Mercedes Lackey's *The Dragon Jousters*

A Jump by dragonjek
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In the south, the Great Mother River stretches through the desert land of Tia, bringing its life-giving waters to all along its banks. In the north, the river splits apart into its tributary "daughter" rivers to form a broad delta, where nestles the kingdom of Alta.

For the past hundreds of years, these two nations warred upon each other. Were combat to only take place on the earth, it would be an even match; alas, Tia's famed Dragon Jousters turn the tide of battle in their favor. Oh, Alta has them too—indeed, the Altans taught the art of training dragons to the Tians in the first place to help them escape slavery under the Heyksins—but the desert dragons of Tia are just too large for the smaller swamp dragons that primarily make up the Altan aerial forces to match evenly.

So the Tians push northward more and more, carving out more small pieces of Alta for their own with every passing generation. And as for the poor Altans who live in this newly-claimed Tian territory? Slaves can be freed, so they certainly can't be slaves. Thus, the only answer is to bind them to the land and force them to live as serfs, forced to eke out miserable existences under harsh masters with no hope of ever achieving freedom.

Such is the life of one young boy, Vetch. But soon a chance encounter with a Dragon Jouster in need of a serving boy will turn his life around, and in so doing will spark a series of events that will result in the unification of Alta and Tia into a single, grand nation. But first, he has to live that long, and who can say if he survives or not with all the changes someone like you could bring to a world like this?

We look forward to seeing the story you'll write upon the desert sands, Jumper. Take **1000 Choice Points** with which to carve your fate in this world of war, dragons, and gods.

Location

Where do you arrive in these lands? You may choose freely, or gain +100 CP for rolling 1d8 to randomly determine where you arrive.

1 – Mefis:
You start out in the capital of Tia, the city of Mefis, and the home of the Tian Jouster's Compound. Like almost all cities in Tia, it hugs close to the Great Mother River, and its structures are made to resist the harsh winds of the desert *kamiseen*.

2 – The City of Alta:
You start out in the capital of Alta, in the city of the same name. Alta is a city divided into roughly-shaped "rings", connected by bridges, because there isn't enough uninterrupted land there. Still, it's close enough to the desert that the Altan Jouster's Compound can get plenty of sand for its few desert dragons.

3 – Akkadia:
Welcome to the cultured land of Akkadia, a land known for its scholars and Healers; so beloved are Healers, in fact, that even when the Akkadians are at war with another country, they will still accept members of that nation who come to study at their Healer's College, which is known for having some of the foremost education in the world.

4 – Bedu Caravan:
Known as the Veiled Ones, the Bedu are a people apart from the Tians and Altans, claiming no land as their own and wandering through the deserts in a harsh nomadic lifestyle. They cannot abide feeling confined in the walls of a city, and live in tents. They are well-known as a neutral faction, but are willing to befriend and help individuals from either side on a person-by-person basis. Ordinary Bedu do not speak with outsiders; only the assigned Mouth of the Bedu of each tribe is permitted to do so, and they are responsible for all negotiations and haggling.

5 – What will eventually become Aerie:

A city abandoned after a cave-in closed off access to its water source, this isn't a city as you may be used to; instead, it is carved into the very walls of the cliffside. The water has since found a new route to the surface, and the spring is enough to sate the thirst of the animals who come to it for survival… and now you.

6 – The Lands of the Lion Kings:
The Lion Kings are a tribal people who dwell to the south of Tia. They have long been allies to the Tians, and to cement their relationship, they send one of their princesses to the current Great King every few generations to serve as his main wife, and regularly supply mercenaries to serve in the Tian armies. They lack the cities or infrastructure needed to train Healers en masse, resulting in groups of tribes sharing individual Healers between themselves.

7 – Home of the Heyksins:
You are from the land that is home to the brutal Heyksin people, who once enslaved Tia and Alta before being driven out by the Dragon Jousters. But they have learned since then, and their next invasion will not begin with armies marching, but with subtle infiltration and subversion. Rather than gods, the Heyksins worship a vengeful and wrathful being who was sealed by the gods long ago for her hunger and endless thirst for the blood of men, an abomination known as Tamat the Render.

8 – Free Choice:
The gods have blessed you with the freedom to choose where you arrive. You can choose any of the above locations, or you can choose another location at your desire. Perhaps the eastern land of Beshelos? Perhaps the Lost City of Te-pa-ten-ke? It's buried in sand right now, so it may not be as welcoming as it would be after it is found and renamed Sanctuary.

Origins

You may freely select your gender, sex, and age, although be warned that sexism is prominent in this Bronze Age society. If you would prefer to leave it up to chance, however, you may be 2d8+8 years old. Select **two origins** to receive discounts for; in this story, serfs will ride dragons, healers may be mages, and princes will become priests. Any origin may be taken as a drop-in.

Peasant:

You are a freeborn commoner, someone engaged in a common and ordinary profession. Perhaps you are a scribe or artisan, perhaps a brickmaker or farmer, or perhaps a mere serving maid. Or… perhaps you wanted a job riskier and with more potential for reward, and chose to be a dragon boy in the Jouster's Compound?

Nobility:
You belong to the upper class; you are wealthy and have power over the lives of lesser men. Perhaps your family has long been retainers to the Great King of Tia, maybe you're from one of the royal houses that the Great Ones of Alta must be chosen from, or it could be that you're simply a commoner who became a Jouster, and thus earned a lesser title of nobility.

Military:
You're a military man. You know tactics and strategy, and have experience serving in an army or navy. You know what it's like to take a life, and what it's like seeing people you know being struck down beside you.

Jouster:
You're in a peculiar position; Dragon Jousters are usually noble-born, but commoners can become one too, and simply being a Jouster is enough to raise you to the ranks of the lesser nobility. Your military feats and the glory of riding a dragon has propelled you to the level of a hero in the eyes of the people; not so much as individuals, but as a member of the Jousters as a whole. Of course, you probably don't take care of your dragon yourself—that's servants' work, best left to the dragon boys.

Priest:
Many are the gods of Tia and Alta. Oftentimes they differ between each other only in name—if that—but woe betide you if you make such a claim to a priest. You are the voice of the gods, and can channel their might, even if you otherwise have no talent at magic—still, you are more likely than most to be god-touched with power. In Tia, it is the priesthood that truly controls the nation, for terrible stories are told of those Great Kings who neglected to listen to the advice of their priests.

You receive a guarantee that the gods will never call you to serve them in-person, nor will you ever be chosen to deliver a message to the gods, both of which require the priest in question be sacrificed.

Magician:
Distinctly different from the Gifts of the god-touched, magic is a force that can be used by anyone with the innate potential. It is slow, strange, and esoteric, requiring various rituals, but the breadth of what it can accomplish is wide indeed. Those with talent at magic are snapped up by the priesthood in Tia, while in Alta they are inducted into the Magi, who are the true power behind the thrones of the Great Ones.

Healer:
You have a gift, and perhaps a Gift, for healing others. You are trained in dealing with injury and sickness, and know how best to tend to both man and beast when they come to you. Yours is a class held in special reverence just below that of priests—but a great deal more approachable to the common man.

Perks

Perks receive a 50% discount to their associated origin. Discounted 100 CP perks are instead free.

Peasant

Tradesman (-100 CP):
Select a trade, craft, or profession such as you would expect to find in pre-unification Ancient Egypt, such as brickmaker, potter, smith, goat herder, etc. You are an excellent practitioner of that trade—maybe not the best, but you're a close contender for the title.

Inured to Labor (-200 CP):
You are used to putting in hard effort and long hours… perhaps willingly, perhaps under the promise of the lash if you failed. You have exceptional stamina, easily able to keep working long past when even other laborers quit. You also know how to give your all, even when you're completely exhausted; no matter how tired or worn out you are, you can always give it your best attempt, whatever "it" may be.

The Master's Good Graces (-400 CP):
If you're a serf, the slaves are above you. If you're a slave, the freeborn are above you. If you're a commoner, the nobles are above you. Even for the Great Ones, the gods reign above all, and even amongst the gods there is a king; no matter your status in life, there will always be someone higher up on the hierarchy, ready to knock you down if you get uppity or start to act outside your place. Fortunately, you happen to have exceptional luck when it comes to interacting with your "betters", and informalities or misbehaviors on your part tend to receive amused responses more frequently than anger. Why, with this perk even a peasant could befriend a noble scion.

Nobody Sees the Servants (-600 CP):
When there's enough status difference between people, the lessers steadily become less like humans and more like animate furniture in the minds of their betters. At will, you can mimic this phenomenon, and make yourself completely unimportant to the minds of others. People will overlook your presence in important meetings, because you don't matter, and you'll never be worth the effort of silencing if you overhear something you shouldn't have. It doesn't work on people whose attention is already on you, however.

Nobility

Princely Bearing (-100 CP):
You've mastered a major step in becoming an important person; you know how to *behave* like someone who is important. With just a bit of focus and an adjustment to your posture, you will have a way about you that demands that others pay attention to you. You can act like someone accustomed to being obeyed, and so long as you do not ask too much, most servants or weak-minded people will be obedient from simple habit even if you don't have the rank to actually demand such obedience.

The Heir's Education (-200 CP):
You are well-tutored, possessing knowledge of the world and its history equivalent to if you had been privately instructed every day of your childhood by adept scholars in subjects of your choice. In every world you go to, you will receive a similar level of advanced education.

Natural Leader (-400 CP):

You have that certain combination of qualities that come together to form what people call “charisma”. You are a likeable person, but can also gather about yourself a commanding air suitable to a leader… or perhaps a king. People will no doubt be drawn into your orbit and seek to know you better, for anyone can tell that someone like you is going to go far.

Plots and Schemes (-600 CP):
The Princes Toreth and Kaleth set up a scheme that would have been decades in the running, which would have fully uprooted the corruption in the Altan government and returned rulership of the kingdom to the Great Ones. It would have worked masterfully… had they only suspected the degree to which their cousins were complicit in the evils of the Magi. You would never have that problem, as your ability to form conspiracies, navigate the political labyrinth, and form your own plots is without equal. Not only are you far cleverer than before, but you become skilled at multitasking and balancing the dozens, if not hundreds, of vital points of information and contacts you would need to manage a conspiracy such as to overthrow a nation.

Military

Arms and Armor (-100 CP):
You are skilled with all manner of Bronze Age weaponry and armor. Armor does little to interfere with your movements, and you are a master at wielding spear, club, axe, sword, sling, and bow in combat.

Charioteer (-200 CP):
You are something of a genius when it comes to riding the chariot. The animals pulling it always respond perfectly in time with your commands, and when you hold the reins, the horses might as well be an extension of your body for how precise your control over them is. You never risk losing balance in a moving vehicle, and are capable of both driving the chariot and firing a bow at the same time, the animals seeming to read your mind to drive where you desire even as you engage in combat. In future worlds, this allows you to man vehicles that usually require more than one person to drive or pilot all by yourself, with the vehicle seeming to respond to your thoughts if that is necessary to function with only yourself at the helm.

Tactics and Stratagems (-400 CP):

You have an unparalleled mastery of group tactics, both in small units and when leading a larger force. Your skill is such that you could easily overcome a force half again your size so long as you had decently-trained troops. However, you also excel at strategy, and are skilled at breaking down your own and the enemy's goals, and determining the most effective way to pursue them. You know how to harass supply trains, how to outmaneuver the enemy, and are a deft hand at the logistics required to accomplish such strategies in the first place.

Leader of Men (-600 CP):
You will always be blessed with the greatest gift any commander could hope for; skilled subordinates. Not only do all forces under your command receive a general improvement to their performance and competency, but your direct subordinates display more initiative and inventiveness; if you keep an open mind you may encounter an idea that could completely revolutionize the way you wage war.

Jouster

Know Your Mount (-100 CP):
Even though the current style of Dragon Jouster leaves the day-to-day care and maintenance of their dragon to the dragon boys, every Jouster worth their salt knows to keep a close eye on the health and behavior of their mount. You will always be aware of the needs and desires of any mount you ride, and have an almost empathetic ability to convey your wishes to it. Of course, whether or not they obey you depends entirely on how much you've earned that animal's affection…

Should you ride a vehicle instead, you will be immediately aware of any problems in the vehicle as soon as they begin to develop.

Stay in the Saddle (-200 CP):
Dragon-riding is hard work. They're constantly bobbing up and down as they flap their wings, and if you're stiff in the saddle you're going to be flung back and forth until you're covered in bruises. You, however, don't need to worry about that, because you're a master at riding. You know exactly how to ride any mount or vehicle as soon as you see it, and whatever you're riding will always respond to you as though it could read your thoughts, making even the slightest course adjustments or the most dramatic maneuvers at a moment's notice.

Requisitioning (-400 CP):
As nobles and heroes of the nation, it is well within the Dragon Jousters' rights to demand food, shelter, clothing, and similar belongings from others so long as it is within their means to give. Although this couldn't be used to take something as valuable as someone's slave, it could be used to take a mere serf into your own service. It also effectively works as a free meal ticket anywhere you go. This will, of course, continue to take effect in jumps after this one.

Tame the Wild Beast (-600 CP):
The Jousters of today might only see their dragons as weapons and animals to ride, but the Jousters of tomorrow forge a bond of love and respect with dragons they've raised since hatching. You could well be one of the Jousters that appear later in the series, as you possess a remarkable ability to tame any animal or non-sophont monster that you raise from a young age. If you show them even a modicum of affection, they will quickly grow to love and care for you, and even the most untrainable of beasts can become a loving pet and partner who can be taught any trick imaginable.

And as a sign of this bond with the beast, once the animal you're raising reaches maturity, it will benefit from any physical enhancement abilities you possess, such as those that improve speed, strength, or durability. At your discretion, this can also apply to any existing animals you have raised from a young age, not only those you raise after purchasing this perk.

Priest

Deliver Unto the Gods Their Due (-100 CP):
When using any sort of magic or ritual that calls upon divine power, you can sacrifice living creatures to the god(s) in question to enhance the power. The younger they are, and the closer they are to sophont-level intellect, the more power this provides you… but be warned that some gods will object strongly to receiving sacrifices as intelligent as humans or as young as infants, and you may be punished if you don't exhibit good judgment in what you sacrifice to who.

Lesser God-Touched (-200 CP):
You have been blessed by the gods, and exhibit one of the Gifts bestowed on fortunate children. You may select the Gift of Animal Speech, which allows you to communicate with animals that are nearby, the Gift of Silent Speech, which allows

you to telepathically communicate with nearby people, or the Gift of Far-Sight, which allows you to observe distant locations without ever needing to go close to them. You may purchase this multiple times to select additional Gifts. These Gifts have limitations in range, but as you train the Gift you will be able to reach farther (exponentially farther, in the case of the Gift of Far-Sight).

Guide the Flock (-400 CP):
Kings may lead the people, but it is the priests who walk among them and in whom the common man puts his trust. People naturally trust you easier, and are more willing to confide their secrets in you. When you give people advice in response to these confessions, they are more likely to take it, and the advice is more likely to be successful.

To better protect your people you can make charms and amulets that ward away the ghosts of the malevolent dead, such as those left behind by those who have not been properly buried or had their spirits supplicated. Furthermore, you are proficient as such supplications, and under your ministrations even the most recalcitrant of ghosts can be sent on to their rightful rest.

Greater God-Touched (-600 CP):
You are truly favored by the gods, and have been granted one of the more powerful Gifts a person can have. You have either the Gift of Foretelling, which will grant you glimpses of the future in the form of prophecies, or the Gift of Speaking with the Dead, which allows you to call forth the spirits of the departed and commune with them, receiving true answers and granting you insight into whatever knowledge they may have possessed in life. You may purchase this twice to receive both. The Gift of Foretelling is limited in that the prophecies you see are often confusing, while the Gift of Speaking with the Dead can only resurrect those who have not been dead for too long. However, both of these limitations can be overcome with time and training.

Magician

Ways of the Mage (Free, Exclusive to Magician):
You are proficient in the art of magic. But the magic in this world is not the spellslinging you may be familiar with; this world's spellcasting requires rituals and lengthy incantations, and for the most part is wholly unsuited to combat or

freeform usage. Still, it has a great host of uses, limited primarily by your own stockpile of energy that you use to cast the spells.

You can spy on distant locations, and ward against such spying. You can instill a compulsion into people's minds, or cause them to forget what you've done to them. You can summon animals such as a great swarm of scorpions, or create illusions to deceive and bewitch the mind. You can empower an element, such as fire, to allow it to accomplish feats it normally never could, such as burn stone itself. You could even summon a storm, although doing so alone would certainly knock you unconscious, and such a hellish storm as the Altan sea-witches conjured would be beyond any single Magus.

You are also able to tie any magic you can perform into a physical object. This allows you to cast a spell elsewhere and activate it through the item, or lets you apply a constant effect to an item, or make it the origin of such an effect (such as creating an amulet to ward against scrying).

Cooperative Casting (-200 CP):
Magic performed as a group is superior to that performed by an individual. From now on, whenever you cast a spell in conjunction with someone else (be it both of you independently casting identical spells, or working together as a group to cast a single spell beyond you as individuals), the power of the spell(s) will be amplified for each person contributing to the casting. This amplification does not consume any extra energy beyond the original cost of the spell.

Power Absorption (-400 CP):
Like the Magi of Alta, you now possess the power to drain others of their power in order to amplify your own spells. This requires you to have access to someone with some special power beyond the baseline of humanity, but it otherwise doesn't require them to have any particular type of power or energy source; you could drain a psychic or a source of divine power equally to empower your own magic. Those who have been drained find themselves unable to use their own powers for days afterwards, and will be physically weakened from having their energies extracted by you; repeated use can eventually drain them permanently, or even kill them. Still, it's not something you could do in the middle of combat, requiring several minutes of casting time to accomplish. That said, you could also attach the effect to an item, and channel the effect through that.

Quality Translocation (-600 CP):
The sand wallowing pits of dragons must be held to a high temperature to keep the dragon healthy; to achieve this temperature, magicians perform a ritual to pull heat from one location, and store it in the sands. The Magi of Alta used a variation of this principle to steal the lifespan of those killed in war to extend their own lives. Now you too have this power; you can name a quality, and via a lengthy ritual can transfer this quality from one location to another… or from some people to others. Such effects fade, however, and must be re-established from time to time.

Healer

The Healer's Craft (-100 CP):
You are exceedingly well-trained in the primary Healer arts, Healing by herbs and Healing by the knife. You are familiar with all the plant and animal products that have medicinal properties, and know how to craft them into potions and poultices that will most effectively convey their healing traits into a patient. You are additionally skilled with the knife, having a steady hand and a keen eye, and know how and where to cut on the body to inflict minimum damage while still accomplishing the goal of the surgery. Or how to inflict maximum damage, if it comes to that. Never anger those who know as much about pain as Healers do.

Sterile Touch (-200 CP):
Not only is your body perpetually clean, but you can also make that which you touch clean, ensuring that your tools and the body of those you operate on will always be as sterile as possible and minimizing the risk of infection or disease.

Healer's Eye (-400 CP):
You have an instinctive awareness of the ailments of others. When someone is injured, even if they are hiding it perfectly, you can always tell; not only that they're injured, but where, how badly, and the possible long-term consequences of the injury. When someone is sick, you know all their symptoms simply by looking at them, and can instantly relate them to whatever the illness is (so long as you actually know the illness in the first place). This is especially helpful for animals which are unable to convey what is causing them misery.

Healing by Touch (-600 CP):

You have the god-given Gift of Healing. While this would see you snapped up by the priesthood in Tia, in Alta and Akkadia the Healers are their own, separate class. When you touch someone, you can channel your physical energies to heal them of their wounds. This is immensely draining, but with practice you can increase the effectiveness of your gift, letting you heal more injuries at a lower cost. This can also work to heal diseases, but it is even more exhausting than healing wounds.

General

A Good Master (-100 CP):
Your slaves, serfs, and servants will have a generally good impression of you, and so long as you do not abuse them, they will be greatly loyal to you. Although they may still yearn for freedom, none of them would wish harm on you to achieve it, and even if they do become free, they will continue to hold you in high regard.

Desert Walker (-100 CP):
You are used to the dryness of the desert, and have endured the winds and brutal heat of the *kamiseen* long enough to be, to some degree, inured to such torments. You can mentally push your pain and discomfort aside in order to keep going, even if you would otherwise be thoroughly miserable. This perk doesn't make the unpleasant into something enjoyable, but it does let you keep functioning even if you feel like you're about to keel over from heatstroke.

God-Given Luck (-300 CP):
You have exceptional luck; although it doesn't often apply in day-to-day life, when it comes to large and critical matters? Coincidences of all sorts just fall into your lap. If the dragon egg you stole is about to hatch, a heavy downpour of rain will come to drive everyone else into their rooms and muffle the loud noises of a dragon breaking out of its shell. If you need to hide a baby dragon, then the compound may soon receive an influx of young dragons needing training. If you encounter someone in need of rescue, they will have useful information or a reward for you, or may be a powerful and influential figure who will remember you with gratitude in their heart. If someone's running from cruel monsters, you may come across them just in time to save them. Ranging a little further out of your territory on a hunting expedition might have you stumble upon a lost and hidden city.

Items

There are no origin-based discounts for items; instead, you receive one 50% discount for each price tier. Discounted 100 CP items are instead free. Unless otherwise mentioned, any items that are lost, broken, or stolen are replaced within a week.

Period-Appropriate Clothing (Free):
You gain linen clothing appropriate to a fantasy counterpart to Ancient Egypt.

Panoply of Arms (-100 CP):
You have a small host of various Bronze Age weaponry, sufficient to arm a small military unit. You have swords, axes, spears, clubs, slings & stone pellets, and bows & arrows aplenty. If any weapons are lost or broken, they are replaced within a day.

Bronze Breastplate (-100 CP):
Despite the name, this also includes a helmet, greaves, and an armored kilt. Despite being made of metal, it is curiously non-conductive to heat, and the desert sun will never make it dangerous to you.

Jouster's Accoutrements (-100 CP):
You have a saddle suited to riding a dragon, with straps to ensure you stay seated. This saddle will always resize itself to perfectly fit whatever it's set upon. You also receive a lance; this lance is unbreakable, and will never weaken or go out of true.

***Tala* Berries (-100 CP)**:
You have a bag full of *tala* berries which, when dried up and ground into powder, can serve as a drug that induces clouded thoughts in animals. It reduces their performance a bit, but it can allow you to train and control animals that would otherwise be unmanageably wild. When you look away, the bag always refills.

Medicine Basket (-100 CP):
A basket with several compartments, it contains all the portable tools a Healer might need. It has several surgical knives and saws, a number of the most common or crucial medical ingredients and herbs, as well as stitches and bandages for those who are injured.

Ritual Accessories (-100 CP):
For both magic and the gods, ritual is important. And proper rituals require proper accoutrements. This includes a set of expensive, formal clothing suitable for a magical ritual, tools with ritual and religious symbolism, as well as a dowsing rod that will always guide you to whatever local ingredient you may need, such as water that has never been contained by the tools of men, sticks that have been broken but not cut, or flat stones that have been shaped only by the hands of nature.

Flora Blight (-200 CP):
Powders that induce a disease in other plants, causing them to lose what special properties they may possess. Although their fruit still produces seeds and they still provide nutrients, plants with medicinal properties become useless, poisonous plants lose toxins, and plants that can be used for drugs no longer work. Furthermore, this difference is almost undetectable, with a very slight discoloration that looks more like the plant has a light coating of dust.

Divine Amulet (-200 CP):
You have an amulet bearing the symbols of a god of your choice. While bearing this amulet on your person, you are immune to curses; any curse that would strike you will instead cause the amulet to break. You receive 5 of these amulets

***Abshati* Figurine (-200 CP)**:
Normally *abshati* are used for funerary purposes… but not this one. You can give your *abshati* figurine a name, and from then on how you treat the figurine will affect the fortunes of the person you name it after. If you treat the figurine well, that person will find themselves blessed with good fortune. If you treat it badly, the one it characterizes will be cursed with terrible luck. You cannot name your *abshati* after yourself. The figurine can only be used for one person at a time, but you can buy multiple *abshati* figurines here if you so desire.

Guide Bead (-200 CP):
A small bead on a string used by the Bedu people as a guide. As long as you have someplace you desire to go, this small bead will point towards that direction. However, if you loose it from its necklace, the bead will instead zoom off to wherever you think of as “home”.

***Shapti* Figurines (-200 CP)**:
Normally *shapti* are also used for funerary purposes, but to a being from outside this world, perhaps life and death aren't so distinct for you? Regardless of why, these figurines of nameless servants would normally work for the deceased in the afterlife, but this set of four have animated as living and extremely-generic-looking servants to labor for you in life. They aren't truly people, although one might be forgiven for thinking that they are considering that they look and behave as though real, but they have no genuine drive, soul, or motivation, seeking only to serve you. What intellect they have is solely devoted to determining the best ways to do so.

Dragon Compound (-400 CP):
An entire compound for the training and stabling of dragons and Dragon Jousters. It has an unlimited supply of food for the dragons, and all the equipment you might need to supply dragons and their jousters. Comes complete with all the servants needed to make the place functions, but doesn't have any dragons… yet. However, anyone that comes to reside in your Dragon Compound by the end of the jump can be brought along with you as either companions or followers, your choice; this benefit applies to all future jumps, as well. You can import the compound into future jumps, or leave it as an attachment to your Warehouse. If you import the compound, you do not also automatically bring its residents along with you, only the servants; the residents will continue to reside in your Cosmic Warehouse.

A Dragon of Your Own (-400 CP):
You have a dragon—not one of the wild ones that are only ridable when drugged up on *tala*, but a dragon that you have raised from the egg (or that has memories of you raising it from the egg, if you are a drop-in). It is affectionate and clever, like a cat, with the sharp eyes and ferocity of a hawk. They don't breathe fire as dragons in some worlds do, but they continue to grow larger throughout their lifetimes, and are graceful and skilled fliers… to say nothing of their intense beauty, for their scales look like iridescent gemstones. Your dragon loves you fiercely, and will do very nearly anything you want it to, so long as you can only convey your intent to it. You may purchase this more than once.

You may have a desert dragon, which is larger but slower and less graceful, or a swamp dragon, which is smaller, faster, and a truly agile flier. Swamp dragons are

considered to be less intelligent than desert dragons, but in truth they are only more susceptible to *tala* powder, making them seem slow in the head. They are, however, somewhat less of a spectacle for the eye than desert dragons; swamp dragons are a single color, which becomes pale on their underside, while desert dragons can have between 2 to 3 different colors.

Crown of the Gods (-600 CP):
This is a golden crown bearing the imagery of one of the gods of this world, such as Haras, patron of the Jousters, Siris, the King of the Afterlife, Te-oth, god of writing, or Hamun, god of storms and stars. A list of gods can be found in the notes. Regardless of what god you choose, the effects are similar; when you place this crown upon your brow, you will be filled with that god's divine essence, and temporarily become their avatar upon earth. They will possess you, and endeavor to accomplish your current task to the best of their divine abilities by wielding powers beyond the comprehension of man. However, it is a strain on your very existence to hold their essence, and you can only call upon their power once every ten years… but in that one instance, you hold the power to shatter armies. After this jump, you can either attune the crown to a new god at the start of the jump, or you can retain the connection to the god you selected here.

Kingdom on the River (-600 CP):
You have a kingdom of your own. Although smaller than Alta or Tia, you have a strong enough military presence that you haven't been swallowed up by the larger nations yet. It's up to you where you are placed along the Great Mother River; perhaps you're higher up near the headwaters, or you could fill a portion of the delta that borders the sea. Regardless, you have your own military, Dragon Jousters, priesthood, magicians, and Healers, although it is up to you how the social stratification of your nation functions. Your kingdom will come along with you on future jumps, although at your discretion you can instead leave it as an attachment to your Warehouse.

The Eye of Light (-600 CP):
Basically a magical magnifying lens, this structure takes sunlight and converts it into a large ray of searing heat, sufficient to melt buildings into molten rubble or sand into glass almost instantly. It has a range of several miles and is located on the top of a tower, which you may place anywhere you wish in the setting. Unlike the Eye of the Magi, this Eye is not an evil artifact powered by sucking out

people's souls and does not send the earth into convulsions after use. It does require a lot of magical energy, however, more than one person can provide without falling unconscious.

Companions

Import/Create Companion (-50 CP):
You can either import an existing companion, or create an entirely new companion from scratch. Whichever option you choose, they receive 2 origins of your choice and receive **600 CP** to spend on perks and items. It costs **50 CP** to purchase a single companion, but if you instead spend **200 CP**, then you can bring a full set of 8 with you.

Canon Companion(s) (-100 CP):
By taking this option, then you can either have your background already be connected to one or more canon characters, or you can guarantee that early in the jump you will meet and have positive interactions with them. If you can convince any canon character to come with you, you may bring them along as companions at the end of the jump. Any companion with a dragon may bring the dragon along as a pet.

Drawbacks

If the points which you have been allotted are too few, you may make your stay here more difficult in exchange for more points.

Avatar of Pashet (+100 CP):
You have been "blessed" to be the recipient of one of the avatars of the goddess of love, Pashet. This *mau* cat has very sharp claws, and likes to knead them into your side. It will suckle on your earlobes at night, leap off of you when you are trying to sleep, cannot be housetrained no matter what you do, and is completely impossible for you to harm or keep away from your home—indeed, anytime you go to sleep, it will appear. It is not a particularly affectionate cat, and is more likely to claw your hand than accept pets. It will force its way into your personal space, be offended when you don't pet it, then claw you whenever you actually try to touch it. It is a combination of all the worst traits of cats, combined into one creature of pure malevolence. The only saving grace is that it is a talented mouser. But if you survive it for all 10 years, it will calm down and be tamed, and you can

bring it with you on your jumpchain as a perfectly friendly, affectionate cat. It has none of the powers you would expect an "avatar" of a goddess to have.

Dragon Night-Sight (+100 CP):
You have the eyes of a dragon… well, of a dragon at night. For all their visual acuity in the daytime, at night their vision isn't even a fourth as good as a human's—and now, yours is just as bad. If you walk around in the dark, you might as well have the worst nearsightedness the world has ever seen.

Acrophobia (+100 CP):
You have an extreme fear of heights. Willingly going up past the height of a building is impossible for you—you can throw mountain climbing out of your itinerary, and getting on a dragon is completely out of the question unless they tie you up first.

"The food turn to thistle in his mouth" (+200 CP):
You have been cursed, Jumper. From now on, no matter what you eat, it is utterly devoid of flavor. From a soup made of leather sandals to the finest of honeycakes, you are entirely incapable of tasting anything. Nor can you smell the aroma of food. But you still have to eat, even if you have perks that would sustain you otherwise. Furthermore, the texture of your food changes in your mouth, to make it more like chewing on sand no matter how soft and succulent the food normally is. Eating will be a miserable experience for the next ten years.

Better a Slave Than a Serf (+200 CP):
There are laws requiring the proper treatment of slaves; a serf has no such protection. A slave can be resold to gain the money you spent on it; a serf comes with the land and cannot be given away, so you cannot profit off of them other than in the labor they give you and have no reason to treat them better than the minimum they need to survive. To be a serf is to be the lowest of the low, completely bereft of rights and liberty. And now, that will be you. Until four years pass, you will be a serf and will be treated as such. You will be entirely unable to escape, nor to strike back against your master, nor will any perk you possess work on your master.

Divine Disfavor (+200 CP):

The gods are not fond of your interference in this world, and their dislike is shared by their priests. The priesthood might not know what you are, but they will know that the gods do not like you. That alone is not enough to see you killed, but the priesthood is a powerful influence on the government and the populace, and you will see yourself given unfair treatment more often than not.

"Every misfortune will fall" (+200 CP):
You have been cursed, Jumper, and whoever did the cursing has the backing of the gods. The world will turn against you in all sorts of ways. Favored tools will break, your homes will spring leaks through which the rain or *kamiseen* sands will seep, the weather will turn against you, and misfortune will no doubt break a bone or two over the course of your stay here. The bad luck will never be so terrible as to kill you of its own accord, but it will make your life miserable many a time.

Ritual Magic (+200 CP):
The magic of this world requires extensive rituals and casting, and now so do all your other powers. As long as it is something you can either direct, activate, or cast, your powers now need preparation time, casting time, and sometimes ritual symbolism in order to function. Even a simple spell will require at least a minute of casting to use, and the most powerful of your abilities may take hours.

Constant *Kamiseen* (+300 CP):
The *kamiseen* blows constantly upon you. The winds of the *kamiseen* do not roar or howl, because they do not need to; instead, it is constant and quiet. It blows endlessly, always pelting you with sand. It is a dry, hot, relentless wind that slowly desiccate you, forcing you to drink more water to stay hydrated (even if you have perks that normally allow you to go without drinking). Fortunately, it does not have the fierceness of a sandstorm, so you will not need to worry about your skin being abraded off of you. That said, being constantly subject to such a miserable wind will be thoroughly unpleasant. This wind does not affect anyone else, only you.

Midnight *Kamiseen* (+300 CP):
Once each month, your location will be beset upon by the Midnight *Kamiseen*. This is not so named because it occurs at night, but rather because it is a sandstorm so thick and so fierce that it blots out the sun completely, leaving everything dark. Meaning that you will be blind as the howling sand strips the

flesh from your bones. Fortunately, you can take shelter during the Midnight *Kamiseen* so that does not happen, but it will inflict great damage on wherever you are and possibly bury some residences in sand. Fortunately, you will always receive a couple days of notice before the Midnight *Kamiseen* arrives.

Night-Walking Ghosts (+300 CP):
Never leave your home at night, for the ghosts of the unquiet dead now wander in your vicinity. Fortunately, they cannot enter a residence without permission, but walking about in the dark is guaranteed to attract their attention, and all the nearby dead who were never given proper burial or whose spirit was not appeased will appear in a rage to kill you and drag your spirit into the afterlife with them. You can fight against them, but they are many and you are but one. It is to the good fortune of those around you that almost everyone avoids going out under cover of night unless they are absolutely laden with protective charms and amulets. Unfortunately, such protections will never serve to save you.

"The thorns of the acacia to pierce his belly" (+400 CP):
You have been cursed, jumper. From now on, everything that you long for will be out of your reach. Jealousy and envy will consume you as other people get the best food, leaving you with scraps; when you love a woman, someone else will win her affections; if you want a dragon egg, yours will be left unfertilized. All your ambitions will turn to dust.

Ending

You've spent 10 years in this war-torn land. How do you feel? Hopefully you enjoyed yourself and formed some warm memories here. Now, it comes time for a final choice. Do you

Stay Here?
There are worse worlds to stay in, I suppose, even if the technology level is very low… but perhaps you're able to change that?

Go Home?
Do you long for home, Jumper? Kiron decided not to recreate the home of his childhood, but that doesn't mean you're constrained by his choices. Go home, and be happy with everything you have attained thus far on your jumpchain.

Move On?
Of course, this is but one world out of the infinitude you have access to. Why stop here?

Notes

The novels in this series are *Joust*, *Alta*, *Sanctuary*, and *Aerie*, all by Mercedes Lackey.

There are many more gods in this world than these listed, but here are those gods mentioned by name in the series:

- **Haras**, hawk-headed patron god of Dragon Jousters and the Hawk of the Sun.
- **Khas**, the dwarf, patron of good fortune and fertility
- **Noshet**, winged goddess of the dawn.
- **Nofet** (also known as **Nefer-et** to Altans), goddess of night, childbirth, but when angered, also of plague.
- **Re-Haket**, god of the sun. The chief god of the Altans. In deeps of the desert, he is known as **Se-ahketh**, the Scourge of Fire.
- **Hamun**, the ram-headed god of storms and stars, chief god of the Tians. To the Altans, he is a mere god of shepherds.
- **Mhat**, goddess of truth.
- **Te-oth**, god of writing.
- **Pashet**, goddess of cats and love.
- **Beshet** of the Far-Seeing Eye, twin to Anut.
- **Anut** the Spirit Walker, twin to Beshet
- **Siris**, King of the afterlife and god of the dead.
- **Seft** (also known as **Sheften**), another god of the afterlife, but also of hidden knowledge and dark doings. Because gods cannot kill themselves, Seft killed his brother Siris so the living god could properly become the King of the Afterlife. He is the patron of hard choices.
- **Enefis**, another god of the dead.
- **Anbenis** the jackal-headed, yet again a god of the dead.
- **Iris**, goddess of the moon, who is husband to Siris.
- **Nebt**, goddess of prophecy.
- **At-thera**, the cow goddess and wet nurse to Haras.

Changelog:

- Version 0.5:
    - Created Jump
- Version 1.0
    - Grammar & spelling corrections
    - Changed Tame the Wild Beast to let your pets benefit from your physical perks, instead of letting you give them perks.
    - Made Constant *Kamiseen* less absolutely awful.