

THE FIRST LAW

As spoken by mighty Euz, Devil-Blood but kin to man, was to never meddle with his diabolical forbearers. For it was by his Magic, which was called Art in his day, that the demons were cast away to the Other Side so that man could come to flourish. After this great feat he bestowed three Disciplines of Magic to three of his sons, left the fourth with merely his blessing, told them to bring order to the world and then simply left it.

He pronounced a Second Law too: Not to eat the flesh of your fellow man.

Thus, it may be said that his legacy is what's called the Circle of the World: A series of continents arranged roughly in a circle. But what order remains to it is a cruel farce. In the north, men kill for names and glory while deluding themselves that things were better in olden times. In what passes for its' centre, fops and noblewomen titter at each other over petty trifles, while torturers plan foreign policies and idiots occupy the throne. In the far south, slavery remains an institution but it is the all-consuming ambition of holy war that drives the Gurkhish Empire. In the East, Styria's power struggles prevent it from accomplishing much at all other than being a wonderfully decadent home for a sinister financial institution that buys and sells nations like cattle. And as for the west, greedy prospectors that found ramshackle shanty towns clash against the indigenous Ghosts who take men's ears as prizes.

The nature of man remains greedy, fallible and ignorant over the centuries, while Art fades with every year. If Euz could see what remains, he might weep.

But one man may change all that. He is called Bayaz, the First of the Magi, foremost (by his own reckoning) apprentice to Euz's son Juvens, immortal adept of the High Art, master of fire and force and will. He will stop at *nothing* to dispense what justice he sees fit for the world. Kings and heroes and killers are nothing more than pawns cheaply bought and blithely sold between him and his nemesis, the messiah of the Gurkhish Empire: The Prophet Khalul. Just as Khalul shatters the Second Law to raise an army of sorcerous cannibals, so too does Bayaz seek fonts of power both sinister and mundane to sharpen the Union like his sword.

And if Euz were there to see

The Age of Madness

Bayaz would unleash, in the name of keeping mankind under his "guiding hand". Then perhaps all his grief might be moved to rage.

For Bayaz knows only one First Law: Victory, at any cost, dictates righteousness.

Take 1000 CP, and give nothing back.

Locations

Feel free to choose to begin your journey at any of the following locations. Wherever you go, people are shit anyway, though not always equally. You don't have to roll 1d8 for your starting location, but it might be fun to!

1. The High Places: You begin by trudging out of the freezing woods into the very clearing where a surly, very deadly group of Named Men of the North fighting what seems to be a hopeless battle against the conqueror Bethod's insidious tactics and vile sorcery: The loyal Dogman, the unwaveringly honourable Rudd Threetrees, the devastating yet empathic Tul Duru Thunderhead, the stoic Harding Grim, the peaceable Forley the Weakest, and the sadistic, scathing but surprisingly principled Black Dow. Depending on who and what else you are, you may bring alarm or merely catch some inevitable ribbing from Black Dow. It's very cold, and there isn't much to eat, but most of these men have taken a turn at the cookpot. And at least some of the company is as kind as it gets here.

Alternatively, you may start at the Great Northern library a few minutes before Logen Ninefingers is due to float over at a river. It's a seemingly quiet, unassuming, superstitious place with one notable exception: It is the home of Bayaz, perhaps the most powerful man in the world. The high and mighty First of the Magi is oddly content to work as a simple butcher when not advancing his world-spanning schemes or seizing dangerous artifacts for his own goals.

...and if you're a real glutton for punishment, you can start your journey by falling off the same cliff into the same river Logen Ninefingers is hurtling into. If you started during The First Law, assuming you can keep both your heads above water perhaps you can have a little conversation along the way?

Or if you start during The Age of Madness, you can be generally around the vicinity of any major character hailing from the North.

2. Adua: See the greatest capital of any age! Defended by concentric circle of fortifications, built as a bastion against any assault short of-say-an army of Eaters, there is not a single thing in this city that can leave any doubt there is no greater place in all the world. The bustling commerce at the docks, the Open Council housed at the Amphitheatre, the Kingsway where great rulers such as Casamir the Steadfast are enshrined in stone, the great citadel of the Agriont where government business is conducted. Although it...*might* be better for everyone if you ignored the reek of sewage, smoke and cheap ale outside the theatres and fencing academies,

where the overtaxed poor in the slums struggle to survive. Not to mention the white-coated Practicals on patrol to “disappear” any treasonous person to their horrifying dungeons in the House of Questions. You wouldn’t want to trouble the bitter, crippled Sand dan Glokta with more paperwork now, would you? Let the poor man keep jab-jabbing in memories of his splendid youth as a fencer in peace.

Should you start during The Age of Madness, miles of sooty factories, textile mills and iron foundries will have replaced the medieval trappings of the Union. Power will have shifted from landed nobles to venture capitalists and investors-among which the most cunning include Savine dan Glokta. The exploitation of the commoners has at last become more than they could bear, resulting in the revolutionary Breakers and the anarchic Burners rising up against the upper classes. Even *this* is just one more of Bayaz’s schemes...though an even more skilful and determined schemer seeks to usurp him as the true power behind the Union’s throne amidst all this. *Jab-jab, wizard!*

3. Sipani: This is Sipani-power, wealth and decadence concentrated in a place so classically Venitian that pasta is probably a national dish. It perhaps the most quintessentially Styrian place in all of Styria, because the bank Valint & Balk makes its’ base here-and funds transactions that can loan out armies or impoverish emperors with a single pile of signed contracts. It should go without saying that the city-state is replete with spies skulking around its waterways, and that there is no more fabulous brothel or casino than Cardotti’s House of Leisure in all the land. This is Sipani. If it ever burns, the world will tremble. But soon Monzcarro Murcatto, the Snake of Talins and leader of a mercenary company known and feared as the Thousand Swords, may have cause to unleash blood and havoc in the name of vengeance against Styria’s treacherous Grand Duke. You could also start somewhere else in Styria, but why would you? This. Is. Sipani.

If you arrive here during The Age of Madness, the endless wars between Styria’s city-states will have long since been quelled by the iron fist of Grand Duchess Murcatto and her more scheme-prone son by an...uncertain father, Prince Jeppo. Having accomplished the veritable *miracle* of driving Valint and Balk out of their hometown, Styria is experiencing a golden era of prosperity and innovation in which they enjoy all the splendours of industrialisation but with none of the strife-making Styria a much-beloved exporter of fine art, high fashion and exquisite glasswork among other luxuries. Much like a particularly ruthless corporation, after brutally humiliating the Union’s armies in

three separate wars with a fully modernised standing army Murcatto manages the outwardly sterling reputation of her nation while engaged in a cold war against her rivals. But for all her wealth, might and hard-earned wisdom, perhaps Murcatto's most potent asset is the backing of Shenkt: Unquestionably the most dangerous assassin in the world...who serves and protects her willingly as his living instrument of revenge against the machinations of the man he once served. Almost no force in this world can threaten Murcatto short of old age or natural disaster, as long as he attends her.

It is whispered that there is no nation Bayaz hates *or dreads crossing* more than Styria.

4. Bethod's Stronghold: Guarded by a wall higher than any other in the region, Skarling's Hall is oft deemed the true seat of power in the North. Solely because it's where the tyrant Bethod chooses to rest his arse. To his enemies, Bethod is seen as a merciless, honourless monster who massacres settlements, consorts with an eerie sorceress to bend the merciless Shanka armies or worse otherworldly forces to his will, and bid his brutal son Scale to crush his enemies while his cunning son Calder refines his schemes. But from Bethod's own point of view he is a weary, tired man left who once sought to unite the North from far bloodier wars. And after being dragged into wars he didn't want to fight by his former comrade Logen Ninefingers, has no choice but to be the villain he didn't want to be seen as. It must be said that most are not welcome in this world-though should you be of Bethod's blood, you can expect a warm welcome and closer familial support from noble blood than just about anywhere else.

If you start during The Age of Madness, you may show up in the fortress of Bethod's son King "Black" Calder instead. There is far less sorcery, and far more fear under his rule-for Bayaz's influence over Calder is far more obvious than it was over Bethod. In civilising Carleon into the North's first gentrified capital, Calder faces considerable backlash from traditionalists who prefer the ways of the sword, the campfire and oaths kept in blood to soft southern conceits-not least from Rikke, the Dogman's mystically gifted daughter. As he watches his feckless son Stour Nightfell fight and kill with none of his cunning, Calder feels little more than philosophical amusement at the ruin of all his plans and his life as a wizard's figurehead-caring for little more than the wellbeing of his brutal son after his wife's passing. He may soon come to know far greater tragedy.

5. The Gurkhish Empire: In truth, little is known of the lands amidst sand and sun, save that they are as hot as they are harsh. Cruel men practice slavery, both for menial labour and so that wicked nobles can sate their lust on lithesome girls. Technology progresses perhaps a step slower than the Union, though certainly faster than the North. And both the Emperor Uthman-ul-Dosht as well as his puppetmaster the Prophet Khalul demand holy war against the Union, though the two are not quite as united as they might project. In truth, Khalul is another of Juvens' apprentices, his many miracles the product of his own High Art and that of his Eater zealots who must betimes consume human flesh to sustain themselves-even from the Gurkhish peoples. Though Uthman is no saint, should Khalul's rivalry-and in truth *vengeance*-against Bayaz bankrupt the Empire, he may seek a different path. Unless vengeance from one of Uthman's own old sins catches up to him, that is.

It is *extremely inadvisable* to start here during The Age of Madness. Emperor Uthman has been overthrown and deposed by a she-devil with a Seed, who is also *speculated* to have slain the Prophet Khalul. The Emperor's five sons are tearing the country apart in a figuratively *and* literally cannibalistic civil war; without Khalul to unite them, hundreds of Eaters are roving the countryside to prey on their countrymen in desperation without a structured supply of human meat to sustain their unnatural existences. Waves of desperate Gurkhish refugees are fleeing north for sanctuary in the Union, begging for asylum in the very kingdom they once tried to conquer.

6. Crease: War crime this, can't eat the flesh of the fallen that, consorting with demons is wrong-what's a man got to do to get some *gold*? Many believe that their fortune lines in the wooden shacks and canvas tents of countless shanty towns built on the border of sulfuric hot springs, restless works of Making, and the wildernesses in which irritated natives dwell. There is no central authority, save whatever some self-declared Mayor can buy enough guns to enforce. And many a wise man might say there's more delusion and danger than opportunity in these parts. But listen: *What if they're after your gold?*

7. In the Ruins of Ambition: There are places beyond the known and the mapped, where stranger things weather the progress of time. The Magus Cawneil dwells in the Great Western Library without playing the game of kingdoms, drinking and reading and mourning the death of Art, the loss of her once-great beauty, the bitter partings with her lovers Bayaz and Khalul (who cared far less for her), and too many other regrets. But she remembers her obligation to Juvens, keeping a boat stocked well enough to journey to distant Shabulyan long after she and the other Master Magi besieged Kanedias the Master Maker to *supposedly* avenge him killing their master. And it is on windswept, rainy Shabulyan where one of the last aware Spirits *supposedly* keeps a chunk of the Other Place called the Seed in its' stomach.

Wouldn't it be unfortunate if Kanedias got the last laugh by swapping it with a mere stone, and hiding the true Seed in his own House?

Perhaps you'd like to start somewhere less pointless. You can also choose to start in the Old Empire. Once, High King Juvens the Master Magus ruled a kingdom that spanned the entire western continent. It is now nothing more than dozens of ruined towns and crumbling aqueducts fought over by petty self-proclaimed emperor-warlords. But Zacharus, another of the ancient Magi, believes it can be more. Rather than ruling through cloak and dagger, he takes a much more hands-on approach as the chief advisor of Emperor Goltus, a particularly powerful warlord.

Surprisingly, though Zacharus seems half-mad and owns little other than the birds at his command, bright things are in the Old Empire's future if all goes as it would have. If you start during The Age of Madness, Emperor Goltus will have succeeded in centralising government across the Old Empire, rebuilding the crumbling infrastructure, quelling the squabbling warlords, bringing back law and order, and even raising a formidable army. Such is Zacharus' success that for all its' advancement the Union must treat the Old Empire with genuine diplomatic caution-and some provinces like Starikland entertain its' backing to overthrow Union control.

8. Anywhere else: What, still not enough places for you? Dare you start on the *Other Side* from whence demons whisper constantly for those that can hear them to release their kind back into the world? Well, you can do that if you dare. You can start anywhere else in the Circle of the World-or beyond it.

Starting Era

When you set foot in this world matters almost as much as who you are in it. As said before, the nature of man never changes-but how he engages with the world may.

The First Law: It is the year 575 AU. Wars are fought by shield, sword and longbow, with the humble trebuchet as the height of military technology. Kings and nobles rule over generally complacent, comfortable thrones-spreading weakness through their societies as a wound spreads gangrene. Despite growing scepticism in the Union and Styria, sorcerers are still a widely accepted topic of discussion in more distant lands, and Euz's bloodline are still remembered as legendary heroes even if worship of them has mostly ceased.

The Age of Madness: It is the year 605 AU. Embracing the decline of all magic not sustained by Eating, Bayaz has unleashed a far darker and more destructive force on the world: The Industrial Revolution. Now wars are decided with muskets and cannons, goods are manufactured on a scale greater than any before, and the flow of coin ensures that it is the fat and happy merchant that increasingly holds the reins of power. Magic is all but forgotten, but lingers *at least* in the outskirts of the North where the Shanka have retired from bloody war to eke out a far humbler existence...and of course, continues to rule the Union in the shadows.

Origins, Age and Gender

There are Lionesses who fight for coin and flesh, there are fool princes good for nothing outside their gilded halls. You may start as any age between 15 and 45, and be whatever gender you want.

Drop-In: Oh. You're truly foreign then. *Watch your back*, few folk are nice and trusting in these parts. There must be something truly strange about you, to have survived this long on your own...

Centrist: Your father was a tanner, a banker, a candlestick maker, your mother a washerwoman or a cook or some other civilised trade. For you hail from the Union: *Arguably* the most civilisation place in the world! From the Midderlands: A relatively strict, class-conscious society where the glamorous Contest allows young men to earn social clout with their flashing steel. From Angland, populated by hardier and more pragmatic sorts whose constant readiness for war sometimes earns the respect of their Northman neighbours—more often, their disdain. From rebellious Starikland, which mostly hates the capital for all the taxes. Or even from Dagoska: A penal colony where the chaos of Union military garrisons, southern traders and religious movements of all sorts collide.

Northerner: Your father was a raiding reaver, and your mother probably killed folk for coin and accolades too unless she was a weakling. You too may be a professional warrior of common rank, and frankly if you are not your life is probably quite bleak. There are no noble titles nor complex laws in the North: Only rugged and loosely-defined but deeply prized codes of honour, and the Circle: A traditional means of dispute resolution in which a champion's friends and those of his enemies hold shields around them as they fight to the death, and the victor is simply deemed righteous. Beyond that, whether you were descended from a self-declared king, a beggar or someone you've never met matters little. Men in the North earn their places through war.

Westerner: You were born amidst chaos, into ruin. If you hail from the Old Empire, expect to either be taxed by an unhinged warlord, or in danger of one driving his armies over wherever you live. If you dwell on the Frontier, expect to either have grown up with that rugged frontiersman/frontierswoman spirit that quickly teaches you to piss wherever's convenient and never take your eyes off a stranger's hands. Or else, as a literal bandit. Frankly, your best hope is to

be born a Ghost. Despite being a nomadic people with few qualms about killing foreigners, they are the most at home with surviving in this land.

Southerner: God, the Creator, is truly great. To have forbidden strong drink, gambling and the other vices of the savage foreigners. Whether your father was a high priest or your mother a subsistence farmer, there is no question your destiny is to give your life for faith and nation. Relinquish whatever attachments you have to your old life, for whether under the auspices of Emperor and Prophet or simply to survive you'll soon be off to war. Unless you're a slave. In which case one way or another, your flesh will feed the appetite of the nation.

Easterner: As a Styrian, you were raised in a culture in which pride and vendettas were often more important than your own life-and in which poison and intrigue are as natural as blinking. Though it is not the only option, in either age the sword is *often* more profitable than making a quieter living-though come what may, there will *never* be a lack of demand for courtesans, financiers and spies either. Even after the Condottieri, mercenary companies used by Dukes to fight their wars in lieu of wasting finances on an army, fall out of fashion to live here is to enjoy both the most agency in the Circle of the World. Use it wisely. This place isn't kind to those who simply wish to mind their own business, living simple, quiet lives.

Perks

Perks are discounted under the relevant background header by 50%. One discounted 100 CP perk is free, the other costs 50 CP.

General

Student of the Art (100/300/600 CP): Three are the pure disciplines that Euz taught his sons, who in turn taught those who came after them, and perhaps shared some faint spark of their gift.

The High Art, which changes the world with power drawn from the Other Side directed through focused thought. Wild and dangerous, it must be tempered with knowledge of existence-and taxes the stamina of the Magi heavily.

The Art of Making, with which Kanedias shaped worldly materials into otherworldly artifacts. A bridge that never rusts no matter how much time passes, a weapon that cuts anything, or a structure that bends space and time are such examples.

(And to Glustrod, he gave only his blessing. Driving him to desperation with envy)

And the Art of Spirit talking, with which Bedesh may speak to primal, wraithlike spirits associated with the woods, and the stone, and perhaps other natural things. Most mysterious of all Arts, little more is known of it other than Juvens' alliance with Bedesh was crucial to defeating their traitorous sibling-and that Bedesh is said to have been able to *command* as well as commune with spirits.

You too may learn these disciplines. Be warned that they are fading fast from this world as magic goes away. It would take an artifact as potent as the Seed to revitalise them. As by far the most is known about the High Art, those will be the primary examples used.

For 100 CP, you have the theoretical training and the faintest spark of magic. You understand the principles, but have scarcely more than a week's experience manipulating the forces. Still, you could casually make faint lights dance, unlock locked doors at will or freeze a glass of water to ice. With time to refine your knowledge, even you could reshape the laws of nature.

For 300 CP, you have roughly the skill in Art of the Magi's younger apprentices. The *purely* Art-based examples of Yoru Sulfur and Ishri include rapid and near- flawless (his eyes cannot be hidden) shapeshifting into those he slays, as well as precise bursts of kinetic force and heat-perhaps comparable to a gunshot. Ishri can seemingly fade into shadows even through tight spaces or perhaps solid objects, teleport short distances along with objects near her, and influence the weather to an unclear degree. Both can seemingly read minds with a glance.

Finally, for 600 CP you are on par with the original Magi. In the largely magic-starved world, the differences in power between them and their apprentices seem subtler-they hold more power, certainly, but exhaustion can direly sap them without amplifiers like the Seed. Two of the known Magi define their specialties through loose themes: Bayaz proclaims himself the master of fire, and force, and perception. Without even a gesture, he can choke out normal folk or make them kneel with great weight and lesser sorcerers alike-or violently detonate someone who has particularly displeased him. Filling a distant swordsman with supernatural strength, focus and blinding speed left him sweaty and panted however, and the effort needed to blow a hole in both an assassin and a four-foot thick stone wall made him pass out. Yulwei, who specialises in precise stealth and perception instead, was able to escort an ally past vigilant guards with almost no vigilant strain.

As a peer to the original Magi, it is assumed you are by default (without certain other perks, or outside context methods of eternal youth) close to them in age. Which is to say visibly elderly, but able to remain healthy enough to adventure over long distances through the mastery of your craft.

If bought with Eater, Devil-Blood or The Feared, with the higher tier purchases you can remain any human age you please.

Eater (100 CP/300 CP/600 CP): But there is more power than just the Art. Power that seems rent from flesh and bone, pushing those who partake in blasphemous feasts to impossible heights of speed, strength, regeneration-and sometimes other gifts. Choose this, and you too will have partaken of the blasphemous rites and feasts that empower them so. Eaters of greater power sometimes manifest unique gifts, similar and perhaps identical to the High Art.

Be warned: This power comes with a terrible hunger for human flesh, that never seems to cease. At least it does not seem so debilitating as to prevent focus in battle as long as an Eater is well-fed, and it is unclear how much they actually require flesh-only that the security of the Gurkish Empire rests on that need.

For 100 CP, you are a junior eater like Shickel. You can kill and consume a grown man faster than he can shout for help, engulfing all trace of his remains. However, though you are stronger than men, three determined enforcers could restrain you. And though broken bones, deep wounds and the like regenerate in seconds while blood loss does not seem to matter, fire ends you decisively.

For 300 CP, you are instead a physical peer to the likes of Yoru Sulfur and Ishri. With absolute nonchalance, he can tear through elite armoured guards as if they were made of cardboard while moving faster than the eye could track. As for Ishri, an explosion strong enough to level a stone building merely left her naked, aflame, and forced to re-wrap her bandages. Both could likely cut through battalions of soldiers swiftly even without using High Art.

There are only two known Eaters in existence worth 600 CP. The first, Mamun, flitted not just short distances but across an entire city too quickly to be observed. Such was his durability that even when the rest of the Hundred Words were destroyed by Bayaz and the Seed in a cataclysm that left many horrifically poisoned, he remained alive enough to escape despite shattered in body. As for the second, the rogue eater known as Casamir Shenkt does not just cave in armor and scatter flesh to the wind-he moves at speeds that make *other Eaters* look tedious, plucking crossbow bolts out of the air and carefully rearranging furniture in the time it takes to seemingly explode multiple men in an instant. It is a testament to his threat level that not only does Yoru Sulfur himself fear combat with him, but even Bayaz seems helpless to inflict any harm by proxy or otherwise-forced to engage with Styria as an independent political rival.

Shenkt's only *apparent* weakness is that unlike Mamun, *at the time of writing* he seems to not have much gift for the Art. Only an inordinate talent for surgery.

Drop-In

Sultry Witch (100 CP): What kind of self-respecting northern warlord would hire a witch who *didn't* look the part? You have that eerily beautiful, undeniably menacing but also dangerously tempting all the most in-demand witches want! And you know how to use it too, naturally adopting intimidating mannerisms but also naturally appealing to egos in a way that makes you an easily valued advisor for even the most egomaniacal warlords. A fortuitous and comfortable life awaits you if you can leverage this into a position most have to actually have useful skills for.

Yes, you're rakishly rugged as a man too. The bad boy rugged warlock sort that a Northmen warlord can't bring himself to truly hate, and would rather get a beer with.

Harried Hag (100 CP): Fast forward into the future. What's a washed-up witch to do, after retiring with little enough to her name? What about helping others with your lifetime of arcane learning? You have a specific sort of precognition that helps you detect-in very general terms-anyone who needs your help. As a bonus, you're guaranteed to have your aid paid back in some minor way. Even the most vicious or ungrateful supplicant at least won't lash out at you for getting involved, and trigger some sort of beneficial coincidence later.

Lesser Artist (300 CP): Beyond the immortal practice of the Magi and their disciplined approach to magic, there are certain folk that seem to manifest far more limited gifts that remain potent in their specialty in exchange for lacking the raw versatility of *true* students of High Art. You are now a peer to the witch Caurib-whose Golden Voice can bewitch warriors that behold her into such devotion they try to kill each other, conjure mists great enough to hide armies of Shanka and use the Long Eye: A form of divination that grants visions of the future ranging from startling clear to maddeningly symbolic. To a lesser extent, you are also capable of feats of High Art such as reviving ancient Devil-Blooded warriors but this seems to take longer rituals and more effort than the Magi and their own students. Some of your gifts may synergise with each other, such as how Caurib's Golden Voice also steadies her Long Eye to prevent her from suffering some of the...the messier...look, there's no polite way to say this. Rikke, who *only* had the Long Eye, regularly shat herself from using it due to suffering epileptic-like fits. While you may vary what gifts you have, their ability to cover for each other is why this perk is not in fact a drawback.

Wild-Eyed Judge (300 CP): There are some people who rise to the top like flotsam when the world burns. Like the madwoman anarchist known as the Judge, you seem to be one of them. Society breaking down around you conversely sees you being handed more authority, opportunities to advance your goals, and hapless enemies being caught flatfooted around you. Don't think this makes you untouchable, though. Your windfalls don't diminish the dangers of chaos and violence.

Devil-Blood (600 CP): There is a woman in the south roped into the schemes of the Magi more or less against her better judgement, in whom runs inhuman blood. Like her, you are stronger than humanity should allow: Able to overpower armoured foes while unarmed, fast enough to dodge arrows and hack apart a dozen unsuspecting soldiers before they have time to mark you, and possessed of inhuman vitality. Deep slashes, puncture wounds and severe bruising knit themselves together over hours or days; while you cannot regrow limbs and the like, blood loss or an arrow through the thigh are functionally aesthetic. Moreover, you are not just biologically immortal but immune to the normally lethal touch of the Seed. In fact, it's exposure would unlock even greater powers such as seeing through night as clearly as day and spotting targets from miles away-at the cost of giving demons a foothold to whisper temptations into your mind. Perhaps you'll prove similarly resistant and adaptive to other magical objects and artifacts of great but corrosive power.

The Feared (600 CP): It shouldn't be possible, but *somehow* you have been marked by a gift known only to Glustrod. Half your body (or a proportionate amount of your surface area) is covered in magic runes written in the language of demons. As that flesh is now of the Other Side, **almost** no force in this world can truly kill it. Let them stab you. Cut you. It matters not. A blade may pass through flesh with a mighty man's hand behind it, but it hits nothing of value until it crosses past flesh covered by the runes into the part of you that remains mortal. Also you are *at least* seven feet tall, and just as strong as you look.

If taken with Devil-Blood, your kinship with demonkind is total. You lack tattoos and/or the towering build (unless you desire them), for you are now more akin to a horror like what Tolomei, Kanedias' daughter, became after she was betrayed by her lover Bayaz and her dead spirit merged with a demon on the Other Side. You are utterly immortal now-never aging, never decaying, not requiring food or drink or water. You can rip doors off hinges, smash through stone walls barehanded, toss armoured men around like toys and flit over to a man across the room before he can lift his shield. Your demonic nature lets you see through illusions, and sense items of magical power like the Seed. Only a weapon like the Divider that invokes the Other Side (or presumably, similarly powerful supernatural forces) could hope to harm you; weapons shatter, bend or pass through you harmlessly as you please. Never bleeding or feeling pain. Perhaps if the Magi still had their original strength, you could also be banished to the Other Side-but in times like this, even Bayaz thinks it would take being sealed in the House of the Maker to protect the world from a horror like you.

Centrist

One of the Good Ones (100 CP): West dan Brock's near-suicidal temper may have wronged his family, but as a stranger in the North he won many unlikely admirers with his guts and gumption. Like him, there is an odd sort of fortune between you and foreign cultures, where your qualities good and vile have a tendency to win the loyalty who don't know how your culture as well. *Specifically* those foreign to the culture you're not.

Upstanding Citizen (100 CP): All you can really hope for is to keep your head down, work hard and trust in what law the nobility sees fit to provide if you're born in the Union without much in the way of privilege. And strangely this...seems to work out well for you? Life in cities and similarly developed civilisations runs smoothly. If you've genuinely done nothing wrong, law enforcement won't drag you off the street just for brushing shoulders with a suspected terrorist, and you'll have decent opportunities for career advancement within your station. Don't toe the line, and all shall be well.

Shining Swordsman (300 CP): There seems to be one man born every generation who's the pinnacle of thrusting, parrying and cutting with a blade. Whether it's Jezal dan Luthar who coasts on his talent while playing cards, or Sand dan Glokta who may well have even surpassed him. To look further abroad, Nicomo Cosca remains a skilled soldier after alcoholism ravaged his abilities, and few men can face Monzcarro Murcatto even with a partially crippled body and having to rely on her off-hand. Simply put, you are so inherently talented good with a sword ordinary men in armor would die. Mind you, this only gives you talent in the duelling ring, not real combat experience.

But your instincts, your build, your reach, your reflexes, *everything* about you is BUILT to carve beasts and armoured men apart with a thin strip of metal.

Meticulous Fury (300 CP): Ah, *there* we go. Now you're properly steeled to the fires of war, able to stand on a battlefield unflinching. But bravery will only get you so far. You're a tactician of rare flexibility, able to keep the enemy guessing with your surprises while also managing your army like clockwork. It goes without saying you know how to give speeches to keep men going through hunger and foul weather, orchestrate their movements through the roughest of terrain, and manage supplies all the while. There are a few men in Union with one or two of these qualities. It could *really* use one with all of them, like you.

Noble Upbringing (600 CP): Ultimately, your destiny in the Union is largely decided by birth. Which is convenient that you're now the son or daughter or of someone very important-which of course comes with excellent landed title of its own. A general, or a lord, or the current Arch-Lector. You may even be a prince or princess, hopefully one less spoilt than your worthless sibling if you are indeed of the Union. Or the child of the Grand Duke, or one of the Emperor's children if you are from Gurkha. Your life is one of unrivalled privilege, wealth and opportunity such that if you never left on an adventure and actively avoided any and all of the main characters in this story, life would be wonderful and you'd have no worries at all. In future worlds, you'll optionally continue to enjoy a similar position of privilege, something like being the President's child or a powerful duke yourself in another world.

His Eminence (600 CP): It takes a special kind of man to go from a lowly torturer to breaking the grip of a Magus that has ruled the Union in countless guises over the years and controls more wealth than even kings know what to do with. A man who knows exactly how to use his underlings and leverage human nature to get what he wants, knowing that standard practice for a torturer does in fact tend to be unreliable. A man who can improvise supplies and reinforcements in dire sieges, seize unlikely victory while embroiled in international conflicts, thwart assassination attempts from his superiors, and make the most out of every career opportunity sent his way. A man with the iron will of someone who continues to succeed in life even when his body's bones are so cracked that walking up stairs and taking a shit are agonising experiences for him. There are now two with that determination and cunning in the Union: Sand dan Glokta, and you.

Northerner

One of the Band (100 CP): Forley the Weakest was a gesture of submission by his folk, hoping to appease the terrible Bloody-Nine and the wicked Bethod before innocent blood was shed. He succeeded beyond all expectations, becoming a beloved member of his band. The mighty and the violent will no longer bully you, pick on you or otherwise use you as punching bag. In fact, those who value strength of arms and have no grudge against you quickly come to see you as an endearing mascot of sorts, and it's easy for you to become the caring conciliator of a warlike band.

Hard Hands, Soft Heart (100 CP): It was pots for Black Dow, once. There is only one living man who knows that the most vicious bastard not sworn to Bethod's side was himself just another apprentice, and he probably waddled off to die on the battlefield somewhere. Your tongue is no less sharp, your bearing no less intimidating. Your natural gift for provoking, keeping off-guard and bullying men around into doing what you want for fear of your temper no less so. But unlike a certain delusional berserker, like Dow you will never be as ferocious as you want. None may appreciate this self-control in the North, but it's a priceless gift in its own way.

Who can say how Dow might react, knowing there's another man out there who can talk his talk without being a complete monster?

Named Man (300 CP): A man who hasn't killed isn't a real man. A Carl has killed enough to earn the right to swear fealty to a chieftain, a king, some authoritative fuck. And a Named Man is one whose valour and prowess on the battlefield is great enough to be honoured with a name. You are now as good a fighter as one of these badasses, enough to earn a suitable nickname about your aptitudes even if you yourself aren't a Northman that will even carry over to new worlds if you wish. Apart from the strength to heave great northern-style weapons around, the skill to fight duels in a ring of shields repeatedly, and the endurance to keep fighting battles where you're reduced to camping in the woods with the bare essentials, there's some aptitude you excel at beyond your peers-the stature of Tul Duru Thunderhead, the Dogman's preternatural nose, or the sheer ruthlessness and cunning of Black Dow. Even if spoken in jest like Shivers (for falling into a river) or Threetrees (for stubbornness), your might and skill are real enough that most Union soldiers may as well be ordinary farmers to you. And even if you are simply named after a place like Whirrun of Bligh, you may boast strength great enough to heave around a sword as big as you are tall yet skilfully enough to split man after man in pitched battle with it.

Loyal Dog, Tough Tree (300 CP): Harding Grim can aim better than the Dogman. Caul Shivers ended up with far more accolades. But even Black Dow at the height of his power had nothing but respect for the Dogman, for one simple reason: He was the only Named Man to fight on the same side for the whole war. Loyalty isn't often rewarded in this world, but it is for you. Those who see you remain stalwart to one side of a conflict feel a measure of the same fervour to you. Psychopaths on the same side soften up, and even your enemies will toast your name and heed negotiations under truce with respect. It goes without saying that your actual firm allies will sooner catch an arrow than let you carry on alone.

Black Crown (600 CP): The king is dead, hail to the king. It's not being handy with a sword, or the strongest, or even the cruellest that won Black Dow a throne that should have belonged to Logen. It was a particular interstice of cunning and ruthlessness that let him strike down his foes at their weakest and bypass the strongest when most distracted. You share in that fortune, having an unerring sixth sense for when best to cross someone while they're least prepared to respond, then to capitalise on their downfall. And all efforts to unseat you from power are harder than they should be, through seeming coincidence. It also seems that destined heroes, renowned champions and main characters of all kinds are more vulnerable around you-letting you carve through contrivance and fortune straight to their throat. Even if you don't manage to kill them, few men as strong as you can oppose you without significant consequences.

Bloody Ten (600 CP): There is a trance only one other in this world is ascertained to have, a berserk state in which Logen Ninefingers ceases to be the friendly barbarian he acts like and becomes the nightmarish Bloody-Nine. In this trance, you can rip through small armies as a normal man with nothing but your bare hands and their stolen weapons, drifting past arrows and swords like a fleeting shadow. Even if you were chased in an ambush and pushed to the brink of exhaustion, you could pull it out in desperation to turn the tide-though the toll on your body would be harsh enough to collapse unconscious. As a final boon, you have even more control over this horrifying state than Logen does, able to restrain it from friends even in the heat of battle.

Consider that all this is possible with the might and skill of an *ordinary* warrior.

As a final aside, you have Logen's very basic ability to talk to spirits with this, which will carry over into future worlds-ensuring there are, in fact, spirits there for you to talk to at the bare minimum as the equivalent from Prodigy of the Art would make you. It is very unclear if this ability has anything to do with your fearsome rage.

Westerner

Rugged Woman (100 CP): A girl can't hold to the ways of haughty ladies to get by in this rough and tumble world! So what if you have to hitch up your skirts and piss in the dust? Isn't that better than wetting yourself in the saddle? Henceforth, uncouth behaviour and grossness won't offend anyone in an undeveloped or dangerous area-it will, in fact, make you seem strangely admirable because of your tough pioneer spirit! This strange charisma diminishes greatly in civilised territory, becoming useless in a formal social gathering.

Wild Hunter (100 CP): The old ways, to live and to hunt without steel blade and forged plate, are still known to you. To hurl a hatchet, run down wild game and live off the land. As a Ghost, or someone raised by one, or else someone as good at surviving in the wilderness as one, the lands outside civilisation are like walking around in your own backyard. You know the signs of shelter, clean water and safe food. Above all else, you know how to stay hidden and move swiftly.

The New Mayor (300 CP): Once upon a time, there was a very unlucky woman named Carlot dan Eider who was stuck in a vicious cycle of being entangled with the wrong people, clawing her way to the top, and getting knocked back to the bottom. Eventually she skipped town and built a new life for herself (that was promptly wrecked as well). You have some of her rat-like luck it seems, because you have *very* good fortune when it comes to surviving calamity and misfortune as long as anyone who actually wants to kill you either gives up or can't find you. You won't catch the plague, be trapped in a burning building or die to anything less extreme than a hurricane or an angry wizard singling you out for a curse-and after calamity, you'll always have a nice windfall of fortune. Like say, enough to become mayor of a shanty town.

Loveable Traitor (300 CP): Pity Temple, plaything of pioneers, mercenary captains and...just about everyone strong enough to hold a blade, really. Yet somehow, the man keeps bouncing back no matter how dire the straits. There is a noticeable shift in favour of forgiveness whenever you abandon the party, stab someone in the back or otherwise screw up. Megalomaniacs welcome you back with open arms, and while the more moral may scowl at you, a sincere apology and show of amends can reliably win you a chance to prove yourself again. This can be pushed past the point of tolerance, but even so your luck at surviving as an oathbreaker is something many a deserter wish they had.

Golden Dreams (600 CP): Picture this-while everyone else is hammering their lives away in the seam they've been told will hold their fortune, based on nothing more than a gut feeling and your own whims you go the other way around the mountain-and find enough gold to fill a palace. That's your life now. The siren song of the Red Country, the promise of finding priceless valuables under every rock, is *real* for you. In the wilderness you just have to look with intent for a few hours to find one precious resource or another as long as it's possible at all to exist, and as for more civilised places-the success of your investments and your luck in bargain sales would baffle Valint and Balk's most experienced financiers. Yes, including the *singular* founder.

Happy Homesteader (600 CP): Adventure, battle, loss...it's such a vicious cycle. Best to be done with it all. When you retreat from ambition and war, fortune conspires to gift you a happy, fulfilling life and preserve that tranquillity. Those with a dire grudge against you or powerful Magi may still pursue you, but random warbands or storms will never tarnish your thriving business, your fertile farm or your otherwise idyllic quiet life. You'll find community, fulfilment, peace-all the things no amount of conquest or violence can ever give a man. Even if your past catches up to you, there will at least be one opportunity for you to confront someone who truly hates you-and do something that will convince them to bury the hatchet, and leave you in peace.

Southerner

Unfortunately Gifted (100 CP): You speak six languages and are a proficient surgeon. You've been a butcher, a house-builder and a couple other useful trades. Or if not that skillset, you have a comparable amount of knowledge and wide-ranging experience to Temple. In peaceful times, perhaps you'd be a successful professional? Alas, these are not times when the world desires your particular talents. These are times when the blade and the gun are all that matters. And men like you are good as little more than hostages.

Desert Grit (100 CP): The hot sun and the arid wastes can be more than a little exhausting to soft northerners (that specifically meaning here anyone north of the Gurkhish Empire). You're built from stronger stock, able to trudge half a day in the sun without fear of exhaustion, and familiar with things like digging shelter or finding sustenance amidst the sands. Your pain tolerance, resilience to hot temperatures, and stamina are like that of a camel.

Slavebreaker (300 CP): *Back in line.* You're big, you're imposing and you're more *professional* at breaking the human spirit than almost any have-a-go torturer from the union. Because you're either a professional slaver or someone with very similar skills, which means you know how to balance carrot and stick to leave a defiant man off-balance, anxious and submissive to your will. This by necessity also gives you a keen eye for talent in most of its forms, allowing to judge if a man's worth more as merchandise or a trading partner. If this slaver thing doesn't work out, you'd be quite a good criminal or politician too.

Disciplined Infiltrator (300 CP): Few men are as cultured as one dedicated to destroying a culture. Your etiquette is near-flawless wherever you go in this world, your charm infectious, your banter lighthearted yet insightful enough that a maid could befriend a noblewoman. Ishri of the Hundred Words can be glib and provocative when her mask of mortality comes off, but in earnest disguise her good cheer is infectious in a way many nobles of the Union merely wish it was. Now, even if you aren't a shapeshifting eater, you too can light up a party with your smile-while compartmentalising complex tasks like planning to kill everyone there.

Word of the Prophet (600 CP): There are many men who go through their entire lives, not knowing why they fight nor why they even deserve to live. This has *never* been the case for you. There is something you are as devoted to, as Mamun of the Hundred Words is to the Prophet Khalul-or on the side of the

Union, as Bremer dan Gorst is to training himself into the Union's strongest soldier. Every skill and ability a perk in this jump indicates you have has been trained relentlessly and with utmost dedication to the fulfilment of that ideal; if you were a swordsman, it would be as though you began your mornings with ten mile runs in full armour, then done three hours of live sparring since the age of 14. While Mamun's own training routine is nowhere near as known as Bremer's, his humility and grace standing in stark contrast to Bayaz's assessment of him leaves no doubt he is no less a paragon of dedication.

In future worlds, you may optionally include a similar level of training into your backgrounds retroactively, improving your ability to use any future skills that could benefit at all from relentless practice.

Enmity of Eons (600 CP): Long has Khalul cursed the name of Bayaz, and long has he waited to gather what he needs to lay low the man *he* knows to be on the wrong side of history-no matter the price. Alas, all his efforts came to naught...until one of Bayaz's own pawns undid much of his influence over his own kingdom. When you hate someone, karmic circumstances and unfortunate coincidences speed up this sort of retribution. This can never take their life or fully set back their plans but logistics will go awry, key items may go lost, allies

may betray your foe and they make impulsive misjudgements that snarl their own schemes. This scales in proportion to your own hatred and the efforts undertaken to get revenge against them. If Khalul had this, a foe as formidable as Bayaz would have lost control over the Union in just under ten years' time. But a typical grudge over a pub brawl would do little more than make your foe step on a particularly sharp pebble while barefoot every week or so.

Easterner

Friendly Mathematician (100 CP): Ah, hell. There's two of them. Ever since you were young, you've had an unusual fixation with numbers. You can count things far faster than most around you, be they the heads of suspicious men or the petty cash of a mercenary company, simply because you've had more practice. You are also terrifyingly strong, fast and savage. You may not have all the overall battle skill and experience of a Named Man, but you could give one quite a brawl before going down even if he was armed and armoured in a duel, and you were barechested while wielding cleavers. You are also *much* better at controlling your temper than the other guy, and have no need to roll dice for important events in your life or difficulty navigating social situations.

Spice of Stygia (100 CP): People come to Stygia for the whores very often, and if you're not one *boy are they missing out*. You are, unquestionably, one of the most attractive people in the Circle of the World. Implausibly given the usual realism for this setting, every inch of you is so maddeningly attractive and sensual whether as a strapping man or a buxom temptress that even if you fell off a mountain and were crudely stitched together, you'd be able to wrap dukes around your finger with your lusty ways. Also, whether you're a virgin or not you can fuck long and good enough to make your siblings hooked on you. Sex is often awkward and messy in these parts. You can also make it very, very fun.

Prideful Poisoner (300 CP): Poison isn't seen as honourable, but many who look down on it inevitably go cap in hand to the poisoners for their many little problems. You happen to be a rival to Castor Morveer, the greatest master poisoner in Styria (not that anyone knows or cares). You can make enough contact venom overnight to leave an invisible, scent-less stain on every parchment in a bank that kills the uninitiated quickly with a touch. You can poison a crown such that lightly resting it on a man's head will quickly kill him. From the Blue Bottle to various spider venoms to Agent 12, you know all manner of intricate concoctions with all sort of applications and devastating effects. Hopefully, you're also more discrete with them.

Practical Ambition (300 CP): Some people make the best of bad circumstances. Others, like Shylo Vitari, seem unable to do any wrong to begin with. While disaster can still strike you down, you've got good luck when it comes to nice things happening in your life-and when nice things happen, *really nice things* tend to follow. Your co-conspirator goes on to become Grand Duchess in a few more weeks and returns your assistance with promotion to high station. Your impulsive vacation turns out to get you out of a bloody civil war. The handsome man you got a drink with turned out to be both an excellent husband and an absolute nightmare who makes your enemies piss themselves thinking about him. And so on, and so forth. You could even live to *old age* as a spy and warrior with this.

Optionally comes with a *weird* fighting style. Not necessarily any more effective than sword and shield. But effective even without armour, quite mobile and hard for even seasoned warriors to predict. Where *did* you learn to fight like that?! Most Practicals aren't Italian ninjas...

Gold, to Steel, to Gold (600 CP): If you've made it this far and wondered why there hasn't been a perk to actually *rule wisely* well...one of many reasons this world is so miserable is that a seasoned mercenary company's Captain General is better at rulership than most actual rulers out there. Fortunately, you've learned enough hard lessons about realpolitik to turn a bunch of warring city-states into the preeminent nation in this world well before 30 years later. A good eye for subordinates, a commanding bearing fit to inspire loyalty from your nobles as well as the love of the commonfolk, as good a grounding in economics as anyone could ask for in this world and a good knack for adapting to advancing technology. If the Union had a king or queen like you in charge, it's unlikely sinister wizardly forces would have nearly as much hold over it.

"We do not kneel" (600 CP): Good things can come from bloody-handed motivations, and even killers can change many lives for the better by taking the right one. When you actively protect something, be it a person or a nation, it prospers. It becomes resistant, hones more and more of its potential, and fortune swings in it's favour. This is faster and more dramatic on a person than a nation, taking merely months rather than years to ensure someone can rise to high station. But the end result is someone or something that is both at least civil with you even if the full scope of what they owe is unknown to them, and prone to throwing a wrench in the plans of any enemies you have. Although perhaps, just seeing a nation as wretched as Styria get its act together or a slandered mercenary become its most glorious Grand Duchess is reward enough? On top of everything, you have a sixth sense for when what you protect might be threatened-and how to ambush or otherwise cut off that threat before it strikes.

Items

Items in this jump are divided by starting date, rather than origin. Items under the relevant starting date header are discounted by 50%. One discounted 100 CP item is free, the other costs 50 CP.

The First Law

A Warrior's Constant Companions (100 CP): Are steel plate, a sword and a greatshield. Or an axe, leather hides, and a roundshield. Or uh...tight leather, and some shurikens on a chain? *Vitari where are those even from.* Regardless, nobody gets far here without being ready to fight at a moment's notice, so for free you may have everything a warrior from this world needs to fight in melee. Mercifully your gear is particularly easy to wash and good at weathering long campaigns.

Since it is a known fact that you can never have too many knives, this item can optionally include as many knives as a mortal man can strap onto himself somehow.

A Place to Retire (100 CP): A thatched roof. Rows of corn, or beans, or wheat, or what have you. A few cows, or a small herd of goats, or somesuch. This small farm and cottage might have been plucked from some weary warrior's dream, so picturesque that looking at it makes some men want to hang up their swords right then and there. Why not give up all this war, and stay here a while? The peace from it seems to permeate even other warriors, making them reluctant to draw blood here.

The Maker's Sword (200 CP): Every now and then, some Northmen hero seems to come across a blade that bears Kanedias the Master Maker's mark stamped upon it. They are universally forged of some grey metal, incredibly sharp without need for sharpening and *never* seem to dull or chip. Whirrun of Bligh's being oversized means that the man can *split multiple foes in half* in the heat of battle with a single swing. In short, these are very good swords even if there is nothing else magical about them. The kind of swords you'd want to dismantle some of Kanedias' more *violent* creations with.

Can be repurchased, for different types of blade.

Great Library (200 CP): What worth is knowledge in a world with so little use for it? Evidently enough that Juvenis saw fit to preserve it in multiple locations. You are now the proud keeper of one such repository, equal to any of the other Great Libraries the world over. It contains knowledge of medicine, herbology and dead languages long forgotten by the Union. It includes the foundational theories, incantations and mathematical principles behind High Art that would enhance any student's understanding of it. It records long-lost knowledge such as how Glustrod attempted to summon demons, the blood feuds of the Magi and the layout of cities long lost to the ages. Now, if only there was someone who actually *cared* about such things that wasn't a scheming wizard with a vested interest in continuing societal ignorance...

The Divider (400 CP): It has a long handle made of tiny little tubes, all twisted together. It has a scored grip, a flat end with a hook and of course the mark of Kanedias. It is said to incorporate materials of the Other Side. With a simple squeeze of the handle, it emits a piercing beam of energy powerful to lance a wound of molten stone through the House of the Maker (itself impossibly shaped and durable) and dismember demon flesh. Handle it carefully. It is more lethal than even most High Art in this age, and few who recognise it will tolerate your ownership of it.

Devout Following (400 CP): Even as Khalul balanced the Gurkhish Empire on a knife's edge of hunger in the name of his vengeance, the sons of Euz themselves found far more sustainable ways to preserve their works. There is now one such group that numbers in the thousands, perhaps as great as the Dragon People in their peak, with two distinct features. The first is that it is touched by the Art in some sense. Perhaps like the Dragon People, they have rudimentary knowledge of Making, enough to sustain one of Kanedias' greatest works. Perhaps they are all witches and warlocks of High Art, far lesser than the Magi and their direct students but far beyond mortal practitioners. Perhaps they are all inexplicably Devil-Bloods after some demonic mating frenzy. The second is that they are fanatically devoted to you, as the Dragon People were to Kanedias long after his passing. How you choose to use that loyalty could decide whether they're seen as wonder-workers or living demons.

The Seed (600 CP): By far the (other) largest piece of the Other Side left in this world, this uneven dark stone is the size of a very large fist. Heavier than it should be and very cold, a wasting sickness not unlike radiation poison kills any mere mortal that touches it in unspeakable ways. So why own this? Even though it comes packaged inside this lovely black box fit to contain it and it's otherworldly energies? Simply put, it is the greatest amplifier of High Art and the greatest potential reagent of Making this world knows. Kanedias forged wonders that defy geometry and entropy with far smaller traces of the Other

Side. As for High Art, Glustrod once attempted to use the true Seed to tear open the gulf between world and return demons to this world. It is also that Seed's presence that warped Tolomei into the deathless shapeshifting horror she currently is. Used by the greatest of Magi wisely, this could change the world. Misused, it could wipe cities from the map.

A word of advice: Do not believe the lies of wizards, the actual Seed lies within the House of the Maker in Adua, not a distant island where mistrustful brothers deceived each other.

A Relic of Making (600 CP): Kanedias made things far more wondrous than mere blades. There is a dragon that lies within a volcano, the strange alloys making up its hide impervious to arrow and blade and scalding steam alike. Its obsidian lens eyes overlook steam venting from its nostrils, its hands are eerily human, and it has absolutely no tarnish or decay over the ages. Had the Dragon People been able to restore it some more, would it have been able to take flight? Boil armies with its vaporous breath, and sunder castles with its tail? Now, you can find out. A magical construct of this order is now both active, and bound to your command. Though less maximally destructive than the Seed, this is a *far* safer way to wipe cities off the map. An entire army of Shanka loyal to you and equal to the horde patrolling the North is also acceptable. Alternatively, you may own a structure as eerie and resilient as the House of the Maker: An impossibly tall spire seemingly carved from a single seamless block of pitch-black stone, which contains vastly greater spaces within. Time passes far slower within than without such that a week can pass with a day's exploration, and walking up a flight of stairs can transport a person hundreds of feet higher than is physically possible, or by turning a corner change the structural orientation of a room entirely. You know how to navigate it like your own bedroom, own the intricate puzzle-lock to its doors, and know how many terrible weapons like the

Divider are stored within. It is utterly impervious even to High Art, at least in such a state as the Magi can currently master.

The Age of Madness

Modern Luxuries (100 CP): Styrian silks that dictate the future of fashion. Rich fabrics dyed in blue and crimson. Osprian wine, the finest beverage in all the silken sea-except perhaps for Sipani brandy, which you also have in great quantities. Fine Styrian decanters, sculptors and other glass wonders, along with polished mahogany furniture. Even the finest cooking spices and other condiments for seasoning...*unique flesh*. These, and more, you have in dozens of crate that would make a wonderful gift for even visiting rulers.

Your windfall is restocked once a week, from what looks suspiciously like a rent in the Other Side.

A Marksman's Garb (100 CP): This is your rifle. There are many like it, but this one is yours. It also comes with the lighter, more leathery armour men who tote it around all day prefer. And a few barrels of ammunition, restocked once a week in a puff of blackpowder. You can shoot things with it, and that generally works pretty well. Enough said.

...quite the unfair tool of war to bring if you start in The First Law, it must be said. Though to be fair, 30 years isn't that long as technology goes.

A Guild (200 CP): Tanners, weavers and blacksmiths all have an ancient monopoly on various industries in the Union founded on quality and craftsman's pride, one master teaching an apprentice his skills. Traditionally the Guilds of these industries protected their own, but most faced obsolescence in the face of industrialisation's advent. Still a few remained more successful than ever due to rarity of goods and the willingness to invest in their own future. You have been appointed the leader of one such guild. Whatever its trade, it is as successful and profitable as the Spicers' Guild, posed for success whichever era you start in. Cutthroat attitudes and shamelessly corrupt relationships with the upper classes optional.

Foundries (200 CP): This cavernous, brick and iron cavern full of roaring blast furnaces, clanking steam engines or spinning looms depending on what it's meant to finance is the future of the Union and likely many other civilised places. *Unfortunately*. Whether it produces metal and metalworks, textiles or components for militaries, it creates a literally toxic work environment for whatever children or workers forced to labour in it. But it produces things at unprecedented pace and efficiency, making it key to any nation's supremacy. The choice to exploit that is yours.

A Tangled Web (400 CP): In an ever more complex world, he who strikes first often strikes last. That is why this conspiracy may ultimately prove to be deadlier than any weapon on the battlefield. It consists of up to 10 highly capable core elites, positioned in whatever positions of society are useful for you. 4 extremely deadly enforcers, if not defecting Eaters than beings or persons of similar lethality. *And* a mass army more than a hundred thousand strong of highly motivated people spread out across the world-convinced they are working for some other cause than yours. They need not be as violent as the Breakers and Burners, but they value proactivity, seeking some major change to this world. Devoted as your elites and enforcers are, they are a weapon primed to topple kingdoms and change the hierarchy of power across the Circle of the World.

In future worlds, a conspiracy of similar scale will continue to be at your beck and call. Easily steered into meaningless gestures of protest or self-expression if you decide the world is fine as it is.

A Nation's Roar (400 CP): It takes more than one foundry to supply or break a nation, it takes dozens. Fortunately dozens of manufacturers with a workforce numbering tens of thousands of labourers now owe you various favours, and enjoy the patronage of many venture capitalists eager to see a return from their insatiable hunger for G R O W T H. Whatever they make, it's *vital* for the upkeep of any nation in this world's military, be it swords and plate armor or guns and cannons. The financial power this impromptu faction gives you is nearly impossible to challenge in any age by any mere guild, and any ruler would be interested in the firepower you could add to their militaries.

In future worlds, a similar conglomerate of captains of industry will continue to follow your lead-eager to see what new profits you'll bring them.

An Empire of Investments (600 CP): There is one financial institution that sits atop all other, that was older than many nations. It has a bank branch in just about every civilised nation, and while the actual bankers are as professionally literate as this world can muster its true strength is trading favours among rulers. By offering loans for "unspecified future favours", the bank has great sway among kings and emperors the world over; the only way to be immune to its influence is to be as untamed as the North is. Its coercive influence is slower and more subtle than issuing proclamations or marching an army, but ultimately far more insidious and inescapable for any ruler who wants to rule through something other than swordpoint. And now, the financial juggernaut that is Valint and Balk (both of whom are actually aliases of Bayaz) has a rival. One owned by you. Only the most senior staff understand they answer to a

higher power, but they have taken pains to ensure all their clerks know that when you speak, nations should listen.

The Crown (600 CP): But of course, *even* if such things may be a farce who doesn't want to be king? Or Queen, or Emperor, or Duke or Duchess. You are now the ruler of any one nation that stands as a peer to the Union, Styria or the Gurkhish Empire. It may not necessarily have the supernatural terrors that some of them can wield as hard power, but it has something arguably more enviable: True stability and far less corruption than anywhere else in the world, a state of grace some nations may have to wait 30 years to see while others will see as an ever-more distant dream. The people are happy and content, the tradesmen have flourishing business and-get this-your nobility are *actually patriotic* and *try to be helpful* and *would be sad if you died* for various reasons. If nothing else, if you don't have a royal consort of some kind they're more than happy to look amongst themselves for an eligible daughter somewhere.

Companions

A Dozen (50/200 CP): Is the name for a band of warriors in the North, regardless of warrior. Anyway, you've met some people who you don't entirely want to massacre, which is a good start. For every 50 CP, create or import one character with any origin but the same starting date as you, and 800 CP to spend on anything except other companions. You may purchase a set of 8 at a discount for 200 CP.

Enemies Kept Close (Free/50 CP): Reconsider. Rethink this. There are better uses of your time, your energy, than dealing with the flaws and hangups of the many self-pitying, self-serving blackguards, madmen and sorcerers in this world. But oh well, if you're *determined* to try this anyone who agrees with you can leave this world as your companion. For 50 CP you're even guaranteed quite the charming introduction with one canon character of your choice.

Looming Lamb (50 CP): There is no happy ending to Logen Ninefingers' story, but this grizzled warrior of the North was wiser than him-quitting the field of battle with his body intact but for a few scars that only enhance his masculine musculature. Despite his terrifying fighting prowess, he is quite the avuncular fellow, and none in his community see him as anything other than a helpful retiree. Only just starting to see a few noticeable streaks of white in his hair, he is actually adjusting quite well to retirement and would happily lend his strong back and hardscrabble wisdom to any friend in need. He would prefer to remain at peace, but if asked could be an excellent tutor with most melee weapons and an unconventional but effective battlefield commander. Depending on your age, he may see himself as your adoptive father or uncle, your drinking buddy, or even a worthy opponent who outlived whatever grudge you once held.

The World's Smartest Shanka (50 CP): The Shanka are generally known for marching for days without tiring, immunity to pain, natural armour through their sloping skulls and leathery skin, as well as strength enough to overpower most soldiers in close combat. They lack fear, pity, doubt and hesitation. An instinctive hivemind coordinates their efforts, for Kanedias built them from clay, metal and spare flesh for his war against Juvenis. He passed down to them skill that allows for injuries as great as a *shattered skull* to be crudely healed. Yet the Shanka are fundamentally disinterested in speech or complex thought unless bound with sorcery...except this one. In a strange turn of events, he suddenly started speaking like a normal human being, asking what the point of clothes were and why his kind are hunted. He has decided to follow you around, hoping to learn more about the humans for alternative tactical resolution. Even more strangely the other Shanka see nothing strange about this either. If asked, he will simply explain they "built" him with more "wiring".

Put Out Prince (50 CP): You know, there's so many incompetent noblemen in this world that statistically there *has* to be one *somewhat* competent one, right? This handsome man has the same tufted hair, dashing looks and smug grin that many a man his age has while making fools of themselves for the slightest of trifles. He is also a polymath-rigorously studying the laws and languages of nations foreign to his own, tinkering with mechanical devices in his spare time, honing his rhetoric and etiquette, and still finding time to jab-jab-jab with his sword. Truth be told, he finds ballroom etiquette *unbearable* tedious (merely applying himself to it as duty demands) and just wants someone to talk shop about his ideas for when he succeeds his lordly father and his fierce interest in engineering. You made a firm friend of him by allowing him to rant about gears and steam engines for a solid hour in a bar.

Servile Sorceress (50 CP): The Northern job market for freelance sorceresses may be shutting down after Black Calder is entirely co-opted by Bayaz's guidance, but this raven-haired witch sees great potential in the industry as your advisor. Tall, slender and with a corpse-like pallor, her supreme confidence and calculating detachment seem unbreakable even in battle. Her many gifts include great foresight (mercifully with no awful side effects) with which she provides unnatural insight into the outcome of battles, and has mentioned potions that make men fight like demons, rituals to bring winter's chill into summer and dances that will spread madness among the enemy among her talents. A surprising number of them involve the two of you dancing naked together while drunk or high on mystical herbs, although she remains haughtily dour with a perfect poker face about how necessary this is.

Owns a great deal of makeup, including a tub of blonde hair dye. Is specifically only embarrassed about the latter, for unclear reasons.

The Other Twins (50 CP): Khalul may be a warmonger, a false prophet and willing to damn nations for his vengeance, but *damn did he have good taste*. At some point, two Eaters with lovely golden hair and the kind of pale bodies that drunks at brothels fantasise about swore eternal fealty to you. Each is ruthless but not unrestrained in feeding their hunger, and each is an adept in the Art-the

subtly more provocative sister has an affinity for perception and glamour but also water while the minutely kinder sister is gifted with fortune, healing and shaping the earth. Each could also easily move faster than an eye can blink, and rip men limb from limb. Each would gladly do so were you to ask.

Fiery Deviless (50 CP): Fenris the Feared was never truly human by the spirits' reckoning. There is now another of Glustrod's ancient soldiers buried beneath the earth. You managed to unearth this towering, muscular, crimson-haired warrior woman before anyone else, and she in turn seems to think you have bound her with sorcery to obey your will. Further exposure to the Seed has ensured *all* her flesh is now of the Other Place, though she retains the tattoos and half-body covering armour out of habit. In her inhuman, savage way she expresses an ambivalence about continuing Glustrod's war, a philosophical contempt for how wasteful it ended up being, and mild amusement at the thought she could require even greater strength than with which she knocked down the walls of old. Other than that, she has little interest in the affairs of mankind, although she does enjoy feeding and taming wolves.

Sometimes coughs politely to remind you to reapply the "binding spells" on her in the form of blue woad painted with your bare hands (very specifically yours and bare) on her side.

Drawbacks

The Ages To Come (+ 0 CP): What lies ahead in 30 years? While magic fades but the Magi flourish, men die for coin and yet strange omens of otherworldly beings returning come about? Take this, and you may extend your stay in this world for up to a century. To see what fresh horrors gunpowder brings, to preserve what you like about the cultures here, or perhaps just to *finally* bring that blasted wizard to justice.

SHOGLIG ONCE SAID (+ 100 CP): That you'd be destined know the hour and manner of your death, from a man choking on a bone! You're practically INVINCIBLE! Here's some bad news you won't believe for the duration of your stay: The witch Shoglig was full of shit. But you believed her. And while you are no less competent in any other area, some complete malarky has led you to do something as absurd and life-threatening as going into battle without armour

Husks and Bottles (+ 100 CP): *A drink, a drink, anything for a drink.* Or a puff on the pipe, or some other vice. You are, alas, an addict of some kind. So much so your faculties are noticeably addled at the start of your journey here, your body wrecked by long abuse. You can try to get clean, and you still have enough wits about you to fight and think past in a pinch. But getting to sobriety is going to be a long, harsh slog-at least by the reckoning of a down on his luck Captain-General with more ambition than sense.

Unyielding Certitude (+ 100 CP): You're a good man. No matter how many happen to need killing along the way. You're righteous. Even if it means you'll have to break men and damn nations to endless war to maintain your supremacy. You're *just going with the flow*, and that's worth stabbing a friend in the back over. There is something you believe in so ardently, you'd cross every line to reinforce it. Something that defines every decision you make, even as it inevitably leads you into conflicts great and small. It will take deepseated, profound loss to break your faith in this conviction. And by then, you'll likely have every reason to double down.

Broken Body (+ 200 CP): The Gurkish torturers certainly worked you over until your thighbones made crackling noises. Or was it the side of a mountain that bounced your ribcage until it burst? Either way, it was awfully kind of that strange man to surgically knit you together into something halfway capable of raising a sword. You can just about fight, but not with your favoured hand. You can fuck, carefully, and always with the risk of bumping into something painful. Every day you're wracked with random pains, certain flexile motions produce screaming agony, and unless you can heal broken bones it's never getting any

better. But hey, at least you can still fight and sort of run. Even if you might need *a lot* of downtime in between.

Loyal To The Guillotine (+ 200 CP): Say one thing about Jumper, say that he has a talent for choosing some *really shitty* friends. There is someone really inadvisable you've pledged your loyalty to, body and soul. A ruthless merchant, a capricious ruler; Bayaz is *always* a valid example. They will send you on dangerous missions, spout their hypocrisies with you as a sounding board and generally make your life difficult in ways you find very hard to oppose. At least they're much more interested in your skills than your body. It's a small mercy that for all his other flaws, Bayaz seems uninterested in pleasures of the flesh these days.

Insatiable Ambition (+ 200 CP): So what if you got back your own Captain-Generalship? *So what?* You want more. To straddle the world and make it rear back at your grip. To swim in mounds of gold! This avarice, this ambition, it is destructive. You'll chase any wild tale, push all but the closest friends into the harm's way, overstretch your resources just to keep getting *more more MORE!* It won't end until literally all the world exists to lick your boots. Perhaps then, you'll finally fill the hole in your heart that the bottle and a real *bitch* of an adoptive daughter left.

Exists To Whine And Get Smacked (+ 300 CP): There is, practically once a book, one sort of useless twat who exists purely to be a blight on every social situation just to set up their untimely demise. In one, it was Crown Prince Ladisla: An idiot with no capabilities other than violently impregnating unwilling maids. In another, it was Morveer, who despite his genuine skills could not help but huff his own farts with every other breath. Regardless of your other capabilities, you too have an extraordinary level of arrogance and insecurity that can and will lead you into humiliating situation after humiliation situation. Do not expect to be right about *anything* that actually matters unless you are truly overwhelmingly powerful enough to win an argument with the physical state of getting thrown off a cliff.

A Bitter Parable (+ 300 CP): The Circle of the World is more than literal. Have you noticed that people have a tendency to start somewhere, get knocked out of shape, and end up somewhere vaguely similar but a few ranks higher or lower? They might even get what they thought they wanted, just in a way they never expected. Buckle up because you're in for a similarly bumpy ride. Whenever you achieve a major victory, there'll be a bittersweet twist to it-your thrown coincides with an invading army, your lover narrowly avoided assassination right before your wedding with no clear motive and so on. Whenever something bad happens, there'll also always be something to make it worse-you might get

attacked by a mob of Shanka *and* imprisoned for example. It'll never be totally impossible to survive strictly because of this, but expect to have a lot more setbacks and need to cut your losses more often. Hey, at least you might learn something about how you cope with adversity!

Wrath of the Magus (+ 300 CP): Kings are overthrown. Barbarian heroes are yesterday's champions, but today's hounded villains. Even nations themselves come and go like seasons. In the end, every conflict in this world for centuries comes down to one of two ancient, bitter men.

In one corner, there stands the Prophet Khalul. Already a powerful magus specialising in divination, control and air, allegedly Mamun convinced him to further increase his powers by consuming the flesh of men. In the name of vengeance he has mobilised the Gurkhish Empire to war against the Union, and formed the Hundred Words: A band of fanatically loyal Eaters dedicated to his destructive cause, gifted in illusions and elementalism and shapeshifting among many other forms of Art apart from their overwhelming speed and strength.

In the other corner, there stands Bayaz. He commands unmatched financial influence through Valint and Balk, such that though the Union remains his truest seat of power he can arrange for most other rulers across the Circle of the World to dance to his tune. Yoru Sulfur, a skilled user of the Art and an Eater himself, is his loyal enforcer in all things. Yulwei, his last active sibling, voluntarily lends his gift for magical subtlety to Bayaz's cause. Both are seemingly convinced utterly of Bayaz's righteousness, while other Magi such as Cawneil and Zacharus are at least civil with him even if they have their own agendas. Though the Union is perhaps slower to mobilise to war, used correctly it is more devastating, and Bayaz's reach is so long that Bethod once enjoyed his backing. Remember also that he has access to the House of the Maker, and the things within.

With this drawback, one of these men has decided you need to die more than their rival. Turning all the resources they have hoarded over the years to your downfall.

This drawback may be taken for *either* of the Magi, or taken twice to face them *both*. If both are chosen and you don't deal with Bayaz and Khalul within weeks, some impossibly cruel force that can only be the capricious amusement of Joe Abercrombie himself will engineer a horrible miracle: Circumstances will cause Bayaz and Khalul to reunite, and after many zany misadventures *they will somehow forgive each other*.

To celebrate their rekindled friendship, they will then agree to pool their resources in the name of your destruction.

I AM RETURNED (+ 600 CP): Shortly after your arrival, at some point during a nap you have a terrifying dream. You saw an eye with a burning stone in it, and within that stone was a circle of runes, and within those runes was a monolithic black door. A towering figure strode through, his face shifting between a shining crown and a naked skull. His voice was harsh, like grinding iron.

He declared his intent to return.

You have one year to prepare for that return. You had better hope the figure *is* Euz reborn, for that would be both the most destructive *and* merciful possibility. The others are that one of his vengeful sons has been reborn in a similar fashion to Tolomei. Worst of all might be Glustrod, returning with demonic allies.

You know, intrinsically, you have one year to prepare. Expect your foe to require *at least* the Magi united and at the height of their power to defeat, much as Kanedias was cast down with great effort by Bayaz and his allies in ancient times.

Ending Options

Homesteader (Go home): That's *it*? After everything you went through, it just leads to this stupid anticlimax practically right where you started? Fuck this! You're going home with everything you have a claim to! Forget this nonsense conflict, and FORGET these pointless thrones! A completely understandable decision, by the way.

Crown of Gilt (Stay): You got yours. You looked out for number one. Or maybe you cut a deal that left you in a comfier place than you started out. Whatever the reason, you've found a place to live here you're reluctant to leave, so you and yours don't have to. It remains to be seen how stable your peace is, but just to sweeten the deal if you managed to kill Bayaz, Khalul or both of them before the end of your stay you get 1000 CP as a personal thank-you from the universe itself for ridding it of either of them.

The Other Side (Move On): Other Side? Been there. Done that. Met the demons, didn't think they were too bad. Quite the misunderstanding they had with Euz, back in the day. You're not going to settle for fine wine and silks, you've got a whole multiverse out there to explore! Proceed to the next jump.

Notes

Magic is so rare and mysterious that it is honestly very hard to tell what Yoru Sulfur can do which Bayaz can't, excluding cannibal superpowers. Please fanwank something. Although I am at least reasonably sure it was Bayaz' prowess that let him wield the Seed through his Art safely while Ferro held it.

For that matter, it's...not entirely clear what makes Eaters so special, but circumstantial evidence indicates it's *more* than just regular cannibalism. Yulwei, Bayaz's fellow magus, claims that Khalul's priesthood looks for "those with any promise" and by the telling of the Eater Shickel the priests made a point of her eating *her mother* first rather than ordinary rationed human flesh. The Age of Madness further makes a note of specifying that while regular civilians resorted to cannibalism, only existing Eaters continue to demonstrate their power. Given some powerful Eaters can also use Art it's possible the condition is a distortion of extant magical potential, but this is speculation. The point is, buying the perk gives you the nebulous potential and experience of being an Eater, and it's *quite unlikely* you can simply become as powerful as Euz by binge eating cities of guys as a normal man. For similar reasons, Eater powers and purchases of Student of the Art are treated as though they are separate powers that occasionally overlap.

Yes, if you take Student of the Art for Bedesh's Art and Bloody-Ten, it stacks. It's like adding a bucket of water to a pond. Logen is *not* a particularly well-educated spirit-talker. But technically, it stacks.

I AM RETURNED is more or less lifted from an ominous and ambiguous cliffhanger in the last book of the Age of Madness series. It is not yet clear who the mysterious interloper is, at the time of writing, and the powerlevel of the opponent is speculative.

Yes, if you want A Guild can specialise in providing people meat for Eater diets.