (+400 cp)

You may access no power, perk or gift of previous Jumps while here, though your skills and knowledge, your strength of character, remain your own.

Ma'ar (+400 cp)

The Mage of Dark Flame, architect of the Cataclysm and overarching villain for a large chunk of the series, has taken a keen interest in you. If he does not presently have a body, he

does now, restored to the height of his power and glory, all that he may destroy you as swiftly as possible.

The Cost of the Crown (+400 cp)

When some people say 'hero' they mean 'sucker.' Half or less of Heralds live to noble retirement and natural death, and they aren't the ones who get songs written about them. You are. You were Chosen for a reason (even if not literally Chosen) and during your stay you will face a threat grave enough to require you to solve it, and will feel duty-bound to act to save others. But be warned, though victory will be quite possible and doable, it will not come without struggle and sacrifice - you will pay for these points in lost friends, impossible choices and long, cold sleepless nights with only your doubts and regrets for company. But take heart, if you had any doubts that you were a hero under all the perks, they will be thoroughly laid to rest.

Sun & Stars (+800 cp)

Well, now you've done it. Something about your plans or just existence in their backyard has mortally offended the Star-Eyed Goddess, Kal'ened, and the sun god Vkandis. The good news is their first moves will be to have their mortal followers assemble the most capable hunting party they're capable of to bring you down. Should that fail, the two aren't remotely above pursuing you directly, in their own personal style.

At that point, either you can survive the schemes and raw power they bring to the table, or you were very, very foolish to take this.

END

What will you do now? Stay here? Go home? Move on to the next jump? Might I interest you in a fourth option?

Repeat - Most Firecats and Companions are reincarnations. You may choose to visit a later era in such a form if you like. This will add a decade to your time in-Jump each time, but otherwise not affect your chain.

Notes:

Cp is never wasted! If you buy two similar perks, assume they synergize. Danger-Sense plus Foresight provides the reliability of the former and the specificity of the latter. Looker & Patronage to become superhumanly attractive. Need and the Imperial Caracnet each make the user *almost* invulnerable to magic, get both and you can scratch out the 'almost.' Etc.