# Foreword

What is this?

*Mightiest* is a project that I’ve made entirely for my own enjoyment and fulfilment. *Mightiest* is an example of two things: a story that I wrote in the fashion of an epic, and worldbuilding.

Worldbuilding is the creation of a fictional universe: examples you probably know include JRR Tolkein’s Middle Earth, JK Rowling’s Wizarding World, the Star Wars Universe, the Marvel Cinematic Universe, etc. This is something I’ve always loved doing- I started when I was 13. I’ve made about ten worldbuilding projects by now; this is by far the largest in scope and it’s the only one that I’ve made a story for.

This world and story are obviously fictional, but a major point for me in all my projects has always been realism. I love learning new things and reading about things like history, politics, and anthropology: I’ve read about 500 books in the past half-decade. The knowledge and insight I’ve gotten from these has allowed me to create a world and story that, whilst fictional, is realistic and makes sense.

All the political systems, economics, religions, belief systems, cultural norms and values, sociocultural elements like dress and festivities, technology, conduct of warfare, geography, climatology, ecology, scientific progress, history, historiography, astronomy, calendars, character psychologies, character psychopathologies, etc- everything presented in *Mightiest* is stuff that I *know* makes sense and is true to real life because I’ve personally done years of research on all of it.

This document contains the entire archive of information on *Mightiest*. It is by now ~530 A4 pages of 12-pt Times New Roman text. There are no images: normally I create a map for all my worldbuilding projects, but I haven’t yet done so for Mightiest. All of this information came entirely from my own head. The exceptions are the names Shurhath, Ethagis, the Sword of Semidon, and the Reefshark: these come from Redditor u/flysquirrel775 who gave me explicit permission to use them in my own project.

The process of making *Mightiest* has taken years: beginning in summer 2021, I worked on it on and off until summer 2024. This document still isn’t finished- I will likely return to it. The story detailed in *Mightiest* has been planned out in this document, but not actually written. I suspect I’ll never have time to do so.

This document has collapsible headings: I strongly suggest using them to make this project a bit more navigable. Information is grouped in terms of ‘The World’ (i.e. the worldbuilding, what is this world, what is Ethagis), ‘The Story’ (the story I wrote), and ‘The Extras’. The Extras refers to other stuff related to the *Mightiest* world but not the main story or direct information about the world. It also contains the *old story*. Basically, in summer 2024 I decided to rewrite the entire main story as I wanted to make it better. The old version of *Mightiest’s* story (and its spin-offs) has been relegated to the Extras section.

Because I’ve been working on this project for so long, the information in the World section was written across several years. Most of that information was written in 2021, a bit in 2024, some in between. The information in the Story section was written entirely in 2024. The information in the Extras section was written in 2024 *unless* it has been explicitly demarcated as being ‘old’, in which case it was written from 2021-2023.

# The World

## 1. Introduction

Some basic, key premises of the world I’ve created:

* This world is a fictional planet, referred to by Ethigeans as ‘Jagannath’. It has fictional continents, peoples, and cultures
* There are *no* countries or geographical regions on Earth that are found in Jagannath: e.g. there’s no Europe, no Amazon Rainforest, no Sahara, etc
* However, basic geographical features like continents, rainforests, and deserts still exist
* The same range of ethnic phenotypes present on Earth are also present in Jagannath, but groups with certain ethnic features as seen on Earth do *not* have the same cultures. Essentially, none of the same ethnocultural groups (e.g. Egyptians, Ethiopians, Maori, Germans, Sioux, Han Chinese) found on Earth exist here
* All the laws of physics as seen in Earth still apply. All scientific phenomena, e.g. composition of the planet’s core; strength of gravity; evolution; the animals present; *Homo sapiens*; the biomes present; the presence of the Sun and Jagannath’s distance from it; the presence of the Moon and its tidal effects; are still constant
* This universe was still initiated by the Big Bang; life evolved in the same way; evolution unfolded in the same way; the end product of *Homo sapiens* is the exact same as in Earth; etc
* Human society-building and civilisation-formation unfolded in the same way, although of course with different ethnocultural groups and geographic environments
* All the same periodic table elements, the same materials (e.g. wood, metals, rock, etc), the same atmosphere, the same chemical compounds, etc as in Earth exists in Jagannath as well
* Supernatural phenomena are widely believed in by various ethnocultural groups in Jagannath but *are not real*. This universe does *not* have magic, deities, fictional animals, fictional monsters, or any other paranormal activity
* The solar system of this universe *is* actually different from our own, with a different number and distribution of planets
* Ethagis is one of the countries in this planet, Jagannath. It is an empire, and is the most powerful country in the world at the time period the story takes place in
* Its sociopolitical systems are based on those of Medieval China, Japan, and various countries in Africa
* The story of *Mightiest* takes place entirely within the country of Ethagis
* The word ‘Ethagis’ also refers to a continent. In our world, the word ‘Australia’ refers to both the continent and the political entity- the same is true in this world for ‘Ethagis’
* Ethigeans speak a language called Khosgan

## 2. Conceptualisation

This is a list of ideas I had in mind when creating *Mightiest*

* The language of Ethagis- Khosgan- is based primarily on Afroasiatic languages and cultures, especially Berber and Arabic. Latin also has a strong influence, and names in Khosgan often come from Latinisations of Afroasiatic names. Many things are named after Berbers and Arabs- Ethiopians and Arameans also lend their names to things here.
* Wanted each country to be based off of several real-world ones and incomparable to a single real-word country
* Wanted the geography of the world to not at all resemble real-world geography, with each real-world continent having no direct this-world parallel
* Wanted there to be a focussed on ‘central’ country which was not at all based on Europe, and which was the most powerful country but not based on China
* Wanted to create a new unique religion with a philosophy behind it and no Abrahamic influence
* Wanted to create a new medical system with no references to themes like humoralism or hot vs cold, dry vs wet
* Midway thru explicitly realised I wanted and succeeded in creating not just discrete religious and medical beliefs but a whole interacting system
* Narrative shld be a political drama in a realistic fantasy setting which explores psychology, philosophy, and the human condition
* Characters should be from as many different strata and roles of society as possible
* Narrative should have many strands, all intertwined and overlapping, with each strand and character influencing the others in various ways, creating a dynamic and connected world
* Subversions of classic fantasy tropes and concepts both in worldbuilding and fiction, e.g. animals and colours having unique symbolisms, especially subversions of Western culture/ideas
* Story should have the scope and narrative format of a traditional epic

## 3. World Hierarchy

The World Hierarchy is a list of the countries of the planet Jagannath is descending order of their strength, defined for the purposes and context of this list as a country’s ability to impose its will on that of other countries.

### The World Hierarchy

*The Four Cores of Power*

1. Empire of Ethagis | Ethagis | Shurhath
2. Khaganate of Abyssinia | Fasilides | Khagan & Emperor
3. Great Kingdom of Axam | Insulinde | Son of Heaven
4. Empire of Hysparleon | Amphiction | Emperor

*The Greater Halfcores*

1. Sultanate of Ghazi | Herat | Samrat
2. Empire of Samarqand | Herat | Shahanshah
3. Grand Duchy of Menelik | Fasilides | Lugal
4. Kingdom of America | Insulinde | King
5. Kingdom of Patagonia | Fasilides | Zamindar
6. Kingdom of Cassabar | Amphiction | Melech
7. Great Principality of California | Insulinde | Great Prince
8. Anaxate of Kazallu | Amphiction | Anax

*The Lesser Halfcores*

1. Empire of Numidia | Amphiction | Padishah
2. Kingdom of Serer | Fasilides | Lamane
3. Grand Duchy of Aztec | Herat | Lord
4. Lakanate of Luzon | Fasilides | Lakan
5. Principality of the Angkors | Insulinde | Lord

*The Eminent Orbiters*

*The Ascendant Orbiters*

*The Meek Orbiters*

### Structure and Definitions

It is a common geopolitical scenario when a select few most powerful states in a region, or indeed the world, tend to dominate. In Europe,[[1]](#footnote-2) this situation can be seen at all points of history after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Although the term ‘great power’ was first used after the Napoleonic Wars, the idea of a few most important powers determining the overall course of history far predates that.

For example, one could classify the European countries of the 18th century as either the main participants or ‘actors’ of history, and those affected by them and trying to enter their ranks. Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia determined the defining events of the century, not other powers like Portugal or Denmark.

Take the Seven Years’ War, a pivotal event of the century and one which decided the overall course of history, establishing the pre-eminence of Britain and the addition of Prussia amongst the five great powers. The great powers and the other powers were all affected by it, but the former group had the influence to actually have a meaningful effect and outcome on the cause, course, and aftermath of that war.

The war was caused by the parallel rivalries between Britain/France and Prussia/Austria. Though there were other belligerents, the primary ones by far were the five great powers. Though other countries may have made gains or losses, the most important aftermaths were those of the five great powers, and these aftermaths became the long-term causes for later major historical events. The course of history was thus shaped by these exclusive five powers.

The most powerful countries use their power to shape history with their decisions and actions. The other powers simply react to these changes and do their best to accumulate enough power to join the former group. Both groups of countries have a will, but only the former can impose it; the latter simply react to these impositions. The peoples of Jagannath do not know of or use the term ‘great powers’, but they recognise that the strongest powers act and the weaker powers react, and this is borne in mind in any discussion of politics.

The strongest powers, as mentioned before, have the strongest ability to impose their will on others. If these powers are the strongest, then their neighbouring countries must be weaker than them, and hence they can impose their will on these neighbours without fear of their neighbours’ will being imposed on them. The superlative power thus poses a unbalanced threat to these neighbours and can consequently leverage this threat to exert influence on them. They can coerce them into performing certain actions (e.g. terminating an alliance), diminish their power by waging destructive wars in their territory, plunder/extort wealth in the form of money or kind, and perform other such actions.

The closer a neighbour is to this superlative power, the easier they are to invade, and hence the greater the threat posed and thus the more influence exerted. Hence, each of these superlative powers has a geographic zone of threat, wherein potency decreases as one gets further from the power. This zone of threat is referred to as an orbit, and the weaker neighbours are said in the be in the orbit of the superlative power.

The weaker the neighbour is and the closer they are to the superlative power, the greater the strength of the orbit experienced by them and thus the more entrapped they are by it. If such a neighbour should have their own weaker neighbours which they pose an unbalanced threat to, they may also exert an orbit of their own. One country may be in an orbit and exert their own orbit simultaneously.

The most powerful countries are not in the orbit of another country. They radiate a superlative kind of power which is not subordinate to another. If one was to create a map of every country in the world and the orbit of each country, one could therefore trace back all radiation of power to these most powerful countries. These countries thus possess a ‘core’ of power throughout the world.

Ethigeans recognise three cores of power in the world. Ethagis, Abyssinia, and Hysparleon, although there is another core of power in another hemisphere whose existence they are unaware of, that being the Empire of Insulinde.

The Four Cores of Power are the four most powerful nations in the world. Some are more powerful than others, and there is a comparatively fairly sizeable gulf between the top two and bottom cores. However, all are on a sufficient level such that if any two were to go to war, the outcome would be uncertain.

A crucial concept to understand is that power is relative. The Empire of Insulinde, for example, is able to impose its will on those around it. But this is partially because of its own strength and partially because of the weakness of those around it. If Insulinde were directly neighbouring Ethagis, it may well have been in the latter’s orbit by this period of time. But as Insulinde’s neighbours are weaker than Ethagis, it is a Core of Power.

Then there are those countries which are powerful enough to have their own orbit, but which are themselves entrapped in the orbit of another. In Ethigean politico-military theory, these are referred to as halfcores, and can be subcategorised as greater halfcores or lesser halfcores. This depends on both the strength of their orbit and the strength of the orbit they are entrapped in. The greater a country’s proximity to its superior, the greater the threat, and the more they and their decisions are influenced by that threat. Hence, the more they are entrapped in that orbit.

Greater halfcores are under less influence from that which they orbit and exert more influence over their orbiters. They therefore have more autonomy. Lesser halfcores are the opposite. There are then those powers which lack an orbit of their own: though they may be stronger than their neighbours they lack the power projection to have their own zone of threat. The threat that they exert is too balanced for them to be able to dominate another country in the way that a core or halfcore can.

These inferior powers are referred to as eminent, ascendant, or meek orbiters, depending on their strength. Eminent orbiters are those which have superiority over other orbiters (though not to the point of becoming a halfcore). Ascendant orbiters are still stronger than other orbiters, but are minor powers. Meek orbiters refer to the weakest and most negligible.

The Ethigeans see international politics as a question of orbits and threat, a perspective used to judge each country as an equal or an inferior, and to act accordingly. Clausewitz in our world famously declared that war is a continuation of politics by other means, but Ethigean strategists have held this belief for centuries. The ultimate purpose of any state in this context is to wage war and expand, and Ethigeans characterise each country on Jagannath according to the orbit model so as to determine which countries would be easiest to declare war on.

The orbit model is an alternate expression of Earth’s own great power model. A Core of Power is a great power, a greater halfcore is a regional power, a lesser halfcore is a middle power, and the orbiters are small powers. The terminology varies, and any society can formulate their own political theory to articulate the specific terms, but the concept is constant.

### Commentary

The Empire of Ethagis is the mightiest nation of the world. Its institutions and culture are shaped around warfare and conquest, and is rich with salt and gold. Blessed with a central location, it engages in trade with various empires and orbiters; indeed, it sees itself as in the centre of the world. Although it has the population and military forces to overwhelm almost every other country in the world, it is tied down by internal conflict and division.

### Determinant Criteria

The ability of a country to impose its will on others is effectively synonymous with the idea of power, and hence the World Hierarchy acts as a comparative scale for power. The question is what constitutes and contributes to power: power is an abstract concept which cannot be quantified or clearly understood. However, it can be broken down into its various elements, and each individual metric that contributes to power can either be given a numerical value or can be at least understood in a more objective sense than the word ‘power’.

The interpretation of what power is and what causes power depends on context. Factors like wealth and population are inevitably universal criteria for power, but power cannot be defined by just a few pillars. The precise definition of power is fluid depending on historical circumstance. In Earth’s 19th century, for example, industrialisation was the backbone of power: Great Britain was able to dominate the world because its industrial power was translated into global power. During the Cold War, nuclear arsenals were, at least in the public consciousness, was the backbone of power: power was defined by who had the capacity to end the world if they failed to get their way.

For the vast majority of European history, until the Congress of Vienna concluded the Napoleonic Wars, the various countries in Europe have been almost constantly at war. Ubiquitous warfare characterised European history and the various European countries were structed and defined by war. The purpose of the state, if it had one besides being the personal possession of the monarch, was to carry out war and to protect its people from it. The strongest states were able to do this and survive, and the weaker states were not. Two contrasting examples are the Kingdom of France, which succeeded in this and survived/expanded in the centuries leading up to 1815, and the Byzantine Empire, which failed in this and gradually dwindled before losing all ability to impose its will and being fully conquered in 1453.

Therefore, the power of a state is defined by its ability to wage war without collapse or conquest. Because the waging of war is simply an imposition of one country’s will over the other (i.e. the will to conquer a smaller country over the smaller country’s will to remain independent), this alternate definition of power agrees with the first.

Ethagis is a country which is so frequently at war with itself or others that all its institutions are, or originated as, a response to warfare, and it exists in a world of countries the exact same way; just as the situation was in our world for the overwhelming majority of human history. Hence, this project defines power as the ability to impose a country’s will on others, in the context of ubiquitous warfare and conquest.

The new question that this raises is what determines a country’s ability to impose its will. There are innumerable metrics that contribute to this, but these can be classified into three overarching categories: military, economic, and institutional.

The military factors are the most obvious, and these include quantitative and qualitative factors. Examples are total military size, infantry and cavalry proportion, equipment of one’s forces, rate of manpower replacement, rate of equipment replacement, speed of army movement, the leadership and commanders of one’s army, soldiers’ training, their drill, their discipline, their loyalty, obedience, etc. These are just related to actual fighting forces however: key considerations are an army’s logistics, supply, communications, overstretch, etc. Almost these factors are applicable to a navy or another kind of fighting force as well. Some of these can be given a number, and some of them cannot, but each individual factor is more objective than the overall meaning of ‘power.’

Economic factors are also fairly obvious, although these transcend merely how wealthy a country is. Even something as seemingly simple as a country’s wealth can be broken down. It is mainly distinguished between how much wealth a country has in its treasury at a given moment, how much wealth a country can potentially extract from its subjects, and how much wealth a country has in total in the form of natural resources and its means of extraction. For example, a country with lots of iron beneath its surface but no mines with which to extract those resources is not wealthy.

There are also other economic matters to consider: what is a country’s tax rate, what is the highest tax rate it can impose without invoking insuppressible rebellion, how willing are other countries to give it loans, are there even other non-hostile countries available to it to give it loans, can a country’s private citizens give it loans, to what extent can a country requisition wealth from its own citizens, will foreign merchants trade with it, etc.

Then there are broader concerns: what is a country’s infrastructure like? How easily can it move men and materiel from one point to another? How quickly? Does it have the ships and merchants to sustain trade and industry during a war? Does it have the food to sustain an army and the means to get the food to them? How will it deal with the loss of food production now that many of its farmers are in an army?

The third of these broad categories is institutional factors: to what extent do a country’s institutions benefit or hinder a country’s ability to wage and deal with war. The most obvious example of a relevant institution here is the military itself. How meritocratic is it? Can a skilled and dedicated soldier with the ability to lead rise the ranks? Are the most senior positions awarded based on social status or actual competence? How easy is it for a monarch to demote a senior officer? These are just a few of the relevant factors which determine the overall strength and reliability of an institution.

This is just one relevant institution. Take another example: the authority ruling a city. Are they officials of the monarch or do they have their own power base? How likely are they to resist their resources being requisitioned? Are they obligated to provide a certain amount of tax or manpower? How well do they command the loyalty of their citizens? How well will they be able to withstand a siege? And, of course, how meritocratic is it and all the other questions which apply to the previous example.

One can break down each institution into multiple different individual factors. These institutions can include an organised religion, the penal system, the banking system, the merchantry of a country, medical institutions, economic institutions like guilds, etc. All of which play a role in society and thus the purpose for which society is oriented, in this case the waging and withstanding of war.

Geography also plays a very important role. Climate, terrain, location, soil fertility, these are just a few examples, and will each be examined in turn. Climate determines or influences a host of other factors. Just a few examples are the equipment an army needs, the ease at which it moves, how well it can forage for food, and how well it can maintain its pack animals. For example, a cold and snowy climate necessitates warm clothes, causes slower movement and reduces forage opportunities for both soldiers and pack animals, and increases risk of deaths due to cold.

Terrain is also extremely important. A country with defensible terrain has a major advantage over others in terms of power because their ability to resist conquest (and thus the imposition of others’ will on them) is naturally boosted. A country with various natural chokepoints to meet a larger force (e.g. peninsulae, mountain ranges, rivers, etc) has the same advantage. Terrain affects how easily an army can move, how easily it can forage, etc.

Location is key because a country with powerful neighbours is under greater threat than one who isn’t, and this can lead to a country being conquered before it has the time to develop its power. Natural resources are also one of the foundations to national wealth and thus power. Soil fertility, finally, is extremely important as high soil fertility means- among other things- more food, which means- among other things- more soldiers can be supported in the field.

One can therefore see how dozens of individual factors contribute to how powerful a country is, but assessing all of these individually for each country would be impossible in a practical sense. It is far more efficient to simply consolidate all of these factors into a single, more abstract metric- that of power- and rank countries by their power. This power ranking, rather than being objective (one cannot debate how many soldiers an army has) and absolute (army size does not need to be compared to anything to be understood), is subjective.

## 4. Empire of Ethagis

### Calendar

The Empire of Ethagis uses the Allaxcisean Calendar, named after the Ethigean polymath Allaxacis. Allaxacis was a scholar of the [learned arts](#_The_Learned_Arts) in the 4th century whose various writings and teachings primarily focus on abstractophy [mathematics], [cosmology](#_Cosmology) [astronomy], history, alphamatics [physics], and natural alphabetics [taxonomy]. He was widely respected in his own time and was a personal advisor to the Shurhath, and as a result drifted towards rulership [politics] towards the end of his life.

Allaxacis created his own standardised calendar to remedy the pre-existing situation of a national calendar which had to be manually adjusted periodically just to keep it in sync with the seasons, and certain provinces far from Semidon who used their own.[[2]](#footnote-3) Allaxacis, like all scholars of that time and now, was heavily influenced by religion, and therefore modelled the calendar on several religiously significant numbers.

The Allaxcisean Calendar is a solar calendar consisting of 365.25 days for each year, dividing the year into ten months and a pseudo-month consisting of a day (or two days for a leap year). The Gregorian Calendar used in the West today starts the year on January 01 during winter; the Allaxcisean Calendar starts the year roughly at the time of the start of the harvest season on what we would call September 08.

The first two months of the calendar consist of eight weeks, with each week consisting of five days. The other eight months consist of seven weeks, with each week consisting of five days. At the start of every year is a day (or two days if on a leap year) which exists outside any of these months, referred to as New Years’ Day; the second of these days every leap year is the Leap Year Day. There are still 24 hours in a day, 60 minutes per hour, and 60 seconds per minute.

Both 10 and 5 are [significant numbers](#_The_Divine_Numbers) in [Ethigean religion](#_Religion), believed to occur repeatedly in nature and reality. It is thought that by structuring abstract man-made creations around these numbers (creations such as calendars), the efficiency and functionality of these creations are maximised. Hence, the Allaxcisean Calendar is largely structured around these two numbers and their multiples.

The months of the Allaxcisean Calendar are all named the divisions of the zodiac. On Earth, the zodiac is divided into twelve astrological signs, with each sign being a 30 degree sector of the planet’s 360 degree orbit around the Sun. In Western astrology, the name of each sign comes from a constellation that the Sun moves through annually, but the divisions of the zodiac vary based on culture. In Chinese astrology, for example, the twelve signs of the zodiac are named after animals.

Ethigean cosmology [astronomy] divides the sky in ten regions of 36 degrees (again, due to the significance of the number 10 in religion) and thus there are ten zodiac signs. The zodiac signs are based on the [Ten Animal Deities](#_The_Ten_Animal), ten gods which physically resemble ten different animals. Rather than being the names of the actual animals, they are the Khosgan words for epithets of these animals seen in Ethigean cosmology.

0. New Years’ Day | September 07

1. Hippo | The Lord | Antavar | September 08 - October 19

2. Hyena | The Maleficent | Halthia | October 20 – November 30

3. Elephant | The Sentinel | Alharis | December 01 – January 04

4. Leopard | The Rogue | Nakal | January 05 – February 08

5. Harpy Eagle | The Watchman | Ghalassa | February 09 – March 15

6. Lion | The Patriarch | Kaptana | March 16 – April 19

7. Crocodile | The Lurker | Deilis | April 20 – May 24

8. Shark | The Arrow | Isari | May 25 – June 28

9. Octopus | The Rover | Mabur | June 29 – August 02

10. Zebra | The Charger | Xaridor | August 03 – September 06

The Allaxcisean Calendar divides history into two eras: *Alhecanis* and *Althaloris*. The year zero is the year that *Alhecanis* ends and *Althaloris* begins. Allaxacis dates the year 0 as the date that the first ever Shurhath with a confirmed date of accession took the throne. There were various Shurhaths before this one, but as the era needs to be begun at a specific year and Ethigean historical records cannot pinpoint the year of any previous Shurhath’s accession or end of reign, the accession date of that specific Shurhath is used. The names of the two eras are written in italics as a means of emphasis, and are not shortened to acronyms, with an example of a year being ‘539 *Althaloris*’.

*Althaloris* starts from 0 and extends to the present year. The name translates to ‘of order’: Allaxacis viewed the institution of a united, central monarchy as being essential to promoting order in Ethagis. The pattern of Ethigean history is that of phases of warring states alternating with phases of united empires at peace, ruled by a [Shurhath](#Shurhath). Allaxacis believed that these phases of a united empires at peace brought stability and prosperity, whereas a divided empire at war with itself brought destruction and chaos.

Therefore, the era of history where Shurhaths ruled Ethagis was viewed by Allaxacis as being the era of order, whereas the era of history before a Shurhath united the continent and brought peace is called *Alhecanis*, which means ‘of chaos’. The calendar’s dualism between order and chaos reflects the religious view that the universe is driven by dual forces of order and chaos; this idea is elaborated on [here](#_The_Dualism_of).

The Allaxcisean Calendar was technically adopted nationally by imperial decree upon its conception, but the extent to which it was actually used by the various divisions of the Empire increased steadily over time. Semidon and the Crownlands used the calendar immediately, but the rainforest regions of the south only began to actually use the calendar in the early 8th century.

### Culture and Views

#### Animals

The cultural perception and Ethigean treatment of animals is massively impacted by Ethigean religion. Before reading this article, it is strongly recommended that you read about the [Ten Animal Deities](#_The_Ten_Animal) and about the Ethigean [scientific discipline of taxonomy](#_Natural_Alphabetics). You may have difficulties understanding this article otherwise.

[Ethigean religion](#_Religion), which has an integral influence on Ethigean culture and [science](#_Knowledge_and_Learning), features a pantheon of ten animal gods, each resembling a different animal and embodying various moral and behavioural qualities. For example, an elephant god called [Ilyzor](#_The_Gods) is the embodiment of values like justice, protection, and wrath. The worship of animal deities in Ethagis has led to Ethigeans perceiving animals as having a sacred nature and being worthy of life, which affects how animals are treated and understood.

The degree of sacredness and, as a result, protection/mercy accorded to each animal varies. Animals made directly in the image of a god, referred to as ['genitor animals’](#_Natural_Alphabetics), are seen as the most sacred, and animals which least resemble the genitor animals (for example worms, mussels, insects, etc) are seen as the least sacred.

Although animals are seen as sacred, a concept which has been shared by many cultures throughout Earth’s history, they may still be killed or put to work. The humans inhabiting Ethagis are the exact same as the humans inhabiting Earth, and both creatures seek to dominate nature and expand their own settlements at its expense. This fundamental human impulse is moderated by Ethigean religion, but not eliminated.

On Earth, for the vast majority of history mankind was *not* entirely dominant over nature and it was seen as an obstacle to progress and safety. The idea of wanting to preserve nature was unknown because nature still posed a threat to mankind. After industrialisation, this changed, and mankind was able to appreciate its beauty and value because it no longer posed any threat or obstacle.

Ethagis is not an industrialised country. Nature is still seen as antagonistic to human civilisation and safety- *however*, Ethigean religion still affects how humans treat animals. There exists a balance between the primal human impulse to dominate and conquer nature, and the religious impulse to revere it.

Ethigean society treats genitor animals and non-genitor animals differently. All animals are sacred and a prayer (or prayers) must be said after taking their life. The duration of the prayers varies based on the circumstances and the series of the animal. A septenary series animal killed in self-defence, for example, merits only a few words. Failing to do so is a highly negligible sin. In contrast, an elephant hunted for leisure requires extensive praying and a remorseful fast wherein the slayer avoids eating [nectars](#_The_Five_Sustenants), meat, and dairy for a day.

Many cultures on Earth have assigned religious significance to animals and utter prayers when they are killed, most notably the native peoples of the Americas and Greenland. The Inuit, for example, have integrated polar bears extensively into their mythology and utter prayers when one is killed.

Mankind is still at odds with nature in Ethagis however, and killing an animal for protection or sustenance is not seen as a sin. Hunting for leisure is also permissible *unless* the victim animal is a genitor series animal (one of the animals created in the image of one of the Ten Animal Deities). Shurhaths and warlords have often amused themselves by hunting for leisure, but very few would hunt elephants, for example. Hunting predatory animals for leisure is acceptable as long as prayers are offered after the kill, because it still serves to protect humanity. In particular, hunting hyenas is actually encouraged in the Way, provided that the correct religious observances are carried out.

When killing something for sustenance, for example, prayers of thanks will be offered to the animal for giving up its life and flesh, and to the gods for permitting the hunter to exercise mortal power of animals. Hopes for the animal to be reincarnated into a better life will be expressed. In situations with more gravity, for example leisure-killing a herbivorous genitor animal, or for killing an animal in a particularly brutal way, prayers of apology will be given. Ethigean religious texts (of which there is a whole body, comprised of the works of various human authors) at length write out the wording for such prayers, but emphasise that these are to be used a guidelines and the hunter may choose the wording provided it is suitably respectful and has appropriate content/duration.

The religious value of certain animals also means that hunting genitor animals for profit is seen as sinful: this is particularly impactful regarding elephants and ivory. The religious significance accorded to elephants, who are seen as the most ordered or most ‘benevolent’ animal and are thus seen as most sacred of all other animals, is absolutely integral to their survival in Ethagis. In Earth’s Roman Empire, for example, the demand for ivory led to elephant populations in North Africa being obliterated.

In the 19th century, European hunters slowly and methodically eliminated elephant populations from region to region of Africa in pursuit of the immense profits of ivory. In some places where it could be acquired from natives for very little, ivory had profit margins of 3000%. The lucrativeness and profits of the ivory trade on Earth drove an elephant population of millions to the brink of total extinction. In a century-long period from the late 18th century to the late 19th century, an average of 65,000 elephants were slaughtered every year.

In Ethagis, ivory is still a luxury item due to its ease of carving, supreme durability, and natural beauty. *However*, because acquiring ivory necessarily requires killing elephants, the ivory trade is not large enough to pose an existential threat to Ethigean elephant populations. Many people refuse on religious principles to hunt or buy ivory. Doing so often marks one as a pariah. Considering how religiously fervent different societies have historically been on Earth and how almost everyone on the planet was religious, it is unsurprising that in Ethagis ivory is so rare.

Tusks scavenged from already-dead elephants may be harvested without sin, and those who own ivory will often use this principle as a justification of that ownership. But killing elephants for profit is deeply taboo and practically heretical, in a society where religion dominates much of life. Amongst the warrior-monk order of the semadai, owning ivory as a luxury item is punishable by immediate expulsion.

The special status of the elephant is not accorded to other animals, of course, and is literally the most extreme example of animal protection. Animals that are not in the genitor series can indeed be hunted for profit without sin, although the prayers given after killing an animal for profit are longer and more fervent than prayers for killing an animal in self-defence or for food.

Ethigean religion treats different causes for killing animals in different ways, and it is worth examining them. Note that the amount of prayers offered after killing an animal depends on the series of an animal. In the following list, it is presumed that the animal killed is a predatory genitor animal that is not a hyena. The causes, in order of ascending sinfulness, are listed here:

1. Self-defence | When one is attacked by an animal and the animal must be killed or a human/humans will die | Concern for animal welfare is entirely ignored in this scenario, and very few prayers need to be offered. Even killing an elephant is seen as moral in this scenario.
2. Averting starvation | When one kills an animal for food or otherwise a human/humans would have died of starvation | Concern for animal welfare is entirely ignored in this scenario, and very few prayers need to be offered. Even killing an elephant is seen as moral in this scenario.
3. Protection | When an animal does not pose an immediate threat to human survival, but may do so in the future | Concern for animal welfare is largely ignored in this scenario, and very few prayers need to be offered. Even killing an elephant is seen as permissible in this scenario.
4. Sustenance | When an animal does not pose an immediate threat to human survival or any threat at all, but is killed to act as a food source | Concern for animal welfare is muted in this scenario, and few prayers need to be offered. Even killing an elephant is seen as permissible in this scenario, although the act is still lamented.
5. Resources | When an animal is not killed for protection or sustenance, but to use its bodily materials (e.g. bone) as resources which will aid in survival | Concern for animal welfare is muted in this scenario, and few prayers need to be offered. Killing an elephant would be a minor sin in this scenario.
6. Luxury | When an animal is not killed for protection or sustenance, but to use its bodily materials (e.g. bone) as resources which serve as luxuries | Concern for animal welfare is considerable in this scenario, and many prayers need to be offered. Killing an elephant would be a major sin in this scenario.
7. Profit | When an animal is killed to harvest resources which will generate wealth for the slayer | Concern for animal welfare is considerable in this scenario, and many prayers need to be offered. Killing an elephant would be a major sin in this scenario.
8. Leisure | When an animal is killed for the amusement of the slayer | Concern for animal welfare is paramount in this scenario, and many prayers need to be offered. Killing an elephant would be an unforgivable sin in this scenario.

Elephants are used as an example here, but again they are the most extreme one. Killing a crocodile for leisure, for example, would be a sin as a crocodile is a genitor animal, but not a major one. Killing a cow for leisure would be disapproved of as an example of wanton cruelty, but the sin comes from this arbitrary cruelty, not the actual loss of life of the animal. Killing an amphibian for leisure would be a very minor sin, and killing an insect for leisure would be irrelevant. For flatworms, no prayers at all need to be offered after taking their life. For an animal in the preterminal series, one word (‘Thanks’ or ‘Apologies’) would suffice. The reverence accorded to each animal generally corresponds to the natural amount of empathy humans have for the animal anyway.

There are some exceptions to the series rule when determining how sacred an animal is. For example, macaques, chimpanzees, and orang-utans. All these animals are in the third series of animals, bearing not much similarity to any of the genitor animals but still being mammals. However, due to these animals’ closeness to human beings, most primates elevated in sacredness above other animals in their series.

Chimpanzees are an important exception. The cultural and scientific perception of chimpanzees is very negative, generally seeing them as the embodiments of all the base and immoral aspects of humanity. Like hyenas, they are still seen as sacred, because they’re both animals, but not much value is placed on their lives. Indeed, Ethigean culture celebrates killing hyenas (they are a threat to livestock, and in a country of farmers this obviously impacts the cultural perception of them. Wolves suffered the same way in medieval Europe) and chimpanzees.

Simple monkeys are seen more sympathetically, and are seen as more sacred as a third series animal but less sacred than a second series animal. For example, when killing a macaque for resources, one would offer more prayers than killing a horse, but fewer than killing a rhino. Orang-utans are seen as unusually sacred for their series, and are seen as sacred as a genitor animal. As a result, hunting orang-utans for profit or leisure is forbidden.

#### Colours

When considering the various different categories of colours in the world, English speakers identify 11: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink, brown, grey, black and white. There are different colours that exist, but these are interpreted as shades of the aforementioned categories. Turquoise, for example, is a shade of blue. Crimson is a shade of red. Mauve is a shade of purple. This is rarely thought about by English speakers, and the idea of 11 colours is taken as a given. Indeed, several languages maintain this set of 11.

But the idea of having 11 fixed categories is not a given: colours fall into a *spectrum* of visible light, not discrete categories. How this spectrum is sorted into categories is not fixed, and as a result many languages have a different number of basic colour words. Russian and Greek, for example, have 12 different basic colour words, as they distinguish between light blue and dark blue- each of these words would be entirely different in these languages and not just ‘adjective + common word’. Languages like Irish and Turkish also have 12, distinguishing between different types of reds.

The number of different colour words a language has is not arbitrary, however. In 1969, two researchers- Brent Berlin and Paul Kay- published their findings from 98 different languages. They found that there was a sort of common order in which languages established different colour words. They grouped different languages into ‘stages’ depending on the number of different colour words that language had. Brent and Kay found that different languages of the same stage generally recognized the same colours.

A language with only 2 different colour words would most likely have words for ‘black’ and ‘white’, Brent and Kay found. A language with 3 such words would have words for ‘black’, ‘white’, and ‘red’. The next stage involved recognizing either yellow or green as a distinct colour. The stage after involving giving both yellow and green distinct identities, bringing the number of different colour words up to 5. Then, blue was recognized. A chart of this is attached below.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

These findings were vindicated by various subsequent publications. Logically, it follows that there must be some kind of reason that these colours in particular have their own distinct names. Some theorise that this corresponds with how visually distinct the colours are: black and white are the most distinct, and out of all remaining colours, the colour red fits least comfortably into the ‘light’/’dark’ classification. On the other end of the spectrum, a colour like purple is less visually distinct as it more closely resembles black (whereas red doesn’t really resemble either white or black at all). Others theorise that this order correlates with the prevalence of each colour in nature. Red, being the colour of blood, is omnipresent in human society and thus very often recognized. Green, the colour of nature, is similarly ubiquitous. Blue and purple, in contrast, are much rarer in nature, appearing in far fewer animals or plants.

I would imagine that the real reason is a combination of all these factors, and these factors drive my decision on how many colour categories there are in the Khosgan language. The visual distinctiveness of the colours obviously wouldn’t be different for an inhabitant of Ethagis than it would be for an inhabitant of the real-life country Japan: both inhabitants would be *Homo sapiens* on planets with the same atmosphere. However, the prevalence of each colour in nature *would* depend on a country’s geography, as well as other sociological factors.

If, for example, we were to compare a hypothetical Country A and a hypothetical Country B (each with their own independently-evolving languages), if Country A was in a biome such that a particular blue flowering plant was far more abundant than in Country B, it is logical that the people of Country A would be more likely to have a distinct word for blue. Similarly, if the people of Country B all wore purple garments due to a particular fashion occurring at the time, it is logical that the people of Country B would be more likely to have a distinct word for purple. Thus the development of colour categories in each language is dependent on geographical and socioeconomic factors.

Languages also change throughout time. The colour pink, for example, was first recorded as a distinct colour (i.e. the word ‘pink’ was first used) in an English text in 1733. Shakespeare did not know of a distinct pink colour. Another complication to note is that the above graph’s use of the term ‘complete array of colours’ does not necessarily refer to a set of 11+ colours, just over 7. Languages that would be considered ‘complete’ in this way do not necessarily have to have all of English’s 11 colours and then some. Bear this in mind when reading the colour categories recognized in Khosgan.

The colour categories of Khosgan are also dependent on geographical and socioeconomic factors[[3]](#footnote-4). Khosgan is a Stage VII language, but the categories are not the same as other Stage VII languages in the chart above. This is a list of each basic colour and their cultural associations/connotations.

The colour categories recognized are as follows: black, white, red, blood-red, green, turquoise, light blue, dark blue, yellow, straw, brown, purple, burgundy, and grey.

##### Black

Black has a wide range of connotations, but unlike in Western cultures the general connotation of black is positive rather than negative. One might expect it to be more likely that black would be seen as negative due to the fact that it is the colour of darkness: even in modern industrialized society, we might fear going out at night due to the increased danger, and in pre-industrialized society darkness is a far greater herald of vulnerability and insecurity. Darkness brings concerns that don’t even apply to those in developed cities anymore, like fear of animal attacks or stumbling into a cave or hole. In London, one can follow well-built and well-lit roads and have foxes run from your approach: in remote country road in Ethagis, animals have no fear of humans and the roads will be old, not at all lit, and often littered with obstacles.

But due to socioeconomic factors, black is viewed positively in Ethagis, most of all as the colour of authority, power, might, and royalty. This is because black is the colour most associated with the social position of [Shurhath](#Shurhath) (Emperor). The role of Shurhath developed by warlords who were the most mighty, the most ruthless, the most feared seizing and holding onto power. In centuries long ago when such lords were in constant war, the most efficient/pragmatic warlords saw dying armour as a waste of resources, a vanity. Such a mindset usually brought these warlords success (correlation and not causation- not dying armour won’t make you an emperor, but if you’re incredibly efficient and not bogged down by vanity, you have an edge over your competitors). They were thus more likely to become Shurhath, and indeed soon having decorated *black* armour became quasi-official Shurhath clothing. It became the traditional dress for royalty and, culturally, black started to be associated with the Shurhath.

Due to the close connection between the position of Shurhath and the act of war (Shurhaths were all initially warlords and dedicated their lives to conquest), black also become associated with the concept of war. The frequency of war in Ethagis historically led elites to justify it to conscripts by extensive glamorization and notions of honour, hardiness, and strength- as such, war is culturally seen as a good thing,[[4]](#footnote-5) and hence black retains its positive connotation.

Black connotes warlord- and war-like qualities in a person, including (in order of decreasing prevalence): stoicism, pragmatism/efficiency, strength of character, reliability, courage, and physical strength. In the West, one may use the term ‘a black soul’ to denote a wicked/cruel person, but in Ethagis such a phrase would denote a hardy warrior.

Black is also closely tied with the profession of medicine: the profession arose from noblemen and warlords hiring attendant field medics to heal their and their companions’ injuries, and in wartime funds for elaborate doctors’ uniforms were scarce. Noblemen still sought to display status, and would thus often decorate field medics’ garments with gold, but the primary colour worn would always be black due to its cheapness and its practicality (field medics were often a target of enemy forces, and black decreased visibility). The tradition of medics being clad in black stuck, and now the profession and practice of medicine has adopted the ‘patron colour’ of black, and now licensed doctors are required to wear black and gold garments whilst on duty by both social convention and law.

Black is also the colour of the cosmos, and in Ethagis it is associated with both the cosmos and its majesty/size. Black can therefore connote these values as well. Due to the religious significance of the cosmos in Ethagis, black is also somewhat of a religious colour and is associated with piety and purity- in contrast to the Western adoption of white as the colour of these values.

Just as in the West, one colour has many connotations, often contradictory: red, for example, connotes both anger/hate and passion/love, depending on the context. Another example would be white connoting both purity and pallidity/sickness. Black is also, of course, associated with darkness and with night and the accompanying insecurity and vulnerability it brings- but it depends heavily on the context. The mere mention of the word ‘black’ would make an Ethigean think of strength and authority, but an author would use the phrase ‘a night blacker than most’ to evoke a sense of unsureness and unease. Lingual connotations are complicated and numerous, relying heavily on context and other cues.

##### White

White, like black, also has a wide range of connotations, but unlike black it is generally seen as a colour which is *negative* in its connotations. These stem from the fact that white is strongly associated with pallor and sickness; the Ethigean climates allow many pathogens to thrive, and it is a dreadful sight for an Ethigean to see a loved one go pale with illness. The crudity of medicine compared to modern standards also means that sickness is much more likely to bring death- in Ethagis, white is the colour associated with death, not black. The phrase ‘black as death’ makes sense to a Western audience, but not an Ethigean one: ‘white as death’ would be the correct phrase.

White’s associations with sickness and death are reasons for its further connotations with poison and danger. These negative qualities, and the simple fact that white is the visual opposite of the positively-viewed black, provide insight on why white connotes the following qualities in people: malice, cowardice, weakness, insincerity, and infidelity. White is also associated with the ideas of danger, confusion, panic, and unpreparedness. Snow is an excellent example of this: snow is infrequent in Ethagis and comes only with the coldest and deadliest winters. The whiteness of the snow is thus seen to be extremely appropriate.

##### Red

In Khosgan, the word that directly translates into ‘red’ can refer to any red shade *except* the shade for blood. A light red and a dark red are both grouped into the same colour category here, but the specific hue of blood, a sort of dark crimson, is recognized as a separate category. In practice, darker or richer reds are sometimes referred to as the same word for ‘blood red’, so the word for ‘red’ refers to, in practice, light red. But, grammatically, the word for ‘red’ is ambiguous in shade.

The connotations of red are generally positive. It is associated with fortune, joy, charm, and fertility. It is seen as a marker of health and virility. In a person, it implies qualities of extroversion, charisma, and confidence. Its associations with fortune mean that sometimes, depending on context, it can adopt the negative connotation of material greed. Indeed, red is closely tied to wealth and prosperity and is often used to represent the [merchantry](#_Merchant) of Ethagis. The overall meaning of red is positive, however.

##### Blood Red

Khosgan separates what we would call the single category of ‘red’ into two different categories. The frequency and prevalence of war in Ethigean history resulted in the majority of famous national literature and poetry centering on war, particularly famous battles and soldiers. This led to the shade of ‘blood red’ being mentioned to the point of it effectively becoming its own category, gaining its own cultural associations.

These associations are almost exclusively martial. Blood red, what we might call crimson, is the colour of the [soldiery](#_Soldiery), and is associated with war. Due to the Ethigean perception of war being different to the modern Western one, this is not necessarily a bad thing, and crimson’s associations are balanced between positive and negative.

On the one hand, crimson is associated with violence, rage, aggression, mercilessness, and imperiousness. On the other, it is associated with strength, courage, and steadfastness. It is most strongly associated with the idea of a soldier or warrior, as well as the concept of war.

##### Green

Green has a wide range of connotations, although the majority of these are positive. Green is associated with many things: this list includes nature, fertility, hope, freshness, springtime, serenity, neutrality, tolerance, love, renewal, and rebirth. Due to its connotations of rebirth, green is often associated with Ethigean religion. In a person, green symbolizes calmness, hopefulness, and tolerance. Sometimes it can take on the negative nature of passivity or weakness, depending on context. Green is also tied to friendship and especially courtship/love, although it can occasionally connote lust and promiscuousness. Due to its abundance in nature and its ease of production from native Ethigean flora, it is associated with the [commonry](#_Commonry).

##### Turquoise

In Khosgan, ‘blue-green’ is rendered as its own colour category, with the word used best translating to ‘turquoise’ in English.

Turquoise connotes friendliness, patience, creativity, serenity, and wholeness. It can also be connoted with wisdom and spirituality, with members of the [semadai](#_Semadai) being fond of decorating armours or hilts with turquoise because of this. Conversely, turquoise can be associated with stupidity, naivety, youth, innocence, and incompetence.

#### Honorifics

An honorific is a title given to an individual when they are being referred to or addressed. Their function is, as the name suggests, to bestow honour and respect. Honorifics act as an indicator of social status and in Ethagis, the uses of various honorifics for different strata of society is highly formalized and elaborate.

An example of an honorific used in England would be ‘Sir’. They can be of a fairly low rank, for example ‘Mr’ or ‘Miss’, or a higher rank, ‘Your Highness’, ‘Your Grace’, ‘my lord’, etc. Although Ethagis does not have direct equivalents for all of these honorifics, it does for some others (for example ‘sir’), although they are used in different contexts. In both England and Ethagis, honorifics are never used in the first person.

Ethigean society has a fairly extensive body of rules about what honorifics are to be used and in which contexts. Before reading this article, it is strongly recommended that you read about Feyriatal, the socio-political hierarchy of the Empire of Ethagis, as different tiers of society have their own unique honorifics. Individuals may also be addressed by their Feyriatal status or military rank, for example a Shurhath may be honorifically addressed as ‘Shurhath’. These kinds of honorifics are called title honorifics, and are applicable to all strata of society except for commoners and slaves.

For a Shurhath of Ethagis, the honorifics used may be *Mightiest*, *my liege and sovereign*, or *Sovereign*.

For an Imperial Officer of the Court, the honorifics may be a shortened form of the office’s description. For example, a Master of the Stables may just be referred to as *Master*. If they are also a nobleman, they may prefix their office title with lord-, for example *Lord Master*. For a judicial officer, they may be called *Justice*.

For a mighty lord, the honorifics of *great lord*, *Great Commander,* or *Duke Commander* may be used.

For all members of the nobility, the honorifics of *my lord*, *your lordship*, or *Lord Commander* may be used. Askary lords may be called *askar* and nazul lords may be called *nazul*.

For any member of the nobility who has an alfaz, the honorifics *noble learned, great elder*, or *wise lord* may be used.

For all members of the nobility and soldiery- except a jagal- the honorific of *Your Valiance* may be used, especially for asthanes.

For a member of the semadai, the honorific of *Serthan* (a Khosgan word which lacks any direct English translation) may be used.

For an asthan, the honorifics of *Commander* or *Asthan* (a Khosgan word which lacks any direct English translation) may be used.

For a jagal, the honorific of *Kuthan* (a Khosgan word which lacks any direct English translation) may be used. If the jagal holds the military rank of commander, they may be addressed by it, but the honorific of commander is not conferred on them by default.

For a vizier, the honorifics of *Your Grace* or *minister* may be used.

For a professional, the honorifics used are *Doctor, Jurist*, or *Master*, depending on whether the professional is a doctor, jurist, or fieldmaster.

For all members of the gentry, the honorific of *Sir* may be used.

For a theonomer, the honorific *Wise Elder* may be used.

For an alfaz, the honorifics *Elder, my elder*, or *learned* may be used.

For a magistrate, the honorifics *officer* or *esquire* may be used.

In the case of a slave addressing their master, the honorific *master* is exclusively used.

In the case of any levy addressing their liege, the honorific *my liege* may be used, except when addressing a Shurhath, wherein the honorific *my liege and sovereign* must be used instead.

#### The Old Ways and Ulaki

The old ways, also denoted by its Khosgan word ‘cathan’, refers to a body of cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices held by a minority of noble dynasties in Ethagis, particularly the oldest, most ancient ones. Cathan centres around the cultural ideal of a warlord: mighty, fearsome, just, and respectable.

It is strongly recommended that you read about [Ethigean social hierarchy](#_Feyriatal) before this article.

For most of its history, the continent of Ethagis has been at war with itself, and the primacy of war in the course of history has been the principal factor shaping Ethigean society. For most of Ethigean history, its nobility have been warlords. Their role in society was a martial one, and the cultural ideal of a nobleman grew around this concept. In recent centuries, growing wealth and peace in Ethagis has done much to erode the idea of nobleman as a martial warlord. Now, nobility have taken on more of a governing, overseer role in society and have become increasingly decadent. Emphasis on martial values like strength, valour, and discipline has faded, and the cultural ideal of a nobleman has shifted from the idea of a perfect warlord to a perfect governor.

Cathan is a response to this change. It is a stubborn maintenance of the old ways, the previous noble ideal of a warlord whose role was to prepare, carry out, and potentially die in battle. It is a set of practices and beliefs that were held in centuries past by warlords in past eras (or at least, those who followed such traditions and ideals). Cathan is virtually exclusively practiced by the oldest houses in Ethagis as a way of maintaining the traditions and ideals of their ancestors.

Noblemen who keep the old ways must rule in the ways that the warlords of centuries past did: no excessive luxury or decadence, no expensive court or extensive bureaucracy, no jesters or spymasters, and a rigid adherence to the law and the exercise of justice. Their belief systems also roughly align with the traditional beliefs of old warlords. For example, noblemen who keep the old ways disdain [Ethigean religion](#_Religion) and its doctrines and ignore them. They see the Way (Ethigean religion) as ‘wishy-washy’ and cowardly, as its core values- restraint, moderation, etc- conflict with traditional warlord values- glory and power.

However, the old ways still advocate honour and morality, just a unique form. A nobleman who practices the old ways must exhibit the moral and personal qualities of the ideal warlord. They must be personally strong and fit, courageous and disciplined, firm but just. They must be undyingly loyal to their liege and must demand/earn undying loyalty from their levies. They must be a serious person who is not mocked and a skilled general/tactician.

They must be morally principled as well: morality is a major component of the old ways, but it is a unique form of morality suited to a warlord, not the kind that is prized in modern Britain, for example. For example, the principles of cathan condone killing and even exalt it, but it must be done in certain ways. To strike down an enemy in battlefield is not immoral: in fact, when done as an execution of one’s duty it’s a *moral* deed. But murdering the defenseless (women, children, prisoners, etc) is frowned upon, and killing by poison or assassination is seen as cowardly and ignoble.

Cathan does place great emphasis on personal honour and integrity, and it commands the nobility to whole-heartedly fulfil their obligations to their people, protecting them from harm and providing justice and security. It greatly opposes moral license, exploitation, decadence, and cruelty. Ultimately, cathan is an ideology which reinforces the role of a nobleman as laid out in the law. In the law, the nobleman is entitled to the service of his levies and supremacy above them, but in return must provide protection, security, and justice. Cathan emphasizes the supremacy of nobility and demands loyalty and deference, but forbids nobility to exploit their levies without consequences. They must fulfil their end of the bargain.

The role of Ethigean law in cathan is a key part of its framework. The moral system of cathan focuses on the importance of law, order, and hierarchy, and frames acts that support these concepts as moral and opposing acts as immoral. For example, slavery is condoned by cathan as it is enshrined in law and forms a major cornerstone of Ethigean society and the economy. It is not frowned upon to support the institution of slavery or to keep slaves. But it would be immoral to deprive slaves of their legal protections, for example, as doing so would be disobeying the law and thus one’s duties.

A side-effect of the focus on law, order, hierarchy, and tradition is that the old ways is a reactionary ideology. Its ultimate advocation is not the modern status quo but the regression of current Ethigean society and culture to what it was centuries before: a time of war and martial virtue. Hence, cathan is an ideology highly supportive of the idea of *tradition*: carrying out ancient customs and rituals, honouring one’s ancestors and emulating their martial virtues, strengthening one’s dynasty and ensuring its longevity, etc.

. It rejects many aspects of modern Ethigean society- extensive periods of peace a major one. Peace is seen as a route to decadence and weakness. War is seen as a tool to make men hardy and principled, although it shouldn’t be persecuted in a dishonourable or immoral way.

Trade and commerce aren’t inherently bad in cathan, but they lead to social changes like the increased influence of merchants and the gentry, which *is* seen as inherently bad. Cathan is anchored on the idea of hierarchy and the supremacy of the nobility. It has a mixed relationship with social mobility. Though it supports an open soldiery which should allow even commoners to ascend its ranks through merit and valour, the nobility is believed to be an inviolable caste whose dominance should never be challenged.

This is not to say that *individual* noblemen do not have duties: noblemen are expected and demanded to earn their eminence through personal example, being subject to a host of moral expectations and political duties (for example providing protection and justice to the people). Noblemen who cannot fulfil these roles are deemed unworthy of them and their power. But cathan strongly believed that the *social class of* the nobility should remain unchallenged. For example, the idea of a merchant gaining enough wealth to hold as much land as a nobleman is anathema to cathan.

The role of a commoner challenging or deposing a nobleman is also anathema. Although noblemen have to earn the right to rule, only a nobleman has the right to depose another nobleman. The importance of social hierarchy in cathan is paramount, and a commoner is seen as ‘lesser’ than a nobleman. A commoner deposing a nobleman would be a fundamental subversion of this lesser status and is thus reviled in cathan.

In summary, cathan is an ideology which seeks to align nobility with the cultural ideal of the perfect warlord: strong, principled, brave, and disciplined, who upholds Feyriatal (the Ethigean socio-political hierarchy) and tradition.

The practices of cathan are all conducive towards this ideal. For example, noblemen are expected to exercise and train every day: this makes them stronger and more disciplined. Noblemen are expected to wear armour in daily life, especially in front of others, instead of civilian clothes. This is because of the importance of tradition: historically, Ethigean nobility were warlords and as such were distinguished by constantly wearing armour. It was a practical means of protections and a strong status symbol, reinforcing the idea of one’s wealth and might.

Noblemen who follow the old ways therefore still wear armour almost constantly, in order to emulate their warlord ancestors of ages past. Indeed, noblemen are expected to act and dress almost exactly like warlords centuries ago, maintaining the traditional customs and practices of ancient nobility. Again, cathan is an ideology which venerates these ancient times and seeks a return to them.

One of these customs is Ulaki, the ritualized tattooing of the back/shoulders and sometimes the backs of the upper arms. Ulaki became adopted by nobility over a millennium ago as a means of intimidating others, and soon became widespread amongst warlords. It began to signify military prowess and became a symbol of strength, martial prowess, and the social class of warlords. It was a custom denied to all social classes save the nobility- even the asthanes- and became an indicator of membership in the military nobility.

The primary colour of the tattooing would always be black, a colour associated in Ethigean culture with power, sovereignty, and authority. The secondary colour would be blood red, associated with war and martial prowess. Sometimes, tertiary colours would be added by different noblemen at their discretion, for example blue or gold. This was fairly uncommon, however: black and blood-red were the mainstay colours of Ulaki.

The tattooing would always cover the whole back and would be a panoply of various images and themes. These included dragons, images of warriors, depictions of powerful natural phenomena like typhoons, and whatever else the nobleman deemed fit. Though some motifs- most notably dragons- were very common, there were no conventions or guidelines for what was to be tattooed. The content of one’s Ulaki was a symbol of one’s individuality and autonomy: a nobleman could not be compelled by anyone- not even his father- to have a certain thing tattooed.

The tattooing would occur at a stage in one’s life that signified manhood and maturity: normally, this was done at 25, the age that Ethigean culture deems adolescence to end at and adulthood to begin. However, it was sometimes carried out after a young nobleman before 25 achieved a great victory in battle, and receiving Ulaki when very young was a badge of pride.

Sometimes, when one nobleman sought to humiliate another, they would lacerate or flay their back in order to erase the Ulaki. If they had a captive nobleman who had not yet received Ulaki, they might prevent them from getting it- or even worse, compel them to have tattoos of their own defeat drawn upon them. This was seen as overly cruel and would earn the offending nobleman infamy and distrust.

Ulaki began to fade out of fashion about half a millennium after its inception. By the 3th century *Althaloris*, scholars began to comment on noblemen foregoing the procedure, who increasingly began seeing it as a relic of a more primitive era. By the 7th century, it was absent throughout the realm, save for a small minority who obstinately maintained it. Nowadays, it is only maintained by the minute proportion of noblemen who follow the old ways. Ulaki is therefore only practiced by around twenty houses, as the old ways are now extremely rare and dying out further. The gulf of time between Ulaki falling out of fashion and the present day, however, means that its fashionability has resurged and it is once again respected.

Ulaki is a work of art in and of itself and noblemen have always sought to impress others by it. Ulaki is respected nowadays because it is inherently aesthetic, and because it is designed to be fearsome and intimidating. More than that, however, it is a symbol of a lost and heroic era, of the ancient terror of the powerful warlords of yore.

The noblemen who still follow the old ways are often mocked for it by the majority of the nobility, who proclaim them to be primitive and uncivilized. Secretly, however, many noblemen respect and often fear them. Modern noble culture is at odds with the old ways and thus seeks to undermine them by mockery and dismissal, and noblemen often ridicule and humble it in the presence of one another. But it is difficult not to maintain an instinctive respect for them because the old ways were *designed* to evoke respect and fear. The whole point of cathan is to shape men into respectable and fearsome warlords. The main point of Ulaki was always to evoke fear and to elevate the person bearing them.

The old ways are so rare nowadays that fewer than twenty houses still follow them. The modern culture of Ethigean nobility still borrows heavily from what it used to be, of course, and the cultural ideal of a modern nobleman is still one that emphasizes most of the exact same qualities that cathan does. Noblemen are still meant to be strong, brave, authoritarian, and just, and are still greatly concerned with their own dominance, martial prowess, and military symbolism. Modern everyday noble clothing is still military in nature, it’s just not typically full armour, which is uncomfortable and impractical. Remember that cathan is ultimately a reinstatement of *historical* noble culture, and modern noble culture still borrows from this.

But explicitly following the old ways and the full breadth of their ideology is very rare, as is Ulaki. In the story set in Ethagis, the only dynasty said to still keep the old ways is House Rath, of which Cyzinian is a member. The only person in the whole story said to have Ulaki is Cyzinian, and other characters frequently mention the rarity and respectability of it.

#### Race and Ethnicity

Ethigeans have a fundamentally different understanding of race, ethnicity, and stereotyping than someone from 19th-21st century Earth would, but their attitudes align roughly with a European from antiquity or the Middle Ages.

##### For Reference: European Racism

In order to compare and understand the Ethigean conception of race and ethnicity, it is best to first examine how Europeans have considered these concepts. As the West has been in a position of global dominance since the 19th century, it has been able to impose its conceptions and values concerning race/ethnicity on the rest of the world, leading to the universalization of these values. As such, this article will consider the understanding of race/ethnicity from a *European* perspective- and also because I anticipate most of the readers of this document will be Western and therefore it makes sense to use a comparison that will be familiar to more readers.

The current attitude of a racist Westerner (although these views would have been considered not only normal but as genuine science before the 1930s or so) is based on biology and phenotype. That is to say, a black man is inferior to a white man[[5]](#footnote-6) because of the colour of his skin (his outward appearance- phenotype) and because the former ethnicity is considered biologically inferior to the latter. Western thought has historically designated black men to be *by nature* brutish, impulsive, and animalistic, with black women being lustful and stupid. These traits are ingrained by nature as a fact of biology. They are less evolved than an Anglo-Saxon, being in between an ape and a man; that is to say, not quite human.

But the idea of ‘whiteness’ is a social construct and not a biological one, because different peoples that we would today consider racially white have been considered ethnically inferior and thus not truly white for centuries. Irishmen, Poles, and Italians are examples of these. In as recently as the mid-20th century, an Anglo-Saxon would have insisted that a Greek, for example, was not truly white, and a Greek would fervently insist the opposite. ‘Whiteness’, and by extension the whole concept of race, is thus biological on a surface level but in reality about power and social status. It is no coincidence that in the turn of the 20th century, for example, Germanic peoples were thought to be biologically superior to Slavs: the strongest nations (Britain, Germany, and the USA) were ethnically Germanic, and most Slavs in Europe were too oppressed by other powers to even *have* their own nation-state.

Europeans have been racist towards other Europeans for as long as they have been racist towards non-Europeans. The idea of a race hierarchy was not conjured out of thin air by Adolf Hitler, he just took long pre-existing concepts to their extreme. Englishmen had claimed ethnic superiority to, say, Southern and Eastern Europeans for almost a century beforehand. These ideas of race, hierarchy, and racial ‘science’ attempting to prove this hierarchy (and succeeding in the eyes of Westerners) became most potent during the 19th and 20th centuries.

But they have their roots in as far back as the 16th century when Europeans first began to man the New World with slaves. Brutality, colonialism, and imperialism needs justification, and over time these justifications arrived. By the 19th century, it was seen in the West as the white man’s destiny to rule the world- predestined because of his superiority over other races. This was used to justify various genocides: for example the one committed by the British in Tasmania. These attitudes on race materialized over time due to economic reasons (the necessity of slavery to generate wealth), reasons generated by the unique situation of colonialism and the tri-point trade.

This is, of course, an oversimplification of a complex issue, and something as broad and complex as racism can’t be pinned down in a few paragraphs. But, in summary, the modern conception of racism as a biological/phenotypical reality has its roots in colonialism and properly emerged in the 19th century.

When one examines times *before* colonialism, one still sees what we would call racism. In fact, in any part of the world in any time of history one would see what we would call racism. There is an unfortunate human tendency to mark out, fear, and despise outsiders. However, in Europe, this racism was of a very different kind to the modern one.

In antiquity, it was not based on biology, but sociology. Take the Roman Empire. Romans saw themselves as naturally superior to other peoples. But this was not because of biology, but rather their civilisation. They saw Roman civilisation as superior to, for example, German civilisation, and thus judged themselves to be superior. But there was no biological boundary for someone to *become* Roman, it was simply a case of gaining citizenship. Hence when Caesar conquered Gaul, many Gallic aristocrats were simply given citizenship and then joined the Roman Senate. Now that they were integrated into Roman civilisation, they were Roman and thus no longer inferior.

Their ethnicity was irrelevant. Roman Senators at the time objected because foreigners were being introduced into a Roman institution, but the Gauls were foreigners because they were from another land, not because of their blood or lineage. There have even been ethnically African emperors. Being Roman was thus entirely a sociopolitical concept: one had to be integrated into Roman society to be Roman, and in there was a political dimension to it because being in Roman society was an expression of serving the Roman state. You owed your allegiance to the Empire of Rome, not some other country.

Neither did the Medieval Europeans see racism as biological. It was also a sociological and sociopolitical concept, rooted in the inferiority of other cultures/civilisations rather than an inferiority of genes. As one approaches the 19th century, this kind of racism becomes more formalized as an ideology and more elaborate. For example, there are European ‘stereotype charts’ from the Early Modern Era (1453-1789) listing various European ethnicities, e.g. ‘Spanish’, and then what Spaniards are considered to be good at, what their positive qualities are, negative qualities, vices, etc. But this elaborate racism was still rooted in sociopolitics: an ethnic Spaniard could join the French aristocracy and be regarded as French.

Ethigean racism is on a sociopolitical basis comparable to Europe before Early Modernity (although there are still considerable differences) rather than a biological basis reminiscent of Europe afterwards.

##### The Ethigean View: Peoples and Allegiance

In Europe throughout its history, the terms of race and ethnicity have been used often and are charged with connotations. In Ethagis, the definitive terms are ‘peoples’ and ‘allegiance’. These terms will be elaborated on later, and they will be seen to be recurring regularly.

A ‘people’ is an ethnic group that is distinct from others by appearance, culture, heritage, or nation. A people has their own lifestyle because they live under the same laws and institutions (notwithstanding class divisions within that people), have a shared heritage, and have a common culture. It is a fundamentally social concept An ‘allegiance’ can be just taken to mean the country that a person lives in and pays taxes to. It is a fundamentally political concept.

In the world that Ethagis is part of, a people and their allegiance are often fairly synonymous. The Empire of Abyssinia, for example, consists of the Abyssinian people, who owe allegiance to the Empire of Abyssinia. There is some ethnic diversity within the state itself, but ethnic identity in Ethagis and the world[[6]](#footnote-7) is fairly fluid and as long as everyone there has had the same allegiance for a long time, the inhabitants are just considered ‘Abyssinian’- a single people, despite phenotypic differences between them.

Ethigeans have no knowledge of genetics or way or determining them. The only way that Ethigeans can determine the differences between peoples are by obvious physical differences (e.g. black versus white) or by country. These aren’t necessarily accurate methods of delineation, but they are the simplest.

This is to say that ethnic identity is a highly fluid grey area and Ethigeans generally delineate people by allegiance first and then superimpose this concept on the concept of peoplehood. Because of this, Ethigeans don’t really have a concept of ‘ethnicity’ and certainly not a concept of something as arbitrary as ‘race’. Ethigeans divide the world into its various peoples, each of which are all physically similar and generally compose a single country. Most countries in Jagannath aren’t multi-ethnic empires and do just consist of one people, similarly to how in the 5th century in Europe there was a realm for the Visigoths, realms for Scandinavians, etc. All Visigoths are somewhat ethnically similar and thus have physical similarities (e.g. skin colour). An Ethigean would say that these Visigoths are one people with one allegiance.

The vast majority of peoples (by this Ethigean definition) thus have their own country, though this is with some exceptions. The main quandary is when a country conquers or assimilates another, as in this case either one people subjugates another and forces it to join the same country, or one people absorbs another into the same country. There now exist >1 peoples in this country: they are different because their histories, cultures, and lifestyles are different.

Their allegiance is the same, but they aren’t the same people. Often when a people is newly subjugated, they live under different, more draconian *laws* than assimilated/original peoples. Sometimes, countries will oppress a people for a prolonged period of time: by doing so, perhaps by imposing harsher laws, military occupation, or higher taxes, they ensure the lifestyle of the oppressed and non-oppressed peoples are kept different. They thus never share the same lifestyle and thus never share the same culture. They will always have separate histories. They never unite to form a single people.

But normally, after a period of establishing their new rule by brutality and chaos, the newly conquered people is gradually given the same treatment as other peoples already in the country. And, over time, the conquered people lives the exact same way as the conquering people: they live under the same laws, share the same monarch, pay the same taxes, etc. Because the laws and institutions governing each people are the same, they each experience historical events in the same way, so as long as they remain in the same country their history is the same. The different peoples thus develop the same history and culture- they truly have the same allegiance.

And as time goes on and these different peoples form more of a shared history and culture, they eventually become a single people despite physical differences. Appearance is not *ignored*, but the idea of being a single cultural unit united by heritage and allegiance is more important. Hence, some Ethigeans have a beige skin colour, some are brown, some are black, but they are all considered to be part of a single Ethigean people. Appearance isn’t really a factor in large empires like Ethagis because there will inevitably be variety in phenotype, so allegiance plays the primary part.

For example, the Empire of Hysparleon is considered to consist of a single people: the Hysparlens. But one Hysparlen, at the north of the empire, may be white, whereas another at the south may be more brown. These would have been different peoples *at one point*- the different appearances of these peoples is a testament to their different origins. They originated as separate peoples with separate allegiances and countries, and this is clear to see because they have different phenotypes.

Because these once different peoples have been in the same country for so long, however, they become one people- the Hysparlens. Peoplehood is fundamentally based on the civilisation the person occupies rather than one’s actual ethnicity. Appearance indicates past allegiance and thus past peoplehood but not present allegiance and peoplehood. By being a part of the civilisation of Hysparleon long enough, you become Hysparlen.

Similarly, if you took a baby born in Hysparleon to Semidon and raised him as an Ethigean, he would be considered a part of the Ethigean people. He owes no allegiance to Hysparleon, he shares no culture with Hysparlens, he is not governed by their laws or their monarchy. He is undeniably Ethigean. His skin colour, for example, is irrelevant.

In summary, what makes you part of a people is not your ethnicity, but your lifestyle. What distinguishes the peoples of the world is not that which is biological, but that which is sociopolitical.

##### The Ethigean View: Civilisation and Superiority

The third integral term to Ethigean perceptions of race, ethnicity, and nationhood is ‘civilisation’. The idea of civilisation refers to the *achievements* of a country. These achievements are political, military, economic, and civic. What contributes to how mighty a civilisation is is how great its military is, how wealthy is it, how absolute the monarch is,[[7]](#footnote-8) how large and built-up its cities are, etc. Every civilisation is different because its positions on these innumerable continuous variables are always different. And- and this concept will be explored later- different civilisations are superior or inferior to others.

As established, the vast majority of countries at any given time will be composed of a single people. The two concepts are generally synonymous, and are colloquially considered to be identical. Sometimes a country will have newly-conquered or long-oppressed minorities, and in this case it is the majority people who are said to be representative of the country. For example, when Ethagis goes to war with Hysparleon and takes Hysparlen prisoners-of-war as slaves, those slaves are oppressed minorities in Ethagis and are not the same people as Ethigeans because they have a different lifestyle. Hence, the country of Ethagis- and its civilisation- is defined by the majority people (Ethigeans) and not the minority (Hysparlens).

Inversely, in the Empire of Hysparleon, the Hysparlens are the majority, and any Ethigean prisoner-of-war slaves are an oppressed minority. The civilisation of the Empire of Hysparleon is thus defined as the achievements and lifestyle of the majority, not the minority. This system of majority-minority would be invalid when considering a country with >1 *co-dominant* peoples, none of which are oppressed or minorities. Ethigeans do not know of any countries like this, but if so they would simply judge that country’s civilisation to be a combined representation of each of its peoples rather than just one people.

Indeed, a civilisation is believed to be fundamentally tied to its people. A mighty civilisation with good laws and a strong monarch is both a product and cause of a correspondingly mighty people. The good state and strength of the country means that the individuals raised in it become better and stronger, and as a collective the people of the country becomes better. They are thus better able to maintain and increase the might of the country.

By being militarily successful and thus enriching the strength of the civilisation of a country, it grows mightier and its people mightier. By being unsuccessful and diminishing its civilisation strength, it grows weaker and its people less impressive. The mightiness of a people partially contributes to the might of the country- for example a courageous people unafraid to die in war or who never break formation- but there are a myriad other factors as well. The mightiness of a people is solely dependent on the mightiness of the civilisation whose people they are part of, but the mightiness of that civilisation is dependent on many, many factors.

Some civilisations are objectively mightier than and thus superior to others, and hence by extension some peoples are objectively mightier than and thus superior to others (based on the might and merits of their civilisation). A superior civilisation may not always be a most powerful country: Ethigeans recognize that the strength of countries fluctuates and depends on various external conditions. However, a civilisation is not the current state of a country but its *achievements* throughout time, and it is possible for a mighty people with a mighty civilisation to fall on hard times. In this case, the country is weak but the people/civilisation is not.

The obvious thing to mention here is that Ethigeans can’t have a concrete idea of the achievements of a people because not only can something as abstract as that not be quantified, but Ethigeans can’t just visit the country and take notes whenever they like. This is a period of history where international travel is dangerous and expensive, and information like precisely how wealthy a country is impossible for even that country to accurately gather, never mind a foreign Ethigean spy. Ethigeans often solve this problem by assuming the achievements of a people based on their encounters with that people.

For example, Ethigeans scarcely visit Abyssinia, but assume it is wealthy and powerful because they have faced its armies. They can see how disciplined and numerous the Abyssinian legions are and assume that because Abyssinia has access to a large number of well-trained soldiers, it is wealthy and has a disciplined people. Due to its wealth and the inherent virtue of its people, its civilisation must therefore be highly advanced.

Ethigeans don’t actually use the term advanced, but refer to these sorts of civilisations as ‘mighty’ or ‘great’, and applies this jargon to peoples. The opposite kind of civilisation is ‘weak’, ‘inferior’ or ‘lesser’. Civilisations in the middle are ‘middling’. A phrase used previously is ‘might and merit’, a reflection of how Ethigeans generally measure the greatness or inferiority of a civilisation by its militarily capacity and power (might), and by its general development and the depth/breadth of the knowledge there (merit).

Ethigeans believe that the Ethigean people is the greatest people on Jagannath. This is evidenced by the fact that Ethagis has been the mightiest nation in the world for several centuries, and the Ethigean civilisation is the greatest civilisation on the planet. The inherent superiority of the Ethigean people is even proved by the fact that Ethagis is in the centre of the world (this is not actually true, it’s just that Ethigeans don’t know about the continents of Daskaigia and Insulinde and know little about the actual size and dimensions of Herat, Amphiction, and Fasilides).

Various Ethigean scholars have formulated elaborate racial hierarchies depicting all the known peoples of the world in an order of greatness (all of which have Ethigeans as the summit), but although the precise hierarchy lacks consensus and is generally taken to be fluid, there is by now a certain pre-assumed order generally held by Ethigean society. Different peoples have different stereotypes and believed virtues and vices. The proportion of these stereotypes and prejudicial views that are positive depends on the believed greatness of the people.

Ethigeans hold no people as flawless, not even their own- all peoples are believed to have their own semi-unique [ignoble principles](#_Morality_and_Reincarnation) (i.e. negative characteristics) and other negative associations. Each people in fact has a very large number of associations, ranging from things like which [temperament](#_The_Five_Temperaments) they tend to be predisposed to or which climate they best thrive under, with only the majority (rather than the totality) being explicitly positive/negative. Greater peoples have more explicitly positive associations and even more neutral associations, like temperament, tend to be more favourable. The opposite is true of peoples believed to be inferior.

By modern Western standards, these views are, of course, highly racist, but historically similar beliefs have been held not only in the West but nigh-universally. Humans have, as mentioned before, an unfortunate biological tendency to delineate themselves from what they mark as ‘outsiders’, and because they fear these outsiders they demonise and/or belittle them to come with it. To seek out security and self-affirmation they assert their own superiority and greatness.

Though us today, products of millennia of Western sociocultural development, can now rightly denounce these tendencies as morally wrong and dangerous, it is neither logical nor helpful to extend these views to fictional societies set in the context of an era before our own. The (fictional) reality is that Ethigeans are on top in a brutish and martial world, and both recognise their eminence and fear their downfall. And from these deeper, partly subconscious fears, they articulate a detailed and poisonous ideology.

##### Ethnic Makeup of Ethagis

Above are the views of Ethigeans regarding ethnicity- as explained, they don’t use the word ethnicity and don’t even really recognise it as a concept. Ethigean scholars who study [abnothology](#_The_Learned_Arts) [i.e. anthropology/ethnography] would distinguish the different peoples of the world by allegiance rather than ethnicity. However, despite the fact that Ethigean abnothology doesn’t recognise the idea of ethnicity, different ethnic groups on Jagannath still exist.

Ethagis is the word used to refer both to the country of Ethagis and the continent- in both cases the boundaries are the same. This is comparable to how ‘Australia’ refers to a country and continent, both of which are the same landmass and surface area.

The ethnic make-up continent of Ethagis is highly complex. The continent was originally inhabited by over a dozen different peoples, each with their own ethnic heritage. Millennia ago, there was no Empire of Ethagis and no Shurhath. The continent was filled with different tribes, most of which with a primitive nation-state in some region of the continent and with their own heritage. Though some tribes had been nomadic throughout history, by the 2nd millennium *Alhecanis* all the different tribes (i.e. different ethnicities) had settled in various parts of the continent. One could draw an ethnic map of the continent depicting over a dozen ethnicities.

Over time and as the continent became increasingly unified politically, the interbreeding of ethnicities led to new ones. Much like how the modern English ethnicity has evolved from the Anglo-Saxon ethnicity which has evolved from the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes, etc, the ethnic composition of Ethagis gradually became more complex and changing. Ethnicity is a nuanced concept and it’s difficult to divide Ethigeans into discrete ethnic groups. Don’t picture the various ethnicities of Ethagis as discrete groups, but imagine a continuous spectrum of ethnicity, with individuals each falling at different places on that spectrum.

Dividing this spectrum into discrete ethnic groups is a difficult undertaking, and arguably impossible as any division of a continuous variable into discrete groups is arbitrary to an extent. Doing so would likely yield dozens. Indeed, when one looks at large and formerly multi-ethnic countries on Earth, we *do* see dozens. The People’s Republic of China currently officially recognises no fewer than 56 ethnic groups- the actual number will almost certainly be more than this.

Imagining a ‘spectrum of ethnicity’ is difficult as ethnicity is somewhat of an abstract concept, so in simplification just imagine a vast spectrum of skin colours. Skin colour is a crude way of identifying ethnicity, but it serves as a good, easy-to-understand example here. The ethnic make-up of Ethagis is such that there are no shades of white here, but there is still a large range spanning lots of different colours.

If one looks at this article [here](https://duskyskin.com/skin-tone-names/) (which itself picks fairly arbitrary names and categories for skin colour), the skin colours present in Ethagis would span from all these colours save porcelain and pale ivory. They would also span all the intermediate values between these colour categories. On the [Fitzpatrick scale](https://injectables.com.au/finding-fitzpatrick-skin-type/), Ethigeans would be Type III to Type VI inclusive.

Ethigeans don’t really concern themselves with the idea of ethnicity, caring more about allegiance if anything. Every living Ethigean would describe the ‘Ethigeans’ as one people. It is obvious to Ethigeans, however, that there *are* external differences between Ethigeans. They can plainly see that a black man and a man with a ‘sand’ skin tone look different. Ethigean abnothology does address this. It proclaims that within the unified people of Ethagis, there are subdivisions. Each subdivision is generally referred to as a ‘kinfolk’, but this whole concept isn’t important enough to Ethigean society for a universal name to be given. The idea of kinfolk is generally unknown to the uneducated commonry, although they too can obviously recognise phenotypic differences.

Each kinfolk is a group of people who look different to others to an extent that it makes logical sense to classify them semi-separately. They generally have a semi-unique heritage and culture: not too unique that they count as their own ‘people’, but enough. This is not part of the kinfolk classification, however, just a sort of ‘side effect’. Each kinfolk is purely a matter of physical appearance. Ethigean scholarship generally agrees that there are Four Kinfolks of the Empire. They are listed here in no order.

The first is the light-skinned ‘[Type III](https://injectables.com.au/finding-fitzpatrick-skin-type/)’ kinfolk of the Autumnlands and the Marches to the very north of the Empire. This kinfolk is distinct from others by the lightness of its skin, explainable by both the more temperate northern climate and a greater flux of Type II people from Amphiction.

The second is the desert-dwelling kinfolk of the west of the continent. This kinfolk is Type IV but has a markedly unique facial structure to other Type IV Ethigeans, and happen to live almost exclusively in the arid desert.

The third is the black-skinned Type VI kinfolk of the South. This kinfolk is also distinguished from others by its unique facial structure. They happen to live almost exclusively in the rainforests of the very south of the continent.

The fourth is just the catch-all category for other Ethigeans. It is the largest kinfolk but the other kinfolks aren’t small enough that they’re ‘minorities’, just smaller groups. People in this kinfolk rank as Type IV or Type V, with the majority being the former.

It is vital to emphasise that unlike the idea of peoples, kinfolks plays no sociopolitical role- nor will it ever. Kinfolks are constituents of the same people and *that* is what matters. The colour of one’s skin or the structure of one’s face are genuinely not relevant to Ethigeans. What matters is not being Ethigean. A universal sociopolitical principle of the Empire is that not just that all the kinfolk are equal, but the differences between them are genuinely pretty much meaningless because they each share an allegiance and civilisation.

### Geography

#### Antavar

The River Antavar is the longest river in Ethagis and the largest drainage system on the continent. It is one of the largest rivers in the world by length and discharge and has around three dozen tributaries. Much of the land around Antavar is highly fertile and is thus coveted for its yield- the term Antavar, without the title of ‘river’, is sometimes used to refer to both the river and the lands surrounding it, although the word Antavar can also just be a shorthand way of referring to the river alone. The river is also an important communications link and serves as a vital transportation and commercial artery in the continent. Consequently, it has played a substantial role in Ethigean history and still holds considerable cultural and political significance today.

For most of Ethigean history, the continent has not been a unified empire but rather many different warring lordships owned by warlords competing for supremacy. For these periods of history wherein Ethagis was divided, Antavar was even more significant a geographical feature than it is now. The river itself was often used as a border between lordships and was jealously fought over. The fertile land around the river was coveted by all lords and many wars were fought over it.

The river itself was- and is- extremely valuable. It facilitated vast amounts of trade, allowed men and materiel to be moved far more rapidly than on land, allowed similarly rapid communications between a liege and his levies, and gave access to the sea. Fighting over the river and its surrounding lands was correspondingly frequent and intense.

The immense attention and bloodshed given to the region conferred great prestige on whoever owned it. The lords of Antavar were often more powerful than others and as a result of this- and the simple fact that they ruled over such a coveted region- were often more respected and feared. Similarly, capturing a stretch of Antavar was a greater than normal assertion of supremacy. Part of the full titles of the Shurhath of Ethagis is ‘Lord of Antavar’ for good reason. Antavar is such a strategic and prestigious region of the continent that its ownership should logically be emphasised.

This is one of the ways in which the River Antavar plays a significant political role, but there are various others. Firstly, the commercial and agricultural importance of the delta is such that owning the delta would make a lord one of the most powerful in the realm despite the delta not being highly geographically extensive. Thus, one of the mighty lordships of the realm is that of the delta, and the Mighty Lord of the Delta owns the least amount of land of all the mighty lords, and yet is typically one of the most influential. Antavar provides such wealth in the form of crops, fish, and trade that those who own part of it have often become more powerful and thus more politically relevant in the realm. In this way, Antavar exerts a constant and undeniable influence on continental politics.

Secondly, the river has contributed towards the current centralisation of the realm: the sheer size of Ethagis makes centralisation difficult as it makes it hard for a Shurhath to actually be in or visit most parts of the realm. The river allows for a Shurhath to travel far more quickly than he would be able to on land, and its tributaries can take him to many parts of the empire. This is highly beneficial for centralisation as it allows a Shurhath to keep a closer watch on many parts of the empire, and the threat of a swift river-borne invasion keeps many lords in line.

Thirdly, the river’s great facilitation of trade, transport, and fresh water provision has meant that settlements there can thrive: Semidon could not have been the capital were it not for the manifold boons of the river. In fact, it likely would not even exist: like many Ethigean settlements, it was originally a war camp, which became a more permanent military site, which became a town and then a city. The Shurhath who established that war camp centuries ago surely did so because the river was so advantageous for a warlord.

Fourthly, because men and materiel can be transported faster by water than land, and by the comparatively swift currents of Antavar faster than other rivers, the river has played a vital role in warfare (which Clausewitz famously dubbed the continuation of politics by other means). Antavar gives an army speed and manoeuvrability- and aids its supply-, and in war these advantages over an enemy are vital. It has conducted many armies to Semidon and many armies away from it, and has supplied- or broken off supply to- many other forces. It has given many armies access to the sea, or easy access downriver, and has allowed these forces to be supplied, allowing them to ambush and defeat rivals and pirates. Because it has played such a substantial role in Ethagis’ wars, it has thus shaped the course of the empire’s history, and will continue to do so for many more centuries to come.

#### The Autumnlands

The Autumnlands is a geographic region in Ethagis and is the name given to the northernmost regions of the Empire of Ethagis, *except* for those which border other countries: those regions are the Marches. Note that ‘autumn’ is not a season in Ethagis; the continent of Ethagis is too equatorial to have a widely recognised four-season cycle and both Ethigean scholars and laymen divide the year into a wet season and a dry season.

In the Ethigean language, Khosgan, the word which is in this document translated to autumn doesn’t refer to a season but rather a climate. The Autumnlands has a more temperate climate than the rest of the continent and has more distinct seasons. A modern climactic classification that we would use, for example the Koeppen system, would dub this region Cwa, although the Autumnlands is significantly less humid than the rest of the realm.

The Autumnlands is a geographic term but also has political meaning. Its borders are roughly based on climate, but their exact position reflects not the effort of paragraphers [karigraphy is the Ethigean name for the scientific discipline of geography/cartography] but warlords. Northern warlords centuries ago pushed the borders as far south as each Shurhath allowed them to, and over the centuries these borders stabilised and took on the form seen today.

The term ‘the Autumnlands’ is a political one, not a karigraphic [the mass noun for the term geography is ‘geographical’ not ‘geographic’, but the rules of Khosgan don’t precisely mirror those of English] one. Nowadays, it is a grouping of various lords, comprising a mighty lord and a few askary lords, although in ages past the whole Autumnlands was ruled by a single liege, giving rise to the now extinct title ‘Mighty Lord of the Autumnlands’.

The Autumnlands is also slightly ethnically different from the remainder of Ethagis: see [here](#_Race_and_Ethnicity_1) for more details on the ethnic make-up of Ethagis and the socio-political views that Ethigeans have on ethnicity. As a general rule, Ethigeans aren’t really concerned with ethnicity as long as one is an Ethigean, and the different ethnicity of the Autumnlanders lacks any political or social significance. Nonetheless, it is present, and is often used to discern whether someone is an Autumnlander. As immigration is low within and outside of Ethagis, most ethnically northern Ethigeans are in fact from the Autumnlands, and thus the ethnic difference can often be used to discern someone’s political allegiance as well.

Autumnlanders are paler than other Ethigeans: this is due to both the more temperate climate and interbreeding with the flux of people from Amphiction, the continent to the north. The Empire of Hysparleon on this continent is populated by Hysparlens, who are fairly pale. Throughout the course of history- particularly during wars between Hysparleon and Ethagis- many Hysparlens have emigrated to Ethagis and taken partners in the most accessible regions there (i.e. the Autumnlands), having children who shared ethnic traits from both parents. Over time, the Autumnlands took on a different ethnic character than the rest of Ethagis.

#### The Marches

The Marches are the regions of the Empire of Ethagis which directly border other countries. Formerly a political term, it has now lost its original politico-military meaning and is used as a geographic term.

The term originated centuries ago when southern Amphiction was peopled by powerful and aggressive nomadic horselords bordered Ethagis and regularly invaded. Shurhaths in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries often had to defend the frontier against such incursions, or at least maintain a strong military presence there to deter and prepare for future attacks. The lack of supervision of the more southerly lords, however, meant that they often rebelled: several Shurhaths were either overthrown or seriously threatened by rebellious lords whilst preoccupied with the frontier.

As a counter to this, subsequent Shurhaths (or powerful northern warlords) empowered the lords whose lands were directly on the frontier, giving them sweeping privileges and supreme military authority in the region (obviously subordinate to the Shurhath/warlords himself) to deal with the horselords there. These lords became known as ‘march lords’ and their lordships, directly bordering foreign lands, the ‘marches’. When the Empire of Hysparleon reached its territorial peak and directly neighboured Ethagis for a few decades, the frightened warlords there empowered the march lords even more.

Over time, the march lords accumulated more and more power, and as the threat of foreign invasion dwindled over the centuries they found themselves faced with more power than danger. Undeterred by the threat of invasion the march lords, few though they were, began to turn on each other. The lands, wealth, and manpower accorded to the few march lords eventually became consolidated in the hands of one dynasty, who became very powerful indeed. By around 600 all of the Marches were owned by one mighty lord, and the Marches are now a region of one of the mighty lordships of Ethagis.

Nowadays, the phrase ‘the Marches’ is almost exclusively used in a geographical context, meaning the north-west corner of the Empire around the Ethigean border. Climactically, like the Autumnlands, it is more temperate than the rest of the continent and has more distinct seasons. It is more arid than the Autumnlands, however, and the terrain is flatter and more grassy. The climate could be described as a combination between the Autumnlands and Nagal.

Ethnically, the Marches has the same character as the Autumnlands. Its inhabitants are paler than other Ethigeans, both due to the less hot climate and greater immigration from Amphiction. One could describe its inhabitants as a Type III on the Fitzpatrick scale. This fact has almost no socio-political relevance in Ethagis: provided that someone is politically an Ethigean, their ethnicity generally isn’t a source of discrimination and won’t correlate with their socioeconomic status. It will most likely be remarked on, however- ethnicity is *noticed*, just not greatly cared about. For more information on Ethigean views on race and ethnicity, click [here](#_Race_and_Ethnicity_1).

#### Nagal

Nagal is the Ethigean name given to the desert in the west of the continent. Foreigners and some Ethigeans will sometimes refer to it as the ‘Nagal Desert’. Nagal is the only desert in the continent of Ethagis and the most arid region there. Using the Koeppen climate classification system, Nagal would likely be classified as BWk, although its maximum temperatures by month are between BWk and BWh and its range of temperature is fairly low.

Nagal is a purely geographic term and is not to be confused with the title Mighty Lord of Nagal. Due to historical developments and sociopolitical factors, the political borders of the mighty lordship in the region almost wholly correspond with the geographic borders of the Nagal Desert.

The history of Nagal and its peoples differ from the rest of Ethagis. Until a few centuries ago, the inhabitants of Nagal (who are ethnically different to other Ethigeans and referred to as a unique ‘kinfolk’ within the realm) were nomadic, and sustained themselves through hunting, foraging, and- primarily- raiding as opposed to agriculture. Shurhaths and the most powerful regional warlords throughout history had ordered the desert peoples (also known as the ‘Nagalans’ or ‘Nagali’) to cease their raiding. However, these commands were not always obeyed, and even if they were once the conqueror of the desert died, they would typically return to their old ways.

Nonetheless, as the centuries went on and the warlords in the west became wealthier and more powerful, they were forced to stop raiding for longer and longer periods. The practice of raiding and plundering began to die out. In the late 6th century, the powerful and imposing Shurhaths occupied the region and purged many of the most feared raiders, dealing the practice what seemed to be a death blow. Though the Nagali began to raid once again in the great interregnum after 650 *Althaloris*, once a new dynasty of Shurhaths secured power they once again enforced the cessation of raiding. The Nagali have not raided other lands since.

The capital of the Mighty Lordship of Nagal is the city of Efrita, which is the largest and most populous settlement in the desert. The density of cities in Nagal is lower than in other regions of Ethagis, and most of the population is spread out in small villages which derive sustenance from foraging and farming whichever animals can survive in the region.

#### The South

The South is a political, geographic, ethnic, and cultural region in the Empire of Ethagis which is considerably distinct from the rest of the empire. Politically, it has been united under a single lordship for many centuries now, which at different points in history has been an independent kingdom or an Ethigean vassal domain, called the Mighty Lordship of the South. The political borders of this lordship almost exactly correspond to the geographic borders of the region of the continent Ethagis which is covered in rainforest.

Climactically, this rainforest is the hottest and wettest region of Ethagis. According to the Koeppen system, one of the climactic classification systems that we have in the modern day on Earth, the South would be an Af. Ethnically, inhabitants of the South, typically referred to as Southerners, are different from other Ethigeans. Ethigean abnothology [a discipline of Ethigean science concerned with the study of ethnicity] lists Southerners as a separate ‘kinfolk’ from other Ethigeans. Southerners have considerably darker skin than other Ethigeans and differing facial structures. It is worth noting that Ethigeans assign very little importance to ethnicity when it comes to other Ethigeans, and a Southerner would not face discrimination for being of a different kinfolk that other Ethigeans.

Culturally and socioeconomically, the South is very different from other regions of Ethagis. These differences are primarily driven by the hardships of living in the rainforest, and how the harsher and less luxurious lifestyle of Southerners has affected its economy and social structure. For example, the South is the most equal and meritocratic region in Ethagis as the difficulties of rainforest living require all inhabitants to be self-sufficient and skilled to a degree, which raises the ‘baseline’ social status of the average Southerner. These difficulties also necessitate skilled leaders, and political mechanisms for casting out an inept ruler without civil war exist. This is a massively important institution which reduces power distance between commoners and lords because commoners can initiate these mechanisms and ruling lords are acutely aware that their rulership must be earned and is not guaranteed.

The Mighty Lordship of the South is the region of Ethagis which by far has the lowest slave population. The few slaves that do labour in the South are primarily servants or prisoners-of-war deployed in manual labour. Although elsewhere in the Empire, particularly the wealthy Springlands, many farms and plantations employ slaves, there are very few large farms in the South which grow cash crops, and those that do almost exclusively use free labour.

The South is one of the most dangerous regions in Ethagis to live in, and one of the regions which is the least materially luxurious. Temperatures and rainfall are unpleasantly high, and dangerous megafauna still pose a threat to Southerners further from settlements. Southerners import little from other regions of Ethagis, partially for economic reasons but mainly because self-sufficiency is a considerable matter of pride, and people are expected to accumulate luxuries from natural sources they hunt/forage/farm themselves. Luxuries are few in the South relative to other regions.

The South is highly politically centralised compared to other regions in Ethagis, mainly because centralisation and efficiency are more necessary for survival in a more hostile environment. Moreover, the greater emphasis of meritocratic rule in the South and the lower power distance between the ruling nobility and the commonry means that, to stay in power, ruling dynasties typically rely far more on loyalty than fear. The norm of loyalty to a capable nobleman who cares for his people fosters an atmosphere of trust and loyalty which permits the commonry and nobility to tolerate a greater degree of centralisation and absolutism than in other mighty lordships in Ethagis.

The manifold ways in which Southern society and living differs from the rest of Ethagis often earns scorn and disdain from other Ethigean nobility. As a result of their unique ways, traditions, and socioeconomic structure, other Ethigean nobility tend to see Southerners as slightly barbaric, although someone who is *ethnically* Southern and raised like a non-Southerner would not be seen as barbaric at all. The judgement for Southerners comes not from their genes, but their lifestyle. For more information on Ethigean views on race and ethnicity, click [here](#_Race_and_Ethnicity_1).

#### The Springlands

The Springlands is a geographic region in Ethagis, referring to the southern portion of the realm which isn’t rainforest. The Springlands is categorised by its terrain and climate: in terms of the former, it is less forested than other parts of Ethagis and features many hills and valleys. Climactically, the Springlands is warm, sunny, and verdant, yielding high harvests and pleasant climes. Its agricultural wealth makes the Springlands some of the most coveted land in Ethagis, and the pleasant beauty of its warm sunlit landscapes makes it an extremely popular place of residence for noblemen, who often take ‘holidays’ there.

‘Spring’ is not a season in Ethagis, which is too equatorial to have a widely recognised four-season cycle. Ethigean scholars and laymen both divide the year into a wet season and a dry season. In the Ethigean language (Khosgan), the word which translates to ‘spring’ is not used to describe a season but rather a climate. The Springlands has a warmer climate than the rest of Ethagis and is more lush, being very ‘green’ and hosting a high biodiversity.

Like the Autumnlands, the term of ‘the Springlands’ is a geographic one but also has political meaning. The borders of the Springlands are roughly based on climate but their exact positioning has been determined by the boundaries of various lordships in the Springlands throughout history. The Springlander lords of centuries past sought to push their borders as far north as they could, and often time a general frontier emerged.

At a few points in history, the Springlands have been united as one fiefdom under a single great conqueror, who assumed the prestigious title of ‘Mighty Lord of the Springlands’. Such a great united domain has never lasted long, however, and for centuries the old title has remained extinct. The Springlands is a difficult region to unite because (as a result of its high sun exposure) it has high agricultural prosperity, which empowers and enriches the lords there. These lords are then better able to resist conquerors, making the region harder to overrun and dominate by any one warlord.

### Government

The fundamental political system of the Empire of Ethagis is an autocratic imperial feudal bureaucracy. As an imperial autocracy, it is nominally ruled by a single person with an imperial title. The political and socioeconomic organisation of Ethagis is partially feudal and partially bureaucratic: despite the two terms being antonyms, it best describes the hybrid structure of national politics.

The Ethigean government is headed by the Shurhath, who holds absolute executive, legislative, judiciary, religious, and military power in the nation. Any other person exercising any kind of power is (nominally) doing so in behalf of the Shurhath, and their authority is bestowed by him. Law drafted by the central government applies to the whole nation, and the central government alone determines diplomacy, trade policy, weights and measures, coinage, national security, and transportation. Although local day-to-day government is largely administered by feudal elites, the bureaucracy still requires, monitors, and enforces these elites to fulfil certain obligations to the central government.

Local government is in the hands of feudal landowners (apart from in the Crownlands), but the central government requires these landowners to conform to bureaucratic rule. They must keep and enforce central law and legislation; provide a centrally determined amount of tax and tribute; be able to mobilise military forces in times of war which are to be incorporated into the imperial army; maintain roads, canals, and national mail-posts/inns to be used by any Ethigean; build harbours and maintain ships; maintain irrigation and water infrastructure; build public works when commanded to; relieve famines.

The central government’s structure can be represented in this diagram:

Shurhath

Imperial Lieutenant

Shurhath’s retinues and family

Grand Censorate

Grand Secretariat

Grand Commanderies

Ministry of Divinities

Ministry of Roads, Canals, and Mail

Ministry of Trade and Seafarung

Ministry of Stewardship

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of the Palace

Ministry of Edicts

Ministry of Levies

Ministry of Heralds

Ministry of Justice

Central government consists of four branches, referred to as the four ‘wings’ of the central government. These are the Shurhath’s retinues; the Grand Commanderies of the Realm; the Grand Secretariat; the Grand Censorate. The latter three branches are all nominally equal in power/prestige, though in practice different groups at court predominate depending on circumstances and imperial favour. The latter three branches are collectively known as the Three Agencies of Court or the Three Arms of Court.

The Shurhath’s retinues are the personal retinues of the Shurhath himself. Though the Shurhath’s retinues form a wing of the central government and court, they aren’t a single agency/organisation in the way that the other three wings of the government are. The retinues’ relative ranks and seniority at court, their own internal hierarchy, and how this hierarchy interacts with those of the agencies, depends entirely on the Shurhath’s will and on circumstances. A Shurhath could theoretically give all of his retinues equal seniority and greater seniority than anyone bar him and his lieutenant. This is just a hypothetical extreme, however.

In practice, most retinues will have a middling seniority at court, and only very few will outrank everyone bar the Shurhath and his lieutenant- if anyone. Often, all retinues rank at most as senior as the Lord High Censor (head of the Censorate) or more junior. The power bases of the retinues themselves is also important. For example, a retinue who was also a highly powerful landowner could exert more power than that formally prescribed to him. Retinues can also occupy official positions in the Three Agencies of Court- e.g., a Shurhath’s personal retinue could also be Prince Chamberlain. Most of the Shurhath’s retinues will be military staff who guard him. Whether the Shurhath creates an internal hierarchy for his retinues, puts them under the control of the Commanderies, or puts them under the control of the Grand Secretariat, is up to him. Not all of the Shurhath’s retinues are military; they can be courtly or personal roles like a personal physician, personal jester, etc.

Senior courtiers may also themselves have retinues. E.g. a Grand Almoner of the Realm could have 20 retinues, be they military or not. The seniority that he chooses to allot these retinues is entirely his choice, but the seniority of a courtier’s retinue cannot exceed his own seniority. Moreover, any retinues that do not belong to the Shurhath or his lieutenant are under the authority of the Secretariat and the oversight of the Censorate.

The Grand Commanderies are the military branch of government. They oversee and administer the imperial army. Ethagis lacks an official standing army, but in peacetime the Shurhath’s and courtiers’ retinues form a permanent military force which the Commanderies administer. The Commanderies use these retinues to guard and police the palace, and sometimes to a lesser extent the city of Semidon. The Commanderies are also responsible for administration and organisation of navies and warships (but not trading ships or other maritime activities) in Ethagis.

Military administration involves the paying of soldiers; keeping archives of enrollments and pay-slips; organising supply of soldiers; logistical matters; building and maintaining forts, arsenals, and other military constructions; procuring armaments; charge of Semidon’s defences. The Commanderies are comprised not just of military administrators, but also the generals and commanders of the army. Most army commanders in wartime are feudal lords rather than central officials, however, so the Commanderies are the smallest wing of the government.

The Grand Secretariat is also known as the civil service, and is responsible for the administration of both centrally-owned land (the Crownlands) and to a lesser extent the realm as a whole. It consists of various departments which each are responsible for an aspect of the nation’s administration. These departments have several grades of seniority which a bureaucrat may ascend, culminating in the highly prestigious official positions at the heads of these departments. The civil service is the most extensive wing of the central government.

The departments of the Grand Secretariat are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Department | Aliases | Head of Department Title & Aliases | Remit |
| Ministry of the Palace | Ministry of the Household  Ministry of the Imperial Clan  Bureau of the Household | Grand Duke Chamberlain of the Realm  Director of the Imperial Clan  Prince Chamberlain of the Realm | Upkeep of the palace, its grounds and household, the stables, concubines, the Shurhath’s leisure, courtly life, the Shurhath and his family, palace architecture and construction, and any other issue related to the court itself |
| Ministry of Divinities | Ministry of Rites and Ceremonies | Grand Almoner of the Realm  Grand Minister of Rites and Ceremonies | Religious ceremonies and concerns, astronomy, temple upkeep, astrology, supervising and drafting the civil service examinations, selecting students, bringing scholars to the court, administering and managing court scholars, education within the realm |
| Ministry of Finance | Chancellery  Ministry of Revenues  Ministry of Agriculture | Grand Chancellor of the Realm  Lord Duke Chancellor of the Realm | Collecting revenue and all other matters pertaining to the state treasury, administering taxation, organising monopolies, paying central government and bureaucracy officials, charge of granaries in the Crownlands and in local government, finances of the imperial dynasty |
| Ministry of Stewardship | Ministry of Works  Ministry of Public Works | Imperial Steward of the Realm  Grand Steward of the Realm | Organising and maintaining public works throughout the empire, government construction projects, standardisation of weights and measures, artisans/laborers brought for government service |
| Ministry of Edicts | Central Secretariat  Palace Secretariat  Secretariat | Imperial Secretary of the Realm  Grand Prince Secretary of the Realm | Drafts imperial edicts and laws when commanded to by the Shurhath |
| Ministry of Justice | Commandery of Justice | Grand Commander of Justice  Lord Duke Commander of Justice | Accepting and deciding all lawsuits brought to the central government. These could be appeals from local government (feudal lords run their own courts) or matters concerning the central government directly |
| Ministry of Heralds |  | Grand Herald of the Realm | Receiving foreign diplomats, envoys, or internal feudal lords, conducting diplomacy, inheritance of fiefs, maintaining living quarters for foreign/domestic guests to the palace |
| Ministry of Levies | Imperial Staff | Grand Minister of the Imperial Staff | Court and local government appointments, ranks, promotions and demotions, granting of honorific titles |
| Ministry of Roads, Canals, and Mail |  | Grand Minister of Roads, Canals, and Mail | Construction and maintenance of infrastructure throughout the realm |
| Ministry of Trade and Seafaring | Offices of Maritime Trade | Grand Officer of Maritime Trade | Organising and overseeing the central government’s trade and maritime activity |

These departments, just like the Commanderies and Censorate, all have their own sub-divisions and elaborate hierarchies.

The Grand Censorate is a supervisory agency responsible for monitoring all other agencies of central and local government. They oversee the Commanderies, Grand Secretariat, and maintain an extensive network of censors throughout the country which monitor and report on feudal lords. Censors are essentially monitors and enforcers of the Shurhath’s will. They ensure that every bureaucrat and feudal lord is playing their part for the empire, and that any threat of rebellion is discovered and subsequently rooted out.

Their duties essentially involve spying on central and local governments. They gather intelligence, conduct censuses, and survey land throughout the empire. In the central government specifically, they also oversee the drafting and wording of edicts, although they cannot draft legislation themselves. They collate and archive all written administrative material produced in the Empire, and all other government agencies (including local) are obliged to share information with them. The most senior officials of the Censorate can also override certain decisions made by the civil service in the interest of court security.

A significant proportion of the organisation and power dynamics of the court are informal, however. Depending on the situation at court, different groups can predominate. Certain agencies, like the Ministry of the Palace, have more informal power than formal due to their proximity to- and therefore influence on- the Shurhath. Certain agencies also enjoy more prestige and uncodified power/influence than others, for example the Central Secretariat, which is informally perceived to be the most senior department of the civil service. In practice, often the influence of different agencies depends on the relative power of its most senior officials and their influence on the Shurhath. In times where imperial authority is comparatively lower, different agencies’ influence depends on the independent power bases of those heading them.

The court is staffed by broadly four different kinds of individuals: slaves, eunuchs, ‘bearded men’, and women. Slaves are not courtiers in the proper sense as they are excluded from any positions of influence and simply carry out menial tasks for the upkeep of the court. Eunuchs are courtiers and often form their own faction in court as eunuchs are despised by unmutilated individuals in Ethigean society. Eunuchs often amass significant influence in court because they cannot form dynasties of their own nor sleep with any of the Shurhath’s concubines; as such, they are seen as ‘safe bets’ around the imperial family and harem and often given positions of trust close to the Shurhath. The Ministry of the Palace, for example, is dominated by eunuchs. The positions of power they are entrusted with, and their proximity to the Shurhath, allows eunuchs to become a significant pole of power at court despite being despised by everyone else.

‘Bearded men’ is the term used to describe any un-mutilated men at court. Whether they have facial hair or not is irrelevant- the term is an old one and is a symbol of masculinity rather than a straightforward description of facial appearance. Most courtiers are bearded men, although whilst the eunuchs almost always form their own faction at court, bearded men are often divided. Factional lines generally occur based on agencies of the central government (e.g. Censorate vs Secretariat), personal loyalties (e.g. to the Shurhath, his mother, an influential concubine, etc), or political ideologies (this is much, much rarer, but an example is religious governance or Ulaki-type rule).

Women do play a role at court as Ethigean culture believes that a woman’s role in society is to study, and that women are more intellectual than men. Nonetheless, due to the pervasive impact of sexism of Ethigean society, women form a minority of courtiers, and a smaller proportion of courtiers than eunuchs. Like bearded men and eunuchs, they are courtiers and play a role in court factionalism/politics. Women tend to despise eunuchs less than bearded men, so when factions form in court around personal loyalties, eunuchs tend to rally around female figures like the Shurhath’s mother, aunt, sister, or even an imperial concubine. Moreover, whilst in factional disputes bearded men tend not to align with eunuchs, women are more neutral.

Court intrigue and politics has a significant impact on the conduct and functioning of the central government, and by extension the local government as well. As the loyalty and adherence of local feudal governments throughout the realm is dependent on the efficient functioning and oversight of the central government, deficiencies in the latter will result in decentralisation of the realm. Ethagis is a feudal bureaucracy, but the balance between feudalism and bureaucracy shifts nearly constantly depending on the abilities of the Shurhath and the court.

The court and central government overlap significantly. Although the central government employs many individuals who are deployed throughout the country, it is headquartered in the imperial court. The most senior officials in government are based in and comprise the Court, and the bulk of central government bureaucrats are also courtiers.

### History

*Althaloris*

0 | Shurhath with the first known date of accession takes power

295 | Continent of Ethagis united wholly under one empire for the first time, unity does not last long

341 | Semidon becomes the Ethigean capital

446-487 | Empire of Hysparleon directly borders the Empire of Ethagis

739 | Axum Dynasty seizes power

825 | Present day

### Knowledge and Learning

#### Introduction

Human societies all recognize various fields of knowledge, though different societies have referred to them in different ways throughout time and space. Fields of knowledge in contemporary Earth include biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics (sciences), history, geography, theology (humanities), etc. Fields of knowledge can be far more specific: the various sub-categories of biology alone include anatomy, biochemistry, taxonomy, zoology, etc. They can be more obscure, including things like etiology, ethology, and metaphysics.

The idea of a field of knowledge is typically associated with *academic* fields of knowledge, but this is not at all the case. Fields of knowledge can be academic with practical uses- things like medicine, architecture, engineering, sculpture, etc.- or strictly practical, for example agriculture, boxing, calligraphy, smithing, etc. A modern Western education often groups fields of knowledge into arts, humanities, and sciences.

In Ethigean society, fields of knowledge are grouped into five broad categories: the mechanical arts, the civic arts, the fine arts, the martial arts, and the learned arts (listed in order of ascending prestige and social status).

The mechanical arts are practices or skills useful in everyday life and typically practiced by the commonry. These include cooking, tailoring, farming, smithing, carpentry, masonry, etc. The mechanical arts are viewed as vulgar and looked down upon by higher social classes. However, whilst the everyday practice of the mechanical arts is looked down on, mastery of any of the arts is respected and confers prestige, wealth, and an improvement of social status. In fact, mastery of the mechanical arts is an important method of social advancement for commoners and thus serves as a mechanism of social mobility. A nobleman, soldier, or [alfazel](#_Alfazel) practicing the mechanical arts would be degrading, although there have been examples of masters of the mechanical arts from non-common backgrounds. Out of the mechanical arts, smithing is seen as the most respectable, followed by farming, and then everything else.

The civic arts are practices or skills generally useful in society as a whole. These include architecture, commerce, sailing, navigation, etc. In some instances, the distinction between the mechanical and civic arts can be somewhat arbitrary, and is in place as a result of tradition and culture rather than logical delineation. Generally, a mechanical art will be useful to a specific kind of tradesman, whereas a civic art is useful either to an entire social/economic class or to a broader group of people. A reliable method of distinction is that a mechanical art requires manual prowess whereas a civic art requires intellectual prowess. The civic arts are seen as slightly below nobility but viable for a gentleman and respectable for a commoner. Despite the slight stigma, there are many noblemen famed for mastery of a civic art.

The fine arts are creative practices useful for aesthetic or creative purposes. These include painting, sculpture, theatre, etc. Fine arts are practiced by all levels of society, although members of the soldiery and members of old warrior-nobility often disdain the fine arts due to their lack of practical application.

The martial arts are combative practices useful for physical conflict and warfare. These include wrestling, swordfighting, archery, hunting, generalship, logistics, and the art of war. They are seen as noble and respectable, often associated with heroism. The wealthiest, most powerful members of the soldiery and the majority of noblemen will have some form of education in the martial arts.

The learned arts are scholarly fields of knowledge aimed at understanding the universe. Many modern sciences are not known/practiced in Ethagis or go by different names. The contemporary names for examples of the learned arts include theology, philosophy, mathematics, anatomy, taxonomy, zoology, geometry, engineering, logic, grammar, history, geography, etc. The learned arts is a highly broad field and its study confers prestige and social status. Though seen as more noble than the martial arts, they are generally studied less by the nobility and very little by the soldiery. Whereas the martial arts are associated with the soldiery and nobility, the learned arts are associated with the nobility and the gentry.

#### The Learned Arts

Disclaimer: many terms here, for example ‘arts’, ‘physics’, and ‘philosophy’ are used in a fundamentally different sense in Ethagis than on modern Earth. This is not at all without precedent: all of these terms have meant something very different in Europe throughout history and if you were to travel back in time to any point before the Scientific Revolution this would be blatantly apparent. The existence of terms like ‘liberal arts’, ‘metaphysics’, and ‘PhD’ are all evidence of how these words have meant something very different to historical Europeans. Bear this in mind as you look through these pages.

The Ethigean learned arts is a highly broad category which can be further sub-divided. Ethigean academia divides the learned arts into three main categories, listed below. The learned arts are often viewed and studied through the lenses of different philosophical-spiritual schools of thought, comparable to how the study of science in Ancient China was often tied to worldviews like Taoism.

Cosmic Law is the grouping for fields of knowledge examining the fundamental nature of the cosmos [i.e. the universe], existence, and the fabric of reality. It is the most prestigious and revered form of study and is heavily centered on theology and the study of the divine. Cosmic law examines the principles of the universe on the most macroscopic level and is a combination of what we would call the sciences, theology, and philosophy. All other fields of knowledge are said to derive in some way from cosmic law. Branches of cosmic law recognized in Ethigean society are as follows, and ranked in order of descending prestige:

[Theonomy](#_Religion) [theology/theogony/cosmogony/eschatology] | The study of the divine, of the origin and fate of the cosmos, and the deities of the universe. Universally held to be the most important and prestigious of all the learned arts. All other learned arts derive from Ethigean religion in some way, with theonomy often providing the philosophical bedrock for other disciplines of cosmic law, natural law, and the humanities.

Supraphysica [physics/metaphysics/gnosis] | The study of existence, reality, and the fundamental questions, nature, and laws of the cosmos.

Archophysica [metaphysics/biology/theonomy/philosophy of mind] | The study of the origin and presence of life and the causes/mechanisms of life’s existence.

[Cosmology](#_Cosmology) [astronomy/astrology] | The study of the physical structure of the universe, the celestial bodies and their effects of the world, and physical celestial phenomena.

Natural Law is the grouping of fields of knowledge examining the natural world around us and the general laws and principles of human experience. It thus encompasses not just what we would call life and health sciences, but other related disciplines. Branches of natural law recognized in Ethigean society are as follows:

Abstractophy [mathematics/geometry] | The genesis and study of mathematic abstractions, including numbers, formulae, shapes, and quantities.

Allaxionomy [alchemy/chemistry/theology] | The study of matter, the changes of matter, and the forces behind these changes. Considered in the Ethigean society to be the most prestigious and fundamental branch of natural law.

Alphamatics [physics/theology] | The study of force, energy, and motion.

Anatomy | The study of the structure and workings of the human body.

Elixurgy [pharmacology] | The study of toxins, drugs, and medicines, as well as their effects.

Fieldmastery [engineering/geometry/mechanical physics/mathematics] | The theory and use of scientific principles to design and construct things. One of the Ethigean professions.

Karigraphy [geography/cartography/climatology] | The study and mapping of the surface of the planet.

[Medicine](#_Medicine) | The study of the mechanisms and internal activity of the human body and the inducement of health. One of the Ethigean professions.

[Natural Alphabetics](#_Natural_Alphabetics) [taxonomy] | The classification of life and nature.

Natural History [zoology/botany] | The study and observation of non-human organisms.

[Sagecraft](#_Sagecraft) [psychology/therapy] | The study of the mechanisms and internal activity of the human mind and the inducement of mental health and wellbeing. Sometimes referred to as ‘sagery’.

Sakhonomy [geology/metallurgy/material science/mining] | The scientific study of metals, minerals, and ores and the excavation/extraction of these substances.

Humanities is the grouping of fields of knowledge studying aspects of human society, culture, and actions. It is distinguished from cosmic and natural law by the fact that all the humanities could not exist without humans. The Ethigean definition of humanities is *not* the same as our definition and is instead broader, encompassing much of what we would call the social sciences and some formal sciences. Conversely, it excludes things like the performing and visual arts and literature as Ethigeans would not classify these as learned arts but rather fine arts. The humanities recognized in Ethigean society are as follows:

[Abnothology](#_Race_and_Ethnicity) [anthropology/ethnography/art of war] | The study and comparison of the various peoples of the known world, including their weaknesses and martial abilities.

Anthrosophy [philosophy] | The study of general and fundamental questions regarding humanity, including ethics, reason, mind, and language.

History | The study of the peoples and societies of the past.

Jurisprudence | The theory and philosophy of law. It is a distinct field from the actual practice of law.

Juristry [law] | The practice of jurisprudence and the exercising of Ethigean law. One of the professions of Ethagis and also known as ‘barristry’.

Linguistics | The study of human languages and the Ethigean language Khosgan.

Luxisprudence [economics/politics] | The study of the production, management, and nature of wealth.

Rationality [logic/rhetoric] | The study of reasoning, thought, and effective communication.

Rulership [politics] | The study of government, rule, and authority. Formal study of rulership has been consistently outlawed in Ethagis and remains a taboo discipline.

#### Abnothology

Ethigeans see Hysparlens as civilized, but soft and effeminate. They believe that though the Hysparlens were once a formidable people, decadence and peace made them weak, and as a result hardier peoples pushed them back. In contrast, the Abyssinians are a belligerent and harsh people, capable of defending themselves and asserting supremacy. However, they lack civilisation; they are barbaric, almost savage. They have become skilled in the arts of war but in nothing else, they have no achievements or culture. The Ethigeans are the glorious mean between these two extremes. Hardy and warlike, but civilized and noble. They combine intelligence with strength, and are thus the most supreme people on the planet.

Hysparleon is an elective monarchy, proof of their weakness and lack of authority. Abyssinia is a military dictatorship, proof of their brutishness and crudeness. Ethagis is an imperial, semi-hereditary monarchy, a civilized but strong form of rule.

#### Allaxionomy

Allaxionomy is one of the learned arts and a major discipline of natural law [an Ethigean term encompassing several of the sciences] in Ethagis. Allaxionomy is the study of matter, the changes of matter, and the forces that drive those changes. It seeks to classify and explain the material world, creating a broader conceptual framework for understanding the nature of matter in the universe and how that matter changes and interacts with itself.

Allaxionomy lacks an accurate Earth homologue: no fields of knowledge in tellurian history quite align with it. Modern chemistry is also by definition the study of matter, but from the same starting point both chemistry and allaxionomy take diametrically opposite courses. Allaxionomy is somewhat comparable to alchemy and other predecessors of modern science, but the comparison isn’t a strong one.

Allaxionomy and alchemy are both rooted in religion, but they both explain the material world in fundamentally different ways and borrow from differing fields of knowledge. For example, alchemy is inextricably linked to astrology, whereas allaxionomy is linked to zoology. Allaxionomy is also much more centred on Ethigean religion than alchemy is on any European religion.

Allaxionomy is centred on the teachings of Ethigean religion, referred to as The Way of the Cosmos, whose scope exceeds gods/rules and extends into philosophy and worldview. The Way provides a conceptual framework for understanding how the universe works and what governs it, and it is this framework which forms the skeleton of allaxionomy. It is strongly recommended that you read about the Way before this article on allaxionomy. Most important are the articles about the material world, the Three Hosts, and- the single most important one- the Ten Bases.

The study of the Way is, as a scholarly discipline, referred to as theonomy, and allaxionomy is derived almost entirely from this. This is a situation not unique to this particular discipline: almost every branch of Ethigean cosmic and natural law uses theonomy as their foundation and merely articulates on different aspects of it.

By this rationale, allaxionomy is the exploration of the theonomic concept of the material world: it seeks to explore and understand the following:

1. What is it that makes up the material world: i.e. what is matter?
2. What are the different forms of matter?
3. How do these forms change and interact?

Though this is of course an oversimplification, ultimately it is what allaxionomy boils down to. There is also the unspoken, informal fourth principle: ‘How can we use this knowledge for human benefit and advantage?’

##### Bases and Materials

One of the most important tenets of Ethigean religion is that the universe is divided into two ‘worlds’: the spiritual world and the material world. These concepts are elaborated on in their respective articles, and the following articles on allaxionomy assume that the reader has read about the Way of the Cosmos. Of these two worlds, allaxionomy focusses directly on the latter, although because the spiritual world influences and begets the material world in various ways allaxionomers are compelled to the study the former as well. For example, the material world is comprised of the Ten Bases, but these bases are begotten by the Three Hosts, which exist in the spiritual world. Hence, a study of the former necessitates the study of the latter.

The most fundamental principles of allaxionomy are as follows:

1. Everything and anything that exists in the material world is called matter.
2. All matter is comprised of the Ten Bases, and the Ten Bases are themselves classified as matter as they exist in the material world.
3. Different tangible substances in the material world are called materials.

* For example, wood is a material, so is bone, iron, water, milk, limestone, cloth, bronze, cement, blood, horn, fruits, etc

1. Not all matter can be classified as materials as not all matter is necessarily tangible.

* This principle exists because the Ten Bases exist in the material world but not all of them are tangible. Water, for example, is tangible and so is a material; it exists in its ‘pure form’, i.e. as a base which is not combined with other bases. But a base like ‘kalai’ doesn’t exist in its pure form: there is no substances called kalai because it isn’t a substance, it has to combine with other bases to form a substance. Hence, kalai is not a material. Confusingly, Ethigeans also believe that air isn’t a material because air can’t be seen or felt, but they do believe that light is a material, because it can be seen, and that fire is also a material, because it can be seen and felt. It is also worth noting that Ethigeans don’t count the bases of earth and metal as materials because, like kalai, they never occur in pure form and all substances which contain these bases also contain others. For example, iron contains the bases of metal and water, gold is metal and fire, etc. There is no ‘ultimate’ metal comprised only of that base. By this logic, there is also no material called lahar. Void, however, *is* seen as a material because it can be seen, visible to human eyes as a colossal, hyper-dense black fog. So in summary, all matter exists as a material *apart from* the bases of earth, metal, kalai, and lahar.

1. Different materials are distinct from each other as they are a different composition of bases.

* Two different materials can be made of the same bases, but are distinct because the proportions of these bases are different. For example, both iron and lead are comprised of the bases iron, water, and earth. However, lead has a greater proportion than iron of earth and a lesser proportion of water. Hence the two substances are distinct from each other.

Materials can be naturally occurring or made by human artifice.

##### Allaxionomic Fluxes

Everything in this universe is constantly changing, whether in an ordered fashion (regular, repeating cycles) or a chaotic one (random, spontaneous changes without pattern). These same theonomic principles are applicable to allaxionomy.

In the material world, materials are constantly changing all the time because the composition of bases in them are constantly changing. Because what distinguishes materials from one another is this composition, materials are essentially transmuting into other materials all the time. These changes are referred to as fluxes, and can be ‘intrinsic’ or ‘extrinsic’. An intrinsic flux is when a material changes without an external force acting upon it, and is thus induced to change simply because it is a law of the universe. These changes are typically extremely slow: for example, bone slowly transmutes to iron over innumerable millennia because, millennium by millennium, its base composition slowly changes.

Intrinsic fluxes are ordered: they are governed by regular, repeating rhythms and cycles. There are almost an infinite number of such cycles in the material world, all varying in multiple different factors: length, number of phases, proportional length of each phase, magnitude, etc. There are also linear sequences that different materials follow until the end of each eon: these sequences always end in one of the Ten Bases.

For example, crude oil eventually becomes water: its base composition gradually changes from water/earth/fire to just water. Every millennium, the proportion of each of its bases changes by a minute increment, and over the millennia the material gradually transmutes into another. Human flesh gradually transmutes into air as a corpse degrades: eventually only the bone is left. However, this intrinsic flux occurs at an extremely fast rate compared to oil-water transmutation. Iron transforms into rust: this change happens without intervention and of its own accord, and is thus intrinsic. It is entirely predictable and is an inevitable occurrence preordained by the laws of the universe- it is thus ordered.

Extrinsic fluxes occur because an external force has acted on a material, causing its base composition to change. These changes are chaotic: they are not written down in the ‘code’ of the universe but rather happen spontaneously and randomly. For example, when a bolt of lightning strikes a tree, the material of wood is transmuted into the material of ash. The tree would not have changed by itself were it not struck, hence the flux is extrinsic. The bolts of lightning do not strike the tree according to any cycle, rhythm, or preordained law of the universe: it simply ‘happened to happen’. Hence, the flux is chaotic.

Extrinsic fluxes can be mediated or induced by human intervention. For example, bone may transmute into iron naturally over millennia, but it is believed that an allaxionomer can mediate this intrinsic flux, making it extrinsic, speeding it up to occur in a laboratory within weeks. Combining tin with copper is a flux entirely induced by human intervention, producing bronze. This bronze would not have formed naturally: it is a material which is entirely the product of human artifice. Many materials have this status.

##### The Classification of Materials

As already established, the term ‘material’ is extremely broad. It is a term of such breadth that it offers little practical use, and subcategories are needed to properly group materials together[[8]](#footnote-9).

Materials can be simple or complex. The complexity of a material is defined by two criteria: the first is how many of the Ten Bases the material is made of. For example, stone is comprised of the bases earth and water.

Material = any substance, including light and fire

Prime = a material which cannot be broken down into other materials

Salt = a material which can be broken down into other materials

Metal = one of the prime metals, alloyed metals, or bastard metals

Metalloid = similar to metals: minerals, rocks, etc

Of these, there are base minerals, noble minerals (gemstones and other valuable/beautiful minerals), earths (ores), and lapises (rocks)

Kalais = non-metals made primarily from the base Kalai (e.g. grass, flax, cotton, etc)

Lahars = non-metals made primarily from the base Lahar (e.g. muscle, bone, blood, etc)

Resins = non-metals made primarily from the base wood (e.g. wood, potash, etc)

Vitriols = non-metals that aren’t water that occur naturally in liquid form (e.g. crude oil) (liquefied substances are also called ‘vitriol of x’)

Oils = manufactured liquid solutions, typically acids or alkalis

Nitres = non-metals that aren’t air that occur naturally in gaseous form (e.g. arsenical fog) (sublimated/vapourised substances are also called ‘nitre of x’)

Rubies = non-metals that occur naturally in solid form (e.g. wood, stone, minerals, etc) (solidified substances are also called ‘ruby of x’)

##### The Metals

Ethigean allaxionomy currently recognises ten prime metals, defined as metals which are prime materials and are not salt metals (i.e. alloys).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Prime Metal | Animal | Partnered Metalloid | Body Parts | People | Clime | Feyriatal |
| Iron | Hippo | Bone | Muscles, Blood, Bones | Ethigeans | Ethagis | Shurhath |
| Gold | Leopard | Marble | Heart, Liver, Spleen |  | Springlands/  Subtropical Plains | Mighty Lord |
| Silver | Elephant | Horn | Kidneys, Eyes, Larynx |  | Mountains | Askary Lord |
| Antimony | Lion | Limestone | Ears, Lungs, Pancreas |  | Savannah | Nazul Lord |
| Zinc | Octopus | Slate | Mouth, Nose, Skin |  | Steppes | Nobility |
| Bismuth | Chameleon | Scales | Oesophagus, Gutcaul, Pharynx |  | The South/Rainforest | Semadai |
| Lead | Shark | Clay | Brain, Gallbladder, Guts | Abyssinians | Autumnlands/ Temperate Forest | Asthan |
| Azoth  [Mercury] | Hyena | Tar | Reproductives, Hair, Stomach |  | Antavar/Bodies of Water | Alfaz |
| Copper | Eagle | Sand | Spinal Cord, Rectum, Bile | Horselords | Nagal/Desert | Commonry |
| Tin | Crocodile | Stone | Phlegm, Nails, Bladder | Hysparlens | Plains | Commonry |

Ethigean allaxionomy recognises several substances which resemble metals or have similar physical properties, but do not align with conceptions of what a metal is enough to be recognised as one.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bastard Metal | Animal | Partnered Non-Metal | People | Clime | Feyriatal |
| Arsenic | Panther |  |  |  | King |
| Shurhath’s Sulfur [pyrite] | Blackfish [orca] |  |  |  |  |
| Lodestone |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Metalloids

There are various subcategories of metalloid: earths (ores), noble minerals (especially valuable or beautiful minerals), base minerals (other minerals), lapises (types of stone or rock), caustics (materials derived from quicklime), and brimstones (materials derived from sulfur). The general consensus of Ethigean allaxionomy is to recognise the following metalloids (these are just examples, however, and not *all* recognised metalloids):

Earths | Ores of Metal

1. Malachite
2. Azurite
3. Hematite
4. Cassiter
5. Calamine
6. Cinnabar
7. Copper Glance
8. Lead Glance

Noble Minerals | Minerals of Value & Importance

1. Sulphur
2. Diamond
3. Corundum [used here as am umbrella term for minerals like ruby & sapphire]
4. Lazeward [lapis lazuli]
5. Satinspar [talc]
6. Gypsum
7. Gypsum Flower [selenite]
8. Cinnabar
9. Salammoniac [ammonium chloride]
10. Orpiment
11. Realgar

Base Minerals | Minerals of Commonry

1. Saltre [sodium chloride; common salt]
2. Saltpetre [potassium nitrate]
3. Soda [sodium carbonate]
4. Lime
5. Manganese [pyrolusite; manganese dioxide]

Caustics | Minerals Derived from Quicklime

1. Caustic potash [potassium hydroxide]
2. Caustic soda [sodium hydroxide]
3. Caustic slake [calcium hydroxide]

Brimstones | Minerals Derived from Sulphur

1. Blue brimstone [copper (II) sulphate]
2. Jade brimstone [iron (II) sulphate]
3. White brimstone [aluminium sulphate]
4. Glass brimstone [zinc sulphate]
5. Dark brimstone [black vitriol; a mixture of various sulphates]

##### The Oils

Oils are solutions that do not occur naturally and are thus referred to as ‘allaxionomically made’ or ‘allaxionomic progeny’. The general consensus of Ethigean allaxionomy is to recognise the following oils:

1. Oil of Sulfur [sulfuric acid]
2. Oil of Saltpetre [nitric acid]
3. Oil of Saltre [hydrochloric acid]
4. Oil of Might [hydrochloric acid & nitric acid]
5. Oil of Resin [turpentine]
6. Oil of Lye [potassium/sodium hydroxide]
7. Oil of Antimony [antimony trichloride]
8. Oil of Wine [ethanol]
9. Oil of Liquor [ethanoic acid]
10. Liquors (types of oils created by dissolving solutes in oil of wine]

#### Cosmology

Cosmology refers to the way Ethigeans believe the cosmos [i.e. the universe] is structured. It does *not* refer to the actual structure of this fictional universe’s solar system, which is written about [here](#_The_Solar_System). This article is dedicated to how Ethigeans *think* the cosmos is ordered and what they believe the processes and laws of the universe to be.

The fundamental structure of the cosmos is that of the celestial spheres. Ethigeans believe that the cosmos is structured such that it consists of five non-overlapping, concentric spheres, each of a greater circular diameter than the previous one. These spheres are referred to as the celestial spheres, and there are five of them- this is important as cosmology is closely tied to Ethigean religion and five is a religiously significant number.

The celestial spheres are the terrestrial sphere, the luminarious sphere, the alterplanetary sphere, the hyperplanetary sphere, and the tenebrous sphere. These are listed in order of both their proximity to the terrestrial sphere and size. For example, the tenebrous sphere is the largest of the celestial spheres and the furthest from the terrestrial sphere.

The celestial spheres are typically represented in a 2D form as a series of concentric circles, with the distances between the circumferences of each circle increasing as one goes further from the innermost circle (representing the terrestrial sphere). The very centre of the terrestrial sphere (more accurately, the geometric centre of the sphere that is Jagannath) is referred to as the ‘cosmic epicentre’, or just the ‘epicentre’. Spheres close to the epicentre are referred to as proximate, and spheres far from the epicentre are referred to as peripheral.

Ethigean religion and science both believe that the universe is cyclic and thus undergoes constant sequences of birth, expansion, contraction, death, and rebirth. Each of these cycles, of which there are infinity, is referred to as an eon. In each and every eon, the universe expands from the epicentre and contracts to it. After the birth of the cosmos in each eon, it expands spherically in all directions, first creating the terrestrial sphere, then the luminarious sphere, and so on. Due to the immense length of each eon the synthesis of each new sphere takes an astronomical amount of time.

It is believed that the universe is currently in a phase of expansion and has fully created the four most proximate spheres, and is in the process of creating the most peripheral sphere, the tenebrous sphere. In each eon, the final third of the phase of expansion is dedicated solely to creating the tenebrous sphere, such is its size.

There are some other terms often used in Ethigean cosmology besides from the celestial spheres. Ethigean religion and science believe that the universe is composed of ten fundamental ‘elements’. Nine of these are used, in different proportions, to make up every substance in the cosmos. The tenth, void, refers to the blackness between different bodies in the cosmos. Void is what we would refer to as ‘space’.

Objects in the cosmos composed out of the nine ‘elements’ (referred to as ‘bases’) that aren’t void are referred to as celestial bodies. Celestial bodies include planets, the Sun, the Moon, stars, comets and asteroids, and are suspended in the omnipresent medium of the void. Bodies which move are referred as ‘roving bodies’, and bodies which rotate on their own axis but are otherwise stationary are referred as ‘fixed bodies’. There are not believed to be any truly stationary bodies in the cosmos.

Below is a description of each of the five spheres.

**The terrestrial sphere** refers purely to the globe of Jagannath and its atmosphere- all the distance from the cosmic epicentre to the sky (Ethigeans lack the technology to conceptualise a complex multilayered atmosphere, and thus conceive the sky as the ‘roof’ of the terrestrial sphere). There is no void in the terrestrial sphere. It does not comprise any of what we would call ‘space’. The terrestrial sphere is solely composed of the other nine bases, and is effectively just Jagannath. The terrestrial sphere is at the centre of the universe, with the cosmic epicentre being at the centre of the terrestrial sphere. The terrestrial sphere (i.e. Jagannath) is fixed and unmoving

**The luminarious sphere** is a celestial sphere completely surrounding the terrestrial sphere at all points. It consists of the ‘luminaries’ and the void between them. The luminaries are celestial bodies in the cosmos which give off light that are close enough to the terrestrial sphere to illuminate it. There are three different kinds of luminary in the cosmos: Sun, Moon, and stars, all of which either surround Jagannath or rotate around it.[[9]](#footnote-10) There is one Sun, are two Moons, and are a large number of stars. All of these are believed to be luminous objects that are their own sources of light. The Sun and Moons are acknowledged to be roving bodies with a fixed pace of movement and a fixed, circular (i.e. two-dimensional and not spherical) orbit, and the stars are believed to be fixed.

**The alterplanetary sphere** is a celestial sphere completely surrounding the luminarious sphere at all points. It consists of both void and the other planets of the cosmos excluding Jagannath, all of which are believed to be roving bodies with a fixed pace and fixed/circular orbit. The other planets in the cosmos are not believed to be luminous, but are illuminated by the luminaries.

**The hyperplanetary sphere** is a celestial sphere completely surrounding the alterplanetary sphere at all points. It is beyond the sphere of the planets and as such does not contain any of them, being filled with both void and other celestial bodies (e.g. asteroids or comets). Celestial bodies which aren’t luminaries or planets are referred to as ‘quaternary celestial bodies’, with Jagannath being the primary, the luminaries being the secondary, and the other planets being the tertiary. Quaternary celestial bodies are believed to only exist inside either this sphere, or perhaps the tenebrous sphere (different cosmological schools of thought disagree on whether the tenebrous sphere may contain luminaries/planets/quaternary bodies or whether it will contain some presently unknown kind of body, a ‘quinary celestial body’).

**The tenebrous sphere** is a celestial sphere completely surrounding the hyperplanetary sphere at all points. It is the region of the universe which is not observable by Ethigeans with their current level of technology; thus the size of the sphere is technically variable and entirely subjective, dependent only on what Ethigeans can presently observe. However, the current scholarly consensus is that the tenebrous sphere is cosmologically distinct from the hyperplanetary sphere and different, unique bodies and phenomena currently unknown to humans exist there. It is believed to be a dark and strange part of the cosmos which humanity will only learn about in the future as optical technology advances.

Ethigean cosmology believes in the presence of five alternate planets (although Vulcan is actually an asteroid), listed in order of descending proximity from the terrestrial sphere: Juno, Demeter, Aximander, Ceres, and Vulcan.

#### Medicine

Medicine is one of the [learned arts](#_The_Learned_Arts) and a branch of natural law dealing with the study of the human body. The ultimate purpose of this branch is the inducement of physical health, and medicine is thus complementary to [sagecraft](#_Sagecraft), a branch of natural law concerning vitriolic [i.e. mental] health. Medicine is not the study of the human body in an anatomical sense: anatomy is a separate branch of natural law. Rather, medicine seeks to understand the mechanisms of the body and the principles underpinning disease, injury, and health.

An observer from Earth would say that the field of Ethigean medicine broadly spans physiology, histology, immunology, field medicine, and surgery. Ethigeans obviously don’t use these words and don’t know anything about real physiology, and Ethigean medicine is what we would call ‘traditional medicine’. But physiology is just the study of the normal functioning of the body: Ethigeans may not explain these functions correctly, but *any* study and explanation of the normal functioning of the body is still (albeit pseudoscientific) physiology.

Medicine is a kind of Ethigean learned art called a ‘[profession](#_Professional_1)’. There are three professions in Ethagis: medicine, juristry, and fieldmastery. These learned arts have unique status over others due to their high practical usefulness and application. Practitioners of the professions (called professionals) have a higher socioeconomic status than other [Alfazel](#_Alfazel), even though from a purely scholarly perspective medicine as a field of study is less prestigious than cosmic law.

The information below concerns the general principles and philosophy of Ethigean medicine. More practical issues like sites and providers of healthcare, methods and types of surgery, and methods of wound cleaning and management are therefore undiscussed.

##### The Profession of Medicine

Practitioners of the [profession](#_Professional_1) of medicine are referred to as either physicians or doctors. Physicians are peacetime practitioners- or at least practitioners operating independent of any military forces. Doctors are specifically medical professionals attached to an army or military force who treats soldiers, typically the wealthiest and most elite ones like noblemen and [asthanes](#_Eskhagan). Doctors are military personnel, and physicians are not. A physician will often join an army in this way and become a doctor, and then after the cessation of conflict be detached and once again become a physician.

All physicians are nominally equal to each other and occupy the same rank. In reality, individual physicians vary greatly in wealth, prestige, and social standing. The lowliest physicians wander the realm unheard of, searching for employment. The greatest amongst them are part of the imperial court, treating courtiers and/or writing treatises with royal patronage. But, in legal hierarchy, all physicians are equal.

Doctors, however, are part of a military structure, and therefore do have ranks. Doctors can theoretically be employed by anyone, although in practice only noblemen generally have the socioeconomic power to do so. The employer of a doctor reserves the right to have their treatment prioritized by that doctor and to issue commands to them. However, these commands (except for the prioritization of the employer) can be overridden by those of a senior doctor, and senior doctors can only be appointed by a [Shurhath](#Shurhath).

There are two ranks of doctor excluding that of the default: sergeant-doctor and doctor-general. Sergeant-doctors can command other doctors but not all other doctors; typically they command either a set number of doctors or hold responsibility for a set number/group of soldiers. This is a fairly vague definition because, just like military ranks throughout the European Middle Ages, the precise remit of a rank was blurry and often varied with context and the individual Shurhath.

A doctor-general has a simpler definition: they have authority over all other doctors. In practice they are almost always also the personal practitioner of the Shurhath, although not by definition. By the superlative nature of the position, a Shurhath can only have one doctor-general in his army at any given time.

The duties of a doctor are fairly simple: they treat the wounded. In doing so they act as surgeons, run field hospitals, and outside of battle may be given authority over foot-soldiers in order to use them as attendants and manual labour. They are subordinate to both their employer and to sergeant-doctors/the doctor-general. A doctor’s first priority is to treat his employer and ensure their physical health, but depending on the commands issued by his medical superior can have a variable list of other priorities.

A physician’s duties are far more ranged and variable. Physicians can be classified as one of three kinds. Some physicians are ‘errant’, meaning they travel from place to place offering medical service in exchange for goods/services. Others are ‘fixed’, meaning they stay in a single location- generally in prosperous/populous ones like Semidon- and offer medical service in exchange for goods/services. The final kind are ‘retinues’, in which they are in the full-time service of an individual (e.g. a nobleman) who provides them with both accommodation (usually) and material payment (e.g. wealth or land).

Physicians are professionals and thus generally earn a living by offering services, but medicine is also a learned art and physicians are also scholars. As such, physicians may gain fame, prestige, and wealth by scholarly contributions such as treatises. They may also tutor others in medicine, issuing Alfaziths [qualifications for higher education] to others and training would-be physicians for their exams. Physicians don’t have a fixed role in the way doctors do; they can find employment in a whole range of ways.

In the socioeconomic hierarchy of Ethagis, a scholar- aka an [Alfaz](#_Alfazel)- is a distinct position which one attains by gaining a qualification called an Alfazith, itself issued by another Alfaz. However, as medicine is a professional, to become a professional is more difficult. In Ethagis, there are state exams which must be passed in order to become a physician, written and marked by [viziers](#_Vizier) [bureaucrats] in the imperial court. Completion of these exams and the achievement of a satisfactory grade (based on how already qualified physicians rank) gives one admission into the College of Physicians.

The College of Physicians is an organization consisting of every Ethigean individual permitted to practice medicine in the country. It is not a physical place and is *not* to be confused with what a ‘college’ is in colloquial English parlance, that is an educational institution. Viziers in the imperial court maintain a register of all members of this College and can remove individuals from this register. Physicians can only be removed from the College by imperial command, but this can occur in a number of situations, generally depending on the Shurhath in question. A weak Shurhath can be more easily pressured to issue such a command by an angered nobleman, for example.

There are no legally enforced moral obligations for a physician, although various Alfazel have written about professionalism and ethics in the past and many of these treatises are influential and widely read. Physicians are exhorted to abide by moral standards and the most prestigious ones do, although there are no standardised regulations for such standards or Shurhath-issued advice.

##### Order and Chaos; Health and Malady

Medicine, like all of the learned arts, borrows heavily from [theonomy](#_Theonomy) [theology and religious studies]. Such is the centrality of [Ethigean religion](#_Religion) to medicine that a preliminary read of this religious philosophy (for the religion is undoubtedly a philosophical worldview) is strongly recommended. Please note that for the sake of brevity these religious principles will be mentioned but not explained in *this* article (that which you are currently reading).

The Ethigean field of medicine defines ‘health’ as the regular function of the body free of malady. It defines ‘malady’ as any disease, ailment, injury, condition, disorder, or abnormality that causes detriment to the patient. The definition of malady is very broad; is it generally defined as anything which has adverse effects for the body.

[The Way](#_Religion) often emphasizes that [chaos and order](#_The_Dualism_of) in the cosmos are not inherently good or bad. Humans more often than not benefit from order and are disadvantaged by chaos, but in many instances chaos can be helpful and order harmful. This is on the scale of the cosmos and the planet as a whole. But in *humans*, order is unequivocally good and chaos unequivocally bad. This manifests itself in terms of morality, happiness, and health.

Chaos and order have, in other articles, been discussed in terms of the former two. A person who cultivates their internal sense of order by the pursual of the [Ultimate Principle](#_Morality_and_Reincarnation) (self-discipline) is one who conquers their animalistic desires for the realization of human purposes, be these reasoning, altruism, etc. The ordered, human ‘side’ to that person’s character takes precedence over the chaotic, animal ‘side’.

This very phenomenon, the prioritization of order over chaos in one’s actions, is the result of acting morally. It benefits the individual by making them happier, and benefits society by making others happier. Happiness, as defined by religion, is the [Ultimate Good](#_The_Ultimate_Good), that which all good things are defined as causing. The basic idea here is that order is good, chaos is bad, and order leads to happiness.

A side to this chaos-order dualism that is not explored elsewhere is that order also leads to health, and chaos leads to malady (ill-health). Health is good as it causes happiness, and malady is bad as it diminishes happiness.

The human body, when it is healthy, is the ultimate embodiment of order. All its organs work in perfect harmony with each other, all working together immaculately so that the body functions perfectly. The body itself is highly structured and precise, composed of dozens of different tissues each interacting with each other in dozens of different ways. There are many cycles which govern the body, all regular and repeating: the heartbeat, the breath, the cyclic sequence of consumption and egestion, these are just but a few examples. When the body is functioning properly and is healthy, it is indeed the embodiment of order.

But when malady occurs, this ordered immaculacy is diminished. The regular cycles and structured tissues of the body are altered and damaged. Hence, the order of the body is reduced, and in its place the element of chaos is introduced. Whereas order manifests itself in the regular, successful function of the body, chaos thus manifests itself in the disruption of this function. The disruption of health is the same thing as malady.

##### The Cause of Malady

Having established that chaos causes malady, and that the cessation of order causes chaos, the question is then what causes the cessation of order. Ethigean medicine recognizes what it refers to as the Three Geneses of Malady: imbalance, improvidence, and unprotection.

The body is capable of sustaining its state of immaculate order, but demands a lot from the patient to do so. The patient must eat correctly, remain physically active, have rest and water, and avoid subjection to the infliction of injury or onset of disease. The body is capable of repairing itself to an extent, but this is time-consuming and not always sufficient to remedy damage. A patient can be afflicted all their life by a malady, or a malady can kill them. Senility is also an inevitable malady, as the body is unable to maintain this state of immaculate order indefinitely.

These aforementioned duties that the patient must carry out are referred to as the Healthful Duties, and these duties prevent malady in various ways: balance, providence, and protection.

Balance is a necessity for order, and the two concepts are intimately intertwined in the Way. Extremes and precariousness are the antitheses of order, and hence balance is a necessary prerequisite for it. Various things must be balanced within the body for normal function: the ubiquity of balance extends from the [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts), to [food groups](#_The_Five_Sustenants), to [emotions](#_The_Five_Modes). For the body to function, these many balances (which will be elaborated on at later articles) must be reached. When extremes or imbalances are present, the rhythms and regularity of the body are interrupted, disrupting function. This leads to malady. The restoration of health is the restoration of balance and equilibrium.

For example, if one has a diet of purely meat, one will be unhealthy. If one has a diet of purely grains, one will be unhealthy- and so on with the various food groups. Health is only achieved by a *balance* of these groups. By restoring a suitable balance between these groups, the malady ceases. Physical activity and inactivity is another example: a sedentary lifestyle leads to various maladies (the loss of physical fitness, unless highly excessive, is not in itself a malady, but sedentary lifestyles still lead to various conditions) and an overly active one does too. A balance must be struck for the realization of health.

Providence is also a necessity for order, as for the body to properly function certain things must be inputted into it. Examples of this are air, water, and food. The body is a highly complex system of various cycles, organs, vessels, and tissues. These require ‘fuel’, however, to work. Without this fuel the cycles become disrupted and the body itself wastes away. Without food, for example, fat is destroyed and then muscle is destroyed. Without water, the Vitriolic Host and the brain are destroyed[[10]](#footnote-11). Without air, the Nitre Host is destroyed and the life force of the individual is extinguished. Essentially, the body needs input.

Protection is the final necessity for order. This includes protection from injury and disease. Injury is inflicted either by accident, by nature, or by other humans. The patient must avoid all of these, as all of these pose a threat to physical health. Contagious diseases also threatens physical health: contagious disease cannot be caused by imbalance or improvidence.

One can catch a disease from someone else, and if you catch it from someone else then it cannot logically be caused the aforementioned [Geneses of Malady](#_The_Cause_of). All contagious diseases are believed to originate from exposure to an external stimulus [note that the word stimulus is included here for your comprehension and an Ethigean would not know it]. Even if you cannot recall that stimulus or cannot even see it, it is still there, merely exceedingly small.

Take a very miniscule thing: the egg of a fly, for example. A man with poor sight cannot see this from a close distance, although a man with good sight could. That same man could not see this egg from a further distance, though a man with excellent sight could. At an even further distance, even this man would not be able to see it: however, a man with outstanding sight could. And so on and so forth towards infinity.

If it is thus always possible that a man with superior sight to us can see something we cannot, we cannot rely on the sense of sight alone to assume existence in the material world. Just as the poor-sighted man cannot see something which is plainly there, so may we all be unable to see something which is plainly there. Diseases thus have their genesis in the failure to protect oneself from exposure to these things, referred to as ‘maladious eggs’ or ‘eggs of malady’.

However, it is not reasonable to assume that something with the magnitude of a vicious, contagious disease can be caused by something as miniscule as a maladious egg. This discrepancy is explained by the fact that the source of the disease must partially lie in the spiritual world as well. A potent disease could have a colossal magnitude in the spiritual world, but humans would never be able to sense their existence. Diseases are thus mainly characterized by their spiritual dimension, as their existence in the material world is extremely small.

Physicians are humans and thus lack the ability to ‘see’ the spiritual world and thus they cannot classify diseases in this way. Diseases can only be classified and treated by their effects on humans in the material world, therefore.

The body consists of various cycles, including cycles of repair and self-remedy. These cycles are in constant operation and thus maladies can potentially be cured by the body without any elixurgic [pharmacological] intervention. The healthier the body, the more powerful these cycles are: hence a well-fed and well-rested person can resist malady better than an afflicted person. Sometimes, however, maladies are too powerful for these cycles, and the person is permanently afflicted as a result- or rendered dead.

The only malady which is not caused by any of these Three Geneses is senility. Senility is part of the natural human cycle of aging and is thus caused by this natural progression. It is an inevitable malady that nobody- no matter how healthy- can avoid. Healthy individuals can lessen the adverse effects of senility, but not avoid them. Senility is one of the fundamental stages of the human life cycle and thus transcends the Three Geneses.

##### The Three Hosts

The [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts) comprise all physical matter, but themselves exist in the spiritual world and affect the material world in other ways besides the [Ten Bases](#_The_Ten_Bases). The Three Hosts have manifold effects on physical health, and a suitable balance of the hosts is essential for good health. Depending on the sex of the individual, the balance of these hosts vary, but for every healthy individual of the same sex the balance is the same.

Excesses and deficits of each host has adverse effects, and each host is associated with different phenomena depends on their variable effects in the material world. The ruby host is the only one associated with the physical body, but each host has so many associations that they affect physical health as well. The vitriolic host is associated with the mind and the nitre host with the life force; even though neither of these are the physical body, organs *in* the physical body serve as material world anchor points for these hosts.

Although the hosts are entirely spiritual, the human body is not, and thus there must be a physical organ which connects the human body to these hosts. Damage these organs beyond repair, and the connection between the host and the body is severed. For example, the vitriolic host is anchored by the brain and the heart. Destroy these organs, and the host is no longer tied to the body: the body thus stops having a mind (i.e. they die). The nitre host is anchored by the brain and spinal cord: destroy these, and the body is deprived of life force (i.e. they die).

Because the ruby host is anchored to the body by every single organ, vessel, and tissue, in order to sever the connection between the ruby host and the body, one would have to literally destroy every single organ, vessel, and tissue of the body. As long as a single trace of the body survives, the ruby host is still connected to the material world by that body.

All effects mentioned here also apply in their reverse if applicable: for example, a deficit in meat consumption causes a deficit in the ruby host.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Host | Ruby Host | Vitriolic Host | Nitre Host |
| Sex  The sex which possesses the host in the greatest abundance | Male | Female | Androgyne |
| Requirement  The nourishment required by the host to maintain its effects in the material world | Food | Water | Air |
| [Viscera](#_Organs_of_the_1)  The material world anchor point of the host | All | Brain & Heart | Brain & Spinal Cord |
| Activity  The activity level of the patient in which the host tends towards excess | Overly High | Overly Low | Appropriate |
| Tissue  The kind of body tissue which an imbalance of causes an imbalance of the host | Deficit of Muscle -> Deficit of Host | Excess of Fat -> Excess of Host | -- |
| [Sustenant](#_The_Five_Sustenants)  The sustenant which, if consumed in excess, causes the host to tend towards excess | Meat and Dairy | Botanics | Grains |
| Season  The season in which the host tends towards excess | Wet Season | Dry Season | Transition |
| [Emotion](#_The_Five_Modes)  The emotion which causes the host to tend towards excess | Anger | Sadness | Ignorance |
| Altitude  The altitude which causes the host to tend towards excess | Low | High | Middling |
| Climate  The climate which causes the host to tend towards excess | Hot, Humid | Cool, Dry | Balanced Temperature & Humidity |
| Temperature  The body temperature which an excess of the host leads to | Hot | Cool | Warm |

##### Organs of the Body

The organs of the body, also known as the viscera, are the physical components of the body. Ethigean medicine classifies organs into three grouping. Each grouping is called a ‘visceral athet’, because the Khosgan word for eight is ‘atha’. There is the ‘noble athet’, ‘base athet’, and ‘sensative athet’.

**The noble athet** is a set of eight organs which are all perceived to carry out more sophisticated functions of the body. These aren’t necessarily the most *important* organs- Ethigean medicine doesn’t classify the viscera by this scale- but the functions they carry out are deemed to be more dignified than those of the base organs. Essentially, the functions which the noble organs carry out are those which make us human. Animals still have these organs, but the functionality of these organs are diminished compared to the human noble organs. For example, both a man and a hyena have a heart, but the human heart is more powerful and thus better able to carry out its functions- in this case, it allows humans to feel emotions that animals cannot.

The noble organs are the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, spleen, pancreas, gallbladder, and oesophagus. The functions that Ethigeans attribute to these organs are *not* what Earth’s modern science attributes to them[[11]](#footnote-12). For example, modern Earth science states that the heart pumps to circulate blood around the body.

Ethigeans believe that the heart is the anchor point for many organs of the mind. It is responsible for all vitriolic [mental] functions of the mind apart from the unthinking, background regulation of the body that is needed for the maintenance of life. The heart beats as a sign that the mind is still connected to the body and the person is alive. The pulse quickens when one feels more intense emotions- e.g. fear, anger, and excitement- because of this mind-heart connection. It slows when one feels calmer and more mellow for the same reason. Physical activity is believed to tax the mind by utilizing its capacities for coordination, and the increased demand on the mind causes the pulse to increase as a reflection of this.

The pericardium is acknowledged to also be a part of the heart. Arteries and veins are two blood-bearing vessels which ultimately originate from the heart. Hence, the heart is also believed to be the site of manufacture for blood. Blood is required for human life as it transmits the vitriolic power of the heart throughout the body, allowing the mind to consider and control all the body parts. For example, humans can only ‘feel’ and move their arm because blood flows through it. They cannot ‘feel’ and move organs like the stomach because blood does not flow through these organs.

**The base athet** is a set of eight organs which are all perceived to carry out more crude functions of the body. Again, these organs aren’t base because they’re unimportant, but because their functions are more basic and crude. Many animals possess these viscera and the functionality of an animal’s base organ is the same as that of a human’s base organ. The stomach of a man and the stomach of a hyena are different anatomically, but remember that Ethigean science has distinct disciplines for anatomy and medicine. It is the duty of anatomists to study the differences between, for example, a human stomach and a hyena stomach. As far as medical philosophy is concerned, they’re as functional as each other.

The base organs are the brain, spinal cord, guts [small and large intestines], gutcaul [greater omentum], stomach, bladder, rectum, and the reproductives [the penis/testes or the vulva/womb]. Again, Ethigeans attribute functions to many of these organs that modern Earth science would not. In fact, the spinal cord and gutcaul aren’t even recognized as organs by the latter. Most of these organs have the correct functions attributed to them, but notable exceptions are the brain and spinal cord.

In Ethigean medicine, the brain is seen as the organ responsible for the fundamental mechanisms for life. It governs the unthinking regulation of basic life processes like the heartbeat. It is a primitive organ philosophically identical to the brain of any animal. It is still very important for life, just as the heart is: injury to either of these organs is most likely to cause death. But these organs are key to life in different ways.

The spinal cord is seen to be the anchoring organ for the nitre host in humans, i.e. the receptacle for the life force which animates a human. Animals are alive just as humans are and thus the spinal cord is functionally equivalent to humans in all animals. Nerves are vessels originating from the spinal cord believed to transmit life force throughout the body. No part of the body can be functional without the presence of nerves. Because they transmit life force throughout the body, without nerves a body part is effectively dead and thus does nothing, being just a useless lump of tissue.

For example, without nerves an arm cannot do what an arm needs to do: move around and manipulate things. Without nerves the heart cannot give emotion. The guts cannot digest food. Destroy the spinal cord, and the connection that the nitre host has with the body is severed and the life force of the human is deprived, leading to death. Non-lethal injury to the spinal cord causes a more minor deprivation of life force as the connection is weakened but not severed: this leads to paralysis but not death.

**The sensative athet** is a set of eight organs which are all perceived to be involved in sensing the world around the individual and relaying information from the outside world to the mind. Without the sensative organs, the human may be alive but would be living in a black limbo deprived of any information on the outside world.

The sensative organs are the ears, eyes, nose, mouth, skin, tongue, pharynx, and larynx. Each organ is either solely responsible for a sense or contributes to that sense. The senses recognized by Ethigeans are sight, hearing, smell, speech, taste, and touch. It may not be obvious why speech is a sense: it seems as if speech conveys information from the mind rather than to it. Ethigean medicine believes speech is a sense because the things we say can often alter our state of mind and our thoughts. Speaking threats frequently, for example, is believed to make one a more angry and aggressive person. Hence, one’s own speech conveys information to the mind.

The mouth and larynx are both believed to be responsible for speech and speech alone. The larynx is the origin site for speech and the mouth shapes itself to produce specific vowels and consonants. The tongue is also responsible for speech as it too shapes itself to make these productions, although it is also responsible for taste. Skin is solely responsible for touch: things like temperature perception are not currently recognized as senses.[[12]](#footnote-13) The pharynx is more complicated, and is believed to contribute towards both taste and smell, helping convey these senses to the heart, the believed site of sense reception.

##### The Eight Essences

All matter is composed of the [Ten Bases](#_The_Ten_Bases), including the matter comprising the body. Different kinds of matter in the body (e.g. blood, muscle, bone, nerve tissue, etc) are composed of the Ten Bases in different proportions. One of the Ten Bases, void, is absent in all matter in the body, and another, Lahar is present in all matter of the body. Hence, all matter in the body is distinguished by eight bases. And in different kinds of matter, the composition of bases and the most abundant bases are different.

Take this premise to its logical conclusion. Fat and bone, for example, are two different kinds of matter found in the body. They have a different composition of bases: in this case, the predominant base in fat tissue is air, and in bone it is metal. (Note: this doesn’t mean that the substances of air and metal are present in these tissues. E.g. the base of air, when combined with other bases, is no longer air.) The only difference between these two tissues is the base composition. Hence, different bases cause matter to have different properties. They have different effects.

When one catches a disease, afflicted tissue is affected in such a way that one of the bases in the tissue is increased in its magnitude, whilst the magnitude of the other bases remains constant. Thus, the base composition of the afflicted tissue changes and therefore the tissue itself changes.

If the [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts_1) associated with a body are unbalanced, that body experiences ill health. The Ten Bases are the physical incarnations *of* the Three Hosts, and are comprised of the hosts in different proportions depending on the base itself. Hence, if the base composition of a tissue becomes unbalanced, the tissue becomes unhealthy. This makes the body unhealthy by extension.

The disease-induced excess of a specific base, however, has similar effects on every tissue it occurs in, regardless of the tissue itself. The unhealthy effects don’t vary based on the afflicted tissue, but on the increased base. Because all matter in the body is distinguished by eight bases, there are thus eight different *kinds* of change (only a single malady is caused by increase of the base of Lahar: senility, and diseases thus don’t cause Lahar increase, so Lahar is excluded here). Each different kind of change is called an ‘essence’.

A table of each essence and a description of it is as follows.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Essence | Air | Earth | Fire | Light | Metal | Kalai | Water | Wood |
| External Effect  The effect which the essence has that is visible | Pallour | Swelling | Inflammation | Flaking [outer layer of skin flaking off] | Necrosis [blackness] | Purpur [purpling of tissue, e.g. bruises] | Pustulation [formation of pustules] | Withering [atrophy of tissue] |
| Holistic Effect  The effect of the essence on the body as a whole | Light Headedness | Insomnia | Feverishness | Loss of Hunger | Thirst | Loss of Focus | Weakness | Fatigue |
| Fluid Effect  The effect of an excessive essence on increased fluid production in the body | Pale Phlegm [mucus] | Sweat | Excreta [fluid associated with faeces] | Bile | Urine | Black Phlegm [congealed blood] | Pus | Nitrous Fluid [cerebro-spinal fluid] |
| Curative [Sustenant](#_The_Five_Sustenants)  The sustenant that causes an excessive essence to be quelled | White Meat | Dairy | Red Meat | Nuts | Nectars | Fruit & Vegetables | Fish | Grains |
| Associated [Month](#_Calendar)  The month in which an essence is more likely to tend towards excess | Alharis | Nakal | Ghalassa | Kaptana | Deilis | Isari | Mabur | Xaridor |
| Associated [Celestial Body](#_Cosmology)  The body whose movements affect the excess/deficit of an essence | Juno | Jagannath | Ceres | Sun | Demeter | Moon | Aximander | Vulcan |
| Noble Organ  The noble organ which contains a base in greatest abundance | Lungs | Liver | Heart | Spleen | Pancreas | Gallbladder | Oesophagus | Kidneys |
| Base Organ  The base organ which contains a base in greatest abundance | Spinal Cord | Stomach | Reproductives | Bladder | Rectum | Guts | Brain | Gutcaul |
| Sensory Organ  The sensory organ which contains a base in greatest abundance | Larynx | Tongue | Pharynx | Eyes | Skin | Mouth | Ears | Nose |

##### The Classification of Malady

The definition of a malady is fairly broad: it is anything adverse which happens to a patient which deviates them from the state of health. However, for the sake of practicality, some greater precision is required when describing what particular malady a patient is experiencing. Ethigean medicine uses three indices to do this.

Malady fundamentally revolves around balance. Balance is only one of the [Three Geneses of Malady](#_The_Cause_of), but everyone ties back to it. Take improvidence: consumption of not enough meat, for example, causes a deficit in the ruby host of the patient, causing malady. Or take unprotection: exposure to a disease causes an imbalance in the bases of tissues, leading to negative changes and the predominance of an essence. Every malady is ultimately a form of imbalance: the variable is what form this imbalance takes.

It has been said that disease causes malady by altering [base](#_The_Ten_Bases) composition and allowing one to predominate unnaturally and by too much, leading to an essence. However, the other Geneses of Malady do this as well, simply by different means. Improvidence means that the base composition of tissues is altered because the body’s composition of the hosts changes. Because the Ten Bases are all made of differing proportions of the hosts, altering host composition alters base composition. Hence, the magnitude of certain bases decreases in the body, allowing the unaffected ones to unnaturally predominate and also leading to essence.

Infliction of physical injury directly results in base composition to change simply by how the impact affects the struck tissue. A whip hitting flesh, for example, causes base composition in the struck flesh to change and essence or essences to form. And, of course, imbalance in one’s lifestyle also results in base composition in the body’s tissues to become imbalanced as it affects host composition, leading to holistic adverse effects. This allows predomination, leading to the formation of essence.

The common factor here is imbalance, be it imbalance of bases directly or the imbalance of hosts and by extension bases. Therefore, one can classify a malady by the specific kind of imbalance suffered. One must also consider the location of the imbalance: does it affect the whole body? Multiple organs? Just one organ? Things, e.g. blood, that aren’t even organs? For effective classification, this must be specified.

One might say that because each base is comprised of the [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts) in different proportions, altering base composition alters host composition. And then, because the bases are made of the hosts, base composition is altered, and one reaches a positive feedback loop. This is not so. Let us say that a patient has caught a disease wherein a tissue consisting of fire and air suddenly gains an increase in fire magnitude. Fire, as a base, is primarily made of the Nitre Host, and the magnitude of the Nitre Host in the body thus increases. But this occurs as a side-effect of the base change. It doesn’t go on to incur more base change, it is an adjustment to it.

Inversely, let us say a patient has consumed too little meat, and the Ruby Host is diminished. The tissues of the body adjust to this as the bases which contain this host become different bases because the magnitude of this host decreases. For example, earth turns to air once the Ruby Host is absent from it. Thus, base composition is altered and essence results. But this is a simple causal effect, an adjustment. It is not a positive feedback loop.

Potential paradoxes aside, the three indices used to classify a malady are as follows: host imbalance, essence, and location. The first index concerns which host is in deficit or excess: generally, this establishes the cause of the malady. The second index concerns which essence is present: generally, this establishes the symptoms of the malady. The third index concerns which components of the body are present: generally, this establishes the location of the malady.

The classification of a malady could thus be, for example, ‘ruby deficit, fire essence, liver’. It could be ‘nitre excess, metal essence, lungs and heart’, ‘vitriolic excess, water essence, blood’, ‘nitre deficit, metal and air essences, gallbladder’, ‘ruby deficit and nitre excess, wood essence, holistic [i.e. the whole body’, etc. There can be multiple host imbalances, up to three, and up to eight essences present (although naturally these extremes are highly rare). The location can be holistic, it can be multiple organs or other components (e.g. blood and nerves), or a combination of these.

##### The Five Sustenants

The Five Sustenants are five food groups that Ethigean medicine dictates must be each consumed in sufficient quantities and in specific proportions. The food groups, or rather ‘sustenants’, are distinct from the other two substances believed to nourish life, water and air, although foodstuffs like milk and fruits may contain water or indeed be a liquid whilst still being defined as foods. Milk and juice are defined as part of the dairy and botanics sustenants, for example, *and* are considered to be a source of water. Foods can also contain multiple sustenants, for example a cake. The sustenants are as follows:

I. Meat | All body tissue of all animals: red meat, white meat, fish, bone marrow, etc

II. Grains | All foods derived from grains: bread, rice, etc

III. Botanics | All foods derived from botanics: fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, nuts, etc

IV. Dairy | All foods derived from milk and including milk: milk, cheese, butter, etc

V. Nectars | A small list of unique, characteristically sweet foods that may meet criteria for other sustenants but which Ethigean medicine explicitly ascribes to this one: honey, etc

It is believed that to be a healthy person, one requires sustenants I-IV, and to reach the pinnacle of health one requires all five. Failure to consume the sustenants leads to malady: indeed, one of the [Three Geneses of Malady](#_The_Cause_of) is improvidence.

Ethigean medicine stresses the importance of not just providence but *balance*. Not only must all the sustenants be consumed, but the proportions of each sustenant in the diet is highly important. The needed balance varies based on several factors: one’s sex, one’s social role, one’s level of activity, etc. For example, men are believed to need a higher proportion of meat than women, and women are believed to need a higher proportion of botanics than men.

Social role refers to one’s status in the socioeconomic hierarchy of [Feyriatal](#_Feyriatal), a hierarchic pyramid consisting of five different classes and many sub-classes. The sustenant balance for each major class in the hierarchy is believed to be different. The nobility is believed to need more nectars than other classes, the soldiery require meat, the gentry require dairy, the commonry require botanics, and the enslaved require grains.

These are just two examples of various factors, with different [Alfazel](#_Alfazel) compiling different lists of such factors. Many tie the number of these factors to 10, a divine number, or 8, for the number of essences, or multiples of these. Many others simply ignore these constraints and make the number however they see fit.

Each person will have different positions in however many axes physicians assign to them. Two men in the same social class with the same lifestyle have, for example, different temperaments, they live in different climates, they feel different emotions. Their precise situations, despite appearing to be the same at first glance, are actually highly different. Each of the manifold factors that go into determining one’s sustenant balance will alter the balance in some specific way, such that every individual has a different precise balance.

There is thus no default sustenant balance because for every individual it will be different. If a physician knows nothing about a patient and has to prescribe their diet (this is a highly unlikely hypothetical situation relying on the physician knowing *nothing* about the patient), it would have sustenants I-IV in equal proportions, with a considerably smaller proportion of sustenant V.

Getting this balance wrong diminishes health, and the greater the difference between the required balance and the actual balance, the more health is diminished. Minor differences weakens a patient’s constitution, major differences lead to malady. Often, a poor balance of sustenants is responsible for the continuation or worsening of a malady. Often, maladies that we would call ‘chronic’, for example arthritis, are believed to be eased by a proper sustenant balance and worsened by an improper balance.

Different sustenants are also believed to be curative for different essences, and different sustenants are also believed to strengthen different organs. The noble organs are believed to be strengthened by meat, the base organs benefit from grains, the sensory organs benefit from dairy, and all organs are strengthened by the nectars. For example, a malady concerning the liver (a noble organ) could be partially treated by giving meat.

Let’s say one has a malady of ‘ruby deficit, fire essence, larynx.’ One would treat this by giving the sustenants of red meat (for the fire essence) and dairy (for the larynx). If one had a malady of multiple essences or organs, the proportions of all the associated sustenants would be increased, resulting in no overall change to sustenant balance.

##### Lifestyle and Constitution

Ethigean medicine spans what we would call lifestyle medicine, and emphasizes the importance of a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Ethigean medicine universally agrees on a small list of the factors that lead to this, referred to as the ‘general medicaments’. They are named as such because they have a holistic effect on health: the general medicaments *generally* lead to good health and makes it easier to overcome malady. They are the closest thing to a universal cure that Ethigean medicine has: they help deal with all maladies and help improve all aspects of health. As curative forces, they are therefore not specific but general.

The general medicaments are as follows:

I. Balance of Age

The age cycle of a human is often referred to as the ‘seasons of man’, applying the metaphor of the yearly climate cycle to the human life cycle. The seasons are infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and senility. The definitions of these seasons are different to what our own: infancy is generally seen as lasting until ~5, childhood until 12-15, adolescence until ~25, and adulthood until 50-60, generally 50.

It is believed that an individual is healthiest when they are in the middle stage of this cycle: adolescence. They are most resistant to malady and physically capable in this stage. In childhood and adulthood, one is less resistant and capable, and at infancy and senility one is most vulnerable. Imagine a bell-shaped [i.e. normal distribution] curve, with adolescence at its apex and infancy/senility at its edges.

Whichever stage of life an individual is in has a significant impact on their physical capabilities and their body’s ability to self-remedy. A balanced age- one equidistant between the beginning and end of a human lifespan un-shortened by ill health- is one of the only general medicaments outside of one’s control. The maladious effects of unbalanced age (e.g. senility) can be partially offset by the application of the other general medicaments, and unbalanced age is only one factor that contributes to constitution (this will be explained later), but it still undeniably matters.

II. Sex

The sex of a human, be it male, female, or androgyne, is believed to influence one’s constitution. Maleness is believed to endow the individual with superior strength and thus strengthens their constitution. A woman and a man who are the same age and have the exact same lifestyle will thus have different constitutions because of the sex differences. Androgyny is believed to endow the individual with superior energy. This still strengthens the constitution as one’s energy/stamina is part of what determines physical capabilities, but strength plays a more important part.

Hence, androgyny still strengthens the constitution, but not as much as strength. Femaleness is believed to endow the individual with wisdom. This is undoubtedly beneficial but because one’s constitution is strictly about one’s physical capability and not vitriolic [mental] capability, wisdom does not strengthen the constitution. Women are thus at a disadvantage to men in this regard as maleness is inherently tied to strength and thus men have more strength than women by default.

Sex and having a balance of age are the only general medicaments which a person cannot control. The others are all a reflection of lifestyle.

III. Diet

Consumption of sufficient quantities of [sustenants](#_The_Five_Sustenants) and in a sufficient balance is highly important for health. If the sustenants are not consumed, the person withers away as the hosts of the body lack fuel/sustenance, and this spiritual malnourishment manifests itself in the material world as the symptoms of physical malnourishment. Malnourishment makes one weaker, more susceptible to malady, and less able to resist malady: it is a detriment that affects every part of one’s life.

If the sustenants are not consumed in the correct balance, the constitution of the individual is also diminished. If they are consumed in sufficient quantities and the right balance, the body grows stronger and healthier, more physically capable. Mentally (these articles avoid discussing mental health because this is the remit of a specific field of knowledge, sagecraft, but it is appropriate to mention this now in passing) the person becomes more focused, sharp, and happy.

Whilst a healthy constitution can be reached by omitting nectars from the diet, including nectars in small quantities can take the constitution to new heights of strength unattainable to those without it. Too much of the nectars, however, and malady is sure to follow; indeed, one can consume far less nectars than other sustenants before it becomes an excess and maladious.

IV. Physical Activity

Being active physically is highly important. Simply utilizing the body’s physical capabilities on a regular basis is important: taxing these capabilities and incurring temporary weakness, fatigue, and pain by doing so is even better. When an individual has this general medicament, the good health of the body manifests itself in the gain of muscle and the avoidance of excess fat. The more the body is taxed, the greater the positive change in the body, and the more the constitution is improved.

Conversely, when one avoids physical activity and does not utilize the body’s physical capabilities, these capabilities diminish. Fat accumulates and muscle withers, manifestations of diminished health. The body tires more easily and is more given to fatigue and general weakness. The constitution is weakened.

V. Combat

Combat- not in a metaphorical sense, but in the literal, martial sense- is a form of physical activity, but provided that it does not cause physical injury to the individual it benefits them far more than other kinds of activity. The act of combat itself is inherently beneficial, beyond simply being physically active. It is a *form of* physical activity which is superior to other forms. If one were to lift and swing a sword with the exact same intensity and duration inside and outside combat, the former’s results would always be superior.

Combat leads to a great increase in strength, speed, endurance, and reflexes. Even a single battle fought benefits the constitution more than a week of peaceable exercise. Note that although combat is a general medicament for the constitution, it is acknowledged to have potentially negative vitriolic [mental] effects- medicine is not concerned with vitriolic health, however, and the constitution is not at all a vitriolic concept. It is wholly physical.

VI. Rest

Excessive or deficient rest is poor for the constitution. Rest refers mainly to sleep, but really means any cessation of activity. Simply sitting down and thinking after, say, exercise counts as rest. Sitting down and doing nothing is rest in all circumstances, because rest is just doing nothing.

A good amount of sleep, every night, ideally coinciding with darkness such that one rises with the Sun, is important. All of the general medicaments are futile for health if one lacks rest. The lack of regular rest- or too much rest- is detrimental. The body warns one of this detriment by means of tiredness and fatigue: fatigue is the herald of unbalanced rest.

Depending on one’s constitution, one requires a different amount of rest for balance: for example a fit adult requires less rest than a senile man in order to have a balanced amount. The balance varies from person to person. A person afflicted by malady requires more rest than one who is not, for example.

VII. Healthful Air

Healthful air refers simply to being outside. Being out of enclosed spaces in natural environments is believed to benefit health, as the air of these places is more ‘healthful’ than the air in buildings, cities, etc. This air is more healthful birth because it is less likely to bear disease and because, reducing the probability of incurring malady, and because it merely inherently *is* and leads to a stronger constitution. The inhalation of healthful airs is therefore believed to benefit health.

VIII. Occupation

Having a balance in one’s life between work, leisure, and rest is believed to be highly important. Work does not have to be manual labour, but any form of activity which occupies the body or mind. Typically, work is perceived to be one’s ‘duty’ in society: for example, a farmer has a societal duty to farm and doing this benefits health. An [asthan](#_Eskhagan) has a societal duty to train and fight and doing this benefits health.

A farmer can also study to become an Alfaz, for example, and this studying is still work and still beneficial, but the message is that the different tiers of society are all occupied in some way. Governance, trading, studying, preaching- all of these are forms of work even though they are not physical. It occupies the individual, providing structure and purpose to life, giving them a reason to wake up every day.

Excessive work is also bad: time must be allotted for the individual to pursue leisure- for example socializing with friends and family- and to rest. The key is a balance of these activities. Different individuals have different balances that are ideal for them- many factors contribute to determining this overall balance. [Social class](#_Feyriatal) is not actually one of them; most of these factors are vitriolic [mental], for example one’s [temperament](#_The_Five_Temperaments).

IX. Cleanliness

It is important for the individual to avoid excess dirtying of the body, especially dirtying of wounds or other regions where the skin is penetrated. Ethigean standards of cleanliness are very different to our own, being notably inferior. In fact, some dirtying of the body is normal and indication of a job well done: a farmer whose hands are clean at the end of the day is a farmer who is done their job poorly.

A balance between abstinence from all dirtying and an avoidance of excessive dirtying (e.g. being covered in mud or faeces) must be struck. Avoidance of all dirtying isn’t inherently bad, but non-excessive dirtying is harmless to the individual and generally comes as a consequence of doing physical work properly, and *that* is what leads to a better constitution.

The general medicaments are the things which influence one’s constitution. The constitution of an individual is their general physical health. How physically capable are they- how strong, how fast, how endurant? How able are they to resist the onset of malady- be this disease or another condition (arthritis, poor vision, etc)? How able is their body to resist the malady itself and self-remedy- how fast is it, how potent is the malady which they can overcome? An individual’s constitution is, in the most general sense, how physically healthy they are.

Constitutions are described as being ‘good/poor’ or, more often, ‘strong/weak.’ The strength of an individual’s constitution depends on the general medicaments: things like excess fat accumulate as evidence of a weak constitution, they don’t cause the constitution themselves. Excess fat or deficient muscle do not cause weakness, they are evidence of weakness.

For example, a man who is young, eats well, and is physically active will have a good constitution. He will be more physically capable: stronger, faster, more endurant, have faster reflexes. He will be more resistant to malady and better able to overcome it. Take a senile woman who is not active and eats poorly. The opposite will be true. But then envision a senile woman who is active to the best of her ability, eats well, keeps clean, and stays outside. Such a woman’s constitution will be inferior to the fit and active young man, but it will at least be better than what it would be were she to lead an unhealthy lifestyle.

#### Natural Alphabetics

Natural alphabetics is a discipline of natural law [an Ethigean term encompassing several of the sciences] in Ethagis involving the classification of humans, animals, plants, and materials. It is analogous to the modern scientific discipline of taxonomy, although natural alphabetics is more specifically a form of folk taxonomy.

Folk taxonomy is not the same as scientific taxonomy. It doesn’t use a universal binomial naming system and gets its information from common knowledge and observation rather than scientific inquiry and biochemical analysis. Most of the names used in folk taxonomy are used in everyday speech and are known to all social classes, although the actual taxonomic terms are more scientific and have been coined by educated, learned men throughout Ethigean history.

In Ethigean natural alphabetics, animals are classified by external appearance and physical characteristics rather than phylogeny and DNA. Natural alphabetics lacks an elaborate taxonomic hierarchy but it does have over one taxon in which organisms are classified. Notably and due to religious reasons, it classifies animals by ‘gifts’, with the term originating from the religious narrative that different animals have different divinely-given gifts. Natural alphabetics is generally associated with [theonomy and supraphysica](#_The_Learned_Arts) [theology and philosophy]. Indeed, an observer from contemporary Earth would observe that there is an extensive ‘philosophy of taxonomy’ present. The idea of ‘gifts’ is just an example of this.

Though this term is a source of conflict with Linnean taxonomy, it ultimately just boils down to different observable characteristics. An atheist could argue that the religious idea of divine gifts actually developed from prehistoric Ethigeans observing animals.

The field of natural alphabetics has developed over centuries and, just like taxonomy on Earth, has advanced disproportionately due to the efforts of a few individuals. Although Aristotle and Linnaeus have never existed in this world, other polymaths and learned men have contributed to natural alphabetics considerably, and are renowned even today.

The most fundamental classification in natural alphabetics is that of the Four Supraclasses, with each supraclass being the highest taxonomic group. The Supraclasses are humans, animals, botanics, and extractables. Botanics refers to plants and fungi and materials refers to naturally occurring substances. In the philosophy of natural alphabetics, each supraclass has a different number of ‘superlative attributes’. There are three superlative attributes: rationality, activity, and cyclation. Rationality refers to the unique human faculties of reasoning, complex thought, and intellect. Activity refers to the human and animal abilities of movement and actions. Cyclation refers to the human, animal, and botanic quality of undergoing the cycle of birth, growth, decline, and death.

Humans possess all three of these qualities, animals possess those of activity and cyclation, botanics possess only cyclation, and extractables possess none. Theories of natural law thus posit that there are three fundamentally different kinds of life: base life, possessed by botanics, animative life, possessed by animals, and higher life, possessed by humans. Deities have the superlative attribute of hypernaturality, the capacity to violate the laws of nature at will, and thus possess the highest form of life: superlative life.

The next tier of taxonomic classification is ‘classes’. Below is a list of the classes of the animal supraclass. Historical Western taxonomy ranked animals in a Great Chain of Being according to their closeness to humans and, by extension, God. The idea of a Great Chain of Being is rooted in medieval Christianity and is thus a religious concept as much as it is a taxonomic concept. Natural alphabetics is also heavily tied to Ethigean faith, which has animal deities and thus decrees that animals are, to a degree, sacrosanct. Hence, the various animal classes are not formally ranked, though they are conventionally listed in order of closeness to humanity. The animal classes are grouped into two orders, Cruoris and Incruoris, with the former having blood and the latter lacking blood.

Classes are also delineated by what natural alphabetics describes as their ‘calument’, their outermost layer. Different caluments include skin, fur, feathers, dry scales, wet scales, exoskeleton, etc.

The classes are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Class | Examples | Blood | Legs | Calument |
| Live-bearing bipeds | Monkeys | Cruoris | 2 legs | Fur and skin |
| Live-bearing quadrupeds | Cats, dogs, rabbits, horses, elephants | Cruoris | 4 legs | Fur and skin |
| Live-bearing armoured quadrupeds | Pangolin, armadillo | Cruoris | 4 legs | Scales and skin |
| Flightless birds | Ostriches, flamingoes | Cruoris | 2 legs | Feathers |
| Birds | Parrots, ducks, crows | Cruoris | 2 legs | Feathers |
| Scaleless boned fishes | Whales, dolphins, sharks | Cruoris | 0 legs | Skin |
| Egg-bearing quadrupeds | Crocodiles, newts, chameleons | Cruoris | 4 legs | Scales |
| Serpents | Vipers, anacondas, boas | Cruoris | 0 legs | Scales |
| Scaleless a-boned fishes | Octopi, squids, cuttlefish | Cruoris | 4+ legs | Skin |
| Scaled fishes | Swordfish, bass, anchovies | Cruoris | 0 legs | Scales |
| Crustaceans | Shrimp, crabs | Incruoris | 4+ legs | Exoskeleton |
| Armoured insects | Scorpions, centipedes | Incruoris | 4+ legs | Exoskeleton |
| Unarmoured insects | Flies, ladybirds, spiders | Incruoris | 4+ legs | Skin |
| Shelled wormiforms | Snails, clams, cockles | Incruoris | 0 legs | Skin |
| Wormiforms | Flatworms, roundworms | Incruoris | 0 legs | Skin |
| Flexiforms | Sponges, sea cucumbers | Incruoris | 0 legs | Skin |

There are divisions below the taxon of classes, but these are not universally accepted in modern scholarly thought. Probably the most common of those are groups within the class of live-bearing quadrupeds; examples include feliforms (felines), caniforms (canines), boviforms (bovines), and equiforms (equines). Every scholar in Ethagis would posit the existence of a taxon below that of a class, but they would disagree on what that taxon would be called and how specific the sub-categories would be.

A parallel and alternate method of animal classification is that of ‘gifts’, a taxonomic and religious phenomenon. It is believed in Ethigean religion that different animals were created with different positive attributes. Though this is a religious principle, it makes sense from a taxonomic perspective, as the ‘positive attributes’ generally refer to observable and advantageous physical characteristics. In more recent scientific corpuses, the term ‘gifts’ is typically substituted for faculty or affinity. Each group of animals endowed with each affinity is referred to as an ‘affinion’. A list of gifts is below, described verbatim from religious texts:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gift | Description | Affinion Examples |
| Armour | The possession of a rigid exoskeleton or scales. | Crab, shrimp, isopod, crocodile |
| Brotherhood | The capacity to live and travel in a group. | Lion, meerkat, elephant, wildebeest |
| Craft | The capacity to deceive other beings by camouflage. | Octopus, cuttlefish, chameleon |
| Ferocity | The possession of considerable physical drive and aggression. | Hippopotamus, honey badger, leopard |
| Flight | The possession of wings and use of them for flight. | Crow, vulture, eagle, bat |
| Killer Instinct | The capacity to kill and eat other animals. | All carnivorous animals |
| Might | The possession of considerable physical strength and size. | Elephant, rhino, hippopotamus, wildebeest, lion, blackfish, shark |
| Satiety | The capacity to only have to eat highly infrequently. | Crocodile, snake, lizard, shark |
| Swiftness | The capacity to travel at extreme speeds. | Cheetah, peregrine falcon, golden eagle, gyrfalcon, sailfish |
| Wisdom | The possession of highly significant intelligence. | Elephant, orang-utan, chimpanzee |

Generally, the affinions do not correspond to currently accepted scientific taxa, although some happen to do almost do so: for example, ‘armour’ generally refers to crustaceans, ‘flight’ to birds, and ‘satiety’ to cold-blooded reptiles.

Botanics are classified into one of six classes: woody plants, crops, flowering plants, green plants, mushrooms, and grasses. In this case, grasses refers to non-vascular plants and green plants refers to any vascular plant which lacks wood, flowers, or any crops. Mushrooms are recognised as distinct from plants.

The final method that Ethigeans use as a form of classification is that of the ‘[series of genesis](#_The_Genesis_of_1)’ system. This is parallel to the system of supraclasses and gifts: Ethigean taxonomy does not involve a single hierarchy or phylogenetic tree but rather parallel systems used in conjunction with each other.

[Ethigean religion](#_Religion) posits that animals are created in ten groups in sequence one after each other. Each group consists of a variable number of animal species, with the first group- referred to as the first series of genesis- consisting of ten animals. These ten animals are believed to be made in the image of [ten animal gods](#_The_Ten_Animal) and are referred to as the ‘genitor animals’. The genitor animals are hippopotami, elephants, leopards, lions, crocodiles, harpy eagles, sharks, octopi, zebras, and hyenas.

The series’ are organised in terms of their physical similarity to the genitor animals: a cheetah, for example, is thus a lower series than an insect because cheetahs are more similar to one of the genitor animals (a leopard) than an insect is. A cheetah and alligator are in the same series as each is highly physically similar to one of the genitor animals- a leopard and crocodile respectively.

This means that as a general trend, animals are organised in terms of their complexity. This is not a universal rule because animals like the cuttlefish are in the same series as a golden eagle due to their similarities to an octopus and harpy eagle respectively (two of the genitor animals). However, as most of the genitor animals are mammals, and mammals are the most ‘complex’ animals (i.e. they diverged from humans most recently), mammals tend to be in lower series, crustaceans and most fish in the middling series, insects in the higher series, and the flatworm being the single animal in the tenth series.

This is a list of each series, its alternate name in natural alphabetics and theonomy [i.e. theology, as the idea of ‘series of genesis’ is fundamentally a religious one] if they have any, and some examples for each series.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Series No. | Alternate Names | Examples |
| 1 | Genitor Series | Elephant, leopard, crocodile, shark, octopus, harpy eagle, zebra, hyena |
| 2 | Postgenitor Series | Rhinoceros, cheetah, alligator/caiman, whale, cuttlefish, golden eagle, horse, wild dog |
| 3 | Ternary Series | Primates, other feliforms, other caniforms, bovines, equines, cetaceans |
| 4 | Quaternary Series | Reptiles, Snakes |
| 5 | Medial Series | Amphibians |
| 6 | Senary Series | Crustaceans |
| 7 | Septenary Series | Insects |
| 8 | Octal Series | Hard-shelled animals e.g. cockles, snails |
| 9 | Preterminal Series | Sponges, worms |
| 10 | Terminal Series | Flatworm |

In Ethigean society, the regard each animal is held in directly relates to the series they’re in. Although this isn’t specified in religious texts or scientific thought, socio-culturally animals tend to be treated better depending on their series and are regarded as more superior/advanced. With the exception of the genitor animals, whose cultural associations are primarily determined by religious teachings, the cultural associations of various animals also generally depends on their series.

Cultural associations and depictions are also dependent on practicalities and observable characteristics: for example, domestic dogs are viewed more positively than most genitor animals simply because they’re helpful and make humans happy. Hyenas and crocodiles are also generally negatively depicted simply because they kill livestock and animals. The general trend of societal views on animals corresponds with the series of genesis, however.

Firstly, animals in lower series are seen as more primitive and less worthy of life. Many people would have significant moral qualms about arbitrarily killing an elephant, whereas almost nobody would care about stepping on a worm. Even animals which societies on Earth have not paid much moral respect to, like an octopus, are far more respected. The impact of religion on culture is extraordinary in any society- there are innumerable examples of Christianity forming Western culture, for example- and this includes Ethagis. Hence the lives of octopi, for example, are more respected and octopus fishing is rare.

#### Natural History

Natural history is a discipline of [natural law](#_The_Learned_Arts) [an Ethigean term encompassing several of the sciences] in Ethagis involving the study of animals and plants. It is analogous to the modern scientific disciplines of zoology and botany, although a much less formalised or organised version of either.

Like all Ethigean sciences, natural history is strongly influenced by [Ethigean religion](#_Religion), known as the Way. Religion is in fact the foundation of natural history, just as in medieval Europe. The Way features a pantheon of ten animal gods, known as the [Ten Animal Deities](#_The_Ten_Animal), which each resemble different fauna and embody a mixture of positive and negative moral qualities and attributes. The primacy of religion to the study of animals is so strong that reading about the Ten Animal Deities is greatly recommended before reading this article. It is also recommended that you read about [natural alphabetics](#_Natural_Alphabetics), a discipline of natural law that is analogous to modern taxonomy.

Due to the religious role of animals, animal life is seen as sacred (to varying extents depending on the animal), meaning that study of animals has been extensive and important in Ethigean history. As a result, Ethigean zoological knowledge is considerably more developed than that of any medieval civilisation on Earth. From the perspective of modern Earth zoology, animals are extremely anthropomorphised, often described and judged by natural historians from a human behavioural and moral standpoint.

Unlike medieval Earth zoology, wherein each animal was used as a tool by the Church to display a specific virtue/vice or to teach a kind of lesson, Ethigean zoology focuses more on empirical observation of the animal and judges them in a more balanced way. Rather an animal being used a symbol of good or bad and used as a parable, each animal shows balance of ‘ordered’ and ‘chaotic’ properties and positive/negative symbolisms. In some animals, like the elephant or hyena, these balances can be very one-sided, but no animal will be wholly condemned or praised.

For example, in medieval Europe the serpent was reviled as the symbol of the Devil. It represented evil and vice. The Ethigean approach is to observe the complement of the serpent’s behaviours and physical attributes and use this information to inform a more balanced judgement. Serpents are generally perceived as more negative than positive: humans have a natural fear of snakes and different cultures throughout Earth and Jagannath have rationalised this primal fear by assigning negative characteristics to them. But Ethigeans acknowledge that serpents are also symbols of fertility and beauty.

The sacredness of animals in Ethagis also means that they are treated differently than they were on Earth before the 19th century. For more information on animal welfare and treatment, click [here](#_Animal_Welfare).

#### Sagecraft

Sagecraft is a discipline of [natural law](#_The_Learned_Arts) [an Ethigean term encompassing several of the sciences] concerning the maintenance of mental health, acting as a complementary scientific discipline to [medicine](#_Medicine) in that medicine concerns health of the body and sagecraft concerns health of the mind. It spans various scientific fields that an observer from Earth would broadly call psychology, neuroscience, psychotherapy, theology, and philosophy. The latter two fields are because sagecraft is centred around the various concepts of [Ethigean religion](#_Religion), and even derives a proportion of its corpus directly from religious teachings.

A preliminary read of the various articles written about Ethigean religion is strongly recommended, but the minimum pre-reading required (and a brief summary of all of these articles) is as follows:

##### Theonomy

[One](#_The_Dualism_of), that the cosmos (i.e. the universe) is characterised by the dual forces of order and chaos. Order represents regular, patterned phenomena (e.g. the cycles of wet season/dry season or day/night). Chaos represents irregular, unpredictable phenomena (e.g. natural disasters or sudden warm periods). Neither order nor chaos in the scale of the cosmos are inherently good or bad, but they *are* good and bad respectively when applied to humans.

[Two](#_Morality_and_Reincarnation), that the force of chaos in humans represents the animal, primal side. It causes various deep, primal desires: those of food, sex, resources, power, authority, etc. Order in humans represents the human, rational side. It causes one to resist fulfilling these desires by immoral means (e.g. theft, rape, abuse, etc) and conquer them, doing moral things and having moral values in spite of these primal desires (called ‘letches’). Self-discipline, defined as the ability to resist these letches and a manifestation of the force of order, is therefore the most important quality in a human as it leads to all other moral actions/values. *The more ordered and self-disciplined a person is, the happier they are*.

[Three](#_Intrinsic_Balance_and), that moral values (e.g. kindness, generosity, etc) are manifestations of the force of order, and are the mean between two extreme, immoral values that are manifestations of the force of chaos. For example, kindness is exactly in the middle of cruelty and feeble-mindedness, and courage is exactly in the middle of cowardice and recklessness. Finding a balance between these two extremes is crucial for morality and thus happiness. Any moral value requires self-discipline to act upon (e.g. one most gather the courage to be brave and resist the urge to be reckless) and any immoral value does not; it is the ‘easy way out’.

[Four](#_The_Ultimate_Good), that everything that is moral and ‘good’ is ‘good’ because it increases the happiness in the world. Happiness is the ‘Ultimate Good’ which defines what is good and what is bad. The Ultimate Good is *not* transitory, immoral pleasure gained by acting on one’s letches, but rather any other means of happiness that is not immorally derived. By acting in a self-disciplined way and cultivating an internal force of order, one becomes happy.

[Five](#_The_Divine_Numbers), that there is a set of five religiously significant numbers in the cosmos, significant because they continually manifest themselves in nature. These are called the ‘Divine Numbers’ and they are 1, 2, 3, 5, and 10. All man-made creations, for example an ideology, a list, a calendar, etc; they should all try and involve these numbers as much as possible because they are naturally, intrinsically good.

Sagecraft is about the cessation of mental unhealth (negative emotion and mental illness) and the establishment of mental health: happiness. It centres around the idea that being a moral, self-disciplined person who does not act on their letches and obeys religious moral teachings will lead to long-term, genuine happiness.

Ethigean religion and sagecraft specify that there are three kinds of ‘happiness’. Please click [here](#_The_Ultimate_Good) for further information about these; this is just a brief summary. Base pleasure results from acting on one’s letches, and is both transitory and immoral. Although it leads to short-term gratification, it actually hinders long-term happiness rather than bolsters it. Actions that lead to base pleasure cultivates a person’s internal force of chaos and makes them a more immoral and ultimately sadder person. Examples of immoral actions leading to base pleasure is the act of rape to satisfy the primal urges for sexual gratification and power.

Pure pleasure is a kind of happiness that is transitory but not immorally derived. It can be joy at having a good harvest, or relief that a threatened bad event has not come to pass. It is thus generally a reaction to external forces rather than the result of one’s own actions. It may make someone happy in the short-term, but has no long-term effect on their happiness or morality and experiencing pure pleasure does not cultivate either chaos or order within a person.

Blessed happiness is a long-term, morally derived happiness. It is synonymous with the ideas of satisfaction, contentment, accomplishment, and calmness. Blessed happiness is the happiness one gets for being a good, productive person. An example is working hard to feed yourself and family and thus keeping yourself occupied, giving yourself a reason to wake up in the morning. This doesn’t have to be manual labour, but any activity which busies the mind and/or body. It leads to actual, long-term, meaningful happiness and actions that lead to it cultivate order within a person.

Doing the right thing is ignoring animal desires to be rational and moral, two qualities that are uniquely human. Each human thus has an ‘animal’ side and a ‘human’ side: the former represents base desires and feelings, the latter represents higher levels of thought that are unique to humans. The more a person does the right thing, the more they develop the Ultimate Principle (self-discipline); a principle is a value, and can be negative or positive. Examples are kindness, cruelty, stupidity, diligence, integrity, deceptiveness, etc. Self-discipline is the Ultimate Principle because it is at the root of all other moral principles.

These other principles are collectively known as the Five Noble Principles, and are principles that are developed by self-discipline. They are as follows:

Morality | Doing things that benefit others at the expense of your own time, effort, happiness, or resources. Cultivated by altruism.

Restraint | Restraining from material pleasures like excess food, alcohol, or sex. Cultivated by self-restraint.

Diligence | Being hardworking and productive. Cultivated by work.

Knowledge | The volume and magnitude of facts, skills, practices, and teachings one knows. Cultivated by study, training, expertise, and practice of a skill.

Wisdom | One’s insight into the world and into how and why other people do the things they do. Cultivated by studying the Way.

By following the Five Noble Principles- and especially the Ultimate Principle- one not only becomes a better, more ordered person, but as a consequence becomes happier. The Way believes that the more ordered a person is the happier they become as a consequence. People who pursue chaos (i.e. short-term physical pleasures) may be happy in those moments, but in the long term are miserable. They are never truly fulfilled as people, whereas an ordered person is genuinely happy and fulfilled.

##### Mind-Body Dualism

The cosmos is characterised by dualism. There is [the ultimate dichotomy between order and chaos](#_The_Dualism_of), of course, but innumerable others. Most of all, there are innumerable dichotomies considering humans, but all of these dichotomies are either of the mind (for example, chaos and order) or of the body (for example, health and sickness). The most fundamental dichotomy for the cosmos may be chaos and order, but for humans it is the mind and the body.

The body exists in the [material world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld). It is not abstract or subjective- the same body is perceived by all others who are sound of sight to be the same. It is wholly accessible to the human senses; it can be seen, touched, smelled, etc. Although there are spiritual forces that *affect* the body, everything about the body itself can be discovered through observation and physical experimentation: practical means.

The mind exists in the [spiritual world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld). It is entirely abstract and subjective- it lacks a physical form and is perceived differently by others; different people have different opinions on the same person. It is wholly inaccessible to the human senses; you cannot see a mind or touch it, for example. You cannot learn about the mind by observation- it can only be understood by reason and logic. You may ask a person questions and note down their answers to try and understand their mind, but one must exercise the faculties of reason and logic to do it: rational means.

To put it another way, an animal can understand the idea of a body but not that of a mind. An animal can see a larger animal and understand that the larger animal is a threat. The animal can do this because the body is understood through practical means like observation. However, an animal cannot understand the mind of the larger animal because no mind can be seen, and requires the faculty of reason to understand.

Hence, the mind and body are fundamentally different. There is no unity between them because there is no overlap, and thus they cannot be combined into one definition of what it is to be human. Just as the cosmos is rightly divided into order and chaos, so must the human be divided into body and mind.

To ignore this dualism and to treat the body and mind as one would be illogical and detrimental. To ignore a law of nature is never wise: if humanity treated the wet season and the dry season as one, for example, the result would be agricultural detriment. Similarly, if humanity treat the body and mind as one, the result is medical detriment.

Thus, there exist two disciplines for the restoration of health to a human. Medicine is the discipline that brings health to the body, and sagecraft is the discipline that brings health to the mind.

##### Organs of the Mind

The body is divided into various different organs, each of which carry out a specific function, or related set of functions, for the body. The eyes provide the function of sight, the guts provide that of digestion, the ears provide that of hearing, etc. When one divides the body into organs, one is therefore effectively just dividing it into its various different functions.

The mind does not exist in the [material world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld) and it therefore lacks physical divisions like organs- but it *can* be divided into various different functions and aspects just as the body can. One cannot map the mind as one can map the body because it isn’t a physical thing: there is no ‘mental anatomy’. There is no physical arrangement of these various functions- indeed there is no physical form or source of them.

The parts of the mind responsible for each function are referred to as the ‘organs of the mind’ as an easily understood way of visualising and compartmentalising these different functions. The parts are given different names, just as organs are given different names, and can be thought as a kind of ‘metaphor’ for physical organs. Due to the frequent comparisons between the body and the mind, the idea of organs of the mind contrasting with organs of the body also appealed to many sages (practitioners of sagecraft), cementing its frequency of oral and written use.

The organs of the mind are as follows, along with- if possible- the corresponding part of the brain actually responsible for this phenomena. It *must* be stated that the peoples of this world *do not* know this much about brain anatomy and don’t even understand fully what the brain does. Neurological terms are included here purely for the benefit and interest of the reader.

NOTE: ‘vitriolic’ in this context means ‘mental’. For more information on this and why this is, click [here](#_The_Three_Human).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Organ of the Mind | Stated Function | Description |
| Nepenthes | Unthinking Regulation | Unthinking regulation refers to the unconscious, background processes by which the mind regulates the body. The natural, cyclic changes of the body- for example waking and sleeping- are kept in rhythm by this aspect of the mind. This is the only organ of the mind which botanics (a taxon including plants and fungi and believed to be the most primitive form of life) possess. It is a constantly active organ of the mind independent of voluntary control, switched off only in death or on the verge of death. |
| Cascus | Unthinking Action | Unthinking action is an unthinking, automatic tendency towards certain actions, independent of voluntary control. It is found in animals and humans. Things that these supraclasses do unthinkingly, like eat food or walk home automatically by what we would call ‘muscle memory’, are caused by this organ. |
| Scientinus | Consciousness | Consciousness is the state of being aware of one’s surroundings- it is fundamentally that which gives us awareness. In a human or animal mind, it is continually running during wakefulness, and rendered inactive at sleep. It is totally independent of voluntary control. |
| Concionis | Physical Instrument | The physical instrument of the mind is that which is responsible for the use of the body to do things. Things like coordination, fine movements, and general control over one’s body are attributed to this organ. Some actions tax this organ more than others. Lifting one’s arm still requires use of this organ as it involves the *will* to move one’s arm and thus a part of the mind. However, this action is simpler and easier to carry out than, for example, juggling five balls. One might be incapable of this because the organ of physical instrumentality is not strong enough. This organ, fundamentally, is about the mind willing the body to do things. |
| Animus | Emotional Memory | Emotional memory is a simple form of memory that animals and humans experience. It is responsible for the memory of emotions like happiness, sadness, fear, etc. For example, both animals and humans remember, after an initial experience, not to walk into fire as it causes the emotion of pain. They may both remember to avoid a particular person as it causes the emotion of anger or fear. |
| Concitanium | Chaotic/Animal Emotion | Animal emotion represents the basic, primal urges common to both humans and animals. These include hunger, thirst, sex, and lust, but also drives and instincts like the desire to have power, or the desire for self-preservation. In Ethigean society, these are thought to be negative in a human and lead to immoral actions. |
| Excercinum | Ordered/Human Emotion | Human emotion represents those advanced emotions believed to be unique to humans. These include empathy, diligence, and self-discipline. In Ethigean society, these are thought to be positive in a human and lead to moral actions. This organ of the mind, as well as the other organs listed below, are believed to be unique to humans. |
| Retinentium | Vitriolic Memory and Knowledge | Vitriolic memory refers to the memory of thoughts, mental formations, skills, and knowledge. It includes remembering the answers to an exam, remembering certain facts and concepts, remembering how to practice a skill, and encompasses all forms of knowledge. It is a uniquely human capacity that requires effort. |
| Sententium | Vitriolic Formations | Vitriolic formations refer to internal, mental conceptions unique to the self. These include thoughts, opinions, and the general faculty of imagination. |
| Agnoscon | Force of Comprehension | The force of comprehension refers to the human capacity to understand new concepts and ideas. The ability to understand complex new concepts, as distinct from just retaining new information, is a key part of human intelligence. |
| Intricinor | Force of Reason | The force of reason refers to the human capacity to exercise reason and logic. Things like deduction, critical thinking, and complex decision-making are all driven by the force of reason, and it is seen as the penultimately most important and noble organ of the human mind. |
| Ultimases | Sense of Self | The sense of self is seen as the ultimate organ of the mind, the most advanced and human part. It is seen as the capacity to recognise one’s own existence and sense of self. It spans the ideas of identity, individuality, personality, and self-worth. It is a recognition of all other organs of the mind, a conscious knowledge of what one wants and what one truly is. Sagecraft focusses the most on this organ and views it as the most important for happiness. It is influenced and formed by all other organs of the mind, e.g. emotions and formations. For example, the sense of self and self-worth may be bolstered by positive emotions and thoughts. |

The greater an individual’s faculty for a particular function, the stronger their organ is said to be. For example, the better a person’s working memory, the stronger their retinentium is said to be. The stronger their self-confidence, the stronger their Ultimases is said to be.

There is no organ of the mind corresponding to perception or sensation as these are wholly attributed to the organs of the body. It is thought that whilst a living thing requires the sense of consciousness to do anything with this sensory information, perception and sensation are simply not seen as the domain of the mind.

##### The Five Modes

Sagecraft holds that there are five fundamental different kinds of modes. A mode in this context is a mood/emotion/state of mind: as the five modes are listed it will become clear what this actually means. The five modes are happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and ignorance. The first four are self-explanatory, but ‘ignorance’ here just refers to not knowing how to feel: it can be thought of as just confusion.

The modes are called this because humans are constantly feeling one of these modes. It would be unnuanced to claim that humans are only capable of five emotions, but all emotions are different forms or combinations of the five modes. These forms can be intense, diminished, or alternate: intense forms are amplified versions of one of the modes, diminished forms are the opposite, and alternate forms are modified versions of variable intensity.

Examples of intense forms are ecstasy (for happiness), misery (for sadness), terror (for fear), rage (for anger), and bewilderment (for ignorance). Examples of diminished forms are comfort (for happiness), discomfort (for sadness), nervousness (for fear), annoyance (for anger), and uncertainty (for ignorance). Although nervousness and fear, for example, may be considered by a layman to be separate emotions, the former is just a different articulation of the latter. E.g. if one is nervous about an upcoming exam one has, what one is *really* experiencing is fear of failure. If one was certain that failure was impossible, there would be no nervousness.

Examples of alternate forms are calmness (for happiness), boredom (for sadness), disgust (for fear), bitterness (for anger), and suspicion (for ignorance). These are emotions which are still just different articulations of the five modes, but on a deeper and harder to understand level. Ultimately, an alternate form makes one feel a mode. For example, boredom makes you feel sad, calmness makes you feel happy, etc. One might not think that disgust makes you scared, but ultimately disgust is just fear of exposure to a stimulus[[13]](#footnote-14). Suspicion is just an indirect form of uncertainty.

Many emotions are also combinations of the five modes or their forms. Contempt, for example, is a combination of anger and disgust- i.e. anger and fear. Aggression is another combination of anger and fear; the same combination of modes can have many different manifestations depending on the form, proportions, and context of the modes. Other emotions are more indirectly linked to the five modes. Something as abstract as acceptance, for example, is a combination of calmness and submission. Calmness is an alternate form of happiness and submission is itself a combination of trust and fear.

All emotions which are the result of any kind of combination are known as ‘multimodal forms’. Any emotion which is a combination of two forms of the same mode is just an alternate form. E.g. reassurance combines calmness and trust (both forms of happiness) and is therefore itself an alternate form. An emotion is simply defined as either a mode or a form.

All animals with blood (known in natural alphabetics [taxonomy] as Cruoris animals) are believed to be capable of experiencing the five modes as well. The more advanced the animal, the more forms it is capable of experiencing; almost every animal can experience feelings of aggression. Only live-bearing quadrupeds [mammals] can experience, for example, trust. However, there are many emotions which only humans can experience, including optimism, remorse, contempt, and love.

There have been hypothetical proposals for a sixth mode: awareness. Awareness is simply the desire to engage with and consider one’s surroundings. An intense form of awareness is vigilance, a diminished form curiosity, an alternate form interest, or contemplation. Ethigean scholarly thought rejects the idea for two reasons: firstly, forms like interest can simply be explained as a multimodal form of happiness and ignorance. This is because interest is a positive emotion that rises from not knowing something. Secondly, sagecraft is centred around religion and 5 is a [Divine Number](#_The_Divine_Numbers); it is believed to be scientifically relevant because basic concepts of nature tend to involve these Divine Numbers. Hence, as the idea of the five modes is simply an observation of human nature, 5 should be the correct number rather than 6.

It is worth noting that out of the five modes, only one is actually positive. Indeed, all of the modes are tied to each other in some way *except* for happiness. This linkage is referred to as the ‘first chain of emotion’, a reference to its primacy in sagecraft thought and its sequential nature. It states that ignorance leads to fear, as one of things we fear is that which we don’t understand. Fear leads to anger, as we feel hostility to that which we fear. Anger leads to sadness, as our anguish makes us unhappy.

Sagecraft is about understanding the mind and the restoration and maintenance of its health. If ignorance is the bane of joy, enlightenment is its origin. Everything in sagecraft is centred around the achievement of happiness.

##### The Five Temperaments

Different humans have different personalities: this is a psychosocial reality. Classifying all the different kinds of personality is a difficult task, but Ethigean sagecraft believes that each person has a different driving force behind their personality. There is a fundamental personality ‘type’ that each person has, and the specific personality of a person is a variable extension of this type. These personality types are called temperaments, and there are believed to be five of them.

The temperaments are named after the different [recognised planets in Ethigean cosmology](#_Cosmology) and are associated with them. They are junic, demetric, aximandine, ceric, and vulcanine.

The junic temperament is characterised as being fundamentally friendly and compassionate. Junic individuals are generally kind, warm, considerable, sympathetic, and cooperative. They may not be outgoing or extroverted; indeed, they may be shy and reserved. Junic individuals may avoid attention or hide their emotions, but find it easy to empathise with people and wish to be helpful. They are agreeable and amicable.

The demetric temperament is characterised as being fundamentally careful and diligent. Demetric individuals have a natural tendency towards self-discipline, and are efficient and organised. They are often principled and perfectionist, but this may lead to anxiety and stress. Their conscientiousness may also lead to difficulties socialising.

The aximandine temperament is characterised as being fundamentally creative and curious. Aximandine individuals have active imaginations and creative instincts, and are inventive. They take an interest in the world around them and are generally more attuned to their inner feelings and desires. Aximandine people are generally more passionate and open to new experiences, but can become distracted by their own mind and become undisciplined and unproductive.

The ceric temperament is characterised as being fundamentally outgoing and extroverted. Ceric individuals are energetic and sociable, often noted for their charisma and confidence. They often struggle doing nothing or being alone with their thoughts, and are often unskilled at introspection. They are more impulsive and emotional, more likely to engage in risky behaviour and embrace chaotic instincts.

The vulcanine temperament is characterised as being fundamentally nervous and unstable. Vulcanine individuals are abnormally prone to anxiety, concern, moodiness, and mood volatility, and may be mistrustful and withdrawn. They tend to compensate for this by self-discipline and remaining occupied, and are emotionally sensitive.

A chart of the temperaments and various associations of each are attached below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Temperament | Base Desire | Base Fear | Noble Principle | Ignoble Principle | Associated Age | Associated [Vitriolic Organ](#_Organs_of_the) |
| Junic | To be good and to be safe | Being without support or guidance | Morality | Deceptiveness | Infancy | Ultimases |
| Demetric | Mastery and greatness | Being inferior or a failure | Diligence | Greed | Adulthood | Excercinum |
| Aximandine | To be uniquely and proudly themselves | Being insignificant or worthless | Knowledge | Cruelty | Childhood | Sententium |
| Ceric | To be loved and supported | Being disliked or unloved | Wisdom | Wrath | Adolescence | Concitanium |
| Vulcanine | To be calmer and have greater peace of mind | Being controlled or harmed | Restraint | Cowardice | Senility | Intricinor |

Each temperament is believed to be more prone to certain noble principles (i.e. positive moral attributes) and ignoble principles (i.e. negative moral attributes), and certain base desires and fears that are more unique to each temperament rather than humanity as a whole. Different temperaments have believed to be born with different [organs of the mind](#_Organs_of_the) at enhanced strength, which enables their altered ways of thinking.

Finally, each temperament is believed to be especially prominent at a different age. Even individuals with a different temperament will naturally gravitate towards the prominent temperament for each age. Ethigeans define certain periods in one’s development differently than us. Infancy, for example, lasts from 0 to 5, and childhood lasts until 12-15. Adolescence lasts until one is 25-30, and senility begins at 50-60 years old.

##### Vitriolic Maladies

Just as the body is victim to a host of maladies, so is the mind. Such maladies are referred to as ‘vitriolic maladies’, as vitriol in the Ethigean learned arts [i.e. sciences] refers to the mind. Vitriolic maladies can be intrinsic, wherein the patient is born with the malady, or extrinsic, wherein the patient ‘catches’ the malady during their lifetime.

What Ethigean sagecraft recognises as vitriolic maladies encompasses a range of conditions, conditions which modern Earth health sciences would designate as neuropsychiatric disorders. Ethigean sagecraft believes that each universally recognised malady has various associations: for example, each is associated with a kind of celestial body and the prevalence of that malady changes with the astronomic movements of that body.

Further associations will be explained later. Presently, here is a list of each universally recognised vitriolic malady and its description, as well as what modern Earth psychology would term the malady. In some instances, the Ethigean and Earth terms are the same, in some cases they are different.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Vitriolic Malady | Neuropsychiatric Condition | Description |
| Melancholia | Depression | Melancholia is referred to in sagecraft as the ‘Emperor of all Vitriolic Maladies’, and is consequently symbolised by a blackfish [orca], which is culturally associated in Ethagis with rulership of the seas. Melancholia is widely recognised as the most prevalent and debilitating of all vitriolic maladies. It is what we would recognise as depression, and is given a unique status of priority and seniority in sagecraft. Melancholia is seen as the ultimate terminus for all other vitriolic maladies and many bodily maladies (sometimes referred to as ruby maladies)- a reflection on how depression can result from mental illness or other disability. Melancholia is a state of lasting sadness that is *debilitating* in its intensity. Symptoms include loss of appetite, fatigue, inability to focus, and sleeplessness. It is a deep, pervading misery that prevents the patient from going about life and which hinders their every activity. |
| Turmoil | Anxiety | Turmoil is a vitriolic malady which encompasses all forms of anxiety and chronic nervousness. It is often associated with overreaction to minor worries, but is also characterised by persisting worry or continuous worry over imagined or invented threats. Turmoil is considered an especially pervasive malady and its symptoms are said to include feelings of dread, a high heart rate, excessive rumination to the point where it interferes with daily life, and the exhibition of ‘nervosa’. Nervosa is a group of behaviours believed to reflect internal turmoil: pacing back and forth or fidgeting with one’s hands are examples of these. Although nervosa can be seen as a symptom of many maladies due to the turmoil they induce, they are most prevalent when the turmoil itself is the malady. |
| Mania | Bipolar disorder | Mania is when a patient experiences highly elevated and volatile emotion, involving rapid fluctuations between either different intense moods or regular mood and intense mood. Although mania is a constantly ongoing state, afflicted individuals can also (or only) experience ‘episodic mania’, characterised by short episodes of extreme mood volatility and energy. Mania is often accompanied by melancholia as the patient alternates between regular activity and intense melancholic activity. Sometimes, however, the intense activity can be ecstasy as opposed to melancholia. Mania has a large number of forms and is somewhat of an umbrella category. Intense mania can cause wrath (excessive anger), turmoil, or even delusions. |
| Delusion | Schizophrenia, psychosis, personality disorders | Delusions are when a patient cannot distinguish reality from unreality, and believes in untrue concepts that cause distress. For example, a patient who is falsely paranoid that those around them seek to do them harm is an example of delusion. Delusion thus includes what we would call psychosis, but it also involves any kind of false belief. It would therefore include what we would call personality disorders. Narcissistic personality disorder, for example, is when one has a falsely inflated sense of self-importance and greatness. Ethigean sagecraft would dub this a kind of delusion as it is a false belief. |
| Anguish | Post-traumatic stress disorder | Anguish is strongly associated with turmoil, but is different as it centres around a specific event or time period rather than involving a general pervasion of daily activities. Anguish has been distinguished from turmoil in sagecraft due to its prevalence, specifically amongst the soldiery and warrior-nobility. Many sages have been hired by wealthy warlords or warriors to deal with their anguish. Anguish often manifests itself in the form of different maladies: turmoil, nightmare, insomnia, etc. It is distinguished from these by the fact that, at its heart, it is a reaction to past experiences. |
| Restlessness | Attention deficit disorders | Restlessness refers to abnormally enhanced activity and an inability to focus or be inactive. It can also be associated with impulsivity and an inability for honest, calm discussion. Patients afflicted with restleness frequently fail to finish tasks, overlook detail and make careless mistakes, struggles with organisation and focus, and are characteristically in constant motion, never staying still. Restlessness can be in the form of inattentiveness or hyperactivity: in Earth psychology, these are actually different forms of ADHD. |
| Hallucination | Hallucination | Hallucination is the perception of objects or phenomena that aren’t actually there. There are distinguished from dreams by occurring during wakefulness and take many forms. Hallucinations can be visual or auditory- but even tactile, olfactory, or gustatory. Hallucinations can even be thermoceptive or chronoceptive, although these are rarer. Hallucination is often associated with delusion and itself is often the cause of conditions like turmoil due to hallucinations often being frightening or malicious. |
| Delirium | Delirium | Delirium refers to an inability to think clearly and properly understand concepts and/or words, resulting in a state of unresponsiveness and madness. Delirium affects various parts of the mind, including awareness, memory, forces of comprehension and reason, and coordination. |
| Nightmare | Nightmare |  |
| Insomnia | Insomnia |  |
| Vertigo | Vertigo |  |
| Insanity | Other mental instability | Insanity is an umbrella term for general mental instability and/or unpredictable and abnormal behaviour. |
| Hollowness | Psychopathy and sociopathy | Hollowness is a malady involving persistent behaviour which Earth psychology would call anti-social. These include greatly diminished or absent empathy and respect for others, strong tendencies towards manipulation and violence, and typically delusions [i.e. narcissism]. Individuals afflicted with hollowness are typically impulsive, bold, and deceptive, and may maintain a façade of outward charm and normality. Vitriolic malady has far less stigma than mental illness on Earth before the 19th century, but hollowness is genuinely considered taboo and a generally dark topic. Hollowness is often called ‘Kalawi’s malady’ or the ‘devil’s malady’ and individuals with it are seen as untrustworthy or predatory. The general attitude pervading vitriolic malady is that, just as with bodily malady, the patient shouldn’t be antagonised or viewed as at fault. However, hollowness is the only malady where the patient is seen as not only a danger but is genuinely antagonised, even to the point of being demonised. Many sages refuse to treat those with hollowness, and some Shurhaths have decreed the death penalty for those suffering with it. Hollowness is not currently punishable by death, but sages are required by law to report all instances of hollowness to imperial authorities, and punitive action is taken on a case by case basis. Due to the taboo and potential punishment of hollowness, it is commonly used as an insult or denunciation in social settings. |

##### Vitriolic Tranquillity

Vitriolic tranquillity is not merely the absence of malady; it is the apex of vitriolic health. The aim of sagecraft as a discipline is to bring about a state of vitriolic health. The simplest definition of vitriolic health is simply happiness. But just as there are different kinds of bodily health, there are different kinds of happiness.

Take two individuals of sound bodily health. One is not particularly fit and lacks a good diet, but because they are free of disease or condition at that moment they are healthy. The other is fit, physically active, and has a good diet. The former person may be healthy at that moment in time, but they lack the physical capacity to resist unhealth and thus their state of healthiness is transitory and precarious. The latter actually has the physical capacity to combat disease naturally and *maintain* their health. Their health is a stable equilibrium, not a precarious balance.

The same concept applies to vitriolic health. It is one thing to be happy in one moment due to the absence of negative external stimuli- this is still vitriolic health, but it is transitory and unstable. However, a far superior form of vitriolic health is to have the capacity to maintain one’s happiness *despite* negative external stimuli. To develop an internal sense of equilibrium and tranquillity allows a form of happiness which is so potent and enlightened that it becomes self-sustaining. This state is vitriolic tranquillity.

Sagecraft posits that there is a path to vitriolic tranquillity that one can follow, consisting of various lifestyle and mindset changes. The path can also be used for the curation or partial curation of certain vitriolic maladies, especially melancholia. There is no order for the various components of the path, and indeed multiple components can be carried out simultaneously. The path is as follows:

One, to wholeheartedly follow the Way. Sagecraft is heavily tied to Ethigean religion and believes that following it genuinely leads to lasting, full happiness. Sagecraft believes that all the teachings of the Way fundamentally lead to happiness. Rejecting short-term, transitory pleasure and becoming a moral, self-disciplined person are seen as essential to real happiness. Satisfaction, pride, accomplishment, and contentment are all believed to come from following the Way. By overcoming one’s primal urges and basic desires in favour of the pursuit of rational goals, the entire human mindset changes. Following the Way is all about cultivating one’s internal force of order, and this is what leads to happiness.

Two, to keep one’s self occupied and stimulated. Being occupied is the most important non-religious component of the path. Sagecraft believes that having a reason to get up in the morning, having a *thing to do*, is essential. The occupation of an individual can be of any nature: it can be learning a skill, studying, pursuing a hobby, even manual labour. There are two conditions: the form of occupation must be enjoyable to the patient (or at least not unenjoyable) and it must require some level of thought and reasoning. If the work is repetitive and simple, then it becomes tedious and unenjoyable. It must be varied in some way. Even if the goal is the same, for example the creation of a desk, because doing so still requires reason and craftsmanship. The craftsman must exercise the faculty of reason to determine measurements, proportions, aesthetic, etc. The craftsman must the exercise the skill of craftsmanship to actually make it. Even if these faculties are exercised for the same purpose each time, the fact that they are exercised at all is the definition of variety simply due to the intrinsic nature of these faculties.

### Legend and Mythos

The articles listed in this section are fictitious beliefs of the Ethigean people: none of these are accurate descriptions of real phenomena in this fictional universe, but rather examples of the larger body of Ethigean legend. Ethigean legend is the full and total collection of all Ethigean mythology and folklore. It is too large a compendium to be written down in full here, so this section is dedicated to some excerpts from this larger body.

Ethigean legend is grounded in and intertwined with other Ethigean belief systems, most notably [Ethigean religion](#_Religion). Reading about Ethigean religion- specifically the part that details a pantheon called the [Ten Animal Deities](#_The_Ten_Animal)- is strongly recommended before reading this section.

#### Demigod

In Ethigean folklore, myth, and legend, a demigod is a supernatural and formerly human entity which has been transformed by any one of the Ten Animal Deities- *except Kalawi*- into a servant of their will. In all of Ethigean mythology, there are only a few instances of this happening, and as a result the word ‘demigod’ can be seen as a proper noun and a title in the Ethigean language rather than just a common noun like it is in English.

Ethigean mythology states that the Ten Animal Deities are too prideful to bestow their powers on humans or even appear to them, with the exception of the most eminent and important humans in all of history. Hence, as a general rule only Kalawi bestows powers on humans, and he only does so because of his desperation to inflict chaos. This is explained by the fact that Kalawi is such a chaotic god, the embodiment of so much chaos and so little order, that his desperation to inflict chaos is greater than that of any other god.

Ilyzor is the most ordered god in the Ethigean pantheon, the embodiment of so much order and so little chaos, and thus it is logical that his desperation to inflict order would be almost as high as Kalawi’s desperation to inflict chaos. Certainly, the force of desire of these two gods exceeds that of any other gods in the pantheon. Whilst Ilyzor is not so wretched and desperate as Kalawi and hence does not *regularly* bestow his powers, he has done so three times throughout Ethigean legend.

A demigod is (or ‘was’, as in this current epoch there are no more demigods) immune to misery, demoralisation, and injury. It was physically impossible for him (all demigods were male- sexism still exists in the world of Jagannath) to lose determination, faith, drive, or confidence: he was incapable of feeling the inverses of these emotions. Although, like a demon, a demigod could not be killed by wounds and had immense healing powers, he *did* still feel fear and pain. He still had a sense of touch and would feel- and notice- physical stimuli, be they the feel of his sword in his hand or the agony of a limb being hacked off. Although that limb could actually crawl back to him, reattach itself, and rapidly heal, in that brief space of time the demigod would be in colossal pain, equal in magnitude to the pain of a human losing that same limb. Their senses of fear and pain were neither dulled nor enhanced: they retained the same magnitude as when the demigod was a man.

In the narrative of the story set in Ethagis- of which demigods play absolutely no part at all- it is a theme that negative phenomena, especially fear, are key parts of what makes us human. The three most malevolent characters in the whole narrative are characterised, in part, by an inhuman inability to feel fear. This triad includes the Revenant, a demon who serves Kalawi.

A demigod, a being that serves Ilyzor, still feels fear and therefore isn’t as monstrous and inhuman as a demon is. This is a reflection of the fact that Kalawi is generally malevolent and Ilyzor is generally benevolent, and the two therefore affect humans in different ways. But despite Ilyzor being a benevolent god, he is still a god, and the humans which he elevates to demigod are still not quite human, divorced them their natural state. This is a reflection of the fact that any god, no matter how benevolent, is still alien and frightening to a human, and thus even a demigod was an alien being whose wound-healing and physically unbreakable resolve could frighten many.

Unlike characters in the narrative such an Ironhand, who are heroic because their resolve is unbreakable *despite* their human feelings and emotions, a demigod literally cannot lose heart even if they tried. They are not capable of doing so, and therefore are less virtuous than human characters who overcome their failings through great and constant effort rather than divine intervention.

#### Demon

In Ethigean folklore, myth, and legend, a demon is a supernatural and formerly human entity which has been transformed by Kalawi into a servant of his will. Although none of the Ten Animal Deities are able to circumvent death and carry out resurrection, Kalawi can use his deific powers to bring a human back from the *brink of* death by healing mortal wounds or illnesses. Mythologically, demons are typically conceived in this way although sometimes in mythos Kalawi approaches a healthy person and tempts them into serving him.

The human who begets the demon is tempted to unleash their inner, primal urges for destruction, power, and chaos. Kalawi acts as an enabler for these desires by gifting the human with unearthly powers, and benefits from the demon subsequently sowing chaos in the world.

Demons are immune to fear, pain, and injury. They are physically incapable of the emotions of fear, anxiety, and all related feelings, and are unable to feel physical contact, forces, or maladies. They often simply fail to notice being injured as things like mutilation, wounds, or the breaking of bones is genuinely just not registered by their brains at all. They may notice these through their other senses, but touch is not one of them.

Demons are immune to injury as well. Wounds rapidly heal themselves as bone grows from stumps and flesh knits itself together. Severed limbs can move independently and still carry out the demon’s will. Though there are no nerves connecting them to the demon’s central nervous system, supernatural forces allow the detached body part to respond to the demon’s brain as if they were. The demon can also retrieve detached body parts (e.g. a hand, arm, etc) and reattach them to their body.

This means that demons cannot be killed by conventional means. Injuries like beheading, mutilation, heart puncturing are all insufficient. The demon is not kept alive through the workings of their body but rather the intervention of Kalawi, and therefore their body is simply a ‘vessel’ for the demon to puppet. Hence, injuring the vessel does not cause the demons to die. Demons can still die, however, as no god can counter death.

Death has to be carried out by a method that doesn’t rely on disabling the body (e.g. wounds or suffocation), but rather total annihilation of it. The demon must be reduced to nothingness. Burning is a prime example of this, and one that features extensively in Ethigean legend: by utterly terminating the demon’s form and reducing it merely to ashes, the demon can be killed.

It is a theme in the narrative that negative phenomena- especially fear- are key components of what makes us fundamentally human, and that courage- a virtue- cannot exist in the absence of fear. The most moral characters in the narrative are generally those that act the most *in spite of* their fear, for example Ironhand. The more immoral characters are generally less courageous, but only the three most malevolent characters in the whole narrative are incapable of feeling fear at all: Purgatory, the Revenant, and Sharkjaw.

### Military

#### Army Military Structure

The contemporary armies of our planet follow a rigid command structure of tiers: squads, sections, troops, companies, battalions, etc. The command hierarchy is elaborate and organised, and consists of many levels, all of which are agreed upon long before the advent of an actual battle. For most of world history, elaborate structures like these were absent. The actual structure of armies varied enormously depending on time and place, but these were almost always less elaborate and less definite than the hierarchies we see now. The Ethigean military structure reflects this.

There is no definite Ethigean military structure, and every Shurhath- sometimes even every general under a Shurhath- organises and structures their forces in a different way. Some Shurhaths and military leaders have been more innovative and/or intelligent than others and create highly regimented and organised armies. Some simply have a mass of soldiers governed by whichever noblemen bring them there, all of whom are under the vague command of a general. And, of course, there are a multitude of rulers in between.

Nonetheless, there are some ranks and tiers in Ethigean armies that are used in most military structures as a kind of general consensus. Most armies have, by this point in time, adopted a set of offices and divisions that are generally common throughout the realm. The most commonly accepted offices are as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| Title | Description |
| Shurhath | The most supreme military rank in all of Ethagis, and one who has ultimate authority over all the armies and forces in the realm. There is no other commonly accepted rank for a commander of multiple armies: the current consensus of military ranks lacks a ‘Marshal’.  The rationale behind this is that in Ethagis, all nobleman are- or at least traditionally were- warlords. They were generals first and foremost and civil governors second. The rank of Marshal is, by definition, a man who commands more than one army: a rank above a general, who commands an army. But to a warlord, it is *their* job to be supreme commander of all their forces. To appoint another man to enact this crucial right and duty would be relinquishing one’s authority. Hence the highest military role a non-Shurhath can achieve is the ruler of their own forces. In a sense, they act as their *own* general. Hence the highest rank achievable is general.  *Except* for the rank of Shurhath, which ranks above. This is because by definition, the Shurhath is the mightiest warlord of the realm and has sovereignty/command over all other warlords. If every warlord acts as their own general, but the Shurhath is the general of all these generals, then the rank of Shurhath is the most senior.  Simply to be a Shurhath is thus in practice its own military rank, as he ranks above all generals and commands them. The most fundamental kind of authority that a Shurhath holds is military authority: they are the supreme military commanders of all their forces. Hence, by definition Shurhath is its own- and the most senior- rank in any Ethigean army. |
| General | A general is the commander of a single army of the Shurhath: there is no fixed Ethigean definition for how large an army is, and it really just depends on the discretion of the general (or Shurhath). One could have either five armies of 10,000 men each, or a single army of 50,000 men, which is then subdivided into five equally sized units of 10,000 men each.  Because an army can be variable in size, the number of generals appointed by a Shurhath can also vary. A Shurhath could even appoint only a single general to command all of his levies. This would not be unheard of, and in theory would not undermine the supremacy of the Shurhath, as the Shurhath would in this case simply act as the liege to the general.  All the lords in the general are (at least nominally) the levies of a Shurhath, and are therefore part of the Shurhath’s military forces. Because the Shurhath has the choice to appoint his own generals, the strongest lords of the realm are not generals by default. A general is a military rank- not a position of nobility. Even if a lord were to contribute 100,000 soldiers to a Shurhath’s levies, they would not automatically act as the general of an army of these 100,000 soldiers. The military rank of that lord, and the breadth of his command, is theoretically up to the Shurhath. In practice, of course, the situation can differ. |
| Lieutenant | A lieutenant is an unusual rank because its seniority can vary enormously. A lieutenant is simply a ‘right-hand-man’ or ‘second-in-command’ to someone in the army (by convention a person of nobility: an asthan would be laughed at if he claimed to have a lieutenant). By convention this is a nazul lord, askary lord, general, or the Shurhath himself. A lieutenant can therefore be a somewhat marginal figure or an extremely powerful one.  A lieutenant is typically a trusted advisor and a retinue, and traditionally would assume his master’s command if the master died in battle. For example, if a Shurhath died in battle, his lieutenant would act as supreme commander of all forces for that battle, until a new Shurhath could claim power. Often, these lieutenants did claim power and some did indeed become new Shurhaths. Nowadays, this isn’t always the case, however.  A lieutenant can also be a general/captain/commander/retinue/sergeant, etc. It is not mutually exclusive with any other rank. A Shurhath, for example, may appoint one of his generals to be his lieutenant. He may not appoint a lieutenant at all: not all people of nobility actually do appoint one.  Nowadays, the meaning of a lieutenant is somewhat different than it was centuries ago, and has come to refer to a trusted subordinate of a man of military rank. This is not a formalised position, and the lieutenant of a nobleman has variable authority. A nobleman can have multiple lieutenants, each with a different level of authority and commanding a different number of soldiers.  Typically, a Shurhath’s immediate subordinates are his generals, and the immediate subordinates of a general or captain are dubbed lieutenants and given whatever command their master wishes. |
| Colonel | A colonel is a military rank which may be given at the discretion of a Shurhath or general (or the lieutenant to either of these roles) to denote a nobleman who has the right to command other noblemen. Out of all the ranks listed here, this is the rarest: usually the right of a nobleman to command other noblemen depends on their status in Ethagis’ social hierarchy, Feyriatal.  For example, a mighty lord is universally understood to have the right to command an askary lord. Because all lords (and usually all/most of their retinues) are cavalry, the hierarchy amongst nobility is typically seen in the cavalry. A mighty lord will rule over a large number of cavalry, and amongst this number will be all the askary/nazul lords, as well as the asthanes and jagals, that are sworn to him. Each mighty lord will by convention and convenience rule over a wing of cavalry or even the proportion of cavalry in an army. They are commanded only by a general or a Shurhath.  The rank of colonel arose as a formalisation/exception to this rule. The colonel has the explicit right to command other noblemen. They are almost always askary lords or mighty lords, and will be given command over a cohort or wing of cavalry. Lords may also command infantrymen (although they themselves will be mounted). A mighty lord will command all the levies who are his vassals, including all his askary lords, who will act as his subordinates and command their levies for him, etc.  In the infantry and cavalry, a specific nobleman may be explicitly given a greater scope of command than he would otherwise have. There is no fixed definition or even convention for the breadth of command of a colonel: it depends entirely on the discretion of the general/Shurhath.  Colonels are rare in armies because the privilege of a lord to command his own levies is a jealously guarded one. Discontent is especially high when, for example, an askary lord is given the rank of colonel and is able to command a mighty lord. Only the more absolutist rulers will appoint colonels, and even then will generally only dare to make an askary lord at the lowest a colonel. The lowest Feyriatal rank ever made a colonel was a nazul lord, and the Shurhath who did this was not in power for long. The more absolutist and brutal Shurhaths of centuries past may have been able to manage this, but a colonel is a relatively new young, with the first colonel being appointed only centuries ago. Even now, most armies do not have colonels. |
| Captain  AKA Lord Commander | A captain is the title given by default to any noblemen who contribute their own levies to a Shurhath’s army. A nobleman can only be called a captain in the context of serving in a Shurhath (or superior lord)’s army. The title of ‘lord’ is *not* a military rank, it is a rung on the socioeconomic hierarchy of Ethagis. The title of captain is *not* a social status, but rather a military rank. Captains typically command their own levies (i.e. the men that they themselves contribute to an army), but this is just a normal trend and by no means a rule. |
| Commander  AKA Commandant | A commander is any man who isn’t a commoner- but also not senior enough to be a captain- who is given military command over other men. Because of these parameters, commander are almost always asthanes or jagals.  Not all asthanes and jagals are commanders: they typically act as individual soldiers, albeit senior ones. Because asthanes are always cavalrymen as they can afford to equip themselves for the cavalry, their role in an army is generally just to be cavalry. Jagals may be cavalry or infantry, but also tend to act as either average cavalrymen or can be a respected soldier.  When appointed to be a commander, however, the scope of their command and the seniority of the men they command varies greatly. They obviously do not command noblemen, but a commander may have authority over just commoners, commoners and asthanes/jagals, just infantry, just cavalry, a combination, etc. The term commander is a fairly vague one that can denote individuals of highly varying seniority. |
| Retinue | A retinue, like a lieutenant, is an unusual rank as its seniority varies colossally. A retinue is a kind of standing army soldier who is the personal bodyguard to a nobleman or soldier. They may also act as attendants and/or advisors, or even confidantes. The personal value of a retinue to their master varies.  Retinues are permanently in service. Their full-time job is to serve their master, and they do such a thing even in peacetime. Unlike a levy, which acts as a soldier in times of war but in peacetime has a completely different job (e.g. a farmer), a retinue is always a retinue.  The number of retinues a person has varies greatly. A Shurhath can have thousands: they are only limited by how many they can afford to maintain and reward. They can also have far fewer. Different noblemen may also have retinues, or they may have none: mighty lords practically always have retinues, however, as do askary lords. Only the nobility and soldiery of Ethigean society are legally entitled to have retinues.  Of all the different tiers of the soldiery, asthanes by convention are entitled to having one retinue. Most asthanes have no more than one as they can’t afford to support them, but the most eminent asthanes have several. Semadai are legally entitled to have retinues but an informal rule of their order is that retinues are forbidden: as such, no semadai have retinues. Jagals are not *entitled* to having retinues but are legally allowed to have them. Still, due to the expense of having retinues, the vast majority of jagals have no retinues.  The role of retinue is not mutually exclusive with any other rank. Indeed, lieutenants and generals are almost always retinues, merely the most senior of many retinues to one man. |
| Sergeant | A sergeant is a military rank practically always held by commoners, who hold authority over other commanders. The precise scope of authority held by a sergeant is variable, but is generally a fairly modest one, as a sergeant is a modest military rank.  Sergeants, by convention, have authority only over infantrymen. This is because the only people in the realm who can afford to equip themselves for the cavalry are almost always not commoners, and the idea of a commoner sergeant having authority over a member of the soldiery is ludicrous and even treasonous. As such, sergeants are infantrymen who command infantrymen. |

The term ‘officer’ can be used to denote any of these ranks. How an army is divided is even less standardised than the chain of command. The terms used in doing so are often armies, regiments, and brigades, but none of these terms have a fixed definition and different Shurhaths may not even use them. In the least organised armies, the only kind of structure present is the fact that a general or Shurhath commands is an army, and in the army each lord commands their own levies and organises them how they wish.

The most innovative Shurhaths have organised their armies into many-tiered, decimalised systems. The overwhelming majority of Shurhaths have a modest structure of armies, brigades, regiments, and smaller sub-units: beyond the level of a regiment, there is no convention or consensus as to how an army may be structured.

Officers do not have a standardised scope of authority: in the same army different sergeants command different numbers of men. Therefore, the terms used in denoting army units are also unstandardised. Often, a sergeant is said to command a ‘platoon’ of men, although how big a platoon is varies wildly. These terms lack a definite scope or meaning.

There is also the added complication of infantry and cavalry being organised in different ways: in many armies, infantry and cavalry are not deployed together. Even in the infantry, archers and footsoldiers are often deployed and organised separately.

Cavalry are usually organised in the rough structure of ‘wings’ (left, right, central), and then into cohorts, large groups of horsemen (usually light cavalry and heavy cavalry have separate cohorts). There is no conventional tier of organisation below that of cohort. It varies based on the Shurhath, and in the majority of cases simply by the will of the general, colonel, or whatever askary/mighty lord is put in charge of the wing/cohort.

Non-mounted archers have a more variable system of grouping. Archers will be supplied by various lords as their levies. In some armies, the individual lord who brings archers to battle will be in charge of their movements and actions. However, because archers by necessity have to be coordinated in order to let off unified volleys, archers are generally more organised than this.

Foot archers are usually massed behind the footsoldiers, and the overall command of all archers will go to a general, colonel, or eminent nobleman. The total body of foot archers will be subdivided into regiments, just as footsoldiers are, but just as with footsoldiers, the size of a regiment is not standardised and the same army may have regiments of different sizes. Most armies have a subdivision of foot archers below that of regiment: a ‘battery’, but the size of this is also variable. Beyond these two basic strata, there is no convention as to how archers are organised.

There is also no convention on how archers are commanded. The total body of archers will be commanded by someone prestigious, but generally foot archers are not, and there is no glory in being behind the lines, not commanded your own men. The vast majority of noblemen will be either serving in the cavalry or in the mass of infantry, surrounded by their own levies and ruling them.

As such, the commanders of foot archers are typically jagals or commoners. There is no formal rank to denote someone who commands a regiment or battery of archers. The rank of sergeant is typically applied to men who command footsoldiers, not archers: a sergeant in charge of a battery of archers is seen as unusual, but it’s not unheard of. There are no rules for organising foot archers.

Mounted archers will serve in the cavalry, practically always as light cavalry. Only asthanes and noblemen can afford to be heavy cavalry (although the wealthier jagals also can). People who have the money to buy a horse and serve in the cavalry almost always do so as the cavalry is more prestigious, but they may not have the money to equip themselves and the horse enough to be called heavy cavalry. Many jagals and commoners are thus light cavalry, and either act as mounted archers, skirmishers, or downgraded heavy cavalry. Light cavalry and heavy cavalry are often separate cohorts, but this isn’t a rule.

#### Navy Military Structure

The command hierarchy in the Ethigean navy is even less elaborate and defined than that of the army. Different leaders structure their navies in different ways, and there is no universal consensus on how to organise sailors and naval officers. There are some common offices that are generally used in all navies, however. These are as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| Title | Description |
| Shurhath | The most supreme military rank in all of Ethagis, and one who has ultimate authority over all the navies and naval forces in the realm. The role of the Shurhath in the navy is the exact same as in the army. He is the most senior commander of all ships and all the men serving on those ships. These naval forces are comprised of both his own ships/seamen and those of his levies.  There is no ‘Grand Admiral’ role as all Shurhaths are expected to fill these roles themselves, as are all warlords- for the same reasons that there is no ‘Marshal’ role. The only person in the realm who can rank above an admiral-general is thus a Shurhath, and as the Shurhath commands all ships/seamen in the realm, they may organise these forces in the way that they choose. |
| Admiral-General | The naval equivalent of a general. An admiral-general is a man who commands a fleet of the Shurhath’s navy, and it is a military rank bestowed at the Shurhath’s discretion. The Shurhath may choose to divide their naval forces into several fleets, or to pool all his ships into a single fleet that travels as one unit.  Just as with generals, different admiral-generals have different levels of seniority, depending on a multitude of different factors. If a Shurhath has three fleets, each ruled independently by an admiral-general, and then these separate fleets are merged into one larger one, the three admiral-generals do not share command. The most senior admiral-general rules the one unit as his own, with the other two admiral-generals acting as his subordinates. The one fleet may then be split off into several again, at which point the admiral-generals may all once again command independently. The same mechanism exists with generals and ground forces. |
| Master | Each ship is governed by two officers of equal rank and authority, but different positions of command. Ships are for both sailing and naval combat: but these two are very different and require very different skillsets. It is thus natural to Ethigeans that each ship should have an officer in charge of each function.  An Ethigean ship contains seamen, and these seamen must be able to carry out both of these functions. Typically, seamen can act as both sailors and soldiers: outside of battle, they can crew and maintain a ship, and inside a battle they can fight. Some ships may have people who can act as soldiers but not sailors: for example a jagal who is garrisoned on a ship has little knowledge of how to sail and much knowledge on how to fight.  Just as a seaman may be only a soldier, and not a sailor, some seamen may be sailors but not soldiers. This is rare, as most sailors are able men who can fight, but seamen who are cabin boys or galley slaves will almost never act as soldiers. Rowers who are not slaves, of course, will: a rower is a strong man, and if they are not a slave they can be trusted with weapons.  The master of the ship is the officer of sailing. Outside of battle, he decides how the ship runs, where it goes, and what happens on it. He has authority over all seamen in this matter, and directs what they do. He is not responsible for anything combat-related: he does not train soldiers, drill them, or direct their movements in battle. But because all seamen also act as sailors and/or help in the running of the ship to some extent, in this matter his authority extends to everyone, Even dedicated soldiers like jagals can be commanded by the master to do some kind of sailing-related task. |
| Lieutenant Mariner | Just as in an army, a lord will often have a lieutenant to assist him, a master of a ship will often have their own lieutenant: this is called the lieutenant mariner (also written as the lieutenant-mariner). The lieutenant mariner’s role is similar to what we would call a ‘first mate’: they act as the deputy to the master and the superior of all seamen on the ship (regarding non-combat matters).  The lieutenant mariner generally succeeds the master if the latter should die before reaching shore, and if the master neglects his leadership duties, the lieutenant mariner will take over.  In some ships and circumstances, the lieutenant mariner may even have his own deputy, referred to as the ‘second lieutenant’, just as particularly influential army lieutenants may also do so. This is not a convention, however, and depends on the discretion of the lieutenant and the permission of his master. |
| Constable | The master rules the ship in sailing matters and the constable rules the ship in combat matters. During battle, he has total and full authority over the ship: he may delegate the tasks of manoeuvring the ship to the master but this is at his discretion. Outside of battle, he is responsible for all matters related to combat.  The constable trains and drills any soldiers on the ship: remember that most seamen act as both sailors *and* soldiers, and are thus loyal to both master and constable. On almost all ships, the master and constable will seek to cooperate by establishing a rigid schedule, wherein any given seamen is at some point serving under the master as a sailor or training with the constable as a soldier.  For seamen which act only as soldiers, for example a jagal stationed on a ship, the constable has full authority over them. If a master gives the jagal a direct command, however, the jagal must still obey. The rules of how a constable and master share power are not formalised or even dictated by convention, and it varies by Shurhath and ship. In some ships, the constable is the explicit superior to the master, but this is by no means common.  In battle, the constable acts as the soldiers’ captain, commanding their movements, positioning, and tactics. He may even lead them into battle himself, depending on the constable and the battle. |
| Lieutenant Constable | The lieutenant constable (also written as the lieutenant-constable) is the lieutenant to the constable, and acts in the exact same way that a lieutenant in a land army would. By convention, if a constable dies whilst the ship is away from port, the lieutenant constable will become the constable until a new one may be found. |
| Midshipman | The midshipman is a kind of junior officer on a ship, one who is by convention almost always a commoner. A midshipman’s authority derives from his experience as a sailor and command over his fellow sailors: he is not a sergeant. The midshipman is a direct subordinate to the master, not the constable- although of course the constable is still superior and can give a midshipman orders.  A midshipman is kind of a sailor equivalent to a sergeant, and some ships may actually have sergeants on it to command seamen in battle. Whilst a midshipman will almost always act as a soldier as well as a sailor, when a midshipman is in battle he does not automatically hold any authority over the soldiers.  Consider each ship as consisting of two separate hierarchies: the soldier hierarchy and the sailor hierarchy. The confusion is that because most sailors will also fight, the same people populate both hierarchies. Indeed, a midshipman may *also* be a sergeant: but these are two distinct ranks with two distinct scopes of authority. |

The term ‘naval officer’ can be used to denote any of these ranks. Theoretically, a man could be both an army officer and a naval officer; however, this is very rare. The army is by far more prestigious than the navy, to the point where most noblemen see the navy as beneath them, with the exception of an admiral-general post. Real glory, wealth, and fame are won in the army. Army officers and naval officers have very different skillsets, and usually a soldier/officer will establish himself in one or the other. The vast majority of people with talent and/or prospects choose the former, although one can still achieve renown and respect in the latter.

Fleets are generally subdivided into squadrons, although this is not a rule. The size of squadrons is variable between fleets and can even vary within the same fleet. Usually, there is no smaller tier of organisation below that of squadron, but this is up to the discretion of the admiral-general or the Shurhath. Often squadrons will be grouped into ‘wings’ in the same way that cavalry is.

The admiral-general has command over a fleet, but there is no convention as to who commands a wing or a squadron. Wings are typically commanded by especially eminent masters, and squadrons by modestly eminent ones. These individuals will then often be referred to as ‘wing-masters’ (or ‘wingmasters’) or ‘squadron-masters’. A constable may also take these roles and assume these titles, though this is less common. Sometimes, admiral-generals will command wings whilst another admiral-general commands the whole fleet. Sometimes, noblemen will be appointed as ‘admiral-colonels’ to rule a wing or a squadron, with admiral-colonel being a distinct military rank. There is no consensus.

Just as masters may gain positions of authority over the movements and running of more than one ship, so may constables sometimes be given positions of authority over the strategy, training, and movements of more than one ship’s soldiers. A constable who is given such authority over a fleet or wing is referred to as a grand constable (sometimes constables given command over a wing will be called wing constables or wing-constables), and a constable given such authority over a squadron will be a squadron constable (also written as a squadron-constable: there isn’t even a standardisation of how the term is written).

These constables by their rank have authority over other constables: a squadron constable would defer to a wing constable, for example. In the absence of such positions, which is not uncommon, all constables will either be equal, or different constables will have differing levels of authority depending on their personal merit, prestige, Feyriatal rank, or favour with the admiral-general.

Whilst most navies will have wingmasters and squadron masters, the majority won’t have any constables that exceed the rank of a mere constable. It is far easier to coordinate ships than boarding parties, and usually the various constables simply work in tandem with each other. Hence, some navies have no squadron constables or grand constables, but as navies grow bigger more and more Shurhaths and admiral-generals are introducing the position.

Most navies won’t have any recognised grand constable or squadron constable titles, but a constable may have authority over more than one ship. They are nominally equal to other constables, but are universally understood to have authority over them and to be able to command them. These constables may remain on one ship or circle between all the ships in the fleet in a kind of rota, and will give orders and instructions to other constables.

The titles of admiral-colonel, grand constable, wing constable, and squadron constable are rare and the majority of navies have none of them. No naval force in Ethagis has all of these aforementioned ranks. The current Shurhath of Ethagis, the Dragonfly, uses none of these ranks when he calls all his levies to war. However, some of the individual lords in the realm have their own naval forces (when the Shurhath hasn’t summoned them for military service) and may use them.

### Politics and Society

#### Feyriatal

Feyriatal is the social stratification system by which society is organized in the Empire of Ethagis. It is a sociopolitical ideology wherein society is grouped into different tiers, each distinguished by differing occupations and social, legal, cultural, political, and economic status. Members of society are classed as nobility, warriors, gentry, commoners, or slaves, essentially forming a pyramid hierarchy. The interaction between the tiers is characterized by the liege-levy relationship. Each societal tier is bound together by an exchange of services for sustenance: military/labour services are offered by the levy in exchange for grants of land or an income, which provides the means for the levy to survive.

Unlike feudalism, however, Feyriatal isn’t defined by the three core concepts of lords, vassals, and fiefs (grants of land). Feyriatal is more of a general system of government and societal organization, and includes liege-levy relationships that don’t revolve around fiefs. The pillars of Feyriatal, rather than lords/vassals/fiefs, can be more accurately described as (societal) role, service, due. Feyriatal classes people by their role in society, be it to govern, fight, administer, etc. The idea of what the individual’s contribution towards society is lies at the heart of Feyriatal, and exceeds all else in importance. Building on this, the service that the levy provides for the liege is one essential foundation of Feyriatal, and the due that the levy receives for this service is the complementary part to this.

Feyriatal is a system of social hierarchy organized for two things: warfare and bureaucracy. The former is easier to understand: Ethagis has been at war for the majority of its history and its sociopolitical system, Feyriatal, reflects this. Warriors form a pre-eminent class and all social classes perform some kind of military service for their superior. The nobility lead soldiers for their Shurhath, and the lower classes fight for their lieges. The etymology of the word Feyriatal comes from warfare: it comes from the old Khosgan word *feyrat*, meaning ‘to assign’. This refers to how noblemen conquering territories would assign conquered land to their levies as their due for service.

The consistent warfare in the land of Ethagis formed a requirement for a more centralized, absolutist state- this is reflected in the complex imperial bureaucracy and nationwide system of administration. Feyriatal has a whole class for these administrators, civil servants, and stewards: the gentry, and it officially recognizes their role in society and assigns them their own due.

The social hierarchy of Feyriatal, as a general rule, reflects the political, legal, social, cultural, and economic status of each class. Feyriatal has a pyramid structure, where certain tiers are superior to others. An aristocrat, for example, has more political power than a commoner, as well as greater wealth, social status, and more legal protections/rights. The superior tier (an aristocrat, in this example) is represented as superior not just in socioeconomic/political terms but in cultural terms as well, with Ethigean culture acknowledging the aristocrat as superior as a human being to a commoner.

However, this superiority is represented as sociological, not biological. A commoner- or even a slave- can ascend the Feyriatal hierarchy, and war has historically been a primary opportunity for social mobility amongst the lower classes. Over the course of Ethigean history, commoners have gained increased legal and social status due to their role in warfare and the increased empowerment that widespread combat experience and proficiency has brought.

It is worth noting that the social hierarchy of Feyriatal does not always accurately represent real socioeconomic power- this has become increasingly prevalent in the past few centuries. Favoured and powerful members of the gentry can become more powerful than noblemen, and wealthy merchants can accumulate enough wealth and local social status to be equivalent with a member of the gentry or even the nobility. These individuals are often not ennobled due to the nobility having a different role to the gentry or the merchantry- Feyriatal is centred around the concept of role.

These wealthy and powerful gentlemen and merchants are still legally inferior to the noblemen who they supersede in socioeconomic power. For example, they will be required to bow to them in formal, ritual situations, and to address them in a certain way. They will also have fewer privileges. However, the real power is not always in the hands of those in the superior class- although, of course, this is the case for the overwhelming majority of noblemen. A merchant accumulating enough power to match a professional is rare but not unheard of- a merchant superseding a nobleman occurs once or twice a century.

The simplified class hierarchy of Feyriatal is as follows:

1. Aristocracy
2. Soldiery
3. Gentry
4. Commoners
5. Slaves

Each of these tiers (excluding the Shurhath, who exists at the pinnacle of the first tier) is subordinate to someone and is a levy, although they are not necessarily subordinate to the tier immediately superior to them. The gentry are not subordinate to the soldiery, for example, and most commoners don’t own slaves.

In each of these basic societal tiers there are various sub-classes and more specialized roles in society. A more comprehensive account of the social hierarchy in Ethagis is as follows:

##### Aristocracy

###### Shurhath

The Shurhath is the supreme form of political, military, judicial, and religious authority in the Empire. The Shurhath is the only individual in the Empire who does not have a liege, although he[[14]](#footnote-15) still provides dues to his levies in the form of land or income grants.

The full title of the Shurhath is: [Sobriquet] [First & Last Name], Shurhath of Ethagis, Liege and Sovereign of the Realm, Lord of Antavar and Defender of the Marches

The Shurhath rules (theoretically) as an absolute monarch in the Empire, and the position is hereditary. The position is not restricted by any constitutions, written laws, legislative bodies (like a parliament), or other executive individuals. It holds supreme legislative and judicial authority, being able to make laws and judgements at will without appeal. The Shurhath exists at the top of the social pyramid hierarchy and his authority is derived from simply being Shurhath, rather than any sort of election or constitution.

It is worth noting that the absolutism of the Empire is theoretical and, in practice, the power actually wielded by the Shurhath varies considerably from monarch to monarch. Although no organized, official body with the power to challenge the Shurhath exists, the nobility of the realm often oppose attempts at centralization and exist as a counterweight to the imperial will. The Semadai, Alfazel, and Imperial Court can achieve the same effect when united and determined. Ultimately, the strength of the Shurhath, whilst bolstered and (to an extent) guaranteed by the inherent rights of the position, depends to a considerable extent on the Shurhath himself.

Considering the frequency and importance of war in Ethagis, the position of Shurhath emerged as a military one and is primarily a martial role. The word Shurhath is Khosgan for ‘mightiest’, and the personal address from a levy to the Shurhath is still (if not ‘Shurhath’) ‘Mightiest’. The Shurhath was, initially, the most powerful warlord in Ethagis, and gained the allegiance of the other ‘mighty’ warlords to become the mightiest. The name is also identical to that of the Ethigean hippopotamus deity, Shurhath. Shurhath is the king of the gods in Ethigean religious mythology, so earlier warlords who achieved preeminence in the region were eager to style themselves accordingly.

The Shurhath is still the leader of military forces in the Empire, and is expected to lead them in battle (albeit from a sheltered rearguard position- a Shurhath actually dying in battle is highly rare). The Shurhath is the liege of every individual in the Empire and can call any of them up to military service under his command. In practice, the administrative infrastructure needed to call everyone to service individually is not extant in any contemporary nation. The Shurhath thus calls all his courtiers and mighty lords to service, who each call all of their levies. The Shurhath disseminates commands through the courtiers and mighty lords: for example, he may dictate a strategy for a war to the noblemen who are his immediate subordinates (the mighty lords), who will each carry out their instructed part to play in their own way by giving instructions to their immediate subordinates. This repeats across each step in the Feyriatal chain of command.

The Shurhath also leads the Empire in a political sense. The Shurhath creates, repeals, and breaks laws at will and dictates imperial policy. Although the actual political autonomy of each nobleman varies with the absolutism of each Shurhath, any imperial decrees theoretically override any policy a nobleman may exercise in his own realms. There are no legally mandated limits to the Shurhath’s political or legislative power, nor is there any individual in the Empire who can legally issue the Shurhath a command. In practice, influential courtiers, noblemen, or other political factions can wield political power by ignoring, influencing, pressuring, and/or coercing the Shurhath.

The authority of the Shurhath theoretically derives from being the ‘mightiest’: if any man can assert their military supremacy over all rival claimants, they are the mightiest warlord in the realm and thus are entitled to the position of Shurhath, which merely formalizes this supremacy. Hence, to legitimately hold the title of Shurhath, one must be capable enough to maintain their supremacy. This necessarily requires sufficient military strength, but also a certain kind of personality. One would expect the mightiest person in the realm to be very intelligent, driven, and talented, for example.

In practice, often the Shurhath either isn’t the militarily strongest person in the realm, or the most personally capable, or both. These Shurhaths are technically illegitimate, and other noblemen in the realm can contest their claim to the throne because of it. This doesn’t happen for every Shurhath, however, as constant warfare would be detrimental for the nobility. Hence, dynasties often appear, even when not every member of that dynasty deserves to be Shurhath due to their might. For more information on legitimacy and succession, click [here](#_Legitimacy_and_Succession).

The Shurhath wields supreme judicial authority as well. The Shurhath can, theoretically, condemn any individual to any sentence he desires. It is his duty to punish offences and prevent them from being committed. In earlier times, the Shurhath would form his own travelling court, and in the most severe situations will still act a judge. Nowadays, however, this duty manifests itself in the gentry, who form the administrative infrastructure needed to actually form courts and who answer directly to the Shurhath. Nonetheless, the decision of the Shurhath is final- theoretically.

In practice, as with all things, it depends on how powerful the individual Shurhath is. The most mighty and fearsome Shurhaths could condemn a nobleman to death in front of all the mighty lords. But, of course, even they had a reasonable cause. The balancing act between the Shurhath and the nobility is weighted in favour of the Shurhath, but the latter will be careful not to act in a way that sparks unilateral resistance.

Finally, the Shurhath has supreme religious authority. The Shurhath is the most senior individual in the Empire both temporally and spiritually. Unlike in European feudalism, there is no separate clerical hierarchy of pope/bishops/priests running parallel to the temporal king/barons/knights hierarchy. There is no Pope equivalent to constrain monarchical power. The Shurhath assumes all religious roles that a Pope or cardinal would. He is a religious figurehead, coordinates and participates in the most important religious rituals, and performs other miscellaneous duties.

The Shurhath’s power has varied greatly in history. Various factors determine the actual strength of the Shurhath, although the rights and military power of the position keeps it at a certain minimum. The character of the individual Shurhath is the most important factor: a genuinely talented, diligent, innovative individual can use the tools at his disposal to amass extraordinary power. The military forces at his disposal is another key factor: a Shurhath cannot cow the nobility into submission without the force to do the cowing. A myriad of other circumstances also have an input: simply having the misfortune to rule at a same time as a particularly gifted nobleman or group of noblemen is a factor. The most powerful Shurhaths have been able to command the mighty lords as pawns. The weakest have been reduced to the power level of askary lords. And, of course, there have been all kinds of men in between.

###### Imperial Officer

###### Mighty Lord

###### Askary Lord

###### Nazul Lord

##### Soldiery

###### Semadai

The semadai are an order of warrior-monks in the Empire. They dedicate their lives to two pursuits: the [Ethigean religion](#_Religion) (the name of which translates to ‘the Way of the Cosmos’) and physical combat, and they use the principles of the former to conduct the latter. A preliminary read of what the Way is and what its principles are is *strongly* recommended, and for the sake of brevity. will not be summarized here.

The semadai have a religious philosophy which motivates and guides their actions. They seek to master the Ultimate Principle: self-discipline. The basic motivation of the semadai is to conquer their letches and to stifle their base principles, cultivating their internal force of order as much as possible. They devote their time to studying the Way in all possible detail, frequently and regularly engaging in religious discussion, prayer, meditation, and ritual. The semadai study the Way to the point that they are the most educated [theonomers](#_The_Learned_Arts) in the Empire.

The semadai are not just monks, however, but *warrior*-monks. They believe that combat and the training for combat encourages self-discipline, the Five Noble Principles, and improves the order and happiness of the individual. Though warfare often feeds on and encourages that which is chaotic- urges for power, violence, etc- the semadai seek to practice it in a way that does the opposite.

Thus, when the semadai are not engaging in religious activity, they are training for war. Semadai have an extremely rigorous regimen of exercise for strength and endurance, techniques, formations, manoeuvring, tactics, strategy, and all the [martial arts](#_Introduction) [note that this is *not* what martial arts is on Earth. The martial arts in Ethagis refers to skills useful for combat (e.g. archery, wrestling, etc)]. Semadai are trained in anti-cavalry weapons and formations but fight as infantrymen in tight formations.

The philosophy of the semadai emphasizes the mental side of combat heavily. This includes how to demoralize, deceive, and generally maximise psychological damage on the enemy. It mainly focusses on the semadai themselves however; how to mentally prepare oneself for combat, how to keep calm and focused in battle, how to cope with feelings of stress, anger, or violence, etc.

As a result of these factors, the semadai are widely considered to be the best fighters in Ethagis. Immensely physically fit, in possession of iron discipline, and indisputably the most technically skilled fighters in the Empire, the allegiance of the semadai is universally coveted.

###### Asthan

###### Jagal

##### Gentry

###### Vizier

###### Professional

In Ethagis, there are three occupations legally recognized as professions: medicine, law, and military engineering. The profession of law is referred to as [juristry](#_The_Learned_Arts), with its practitioners called jurists; this is because ‘law’ in Ethigean parlance refers to [disciplines of science](#_The_Learned_Arts). The profession of military engineering is referred to as [fieldmastery](#_The_Learned_Arts), with its practitioners called fieldmasters; this is because Ethigeans are not technically advanced enough to have created or even heard of engines at this point in time.

These professions are regulated directly by the Shurhath and all professionals must be registered by imperial decree into one of three organizations: the Secretariat of Physicians, the Secretariat of Barristers, and the Secretariat of Fieldmasters.

Admission into the secretariats is regulated by imperial examinations, although in exceptional circumstances can be granted by the Shurhath personally. Candidates are also expected to own to memorize relevant medical, legal, and engineering texts: these could be medical corpuses by prominent physicians, Ethigean lawbooks, and engineering manuals respectively. The overwhelming majority of professionals have been tutored for these exams by private professionals/gentlemen.

Professionals utilize their services in several ways. Most often, professionals are either commissioned by noblemen/the Shurhath (or anyone wealthy enough to afford it- even a vagrant is *technically* legally allowed to) or play a role in the military. Physicians, for example, generally do one of two things: they roam the realm searching for commissions, or accept a salary/land grant from a noblemen and become their retainers. Fieldmasters often find civilian employment as architects, and may even be commissioned by city magistrates to design and build cathedrals and other landmarks. Jurists are very often hired by noblemen to argue their case in court.

Jurists are very rarely utilized as military tribunes/judges, but most military professionals are military engineers (aka fieldmasters) or, in some cases as retainers of noblemen/Shurhaths, licensed physicians acting as field medics. In wartime, almost all professionals serve in an army in some capacity, a reflection of the centrality of war to Ethigean institutions.

Legally, professionals are recognized as commoners: however, due to the extensive knowledge (and literacy skills) required for passing the exams, almost all professionals are also by birthright members of the gentry. However, even a freed slave can theoretically become a professional. Professionals are, in strictly legal terms, not too high on the Feyriatal hierarchy, but their influence, prestige, and wealth often exceeds this. A professional can provide services to noblemen in exchange for currency to amass considerable wealth: the richest professionals have been as rich as members of the lower nobility.

Professionals are universally respected for their sheer skill and in specific interactions can often exert authority over the noblemen they typically service. A doctor, for example, naturally has authority over a patient due to his skill and the inherent nature of the doctor-patient relationship[[15]](#footnote-16). If a doctor advises a Shurhath to do something, the latter normally complies. If a physician sees a mighty lord bleeding out and urgently tells his scion to take off his cloak to use as a tourniquet, the latter normally complies.

Professionals often generate wealth, prestige, or fame through other means however. The majority of professionals come from the gentry or even in some cases from non-eldest sons of the soldiery and nobility. As such, they often have other means of sustenance, although the lucrativity of the professions can sometimes lead to them becoming primary sources of income.

Excluding such alternate sources of wealth, professionals can make a name or fortune for themselves very often in publishing. Many professionals have written highly influential medical texts in the past, for example. The most eminent jurists have, in the past, often been philosophers. A few fieldmasters who rose up from the commonry in wartime plied trades like carpentry. These are merely a few examples of how the class of professional in Ethagis opens more doors than it closes.

###### Alfazel

###### Magistrate

##### Commonry

###### Artisan

###### Farmer/Fisher/Miner

###### Tradesman

###### Merchant

###### Labourer

###### Vagrant

##### Enslaved

###### Imperial Slave

###### Slave

#### Legitimacy and Succession

For the vast majority of European history since the fall of the Western Roman Empire, most monarchies have been hereditary. Succession is a simple mechanism of son following father, and the legitimacy of the ascendant monarch is derived from the fact that his ancestors were also monarchs. This is not to say that this was always the state of affairs: there were many exceptions, periods of chaos, and succession crises. But, generally, the idea of the monarch’s children succeeding them was the foundation of the monarchy.

A hereditary monarchy is just one of many possible forms of monarchic government, however, and one that the Empire of Ethagis doesn’t really conform to. Although the nature of Ethigean society and government is so different from any in our modern age, and thus difficult to explain with contemporary political rhetoric, the best way to describe the theoretical nature of Ethigean monarchy is as an autocratic military dictatorship.

In order to understand why this is and the nature of Ethigean monarchy, it is necessary to understand the history and nature of the office of Shurhath. Shurhath lacks any accurate English translation and is thus written in this document in the native Ethigean tongue: Khosgan. The word ‘shurhath’ is Khosgan for ‘mightiest’: this is simply because the first Shurhaths were warlords who were more powerful than other warlords and thus able to assert sovereignty over them. In a continent divided between many competing warlords, those warlords who were able to unite it by being the ‘mightiest’ were the first Shurhaths.

The office of Shurhath is thus inherently tied to military supremacy, and in the early centuries of the position, the position and military supremacy were entirely the same. It is an embodiment of the ‘might makes right’ principle: that whoever is strongest has the right to rule. Legitimacy is simply derived from *being* the mightiest: ancestry is irrelevant if the only prerequisite for being Shurhath is simply being able to seize it by asserting supremacy over all your rivals. In order to maintain power, you didn’t need any ideological justification, just the ability to hold onto that power by maintaining military supremacy. That in itself *became* the ideological justification for the position of Shurhath: one had to be the mightiest in order to claim the right to rule.

As a result, there were and are no formal succession mechanisms for the imperial crown. In a monarchy where the ideological justification for the monarchy is ancestry, succession mechanisms are easy: the descendant of the former monarch ascends the throne. But in a monarchy where the ideological justification for the monarchy is being the mightiest, it’s a lot less clear how one would establish an automatic system where the mightiest becomes the new Shurhath. Indeed, the best way to establish who is the mightiest is evidently to have a continent-wide war upon the death of every monarch, in order to see who asserts supremacy over everyone else.

This, of course, is incredibly impractical, and is the reason why over the centuries the office of Shurhath gradually took on a more hereditary character, despite the ideological basis of the position remaining ‘might makes right’. This took time, however, and was never formalized or codified.

In the earliest centuries of the position, several Shurhaths tried to establish their children as their successors. This is not illogical: the position of Shurhath did not accept ancestry as in itself a justification for rule, but there was no reason why a person, provided they were the mightiest, could not ascend the throne if their ancestors also happened to be the mightiest. If a father groomed his son for rule and if his armies swore loyalty to the son, a transition of power from father to son would in fact be relatively seamless. So a Shurhath trying to get his son to eventually succeed him was nothing unusual.

Often, however, this failed because their children simply did not have the character or abilities that their fathers had, and they didn’t reign for long because they weren’t the mightiest. Sometimes this succeeded because the child, like the father, also happened to be the mightiest. In either case, the mightiest ruled: either the worthy child of the former Shurhath, or whoever had the ability to overthrow an unworthy successor.

But although war presents many opportunities to those who aspire to emperor-hood, most elites in any realm do not want near-constant war. It is expensive and exhausting: prolonged periods of peace are beneficial to noblemen as it gives them time to consolidate their own power. They can then use this built-up strength to make a bid for the throne at a later time. As a result, as the centuries went on the bar for being a ‘worthy’ successor began to drop. If a child succeeded a former Shurhath who wouldn’t be able to hold the throne in a major war, as time went on the nobility assented to the succession and didn’t contest it simply because peace would be beneficial.

What began to happen was that in Ethigean history, a single dynasty would be able to hold the throne for several generations, because there was a general consensus amongst the nobility to not contest the succession- even though *technically* the children who inherited the throne lacked a claim to it, because legitimacy was derived from might and not ancestry. The nobility just decided to let that go, however, in order to secure a lasting peace.

But there are problems with this approach. Firstly, it means that dynasties often get gradually weaker over generations. If nobody is enforcing the fact that the Shurhath has to be a good soldier/general/statesman/etc to rule, then over the generations the Shurhaths of one dynasty could potentially become less and less competent. In fact, this is exactly what happened, because the decadence and luxury of the palace, along with the lack of discipline or restraint shown to the heirs of Shurhaths, were the perfect conditions to lead to spoilt and incapable rulers. The second problem is that there is no formal point at which the nobility decides to stop tolerating this illegitimacy.

Imagine a monarchy with ten generations, all of the same dynasty, and each generation becomes less and less capable. The first Shurhath of the dynasty was the mightiest in the realm and seized the office in a continent-wide war, where he genuinely proved himself to be more capable than any other warlords. For the sake of peace, the nobility accepted this and didn’t contest the accession of his heir, who technically wasn’t the mightiest in the realm anymore but was still generally capable. So the heir is technically illegitimate- because they aren’t the mightiest- but the consensus is to just tolerate it.

The question is, at what point does that consensus break down? The third generation? The fourth? The fifth? At any given point at which a monarch dies, a massive continent-wide war *could* break out if enough noblemen decide ‘enough is enough, I’m going to contest the succession’. Or, if this isn’t the case, there could be no issues at all. The point is that there is uncertainty: there’s no actual mechanism to determine *when* the next war will break out.

It depends on a multitude of different factors: how powerful is the new ascendant monarch, what is their character like, their force of will, how many allies do they have, how long has it been since the last war, how ambitious the various lords in the realm are, how competent they are, how restless, etc. Essentially, whenever a monarch dies, every nobleman makes a decision: ‘do I make a claim for the throne or do I leave it?’ If enough people decide to do the former, a war happens. If only a few do so, it’s dubbed a rebellion. If none do so, the situation is a continued peace.

Theoretically, the authority of the Shurhath is absolute and incontestable. In reality, the power of each Shurhath varies based on a hundred different factors. Many have been anything but absolute monarchs, but a handful have been genuine autocrats. Generally, the Shurhaths who seized power in war and asserted their supremacy over all other claimants were more absolute rulers, because they were able to gain and then effectively use their military supremacy, setting up a genuine military dictatorship where nobody could contest them. The Shurhaths who were born into the role generally ruled less absolutely, because they may not have as many soldiers or as much plunder at their disposal, and because in peacetime opportunities for brutality and aggression are more limited. This is by no means a concrete rule, however, and more of a general historical trend. It essentially just depends on whether the nature of a Shurhath’s rule is actually a military dictatorship or not: are they in power genuinely because nobody else can overthrow them, or because the nobility have ‘allowed’ them to be in power for the sake of peace.

An issue with military dictatorships in general is that they are reliant on the ruler’s own forces being loyal and reliable. In the history of the Roman Empire, for example, emperors effectively held the throne through acting as military dictators, but many emperors lost the throne because their own forces turned against them. If a dictator’s own soldiers become aware of their importance and/or if discipline breaks down, the monarchy suffers: the Janissaries of the Ottoman Empire are another example of this.

In the Empire of Ethagis, however, this isn’t really a problem, for the same reason that Medieval European armies scarcely turned on their monarchs. The intrinsic hardships of peasants’ and soldiers’ lifestyles, especially when war is frequent, keeps them disciplined. The peasantry lacks the education or insight to realize their own importance, and the superiority of their feudal betters keeps them in check. The military elite (knights, samurai, asthanes, whatever) are kept in check through an ideology which supports loyalty, their comparatively small numbers, the superiority of *their* feudal betters, and the lack of any real proximity to the monarch wherein they could pressure him. To Ethigean monarchs, the source of threat doesn’t stem from their armies (unless they are so impoverished or oppressed to be driven to mutiny), but from other noblemen.

### Religion

The official state religion of Ethagis, and the one practised by the overwhelming majority of Ethigeans, is The Way of the Cosmos. In this context, ‘cosmos’ refers to the universe as a whole, and the name thus refers to the general alignment and workings of the universe. It is colloquially referred to as just ‘The Way’.

The Way is a religious, philosophical, and spiritual tradition. It combines elements of various worldviews which would be familiar to us, but is distinct from any belief system present on Earth.[[16]](#footnote-17) The Way is not necessarily *true*: it is not necessarily an accurate description of how this fictional universe is constructed, but it is how Ethigeans *believe* it to be.

#### Philosophy

##### The One

The most central concept of the Way, around which all others revolve, is that of the One. The One is the name for the fundamental force driving life, reality, and the universe. It is not a deity or a being, but rather a primal source of energy that sustains the cosmos [the Ethigean term for the universe- the two terms are used synonymously here].

All forms of energy derive from the One in some way and utilise it. There are various manifestations of the One and the fundamental energy of the One takes the form of various different kinds of more specific energy. For example, magnetism, fire, and tidal movements are all viewed as examples of the One being channelled in different kinds of force.

Life itself is sustained by the One. A living body is distinguished by a non-living body by the presence of the flow of the One. A dead human for example is simply a mass of flesh and bone: but the flow of the One through the mass animates it and gives it life.

Though the universe is in a constant cycle of waxing, waning, destruction, and rebirth the One remains constant. Its magnitude constantly extends to the entire breadth of the cosmos and its power is absolute. It permeates everything and ties everything in the cosmos together. No deity supersedes the One in strength: they simply utilise its power in different ways. Every action utilises the One in some way: a fox moving its paw utilises the One, a man’s heart beating utilises the One, a catapult launching a rock utilises the One. Actions of different magnitudes simply call upon different quantities of the One. A hummingbird flapping its wings utilises comparatively less, and a deity razing a city utilises a lot.

The One cannot be created or destroyed: its total quantity in the cosmos remains eternally constant. Various process and actions channel the One and convert it from one form to another. The One is omnipresent, existing within things and in the spaces between them. When one lights a fire, the One is being converted from a passive, unutilised form resident and ‘dormant’ in the air to the manifestation that is fire.

The source of the One is unknowable because there is no source- it is the necessary first cause that drives the universe. Each incarnation of the universe is simply a monumental conversion of the One from one form to another, it is simply an act which uses the One as its fuel. The One is the ultimate first cause.

##### The Flow of the One

In the subsequent articulation of the philosophy of the Way, a concept that will be mentioned often is the idea of the natural, predestined flows of [the One](#_The_One). The flows of the One refer to natural, inevitable processes that lead to the phenomena described below. These phenomena are eternally constant simply because the One causes them to be constant. There is no conscious mind behind the actions of the One: just as a river flows naturally and without consciousness, so does the One.

The Way posits that the universe is the way it is simply because of these natural movements of the One. The One, fundamentally, is a force, and the ‘flow’ of the One simply refers to a specific expression of this force. If one force, the One, is the source of all phenomena, then causes of the different phenomena must be distinguished by different applications of the force. Just as all things in the material world are distinguished by different manifestations of the force (see the Three Hosts and Ten Bases), so are all immaterial forces and phenomena caused by different applications.

An important to concept to clarify is the distinction between the spiritual world and the material world. The spiritual world is composed of forces, energy, and other immaterial, abstract phenomena. The material world is composed of physical matter and substances. Even intangible things, for example ‘air’, are part of the material world because they can be interacted by other things in the material world. Humans are part of the material world and can breathe air, thus proving its presence in that world. Spiritual phenomena are the cause of events and things in the physical world, but as they are immaterial and abstract they aren’t actually *part* of the material world.

The immaterial applications of the One that cause spiritual phenomena are not broken down and understood in the way that the material world is. The Way believes that humanity can break down and understand the physical, material world (or at least try to) because, as humans live in the material world, we can experience it. Experience is the root of all knowledge and knowledge is the root of all understanding. Concepts like the [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts)[[17]](#footnote-18) and [Ten Bases](#_The_Ten_Bases) are mechanisms to understand the physical universe.

But understanding the spiritual world, built on abstract forces, is believed to be impossible. Humanity lacks the capacity to do such a thing; its faculties are limited to understanding by experience. Even the mental invention of new concepts- i.e. imagination- is based on experience: try imagining a new colour. One cannot, because all that is imagined is based on what we have experienced. The spiritual world is fundamentally beyond our comprehension.

Spiritual phenomena (i.e. abstract concepts) are therefore rationalised as being the results of the flows of the One. The One is constantly undergoing changes and movements, a reflection of the ever-changing nature of the universe (this is elaborated on later). The flows of the One can be unpredictable (to produce changes are unpredictable, or ‘chaotic’), or regular (to produce changes that are regular and predictable, or ‘ordered’. The ideas of chaos and order will be elaborated on later). All changes and phenomena are the results of the flows of the One, for the One and it the changes it undergoes defines everything. The term the ‘rhythms’ of the One refers to a kind of flow that produces regular, ordered cycles (e.g. the cycles of the seasons).

The flows of the One thus underpin the fabric of reality and cause all things. They, just like the One, are the first cause. They cannot be traced back to any previous cause, they just *happen*- they just *are*. They are described as being predetermined or predestined because, in order for the universe as we know it to exist, these flows need to exist. They are predestined because the universe is a result of the flows, and not the other way round.

The concepts detailed below are the results of the natural, predestined flows of the One- and, because the One is the first cause, that is the where the explanation ends. Although nobody in Ethagis realises this, the idea of fundamental laws of the universe existing simply because they naturally just *do* is a primitive articulation of the idea of the laws of physics.

The laws of physics apply to both Earth and this world. Scientifically, both worlds are identical: e.g. they’re both made of chemical elements, the laws of physics are the same, the human genome is the idea, etc. However, just as in the history of Earth, the inhabitants of this world have not proven these concepts yet, and- just as in the history of Earth- explain the world in simpler ways.[[18]](#footnote-19) Ethigeans do not have any knowledge of the ‘laws of physics’, but they do have their own explanation for reality, boiling it down to a number of fundamental laws- those laws aren’t caused by some other being, they’re just facts of the universe.

In the Way, these laws and concepts come down to the flows of the One, which is the ultimate first cause, but *because* of the One the concepts listed below are still just facts of the universe. The flows of the One is just the mechanism used to explain this.

##### The Three Hosts

The Three Hosts, also known as the Three Cardinals, refer to the three most basic forms of t[he One](#_The_One). All things in the cosmos are composed of ten fundamental substances called the [Ten Bases](#_The_Ten_Bases), and each of the bases are composed of the Three Hosts in different compositions. However, whilst the bases are material, the hosts are more spiritual. The hosts are not composed of matter and do not exist in the physical universe.

The Three Hosts are merely the basic manifestations of the One, and of them everything is composed. However, whereas the bases determine an object’s physical composition, the hosts determine an object’s spiritual composition. Each host has different attributes and influences the world in different ways. They constitute the different aspects of a human, and each base is a physical incarnation of a different balance of bases.

The first host is the spiritual force that is responsible for the body of something. It is called the *Ruby Host*. The ruby of a thing is the spiritual force which allows it to have a physical self. It is *not* the physical self itself. It is the existential cause *of* that physical self. In a human, the ruby host allows the person to have a body.

The second host is the spiritual force that is responsible for the mind of something. It is called the *Vitriolic Host*. The vitriol of a thing is the spiritual force which allows it to have a mind. It is not a brain, not even an abstract aggregation of all the thoughts a person may have. It is the existential cause that allows a human to have a mind. It is how a lump of physical tissue, a brain, can have thoughts and a mind. Only humans and animals have a vitriolic host.

The third host is the spiritual force that is responsible for the life force or something. It is called the *Nitre Host*. The nitre of a thing is the spiritual force which gives it life. A stone does not have a nitre host, but a human, animal, or even a plant does.

There are thus three spiritual forces driving the existence of a human being: the ruby, the vitriol, and the nitre.

The three hosts symbolise and influence a range of other things. The ruby host is associated with manhood and is known as the ‘male host’. The vitriolic host is associated with womanhood and is known as the ‘female host’. The nitre host is associated with androgyny and is known as the ‘androgyne host’. This is because in the Way, males are believed to have a ruby host of a greater magnitude than females, which explains their superior strength. Females are believed to have a vitriolic host of a greater magnitude than males, which explains their superior clarity of thought and decreased aggression. Prepubescent children are believed to have a nitre host of a greater magnitude than adults, which explains their superior levels of energy.

##### The Ten Bases

The Ten Bases are the physical building blocks of all things in the cosmos. Each individual base is formed by a different combination of the [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts). Each base is essentially a physical manifestation of a composition of the hosts. Water, for example, is the material world incarnation of a specific balance of the hosts.

All the bases are in the physical, material world. Even air, which isn’t tangible or visible, is still a physical substance because air is absent outside the planet. Because one can thus deduce the existence of a substance, air, that substance must therefore exist in the physical world because humans cannot sense purely spiritual forces.

Humans, for example, are made up of various different tissues. Each tissue is a different material and is thus made up of a different balance of bases. Bone, for example, is a specific balance of bases. If one were to alter this balance, the substance would change: it would no longer be bone. Things are made of bases; a given substance (e.g. bone) is not *made of* hosts, but the presence of the hosts exists in them. The presence of the hosts exists in living organisms as well because living organisms are still made of the Ten Bases.

Take a male human. A male human is made of various components: one of these, just to give an example, is blood. Blood is a substance that is made up of a unique balance of bases. In the specific balance for blood, the base of water predominates. The base of water, just to give an example of the various bases composing blood, is the physical consequence of the Three Hosts. Take the other example of muscle tissue. Muscle tissue contains a high proportion of the ruby host- the host associated with manhood. The hosts exist naturally in the being of a man, and men naturally have a greater proportion of the ruby host than women. This manifests itself physically in the fact that- on average- men have more muscle tissue.

There are ten bases, each composed of a different balance of the three hosts. This is an index of each base and their composition. The composition is listed in descending order of concentration of host.

Water | Ruby Host, Vitriolic Host, Nitre Host

Earth | Ruby Host, Nitre Host, Vitriolic Host

Metal | Ruby Host, Vitriolic Host

Wood | Vitriolic Host, Ruby Host, Nitre Host

Kalai | Vitriolic Host, Nitre Host, Ruby Host

Air | Vitriolic Host, Nitre Host

Fire | Nitre Host, Vitriolic Host, Ruby Host

Lahar | Nitre Host, Ruby Host, Vitriolic Host

Light | Nitre Host, Vitriolic Host

Void | [All hosts in equal proportion]

Earth refers to dirt, soil, stone, and rocks. Essentially, it is the layers of the ground excluding any metals found inside. If one were to walk on the ground of the countryside and put a shovel to it, the contents of the shovel would be earth. Stone, for example, is predominantly made of earth (although it is made of other bases as well, with metal being second place). Dirt is predominantly made of earth (although it is made of other bases as well, with wood being second place).

Kalai refers to greenery and vegetation. Leaves, for example, are made primarily of water and Kalai. Different flora are made up of a different combination of bases, but Kalai will always be the main one. Crops, flowers, leaves, vines, all of these are made almost entirely of Kalai.

Lahar refers to the tissues of the body, especially the unique tissue composing the brain of an animal or human. A brain is the substance made up of the highest proportion of Lahar out of any other substance. But Lahar as a base is only found in the tissues of humans or animals. Bone is the human tissue which contains the smallest proportion of Lahar, and brain matter is made almost entirely of Lahar.

Void refers to the substance that fills the cosmos outside the terrestrial sphere. Just as air is to the terrestrial sphere, so is void to the other spheres. It is the blackness which occupies the universe.

The overwhelming majority of substances are made up of more than one base, with most being made up of more than five. Silk, for example, is believed to be made up of six bases, with four of them merely being in very slight amounts. There is no substance made up entirely of Lahar, for example, or Kalai, or earth. In fact, even a metal is not made entirely of the base metal. Zinc and iron, for example, are predominantly metal but are distinguished by containing a different composition of bases.

Base composition is what distinguishes one substance from another. As long as two substances are different to each other, they will be made of a different combination of bases. Two very similar substances will be made of the same number of bases. The predominant base may be the same, the second most abundant base may be the same, and the third etc. But as long as a substance is 0.01% more (for example) fire than another, they will be different. If there is *any* difference in base composition, the substances are different.

##### The Cyclic Cosmos

One of the most fundamental concepts of the Way is that universe is in a constant cycle of ending and beginning. The universe is constantly in an unimaginably long cycle of [being born](#_Cosmogeny), waxing, waning, dying, and being born again. The Way denotes each ‘life’ of the universe as an eon, with religious texts describing it as ‘the span of time equivalent to if one were to rub a sheet of silk once a century on a rock fifty leagues long, wide, and tall, and wait for the rock to be ground away’. The universe is believed to be born from a single point, expanding until it reaches its prime, contracts into a single, infinitely small point, and expands again.

The inhabited planet is believed to be the centre of the universe in Ethigean scientific thought, and thus eventually the contraction of the universe will result in the apocalyptic destruction of the planet and humanity. Then, as the universe is born again, the events of the origin of the universe will commence yet again. This cycle will repeat for all eternity: though each eon may end, the time of the universe is infinite.

The cyclic eternity of the universe is a macrocosm of the endless cycling of each human life in birth, growth, decline, and rebirth. The Way believes in human reincarnation: if a person dies, they are reincarnated as some other point in time and space, lacking memories or traits from the person that came before. Each human is locked in a constant cycle of life, growth (waxing), decline (waning), death, and rebirth. Just as the universe is locked in a cycle of eons, each human is locked in a cycle of lives.

Reincarnation can either be instant or delayed. A man can die in Ethagis and be reborn in another continent at that same instant. Alternatively, a man can die in Ethagis in 500 SE and be reborn in another continent in 1000 SE. A man can die in Ethagis and, by sheer coincidence, be reborn as another man in Ethagis. By an even greater coincidence, a man can die in Ethagis and just happen to be reincarnated in the same village. The location of reincarnation is coincidental, the delay of reincarnation occurs as a response to population changes.

As the universe expands in its natural outward flow, the number of human cycles in existence increases. New cycles get added to the ‘pool’ of existing human cycles, wherein each cycle is a human life and all its subsequent reincarnations. This means that the overall world population increases. After the universe reaches its apex and contracts, the total number of human cycles in existence decreases. At the very last instant of the eon, a single human will remain. A moment later, at the very first instant of the eon, a single human will inhabit it.

If some great plague kills a million Ethigeans, those million Ethigeans are not all reincarnated immediately. The great plague has still taken its toll. The universe is currently expanding, so those Ethigeans will *eventually* all be reincarnated because the overall trend of the universe is that the number of human cycles is existing. But they won’t all be reincarnated instantly because, for the decade (which is an infinitesimally small timespan in the context of an eon) the total human population must decrease. But all those Ethigeans will eventually be reincarnated in that eon.

If the universe was in a state of decline (which, it is believed, will only occur after a colossal amount of time), then the total human population would overall increase. There may be some fertility boom in Ethagis in one century, but eventually all those new people born would die and they would be reincarnated next eon. Their souls are held ‘in reserve’, in a way.

A soul is a permanent essence of a human cycle, believed to be made entirely of the One. In a human cycle of endless lives, the soul is what remains. At any given point, not all souls will be currently alive. At the very apex of the universe’s expansion, all the souls of the cosmos will be alive. But as the universe waxes or wanes, only a portion of all the available ‘souls’ will actually be alive. The others will just be held in reserve- a state known as dormancy- until they are to be reincarnated later that eon or in another eon, depending on if the universe is expanding or declining.

Imagine you possess a hundred plates. At different points, the number of guests in your home increases or decreases. At the very apex of the party you are hosting, there are exactly one hundred guests in your home and all the plates are in use. When the party is in decline and guests leave, more and more plates are put away, being held in reserve. When the party gets more active, more and more plates are brought out for use. Each plate in this analogy is a soul and each guest is a human life that happens to be using that soul.

This is a flawed analogy because in this analogy the guests and plates are separate entities. In the philosophy of the Way, each human cycle of lives is inseparable from a soul. When a soul is dormant, it is not currently alive, it is being held in reserve. There is no human cycle outside this soul. Each human cycle revolves around a single soul. There are billions of souls in the cosmos, but only a portion of them will currently be alive. There is one human cycle for each soul, and throughout each eon the human cycle for each soul remains the same. By the end of an eon, each soul thus has a gargantuan number of lives that it has experienced.

Take an example of one soul, Soul A. Throughout an eon, it will be dormant and alive at different points. In the eon, the soul will at intervals be alive, and a human attached to that soul will be alive. Once that human dies, the soul may remain alive as the human is immediately reincarnated. It may alternatively be dormant for a while in between reincarnations, for whatever length of time. An incomprehensible number of humans holding that soul will live and die in an endless repeating cycle of life, death, rebirth. Each soul thus corresponds to one human cycle. Whilst the soul is dormant, whatever human is waiting to be reborn is effectively unconscious and not perceive this time.

These processes are all regulated by the natural, predetermined [flows of the One](#_The_Flow_of). They are the inexorable, unchangeable rhythms of the cosmos. They cannot be stopped or interfered with. They are regulated automatically by predestined flows and changes of [the One](#_The_One).

##### The Dualism of the Cosmos

In each eon, there are two supreme beings. These are deities which transcend the idea of ‘God’ in any Abrahamic religion. They are technically beings, but realistically they’re more just forces of the universe. These are beings so supreme, so elevated above human consciousness, that they do not feel emotions or have thoughts. This may make them sound like primitive beings- a flatworm, for example, lacks emotions or thoughts- but the reason for this absence in these supreme beings is simply because they have genuinely transcended beyond the need for these things.

These supreme beings lack any material form or ‘body’- they are made solely of [the One](#_The_One). They are beings of pure force, pure energy. They are both fundamental forces driving the universe, and are fuelled by the One; but the ways that they *use* the One are diametrically opposed.

One of these supreme beings is a force in the universe that creates order. The other of these supreme beings is a force that creates chaos. The presence of these two supreme beings thus means that the universe exists in a constant balance of order and chaos. The force of order in the universe is always totally balanced with the force of chaos in the universe. They exist in a perpetual dynamic equilibrium: one may predominate at times, but if there is a surge of chaos in the world there will always be a corresponding surge of order in the world, equal in duration and magnitude. That corresponding surge may occur a millennium later. But, overall, if any one force predominates for any period of time and intensity, the other force will predominate in a way that matches it. Overall, in each eon, the strength of both order and chaos will be equal.

The supreme being that drives the force of order is known as Mahomedes and the supreme being that drives the force of chaos is known as Zorothestra. Both of these beings are brought into existence at the beginning of each eon and end as each eon ends. They are not brought about by the conscious machinations of a creator deity like the Abrahamic God, but by the simple, predestined movements of the One. It is inevitable that with every eon, due to the simple flow of the One, they will turn into being.

Mahomedes and Zorothestra are not inherently good nor evil. Order and chaos is not good and evil. However, generally- simply by the definitions of what happens to be beneficial for human existence- order tends to be beneficial and chaos tends to be detrimental. Order takes the form of peace, of uneventful summers, of regular harvests, of a normal climate. Chaos takes the form of war, of natural disasters, of failed harvests, of a tempestuous climate. In the view of the Way, harvests and wars are irrelevant on a cosmic scale and thus inherently neutral. A supreme being does not need to care about natural disasters and climactic events. They are simply irrelevant, and thus neither good nor bad. But, for human existence, the events brought about by order happen to generally be beneficial, and the events brought about by chaos happen to generally be bad.

There are exceptions- evidence that neither order nor chaos are inherently good or bad. Order can be the continued, everyday oppression under a tyrant. Chaos can be an abnormally good harvest or warm weather. And because of these examples, one cannot conclusively say that order is inherently, absolutely good, and that chaos is inherently, absolutely bad. But, generally for humans, order is seen as good and chaos is seen as bad. There is a fundamental dualism in the cosmos between these two forces.

A century of peace and prosperity is a period of order predominating over chaos. A century of war and hardship is a period of chaos predominating over chaos. But even as one continent, say Ethagis, experiences the former, another continent may be experiencing the latter (and vice-versa). In this way chaos and order are balanced.

Just as chaos and order co-exist in the universe, so do they co-exist in a person. The former is a macrocosm of the latter- just as the cycling eons is a macrocosm for cycling lives. In each person, chaos and order co-exist, although the balance may vary. In a normal person, chaos and order are balanced. This is the normal state of being in a person. In a good person who has followed the teachings of the Way, order predominates. In a bad person who has rejected the teachings of the Way, chaos predominates. But, overall, in the grand scheme of humanity, order and chaos are balanced.

Just as some people are unusually just, so are others unusually wicked. This is the natural state of the world- there is a ‘bell curve’ wherein the majority of people are normal and a minority are either especially good or especially bad. Thus there is overall balance. But even if an almighty Shurhath were to conquer the whole world and, by just example, make all the peoples of the world righteous followers of the Way, chaos would still manifest itself in other ways. Perhaps on another planet, chaos would predominate and there would be great storms and meteors striking the planet every day. Hence, even though chaos and order have to be balanced overall in the cosmos, on one specific planet either order or chaos can predominate. Hence, humanity can perfect itself by following the Way and the ensuing order can be compensated for by chaos on other planets.

Order and chaos exist in various forms in a person. Order manifests itself in the capacity for reason, empathy, and the collection of wisdom. It is everything that is uniquely human: forward thinking, rational planning, decision-making, insight, intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, empathy, kindness, restraint, self-discipline, principles, morality. The force of order in a human is thus strengthened by the cultivation and/or use of any of these attributes. For example, it is strengthened by the self-imposition of discipline, the accumulation of knowledge, the performance of good deeds for altruistic purposes, etc.

Chaos manifests itself in the ideas of instinct, impulse, needs, and deep desires. It represents the lowest level of human nature, that which is shared with animals. It manifests itself in the form of hunger (need for food), lust (need for sex), aggression (need for authority), and greed (need for resources)- to name a few examples. It manifests itself in the deep desires for power and is cultivated when humans seek to satisfy these deep, dark desires in excessive, immoral ways. For example, a soldier massacring a village to satisfy his unconscious desire for strength and power is cultivating the force of chaos within him. A king gorging himself on a colossal feast to satisfy his base desire for food is cultivating the force of chaos within him.

In the average person, chaos and order co-exist. Every person has the base desires for sex, power, resources, etc, and will typically act to meet them: they might approach women to satisfy the urge for sex, or work hard in the field to satisfy the urge for resources. But generally they will avoid excesses and lapses of morality: they will generally avoid gluttony (excess indulgence in the urge for food) or theft (excess indulgence in the urge for theft). They avoid these crimes because they *know* that it is wrong. Their internal sense of morality (order) regulates their behaviour and restrains their base desires (chaos). But they can- and most often will- occasionally face lapses in self-discipline and commit wrongdoing, for humans are not perfect.

A wicked person is one who (just as an average person does) has these dark, base desires but do *not* resist excesses or immoral acts to satisfy these urges. They may steal to satisfy their desire for resources. They may bully to satisfy their desire for authority. They may rape to satisfy their desire for sex. They do not listen to their internal sense of morality, and the wilful ignorance of that sense cultivates chaos and makes them wicked.

A righteous person is one who has these dark, base desires but *resists* acting upon them because their self-discipline and morality prevents excesses and immorality. They constantly struggle with the subconscious, base human desire for resources- but they will never steal, because they know that doing so is wrong and they have the mental strength to resist it. These base, deep subconscious desires are referred to as ‘letches’. Righteousness is not an absence of dark thoughts, it is the capacity to resist them.

##### Morality and Reincarnation

The dichotomy between internal order and internal chaos, and the balance between these two forces defines morality in the Way. Goodness is when order prevails over chaos, and evil is when chaos prevails over order. The Way encourages the cultivation of wisdom, knowledge, and restraint in a person, and the dispelling of acting on one’s letches.

The Way champions one value above all, called the Ultimate Principle: self-discipline. Self-discipline is considered to be the greatest value one can cultivate because it leads to all other values. It is that quality which is the most human quality: the ability to resist ones animal desires in order to fulfil human purposes. For example, a human has the animal desire to steal in order to attain resources. But they have the uniquely human quality of morality[[19]](#footnote-20) and thus a self-disciplined man fulfils the uniquely human purpose of doing the right thing.

Self-discipline doesn’t just extend to doing the right thing morally, but simply doing what needs to be done. The Way believes that humans have a natural, deep desire to do nothing, stemming from the animalistic letch to conserve energy. But humans might also wish to labour in order to gain food, to train in order to gain muscle, or to study in order to gain knowledge. Each human must balance the deep animalistic desire to do nothing and the rational, human desire to do some form of work. They must choose between chaos and order. Self-discipline is ignoring the animalistic letch to be lazy in favour of doing the right thing- work.

Doing the right thing is ignoring animal desires to be rational and moral, two qualities that are uniquely human. Each human thus has an ‘animal’ side and a ‘human’ side: the former represents base desires and feelings, the latter represents higher levels of thought that are unique to humans. The more a person does the right thing, the more they develop the Ultimate Principle (self-discipline), which leads to other virtues like morality, diligence, and knowledge.

These other virtues are collectively known as the Five Noble Principles, and are virtues that are developed by self-discipline. They are as follows:

Morality | Doing things that benefit others at the expense of your own time, effort, happiness, or resources. Cultivated by altruism.

Restraint | Restraining from material pleasures like excess food, alcohol, or sex. Cultivated by self-restraint.

Diligence | Being hardworking and productive. Cultivated by work.

Knowledge | The volume and magnitude of facts, skills, practices, and teachings one knows. Cultivated by study, training, expertise, and practice of a skill.

Wisdom | One’s insight into the world and into how and why other people do the things they do. Cultivated by studying the Way.

By following the Five Noble Principles- and especially the Ultimate Principle- one not only becomes a better, more ordered person, but as a consequence becomes happier. The Way believes that the more ordered a person is the happier they become as a consequence. People who pursue chaos (i.e. short-term physical pleasures) may be happy in those moments, but in the long term are miserable. They are never truly fulfilled as people, whereas an ordered person is genuinely happy and fulfilled.

The process is a positive feedback loop: the more self-disciplined one is, the happier they are, and happiness makes it easier to overcome one’s animal side and be more amicable and just (uniquely human qualities). This makes it more likely that the person will cultivate the Principles. Conversely, the more chaotic and dark one becomes, the less happy they truly are on the inside, making them more likely to lash out and do bad deeds.

A person’s internal balance of order and chaos (and thus their morality) determines their reincarnation status. Reincarnation acts as a mechanism to punish chaotic people and reward ordered people. It is impossible to be reincarnated as a being that isn’t human, but the circumstances of one’s birth depend on one’s previous life.

A good person will be reincarnated as a baby born into a better life: they may have more favourable characteristics, or superior socioeconomic status, or both. For example, an immensely self-disciplined person may be reborn as a mighty lord with great wealth, intelligence, and strength. An immensely chaotic person may be reborn as a weak, idiotic slave. An average person may be reborn as a relatively handsome, relatively intelligent farmer.

This does not mean that someone should be commended or loathed for their actions in a past life because each reincarnation is believed to be genuinely different from the last. But the reincarnation system still functions as a karmic principle (i.e. the principle that what goes around comes around) because it still causes suffering for one’s soul, which is constant between reincarnations. Therefore, although you aren’t responsible for the deeds of your previous incarnation, you *are* responsible for the fate of your next incarnation. There is still an incentive to do good because your soul will still suffer in your next life if you do bad- i.e. *you* will suffer.

As a sidenote from explaining Ethigean religious philosophy, it is important to note that this acts as a social control mechanism. The plight of a slave can be justified by explaining that they must be punished for bad deeds in a past life. The privilege of a nobleman can be justified by explaining that they must be rewarded for good deeds in a past life. Some argue that all religions originated as social control mechanisms to justify inequality. This project wishes to consider the concept of a state religion from a realistic perspective that reflects the practicalities of religion in our world.

In both Ethagis and medieval Christian Europe, the various dominant religions helped justify social hierarchy. There was no French Revolution until the dominance of Christianity in Europe faded, for example. But there were still political disturbances and still the ultimate fact that many in power (i.e. kings) ignored religious directives for the consolidation of power and wealth. Hence in Ethigean history, war is still extremely common, simply because people want power.

Commoner revolts also happen when commoners are pushed far enough. But the ultimate nature of the social hierarchy is protected. The commoners do not seek to establish a republic, or to end war. These are just natural constants of life- just as medieval European peasants almost never rebelled to actually end the monarchy. Even in 1789 the French originally sought to establish a constitutional monarchy rather than an actual republic. I’m using European history as an example here as I anticipate the majority of people reading this will be Western, but this principle applies to almost any society throughout the history,

State religion only partially maintains this state of affairs, however. Ultimately the state of affairs is maintained that the simple fact that those in power have the power to maintain that system. If you’re a king, and you have an entire organised soldiery to put down commoner revolts, you can continue being king. If this state of affairs continues over several lifetimes by the position of monarch becoming hereditary, people accept it. If you are born into being a peasant and that’s all the life you know, you are far less likely to rebel against that state of affairs. If one were to argue that religion helped justify and maintain this system, that would be one thing, but it is only one of mechanisms present in society used to help justify the elite-perpetuated social order, and is not in itself capable of maintaining such an order without the simple reality of power.

Despite the fact that the Way justifies the social order, events contrary to religious principles still occur frequently in Ethigean history because of simple human behaviour. Ethagis does not recognise chattel slavery and slaves do still have some rights, for example, despite that the fact that one could argue slaves deserve all possible hardships due to evil in a past life. Commoners still rebel against noblemen if pushed hard enough. Lords still go to war to pursue power and resources. Just as in every society on Earth, religion is only one motivator for human behaviour and though the principles of the Way are being set out here, the extent to which they are all adhered to various enormously depending on a hundred different factors. Just as with every religion on Earth.

##### The Eternal Flux

An important concept of the Way is that everything in the universe is changing. The change can be ordered, it can be chaotic, but there will be change. The cosmos is in a constant state of change that the Way refers to as the ‘eternal flux’. The only constant in the universe *is* change.

The eternal flux manifests itself at all scales. At the most macroscopic level, it is at the level of the cosmos’ cycle of expansion, contraction, death, and rebirth. But the eternal flux manifests itself in the cycle of changing seasons, the cycle between day and night, the life cycles of humans… any form of conceivable change.

The point is that these cycles are everywhere in the natural world, and these cycle are regular. They are determined by the natural [flows and rhythms of the One](#_The_Flow_of) through the cosmos and its changes from form to form. These changes occur totally independent of the efforts/notice of any deity or entity. It is a fundamental law of the universe- called the *law of flux*- that these changes will happen. The cycle of seasons for example- this will occur in the same way, every year, for as long as the eon persists. This cycle is regulated purely by the laws of the cosmos. Just as the concept of gravity is regulated by the laws of physics alone and no deity, so is the concept of flux regulated by the laws of physics alone and no deity.

These are examples of natural, ordered cycles: the force of order drives this. These cycles occur regularly, in the same way and order each time. But the force of chaos drives change as well. The flux brought about by chaos is very different. These aren’t cycles, but rather a series of sudden events of an unpredictable pattern. To give an example, if one were to create a timeline of natural disasters in Ethagis, what you have effectively made is a depiction of a series of sudden events of unpredictable pattern.

The sudden onset of a natural disaster is an example of the eternal flux of the universe. There is constant change, some of it being predictable and some of it being unpredictable. Variations in weather and climate are also examples of eternal flux being driven by the force of chaos: as long as it isn’t a regular, repeating cycle, it is driven by the force of chaos.

The idea of eternal flux extends to people as well. People are changing all the time- not just physically due to age but mentally and psychologically as well. People change all the time. Someone might have a completely different personality, worldview, outlook, or even lifestyle to a version of them from a year ago. This is the case with everyone. Even if that change is extremely small or if you personally can’t notice it, it has still happened.

Everyone is constantly experiencing life and is thinking. Each experience, no matter how new it is or how major it is, changes someone in some way. Even if someone simply experiences an average, normal, eventless day of manual labour in a farm, that day will have had some kind of mental impact on them, even if they don’t notice it. Perhaps they are more miserable, more bored, more jaded. They could be doing the same work every day for a year with no new experiences, but they still change simply because the effect of that work on their psyche accumulates.

Even if someone were to remain in a room for an hour doing nothing but thinking, the thoughts they will have had could have had a myriad of changes on their psyche. This is obvious if, say, they change their opinion on something or some new concept occurs to them. But let’s say they think about something extremely trivial- say how much they enjoy eating grapes. That has still changed their psyche in a miniscule way: they are happier at the end of the hour, and have a deeper appreciation for those grapes. Change in someone doesn’t just take the form of worldview or opinion changes: changes in emotions, the thoughts someone is thinking, the appreciation of a minor thing, etc are all still changes in a person.

If one looks at a more macroscopic level, back to the scale of a year, you can see that due to an accumulation of all these minor changes (and due to the sporadic experience of more major mental changes), a person changes by a noticeable amount. Change doesn’t just occur in a person over a year though. Change in someone may be easier to notice over a year, but because that change is gradual, they will have still changed by a small increment in a month. They will have changed by an even smaller increment in a week, smaller in a day, and so on and so on until infinity. In an infinitely small period of time, someone will have changed by an infinitely small increment. But they have still changed.

This is called the *law of impermanence*, and is used to prove that there is no fixed, unchanging self. This has major moral implications. Most importantly, it allows for the providence of redemption: despite one’s level of evil, one can change at any point to become good. Because someone can change at any point, anyone can at any point in life change the whole trajectory of their life simply by deciding to. An evil man sets himself on a trajectory to do evil things and live a chaotic life. A good man sets himself on a trajectory to do good things and live an ordered life. But at any point, either of them can change this whole trajectory simply by changing who they are.

And because nothing is set in stone in this way, there is no such concept as fate or destiny. Nobody has a fate, because they are changing every second, and at any of these seconds they can decide to be completely different. Because nobody has a predetermined destiny or role, they- and only they- are responsible for their actions. Not a deity, not nature- them alone. Everybody has a set of moral responsibilities to be a moral, self-disciplined person.

True acceptance of the eternal flux is key to happiness. To fear and resent inevitable change leads only to misery. If one were to lament the end of the summer each year, it only causes futile unhappiness. One must conquer one’s own basic, automatic tendency to hate change and cultivate acceptance of it. Doing this requires self-discipline and represents a triumph of the human desire for happiness over the animalistic instinct of hating and rejecting change. It is therefore a triumph of the internal force of order over that of chaos.

In the entire universe, the only unchanging constant is [the One](#_The_One) and, by extension, things made solely of the One without having a physical form (i.e. a soul). All physical things existing in the material world change: only that which is solely spiritual remains constant. The forces of [order/chaos](#_The_Dualism_of) are abstract, spiritual concepts that are a constant- they are present in every eon for the whole eon. In every eon there will be the [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts), the [Ten Bases](#_The_Ten_Bases), the [eternal flux](#_The_Eternal_Flux), etc. They are present not because a creator deity creates all these phenomena but simply because it is inevitable. The One has a natural tendency to establish these phenomena, and so as long as the One is constant (and it is), these phenomena remain constant. All other things, all that is in the [material world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld), are not.

##### The Great Interdependence

The great interdependence is the name given to the concept that everything in the cosmos is interdependent in some way, and that whilst everything is in a state of [eternal flux](#_The_Eternal_Flux), the *way* that everything changes depends on the way that everything around them changes. There is therefore an intrinsic connection between all things in the universe.

Nature is an example of this. There is a cycling of the seasons. The season affects the climate. The climate affects the weather. The weather affects plant and crop growth. This affects animal and human populations. This affects trading and spending patterns, which affects commerce, which affects wealth, which affects the frequency of war, which affects numbers of deaths each year, which affects the number of reincarnations occurring, which affects the form changes of the One, which affects the cycling of the seasons. Everything causes everything, and at every step of this one example chain, there are a hundred more effects. Each of these effects in turn causes a hundred more effects. The world is thus linked by a colossal, eternal web of causality.

This is how the Way explains the basic phenomenon of causality. It does not occur by a deity, but rather by an infinite chain reaction sparked by the first cause that is [the One](#_The_One). As soon as a new eon begins, change is already present because the universe is expanding. That expansion, caused by the presence of the One and its natural tendency to cause the cycles of the universe, is itself a change. This change then triggers all others. The cosmos is in a constant state of everything changing, with each change causing several more, infinitely sustaining the eternal flux.

##### Extrinsic and Intrinsic Balance

As established, the universe naturally establishes an equilibrium between [the forces of chaos and order](#_The_Dualism_of). It is a fundamental law of the fabric of reality that there must be a balance between those forces. The universe naturally establishes balance in as many areas as it can, and when one examines nature this is evident.

For example, the temperature of the terrestrial sphere is balanced between extreme heat and extreme cold. The precipitation in Ethagis is balanced between enough to provide nourishment and not too much so as to ruin the earth [earth in this document with an uncapitalised ‘e’ refers to the ground rather than the planet] and make it infertile. The animal population is balanced between enough to provide for humans and not too much so as to overrun the planet.

These are a few examples of a vast, overarching principle of the cosmos: it tends towards a balance between two extremes. This is a simple consequence of the predestined [flows of the One](#_The_Flow_of): these balances occur every single eon because [the One](#_The_One) is constant between eons, and every single time the One naturally establishes these equilibria. It is a law of the universe.

These balances are beneficial for humanity. The aforementioned examples prove this: humans benefit from a balanced temperature, balanced precipitation, balanced animal population, etc. If humans benefit from balances in nature, it follows that they should benefit from balances in human society, and, by extension, within their own character. The Way believes that a human is most happy, healthy, and moral when they cultivate an internal- or ‘intrinsic’- balance.

The idea of intrinsic balance will be elaborated on later, but the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic balance must be outlined. Extrinsic balance refers to the naturally occurring balances that occur simply due to the predestined flows of the One. These are balances of temperature, precipitation, animal population, and the fundamental balance of chaos and order. Intrinsic balance is balance pertaining specifically to the human body and mind- as well as human actions.

Because intrinsic balance applies to the body, it affects how physically healthy one is. Because it applies to the mind, it affects how vitriolically healthy one is (vitriol is the [host](#_The_Three_Hosts) pertaining to the mind, and vitriolic health is thus the Way’s equivalent of mental health). By following an intrinsic balance in one’s actions, it affects how morally healthy one is (i.e. how moral are one’s actions).

Maintaining an intrinsic balance is key to physical health. Manual exertion (in the form of farm-work, soldier training, etc) is a prime example of this balance. Too little manual exertion and the muscles atrophy [note that the terms ‘atrophy’ and ‘hypertrophy’ are distinctly scientific and are not known to Ethigeans]- or, to use the term that Ethigeans would, ‘wither’. This leads to weakness. Too much manual exertion and one becomes fatigued and in pain- this leads to weakness.

Only a balance between these two extremes, including a good amount of manual labour coupled with rest and recovery- leads to a positive outcome, the accumulation of muscle and the development of strength. Ethigean medical theory also revolves around the concept of intrinsic balances and how disease and other conditions are results of imbalances of various things (food groups, climates, etc).

Maintaining an intrinsic balance is also key to vitriolic health. Work is a good example of this- not necessarily manual work (although this is most definitely still work) but anything that requires effort. This could be manual labour, or studying, teaching, governing, writing- anything involving physical or mental exertion and which occupies the focus and time of the worker. Too little to occupy the mind and one becomes lazy, bored, and lethargic. Too much to occupy the mind and one becomes fatigued, without spare time, and lethargic. Both states lead to melancholia.

A balance, however, is optimal. The mind and body are kept busy and having obligations and a routine leads to self-discipline. However, one has time to pursue interests, spend time with treasured ones, and cultivate the Principles. The result is happiness. Although other factors may contribute to or impede happiness, and merely having the right balance of work doesn’t guarantee happiness, having this balance makes happiness more likely. Achieving an intrinsic balance gravitates one towards the state of happiness.

##### Intrinsic Balance and Morality

Finally, maintaining an intrinsic balance in one’s actions is key to moral health. Moral health simply refers to being a moral person and cultivating order. An intrinsic balance in actions is about conducting oneself in a moral way, and one does this by acting in a *balanced* way. For example, selfishness is bad, but feeble-mindedness is also bad. One must seek the balance between these two attributes: kindness. Imagine a one-dimensional scale: at one extreme is being a coldhearted, selfish person who never does what others want and acts only for oneself. At the other extreme is being a weak pushover who always does what others want and never acts for oneself. But in the middle, kindness, one acts for others but still stands up for onseself.

One extreme, selfishness, represents the internal force of chaos because it occurs when someone listens to their primal instinct of self-preservation and thus acts only in their own interests. It does not require self-discipline because it is easy to act on these instincts. The other extreme, feeble-mindedness represents the internal force of chaos because it occurs when someone listens to their primal instinct of self-preservation and thus submits to others in the hope of avoiding confrontation and thus avoiding harm. It does not require self-discipline because it is also easy to act on *these* instincts. Only the intrinsic balance- kindness- requires self-discipline.

Kindness requires self-discipline because it is *not* easy to be kind. It takes effort and difficulty to be kind. The easy thing to do is to be selfish, or to avoid confrontation. It is hard to do something for someone else at your own expense. It is also hard to steel yourself for confrontation and say ‘no’. Hence, acting at either extreme cultivates chaos. Acting at the intrinsic balance is the only way to act that cultivates self-discipline and thus order. Achieving this balance is what being moral is and improves moral health.

The Way thus encourages developing attributes that resemble this intrinsic balance. The word used to refer to non-physical characteristics is ‘principles’. Negative principles are things like cowardice, selfishness, greed, lust, feeble-mindedness, envy, etc. They are all extremes, and do not require self-discipline (being driven by the force of chaos). Positive principles are things like courage, altruism, selflessness, etc. They are all intrinsic balances, and do require self-discipline (being thus driven by the force of order).

The former require no effort or difficulty to cultivate- no self-discipline is required. They represent all that is base in a human, and are qualities exhibited by animals. The latter are the opposite: they go against these basic animal instincts and letches and contradicting one’s animal side like this requires self-discipline. These principles represent all that is noble in a human, and are qualities exclusive to humanity. Therefore, negative principles are known as ‘base principles’ and positive attributes are known as ‘eminent principles’.

Every person has a different balance of principles within them. Even a good man will have base principles, but the strength of his eminent principles will far exceed the strength of his base principles. He will still *have* those base principles; thus he may occasionally think immoral things and thus perform immoral thoughts. It is only human to have these base principles: the force of chaos is always present within everyone. But the strength of his eminent principles exceeds that of his base principles, and thus his internal impulse to do good exceeds that to do bad. He *wants* to do good. And because his will to do good exceeds his will to do evil, he is a good man.

What defines the man as good is therefore the balance between his eminent and base principles. Eminent principles lead to moral actions and base principles lead to immoral actions. Take the example of the good man whose eminent principles are stronger than their base principles. Because of this, he has the will to be morally good and do the right thing. Because of *this*, he can ignore these animalistic instincts and do the right thing. Good character and will leads to good actions. Good people can still do bad things but they will more often do good. One’s internal character is the source of action. Therefore, the Way looks at morality from an internal perspective: focussing on one’s principles and internal forces of chaos/order.

##### The Ultimate Good

The Way believes that cultivation of order is moral and thus good, and cultivation of chaos and immoral and thus bad. The question is *why* order is good and *why* chaos is bad. As specified earlier, [chaos and order](#_The_Dualism_of) are fundamental forces of the universe. They aren’t intrinsically good or bad, but when applied to humans the Way posits that order is good and chaos is bad. This seems like a paradox.

The Way has an explanation that has been mentioned previously. As mentioned earlier, order happens to generally benefit humans when it occurs naturally, and chaos happens to generally detriment humans. For example, regular harvests are helpful and natural disasters are harmful. This doesn’t explain the link between chaos/order and morality, however.

As mentioned previously, actions that cultivate chaos and are caused by base principles are immoral. So actions motivated by and exhibiting base principles like greed or lust are immoral. Basically, if one’s action manifests a base principle, it is an immoral action. Conversely, self-disciplined actions that cultivate order and are caused by eminent principles are moral. So actions motivated by and exhibiting eminent principles like kindness are moral. A moral action manifests a noble attribute and requires self-discipline.

But there is still the deeper question of *why* is kindness is moral. And then this leads one to the even deeper question of why anything is moral. And this line of thought leads to one of the deepest question there is: what morality actually *is*. The Way answers the question by a concept that it is the ‘Ultimate Good’.

The Ultimate Good is happiness. The morality of all things are defined by the happiness they bring into the world, and increasing one’s internal force of order enhances the happiness of both the self and others. There are various different kinds of happiness that humans experience, however. The main three types discussed in the Way are elaborated on below.

Following one’s base instincts leads to a kind of happiness, but it is a transitory, primitive kind of happiness. It is short-term and basic, associated with ephemeral physical pleasure rather than lasting feelings of satisfaction or contentment. This specific kind of happiness is referred to as ‘base pleasure’. Base pleasure is derived from satisfying one’s base feelings and letches. It is *not* the Ultimate Good. That isn’t to say that is always immorally gained: for example, by eating a nice meal one experiences pleasure. But you are still experiencing mere physical pleasure and responding to the primal urge to eat food and experience gustatory pleasure. Pleasure is the kind of happiness experienced by- and associated with- animals.

The other kind of happiness experienced by the self is the opposite: it encompasses long-term, lingering feelings like satisfaction, contentment, accomplishment, wellbeing, self-confidence, and calmness. It is the opposite of pleasure in that it is a uniquely human phenomenon. This specific happiness is referred to as ‘blessed happiness’ [there is a word in Khosgan for this, but the appropriate analogue for it in an Indo-European language would be ‘eudaimonia’, which in fact means the same thing]. Blessed happiness comes from cultivating the principle of self-discipline: the Ultimate Principle. All the activities that lead to eudaimonia stem from self-discipline: regular physical activity, occupying the mind with work, spending time and effort socialising with others, being good to others, etc. Blessed happiness is *never* at the expense of others and *never* has the consequence of encouraging chaotic thoughts or behaviours in the self.

The third kind of happiness is that which is either experienced by others as a result of your actions or by oneself as a result of external forces. When you are good to someone, for example, it makes them feel good. It also makes you feel good- the happiness you experience is blessed happiness. The happiness they feel, however, is a third kind. This is neither base pleasure nor happiness but rather ‘pure pleasure’. Pure pleasure is as transitory and primal as base pleasure is, but the difference is that it is not experienced by giving in to base urges. It is also experienced when something positive happens to the self- for example if someone is nice to you, or if there is a particularly good harvest. Because pure pleasure is not derived from giving into base desires, it is a good (although still animalistic) kind of happiness and thus the second, inferior component of the Ultimate Good.

Base pleasure is not part of the Ultimate Good because its experience either comes at the cost of someone else and discourages self-discipline, which thus prevents the realisation of blessed happiness, a purer form of happiness. One might feel base pleasure by stealing, for example. This comes at the expense of others and thus isn’t a good thing- hence it cannot be the Ultimate Good. One, say in this example a nobleman, might also feel base pleasure by going outside and looking over their large estate. Technically this isn’t at the expense of someone else- but two things are wrong.

Firstly, the pleasure is coming from a letch, in this case the primal, animal urge to have lots of things. Obtaining gratification from giving into letches is bad because it encourages a habit of giving into letches, which leads to chaotic behaviour and thus the infliction of suffering unto others. Secondly, it is a form of gratification which indirectly comes at the expense of others as land as finite and the coveting of a finite resource is by extension a celebration of the deficiency of others.

Even something as seemingly harmless at enjoying a fine meal is not part of the Ultimate Good because when one derives pleasure from satisfying base urges (in this instance the urge to eat and enjoy food), it increases the risk of urge-satisfying behaviour. Someone who indulges in a fine meal is more likely to become a glutton than someone who never does so. This is harmful because urge-satisfying behaviour in general is chaotic and generally involves the expense of others, hence *all* base pleasure is excluded from the Ultimate Good.

The Ultimate Good therefore essentially equates to blessed happiness for the self and increasing the happiness of other people. The Way defines morality as anything that promotes the Ultimate Good. A moral act is one that promotes the Ultimate Good by causing blessed happiness for oneself and/or pure pleasure for others. A moral principle is one that leads to moral acts and thus leads to the promotion of the Ultimate Good. Thoughts and behaviours in humans that lead to the internal cultivation of order lead to both moral principles and acts, and they are moral because they lead to the Ultimate Good.

The most simple definition of morality is therefore: cultivating order -> Ultimate Good. Everything is centred around the precept of happiness. That which is moral is that which increases the Ultimate Good (i.e. the happiness of the world). That which is immoral is that which decreases the Ultimate Good by causing suffering. Suffering in this case refers to sadness, misery, pain; anything which is universally recognised to be a bad emotion. The word used by the Way instead of suffering is the ‘Ultimate Harm’. The Ultimate Harm is the antagonistic force of the Ultimate Good, and is increased by chaotic (rather than ordered) actions. When either increases, the other decreases (and vice-versa).

The inverse of all actions which increase the Ultimate Good increase the Ultimate Harm. Indeed, one is merely the inverse concept of the other. Just as a moral act increases the Ultimate Good, an immoral act increases the Ultimate Harm.

Happiness (i.e. the Ultimate Good) is the only way of measuring that which is good, and this is because it is the only measure which can be universally agreed on. All humans (with the few exceptions of those who are vitriolically unhealthy- i.e. have mental illnesses) possess the uniquely human faculties of empathy and compassion. Humans thus feel negative emotion when witnessing another human in discomfort. Every vitriolically healthy person believes that murder or rape, for example, are wrong. This moral sense is internal and universal, and relies on the faculties of empathy and compassion.

The human ability to feel these things is *why* humans have an emotional response to murder/rape. When a human hears that another human has been raped, they don’t feel negatively because they are imagining the same scenario happening to them, but because of empathy they can understand how horrible the rape would make the latter person feel and because of compassion they can sympathise and feel bad. At its core, this boils down to happiness. Humans are capable of recognising that chaotic actions like rape make others unhappy, and this recognition makes humans unhappy. A human’s sense of morality thus relies on their knowledge and perception of unhappiness and, inversely, happiness.

Happiness is universally recognised by humans and universally acknowledged to be good. Unhappiness is universally recognised by humans and universally acknowledged to be bad. Because of this, happiness and unhappiness are the *only* ways by which what is good can be measured. Not only is happiness the only universal metric, but happiness is the sole root of all good things. All things which any human classifies as good are things which make them happy in some way. Friendship, love, justice, respect, fulfilment- if any human deems these to be good, it is because it makes them happy. Happiness is the only way of measuring good because fundamentally, everything else which can considered good is something which causes happiness. Happiness is the ultimate form of good, and hence it is the Ultimate Good.

##### The Divine Numbers

There are a number of recurring ideas in the philosophy of the Way. These include the ideas of dualism (e.g. the duality between order and chaos), change, cycles, and balance. One of these recurring ideas, what one could call the ‘themes’ of the Way, is a set of five numbers, referred to as the ‘Divine Numbers’. The Way does not acknowledge the existence of an omnipotent God as Abrahamic religions do, but the word ‘divine’ in the context of the Way can refer either to the One, deities, or fundamental rules of the universe/ the fabric of reality. These are numbers which are either uniquely significant or continually recurring in religious philosophy. They are 1, 2, 3, 5, and 10.

1 is a divine number due to [the One](#_The_One). The former is a symbol of the latter: the indivisibility and singleness of the number represents the concept. Most importantly, the number 1 is seen as the ultimate root of all other numbers. Every abstractophic [in Ethagis, mathematics is referred to as abstractophy] number revolves around 1. The natural and irrational numbers are all multiples of 1, the rational numbers are all fractions of 1, everything traces back to 1. It is the ultimate anchor for all other abstractophic objects, used to understand everything else in the field.

The centrality of the number 1 to the abstractophic world is a microcosm of the centrality of the One to the actual world. Every concept, every phenomenon, every *thing* in the world revolves around the One. It is the ultimate anchor for everything in the universe, needed to truly understand the cause for everything. The number 1 is a representation of this, and is thus the most important of the Divine Numbers.

2 is a divine number due to the dualism present in the universe. The ultimate dichotomy in the universe is that between the fundamental forces of [chaos and order](#_The_Dualism_of) (the term ‘sublime dichotomy’ or ‘the sublime’ refers to this), but there are dichotomies present everywhere. Dichotomies exist in nature, in humans, in morality, they are considered to be a fundamental part of the universe just as the chaos-order dichotomy is. Some dichotomies are just expressions of the sublime dichotomy, for example darkness and light. The Way doesn’t teach that either of these are inherently good or bad, because it teaches that chaos and order aren’t inherently good or bad forces.

Other dichotomies are expressions of the sublime dichotomy but, because they relate to human morality and/or the [Ultimate Good](#_The_Ultimate_Good), can be considered to be good vs bad. An example is the dichotomy between base principles and eminent principles, or health and sickness. Most dichotomies aren’t expressions of the sublime, and neither are they inherently good or bad. Indeed, a deficiency or excess of either would be harmful to humans. Examples include the wet season and the dry season, rain and sun, land and water, etc.

3 is a divine number because it is a symbol of a balance between two extremes. This was explored earlier in the idea of [intrinsic balance](#_Intrinsic_Balance_and) and morality between a balance between two extremes: the specific example was kindness being the ordered balance between cruelty and feeble-mindedness, the two chaotic balances. 3 is significant because it represents one extreme, the balance, and the other extreme. This concept is seen not only in intrinsic balance but also [extrinsic balance](#_Extrinsic_and_Intrinsic), both concepts mentioned previously. Just as dichotomies are ubiquitous in the universe, so are balances.

A second reason why 3 is a divine number is because of the [Three Hosts](#_The_Three_Hosts). The Three Hosts are such an important concept in the universe, underpinning all physical matter and everything in the material world, that the number 3 gains importance simply from them. The Three Hosts also correspond to the [Three Human Deities](#_The_Three_Human) (a concept explained below), and the number 3 also derives its divinity from this. Thus, the number 3 derives its divinity from three sources: balance, the hosts, and the deities.

5 is a divine number as well, but it may not be as clear why. Firstly, all the Divine Numbers are prime numbers (or have only one factor) except for 10, and both 10 and all its factors are Divine Numbers due to association and the [interconnectedness](#_The_Great_Interdependence) of the Divine Numbers. 5 is a factor of 10- because of this, would one expect it to be significant in the cosmos and it is. The only religious occurrence of the number 5 so far has been the [Five Noble Principles](#_Intrinsic_Balance_and), five of the most exalted, positive character attributes. However, the number 5 occurs as a highly frequent grouping in religious texts.

Its significance is less in the fundamental concepts of the universe (as observed above) and more in the practice of the Way and living an ordered, self-disciplined life (e.g. the Five Noble Principles). It is also common when discussing practical matters- for example, medical theory revolves around the five humours. Sagecraft [mental health theory] posits that there are five basic human moods (happiness, sadness, anger, fear, confusion). The number 5 is divine because of its practical applications and abundance in moral teaching and the learned arts [i.e. science].

10 is a divine number for two reasons: the [Ten Bases](#_The_Ten_Bases) and the [Ten Animal Deities](#_The_Ten_Animal). The former is the basis of all matter in the material world, and the number 10 is therefore a divine number because it underpins that world. The latter is a set of gods in the material world, and is a concept that will be explored further later. Because the number 10 therefore relates to both the fundamental fabric of the universe (i.e. the Ten Bases) and the deities themselves, it is divine.

The Divine Numbers can be considered a summary of many of the most important teachings of the Way. They are the most succinct encapsulation of concepts like the One (1); the dualism of the cosmos- i.e. between chaos and order- and the various other dichotomies (2); balance, the Three Hosts, and the Three Human Deities (3), an abundance of various religious concepts (5), the Ten Bases, and the Ten Animal Deities (10). These concepts have either been mentioned above or will be mentioned later. The Divine Numbers are a string of digits that one would use when describing the Way by its shortest, most simple explanation.

#### Higher Powers | Gods, Deities, Supreme Beings

##### The Higher Powers

Higher powers refer to forces in the cosmos that exceed the power of humanity: as a general phrase, this can refer to deities, supreme beings, and the various conceptions of God. Essentially, a higher power is a supernatural power that is considered divine, sacred, or fundamentally significant in some way. The Way recognises a hierarchy of higher powers. All components of this pyramid are divine and worthy of reverence, but each descending tier is less important to the fabric of reality and nature of the cosmos.

At the summit of the divine hierarchical pyramid is [the One](#_The_One). The next tier are the supreme beings of [order and chaos](#_The_Dualism_of), Mahomedes and Zorothestra. The next tier are the [Three Human Deities](#_The_Three_Human), and the final tier is the [Ten Animal Deities](#_The_Ten_Animal).

It is worth clarifying the various terms used in the Way. The One is never referred to as a ‘god’ or ‘supreme being’- it far transcends these terms. Neither is the One a being: it is a force and a concept. It lacks any consciousness or a will, it just tends towards certain flows and changes.

Mahomedes and Zorothestra are supreme beings in that they are beings, but utterly incomprehensible to humans. They exist as spiritual forces and lack any kind of physical form in the material world or physical representation. Mahomedes and Zorothestra are beings with consciousness, but it is a fundamentally different kind of consciousness to that experienced by humans, one we cannot understand. The magnitude of difference between humans and supreme beings exceeds that between humans and flies. It is closer to the difference between humans and rocks.

Supreme beings do not have a will or desires as humans do. Neither supreme being wishes to overpower the power, nor do they consciously maintain the sublime dichotomy. This is not because they are too primitive or crude to have these desires, but because their conscious is so elevated that it transcends them. Emotions are not experienced by supreme beings because they have no need for them: they are on a fundamentally different level of existence than humans.

They are neither malevolent nor benevolent- they simply exist, maintain the forces of order and chaos, and that is all that a human can understand about them. Naturally, supreme beings are utterly unconcerned with the plight of human beings and this in no way influences the sublime dichotomy. Supreme beings are entirely spiritual and are entirely invulnerable. The idea of ‘harming’ a supreme being is like the idea of slapping gravity. It makes no sense at all. Supreme beings are superior to all other beings in the universe, including deities.

The Three Human Deities are a triad of deities, often referred to as the ‘Divine Triad’ or just the ‘divines’. They are spiritual beings but each have a physical form which is used to represent them. These three physical forms, one for each deity, are referred to as the divine forms, and represent a human male, a human female, and an androgynous human. The Divine Triad are written about in further detail later.

The Ten Animal Deities are a set of deities, but in the nomenclature of the Way the Ten Animal Deities are referred to as ‘gods’ except for the specific phrase of the Ten Animal Deities. Though a god is a kind of deity, this nomenclature is generally just used as a shorthand to distinguish them from the Three Human Deities, who are referred to as the ‘divines’. The Ten Animal Deities lack any spiritual form and exist solely in the material world, just as a human or animal. The gods are written about in further detail later.

##### The Three Human Deities

The Three Human Deities, or the ‘Divine Triad’, are a group of three higher powers in whose likenesses humanity is made. The divines are spiritual beings that do not exist in the material world but which have a physical form which they can be represented by. Each of the divines is composed entirely of a single host and their form is considered to be a personification of that host.

The Divine Triad are *not* creator deities. The Way does not recognise the existence of *any* creator deities: the only creator recognised is [the One](#_The_One), which is *not* a deity but simply a force. However, the divines act as a ‘template’ with which the One creates humanity (i.e. humans are created in the likenesses of the divines) and each divine governs the various physical and psychological processes associated with each sex. Their influence on humanity is achieved by the divines channelling the One and acting as a cosmic vessel for the various flows and changes of the One. This idea will be elaborated on later.

The divines do not feel emotions and, like the supreme beings, exist on a higher plane of consciousness than humans. They aren’t quite as incomprehensible as the [supreme beings](#_The_Dualism_of) themselves, who are so transcendent that they aren’t even *understandable* to human minds. The divines can be understood as emotionless beings without human motivations or thoughts. Their purpose is simply to regulate the various processes they are in charge of and to act as a source for various different changes of the One.

The first divine is the Ruby Divine, synonymous with the terms of ‘the divine male’ or ‘the Arsenicum’. The Arsenicum is the divine that is comprised entirely of the [ruby host](#_The_Three_Hosts), and is physical form is that of a male human. The Arsenicum never actually manifests itself in this form because it does not exist in the material world. The physical form is merely a way to represent the Arsenicum- it does not represent an actual material incarnation. All of the physical forms of the divines follow this same principle.

The Arsenicum’s physical form is described in religious texts as being a ‘perfect male form’, with male humans being created by the One in the image of the Arsenicum. The physical form of the Arsenicum is believed to also be a pictorial representation of the ruby host itself: i.e. if one were to most accurately draw out and depict the abstract concept of the ruby host, the form of the Arsenicum would be the best way to do it.

The idea of male perfection is highly ambiguous. The other two divines both represent the ‘perfect female form’ and the ‘perfect androgyne form’- but these terms are similarly ambiguous. Importantly, the idea of perfection is *not* attributed to ethnic features like, for example, complexion, but rather the geometric specifications of the *form* of the person. Perfection is explained in terms of mathematical proportions and shape, not specific racial or geographic features.

The idea of perfect forms is not elaborated on, however, leaving various theonomers [theologians] to speculate what this actually refers to. The result has been a plethora of sketches and blueprints similar to Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man, as well as enhanced study of geometry and anatomy to research form perfection- however, this article does not seek to explore the societal consequences of the Way, but rather its tenets.

Returning to discussion of strictly the Arsenicum, the Ruby Divine is associated with masculinity and masculine traits.

All actions are a result of channelling the One, and different actions channel the One in different ways. The One is a source of energy which can be drawn from in a myriad of different ways. Even all mental processes (e.g. thoughts and values) channel the One, and different processes channel the One in different ways. When a person holds and exhibits masculine attributes (e.g. physical strength, virility, etc), they are channelling the One in a certain way.

When these channellings occur, the Arsenicum is the conduit through which the One is channelled *through*. They are, to humans, the source of the One when masculinity is observed. Whenever someone commits an action considered by Ethigeans to be masculine (e.g. protecting a loved one), they derive the One for that action *through* the divine male. The divines are cosmic vessels for the One, and are channelled by humans when relevant.

Masculine attributes (the Way would call them masculine ‘principles’) in Ethigean society include strength, virility, courage, integrity, skill, and loyalty. Hence, holding and exhibiting these values is an example of channelling the One *through* the Arsenicum. It is a conduit. The Arsenicum is also the conduit for the One when it comes to male biological activity and changes, for example male aging, male puberty, and male hormonal cycles [Ethigeans obviously do not know what hormones are, but they can recognise regular, cyclic behavioural changes].

The Arsenicum is also believed to manifest itself in the form of a male appearance: for example facial hair, muscles, and a strong jawline (as well as the presence of male reproductive glands) are manifestations of the Arsenicum (an indirect manifestation of the One). Men in general are believed to physically manifest the Arsenicum: any man, regardless of their characteristics (the Way defines being a man as possessing male reproductive organs), automatically manifests the Arsenicum to an extent. However, men with a greater number and magnitude of masculine traits manifest it more. Men with a greater number and magnitude of feminine traits manifest it less. Men with feminine traits never manifest the female divine or the androgyne divine because they are divine. These principles apply to all the divines.

The Arsenicum is being used as an example for all the divines to demonstrate their nature as conduits and energy sources, and to show that each divine has a physical form that acts as a template for humans of that sex. The divine female is a conduit for actions and principles of femininity and has a physical form representing female perfection.

The second divine is the Vitriolic Divine, synonymous with the terms of ‘the divine female’ or ‘the Thylanicos’ (pronounced with a hard ‘c’). The Thylanicos is the divine that is comprised entirely of the [vitriolic host](#_The_Three_Hosts), and its physical form is that of a female human. The physical form is that of the ‘perfect female form’: this is all that is said in the religious texts. It is believed that whilst this phrase still refers strictly to proportions and shape, the ideal female form is different to the ideal male form. It is also believed to be the best way to represent the abstract, spiritual force of the vitriolic host.

The Thylanicos is the conduit for female principles, which Ethigeans hold to include wisdom, calmness, honestly, impartiality, elegance, and grace. The Thylanicos is also the conduit for feminine actions which manifest these principles, and the conduit for female biological activity, for example female aging, female puberty, and the female menstrual cycle.

Finally, the Thylanicos is believed to manifest itself in the form of feminine characteristics (e.g. rounded hips, a slim waist, and the possession of female reproductive organs and breasts). All women manifest the Thylanicos to an extent however, simply because they are female. The greater the number and magnitude of traditionally female characteristics a woman has, the more they manifest the Thylanicos. However, women *cannot* manifest the other divines, and the Way defines being a woman as having female reproductive organs.

The third divine is the Nitre Divine, synonymous with the terms of ‘divine androgyne’ or ‘the Syndasticon’. The Syndasticon is the divine that is comprised entirely of the [nitre host](#_The_Three_Hosts), and its physical form is described as the ‘perfect androgyne form’.

Earth and Ethagis have slightly different understandings of what androgyny is. On Earth, androgyny is when both masculine and feminine characteristics are combined into a single form. These characteristics can be biological: for example intersex people may have both male and female reproductive organs or unique chromoLaharl patterns. They can also be social: for example people can identify as non-binary or gender neutral.

On Ethagis, androgyny is understood as either the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics or the lack of either. The latter is explained as prepubescence: Ethigeans thus see children as androgyne, referred to as ‘young androgyny’. The former is more difficultly explained. Ethigeans distinguish ‘true androgyny’ with ‘false androgyny’. Androgyny is thought to be determined by anatomy: ‘true androgyny’ is when the androgyny has a biological basis. The possession of male and female reproductive organs or the lack of any reproductive organs are the only qualifications for true androgyny in Ethigean society. False androgyny is when a person behaves androgynously (e.g. a man exhibiting feminine principles) or appears androgynous *but* has only either male or female reproductive organs.

Because of its religious significance, androgyny is not seen as a bad thing and is not persecutable or stigmatised. False androgyny is still believed to channel the Syndasticon: when a woman holds/exhibits male principles, it is believed to channel the Syndasticon rather the Arsenicum because the ‘channeller’ is female. True androgyny naturally also channels the Syndasticon. There are also androgynous principles which channel the Syndasticon no matter the sex of the ‘channeller’. Ethigeans hold some androgynous principles to be humour, diligence, and generosity (these are just a few examples). Sometimes, masculine principles are the opposite of female principles (e.g. virility and chastity), but androgynous principles are never the opposite of either.

An androgyne appearance cannot manifest the Syndasticon if the person exhibits false androgyny. A man exhibiting many female traits is seen to manifest the Arsenicum, but in a lesser magnitude. Men or women (defined by the presence of only either male or female productive organs) *cannot* manifest the Syndasticon in their appearance.

However, people who exhibit true androgyny *do* manifest the Syndasticon in their physical appearance and by exhibiting androgyne physical traits (defined as merely an average of masculine and feminine traits- e.g. facial hair between abundant and zero). Simply being truly androgynous means that one’s physical appearance manifests the Syndasticon, but the more androgyne one appears, the more the Syndasticon is manifested.

Young androgyny is simpler (assuming the person is of male/female sex but merely prepubescent). Prepubescent people (in this example) are still male or female and thus their appearance will never manifest the Syndasticon. They may *channel* the Syndasticon if their principles and actions are androgynous. But they can also channel the Arsenicum or Thylanicos.

Young true androgyny (when the person is prepubescent but also has neither/both male and/or female reproductive organs) is also comparatively simple. Young true androgynes will manifest the Syndasticon and may channel it in their actions.

The religious texts describe a ‘perfect androgyne form’. Because young androgynes do not channel the Syndasticon, theonomers generally don’t consider this form to represent a child. The proportions of this form are believed to be an exact mean between the perfect male proportions and the perfect female proportions, just as androgyne physical characteristics are believed to be an exact mean between masculine characteristics and feminine characteristics.

##### The Ten Animal Deities

###### *Introduction*

The Ten Animal Deities are a group of higher power in whose likenesses ten animals are made. The Ten Animal Deities, often referred to as ‘gods’, are beings which exist solely in the [material world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld) and not at all in the [spiritual world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld). Because they exist only in the material world, each god exists solely of the Ten Bases.

The gods are *not* creator deities. Each god acts a template for one specific animal, but they do not create that animal. [The One](#_The_One) is the force of creation present, the relevant animals are simply created in the likeness of their corresponding god. All other animals created by the One are derived from these likenesses in some way.

The gods experience a consciousness which humans can, to an extent, understand and relate to. Each god has its own individual balance of order and chaos and embodies different personality characteristics (which the Way refers to as ‘principles’). They have motivations which humans can comprehend and are capable of feeling emotion.

The gods do not exist at all in the spiritual world and therefore cannot act as conduits or resevoirs of the One in the same way that the supreme beings and the divines can. Spiritual beings exist in the spiritual world and can affect the material world. The gods can affect the material world because they exist in it. Each god embodies different principles- for example the deity Ilyzor embodies justice- and seeks to further these principles as much as possible, maximising their prevalence on the planet.

They do this almost entirely by indirect means. The gods only actually appear to humans extremely infrequently and only to humans of great overall significance. These refer to humans who will change the overall course of history: kings, generals, philosophers, explorers, etc. Even then, religious texts state that these kinds of individuals will see a god only once (twice has occurred, but only once), and almost all the time that god will be Kalawi, acting as a tempter for humanity to do chaotic things.

The gods almost wholly just influence humanity, exerting their power to create situations where humans have the opportunity to cultivate the principles that each god embodies. For example, the god Azor, who embodies the principle of patience, will engineer scenarios where a person has the opportunity to commit an act that requires patience and thus cultivate their internal sense of patience.

This is an example of gods committing an ordered act, but they can also commit chaotic acts. Gods embody negative principles as well, and will thus also engineer scenarios where humans are tempted to commit acts which cultivate these negative principles. For example, Ilyzor, who embodies the principle of wrath, will engineer scenarios where a person has the opportunity to commit an act that requires wrath and thus cultivate their internal sense of wrath. The gods, just like humans, have their own internal balance between order and chaos.

The *overall* balance between [chaos and order](#_The_Dualism_of) in the ten gods is precisely equal, but individually the balance between each god varies. Some gods have a balance more shifted towards chaos and others have a balance more shifted towards order. Overall, these imbalances cancel out to give a perfect overall balance.

###### *The Gods*

The first and most powerful god, referred to as the ‘Emperor of the Gods’ is a hippopotamus deity referred to as Shurhath. The imperial Ethigean title of [Shurhath](#_Shurhath) is directly borrowed from the name of the deity. The balance of chaos and order in Shurhath is exactly equal as Shurhath embodies chaotic and ordered principles in equal magnitude. Shurhath is the joint-most powerful god along with Kalawi (who is explained later). He (Shurhath is depicted as male) embodies the principles of might, authority, power, rule, aggression, ferocity, and tyranny.

The second god is an elephant deity referred to as Ilyzor. The balance of chaos and order in Ilyzor is the most shifted towards order out of all of the ten gods, although there is still some chaos present. This is to say that Ilyzor embodies ordered principles to a far greater degree than chaotic principles. Ilyzor embodies the principles of justice, wisdom, prophecy, protection, gentility, and wrath. Ilyzor is depicted as male.

The third god is a leopard deity referred to as Namur. The balance of chaos and order in Namur is very slightly shifted towards chaos. Namur embodies the principles of (female) beauty, opportunism, independence, solitude, intelligence, intuition, loneliness, and ruthlessness. Namur is depicted as female.

The fourth god is a harpy eagle deity referred to as Qarthal. The balance of chaos and order in Qarthal is exactly equal. Qarthal embodies the principles of persistence, tenacity, diligence, stubbornness, and arrogance. Qarthal is depicted as female.

The fifth god is a lion deity referred to as Sinthar. The balance of chaos and order in Sinthar is shifted towards order. Sinthar embodies the principles of (male) beauty, family, brotherhood, parenthood, guardianship, majesty, fearsomeness, lust, and cruelty. Sinthar is depicted as male.

The sixth god is a crocodile deity referred to as Azor. The balance of chaos and order in Azor is considerably shifted towards chaos. Azor embodies the principles of fertility, patience, stealth, greed, envy, and violence. Azor is depicted as male.

The seventh god is a shark deity referred to as Garash. The balance of chaos and order in Garash is shifted towards order. Garash embodies the principles of martial prowess, steadfastness, ambition, and belligerence. Garash is depicted as male.

The eighth god is an octopus deity referred to as Akkar. The balance of chaos and order in Akkar is considerably shifted towards order. Akkar embodies the principles of playfulness, enigmaticality, mischief, craftiness, and shyness. Akkar is depicted as female.

The ninth god is a zebra deity referred to as Sibira. The balance of chaos and order in Sibira is very substantially shifted towards order. Sibira embodies the principles of loyalty, reliability, hospitality, friendliness, grace, caution, and timidity. Sibira is depicted as female.

The tenth and joint most-powerful god is a hyena deity referred to as Kalawi. The balance of chaos and order in Kalawi is the most shifted towards chaos out of all the ten gods, and Kalawi is the only god who is described as actively malevolent. Sometimes referred to as a ‘demon god’, Kalawi often plays the role of the tempter of humanity, encouraging them to embrace their internal chaos. Kalawi embodies one positive principle, that of confidence (no god is entirely without internal order or chaos), and also embodies pride, license, malice, sadism, destructiveness, impulsiveness, and malevolence. Kalawi is depicted as male.

Some of the principles embodied by male gods are actually seen as feminine principles which channel the Thylanicos (one of the Three Human Deities and the one embodying femininity). Wisdom and lust are examples of these. Inversely, some of the principles embodied by female gods are actually seen as masculine principles which channel the Arsenicum. Loyalty and fearsomeness are examples of these.

This is possible because masculine and feminine principles are different for animals, humans, and gods. More accurately, the very concepts of masculinity and femininity are different between these kinds of beings. Therefore, whilst a male god might embody a principle which humans consider feminine, in the sphere of the gods this discrepancy is absent and the masculinity of that god is not compromised. The inverse also applies.

Because religious texts state that these animal deities embody certain principles, it also means that each respective animal is also culturally associated with these principles. Zebras, for example, are associated with reliability and grace. Animals made in the image of a god (these ten animals are known as the ‘ten genitor animals’) can have other cultural associations that transcend the scope of that god. Harpy eagles, for examples, are often culturally associated in Ethagis with the idea of death even though the eagle god Qarthal is not at all associated with death.

Of course, animals that are not created in the likeness of a god can also have cultural associations, often associations that overlap with those of the genitor animals. Coconut crabs, for example, are often associated with tenacity and persistence, just as Qarthal is. Animals, both noble and ignoble, can also be associated with things that aren’t principles, for example political and socioeconomic concepts. The blackfish [killer whale] is associated with the nobility, for example, and the shark is associated with the soldiery. In fact, each class in the Ethigean social hierarchy has its own animal association: the hippo is the monarchy, the blackfish the nobility, the shark the soldiery, the harpy eagle the gentry, the wildebeest the commonry, and the beetle those in servitude.

The cultural associations and religious roles of various animals could also be attributed to practical realities and observation- all cultural associations come from these and atheists and non-theists may argue that religion comes from these too. Blackfish are associated with nobility, for example, because orca are apex predators of the oceans and their ecological dominance is often related to socioeconomic dominance. In terms of religious roles, for example, one could see the vilification of the hyena god as a malevolent demon as a reflection of the fact that hyenas eat livestock and thus threaten the livelihood of Ethigeans. As a result of the subsequent resentment, hyenas were demonised in Ethigean religion.[[20]](#footnote-21)

###### *The Gifts*

Each of the Ten Animal Deities is described in scripture to have given a gift to animal-kind as a whole, although only certain animals possess a gift. Some animals in the natural world are more gifted than others. The elephant, for example, possesses multiple gifts, whereas insects possess none. The gift of each god to animals is as follows:

Shurhath gave the gift of might, possessed by animals with exceptional size and strength. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of might include hippopotami, elephants, rhinoceroses, and lions.

Ilyzor gave the gift of wisdom, possessed by only the most intelligent animals. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of wisdom include elephants, gorillas, and apes.

Namur gave the gift of ferocity, possessed by the most driven and aggressive animals. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of ferocity include leopards, hippopotami, and honey badgers.

Qarthal gave the gift of flight, possessed by animals equipped with the ability to lift themselves up off the ground and sour. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of flight include eagles, crows, and ravens.

Sinthar gave the gift of brotherhood, possessed by animals who live and roam in large groups. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of brotherhood include lions, elephants, and wildebeest.

Azor gave the gift of armour, possessed by animals with a tough exterior that prevents physical damage. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of armour include crocodiles, pangolins, and crabs.

Garash gave the gift of satiety, possessed by animals who only need to feed very infrequently. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of satiety include sharks, crocodiles, snakes, and lizards.

Akkar gave the gift of craft, possessed by animals who engage in trickery and deception (i.e. camouflage). Examples of animals blessed with the gift of craft include octopi, cuttlefish, and chameleons.

Sibira gave the gift of swiftness, possessed by animals who can move at high speeds. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of swiftness include zebras, cheetahs, peregrine falcons, and wildebeest.

Kalawi gave the gift of killer instinct, possessed by animals who have the capacity to kill and feast on other animals to survive. Examples of animals blessed with the gift of killer instinct are all living carnivores: Kalawi is the reason why predation exists in the natural world as no other gifts relate to the killing of other animals.

However, the Ten Animal Deities as a whole set combined their powers to give a unique gift to humankind, referred to as the ‘noble gift’- this is the gift of potential. The gift of potential is not about possession, but capacity. It is not the possession of a certain value, but the *capacity* to master a myriad of skills and do great things if humanity should set their mind to them. It is a reflection of the fact that humans have the potential to build great civilisations, become highly strong and swift, wise beyond the means of any creature, and learn a thousand different skills and practices. Humans have the *potential* to far exceed any of the animals, and indeed they have.[[21]](#footnote-22)

##### Size

The geologic time scale of the word of Jagannath is the same as that of Earth, and hence its zoological history is roughly the same as well. Though there are some individual differences, in both worlds there have been mass-extinction events that greatly diminished the number of extant megafauna species. And, in both worlds, fossil records of these species may be preserved and these remains may be discovered by humans.

In the absence of the knowledge to accurately explain the presence of these fossils, they are generally incorporated into a culture’s mythology. For example, a prominent theory suggests that Ancient Greek depictions of abnormally large Greek heroes like Hercules stem from bear skeletons, which resemble an abnormally large human skeleton. In Jagannath, fossils also play a cultural role in mythology.

Jagannath has the same extant animals as Earth and these animals must have the same evolutionary history on both worlds. Hence, historic and now extinct species on Earth have also walked the lands of Jagannath. One of these species is a proboscidean called *Palaeoloxodon namadicus*, also called the Asian straight-tusked elephant. This was the largest land mammal to *ever* exist.

The size of this colossal beast has been estimated to be 4.5m at the shoulder. To give an idea of how vast this is compared to a human, see [here](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palaeoloxodon_namadicus#/media/File:Largest_land_mammals_size_chart.jpg). The skull alone would have been colossal. Unlike in Earth, in Ethagis a fossilised skull of *Palaeoloxodon* has been found. As the concept of the Ten Animal Deities had already been formulated at this time, the main issue was explaining the gargantuan skull found.

As Ethigeans are and were ignorant of modern Earth taxonomy and phylogeny, the presence of the new skull was acknowledged to belong to a species different to modern elephants, but this was explained in a different way. Although previously it had generally been held that the gods were larger than their relevant animals to some extent, this principle had not been established and the size of the gods was a subject of much debate.

Religious thought universally held, however, that the Ten Animal Deities were all still alive, so the *Palaeoloxodon* skull posed a theonomic issue. Elephants were a genitor animal so there could not have been a previously existing elephantine species,[[22]](#footnote-23) and Ilyzor was still alive so it could not have been Ilyzor himself. The only thing specified in religious texts was that the genitor animals were made in the image of the gods.

The explanation agreed upon was that the skull was deliberately buried by Ilyzor to be found by Ethigeans as a way of transmitting information. The discovery of the skull was believed to be Ilyzor’s way of showing humanity what he looked like, and how the corresponding genitor animal (the elephant) was made in Ilyzor’s image- but an approximate image, and of a different size. Ethigean mythology and religion depict Ilyzor as being of variable sizes, ranging from slightly larger than *Loxodonta africana* to the size of a castle. The discovered skull was thus interpreted as a single ‘form’ of the god Ilyzor.

From this, modern Ethigean theonomy holds that each god is highly visually similar to its corresponding genitor animal but not identical. They are an enlarged version of that animal with very slight anatomical differences for further distinction. These differences, other than size, are incredibly small, however, the same magnitude as, say, a different curvature angle of the tusk for example.

#### Cosmogeny

The term cosmogeny in the Way, and by extension Ethigean society, refers to the creation of the universe (or, more specifically, each *cycle* of the universe) and its inhabitants, both deity and entity.

The Way believes in the concept of a [cyclic universe](#_The_Cyclic_Cosmos) in a constant cycle of birth, expansion, contraction, and death. The universe is born, waxes, wanes, and dies, and is reincarnated the next instant. Each incarnation of the universe is referred to as an eon; the precise length of an eon is unspecified in religious texts but it is referred to as ‘the span of time equivalent to if one were to rub a sheet of silk once a century on a rock fifty leagues long, wide, and tall, and wait for the rock to be ground away’.

This cycle is eternal and lacks beginning or end. The idea of cosmogeny actually refers to the genesis of each *eon*, not the cosmos [this is the term that Ethigeans use to describe the universe, but this document uses these two terms synonymously] itself. The cosmos has no genesis and will never have an end, it stretches back to infinity and will stretch forward to infinity. The cosmogeny of the universe is thus a nonsensical statement.

##### The Genesis of the Spiritual World

The cycling of the universe refers to the [material world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld); the *material world* is what undergoes the constant cycle of expansion and contraction. The spiritual world does not undergo these cycle because it can’t- the spiritual world lacks any physical quantities or dimensions and thus cannot change its size because size in a physical quantities. There are no concepts of space or time in the [spiritual world](#SpiritualMaterialWorld).

The spiritual world can’t be subject to the cycles of expansion and contraction because growing/shrinking is a change in space and doing so takes time. The spiritual world is therefore constant throughout eternity, just as [the One](#_The_One) is.

Not all the things in the spiritual world are constant throughout eternity, however. Each eon dies by contracting into an infinitely small point at the very centre of the planet [the Way believes in a geocentric universe]. The infinitely small point is referred to as the ‘cosmic pivot’, also known as the ‘cosmic egg’, and exists for a single moment in time.

This moment is at the very end of an eon, signifying the death of that eon. The moment is also at the very beginning of the next eon, signifying the birth of that eon. An instant later, the infinitely small point begins to expand- as soon as it expands from its infinite smallness, it is no longer the cosmic pivot. The cosmos has now entered the phase of expansion.

However, in the cosmic egg, the only thing present is the One- no material thing could fit into an infinitely small space, and no spiritual beings are present (this is elaborated on [here](#_The_Genesis_of)). However, because the One is part of the spiritual world, if the One is present in the cosmic egg then by extension so must the spiritual world.

The One is such a fundamental force of the cosmos that it *underpins* the spiritual world as well as exists in it. There would be no spiritual or material worlds if it weren’t for the One; it is the force behind the existence of both worlds. However, the One is a spiritual force and thus itself exists in the spiritual world; this is vaguely analogous to a person building the house they choose to live in. Because the One is eternal then the spiritual world must also be. Hence, the spiritual world- just like the One itself- lacks a genesis or an end. It is eternal and infinite.

##### The Genesis of the Material World

The cosmos originates from the centre of the planet, and as it expands it essentially builds the planet up layer by layer: the universe expands spherically in all directions. The material world is constructed as the universe expands. First the deepest stones are formed, then the shallower ones, then the world’s surface and the topmost lands and waters. Then all the celestial bodies are synthesised in order of their proximity to the terrestrial sphere.

All the bodies of the cosmos (i.e. the material world) are created in this way. The universe expands outwards, and as it expands the material world is built. It is built as the boundary of the universe touches it- imagine a dark plate scattered with objects and a light placed in the middle. As the light expands, the boundary of the light reveals new material. It’s not as if objects wait until they’re in the light for ten seconds and then suddenly become visible. The very edge of the field of light, as it expands, reveals things as it moves. This is a flawed analogy as the universe does not ‘reveal’ objects that are already present- it creates new matter- but it illustrates how matter is built at the instant the universe expands.

The cosmos is filled with celestial bodies and the spaces between them- the spaces are said to be filled with one of [Ten Bases](#_The_Ten_Bases) called void, whereas the bodies themselves are simply comprised of all the other nine bases. *All* of the Ten Bases exist in the material world, however. Therefore, because the universe expands spherically, at different points on the sphere either void will be brought into existence or the other nine bases.

At *no* point is ‘nothingness’ present anywhere in the universe. There is no geographic point in the material world where none of the Ten Bases are present. The cosmos is filled with a medium of void, suspended in which are celestial bodies composed of the other bases. Neither is there anything ‘outside’ the cosmos. This does not mean that there is a region outside the bounds of the universe filled with ‘nothingness’, it means that there is no such region.

Eventually, the universe reaches its apex. There is a single moment in time where the cosmos is at large as it will be in that eon, a moment referred to as the ‘cosmic zenith’, or just the ‘zenith’. After the zenith is reached, the universe begins to contract again. As it shrinks, it begins to subsume- that is to destroy- its contents, starting from the very edge of the universe and ending with the terrestrial sphere.

Just as the universe creates the material world, and the instant it expands new bases come into existence, so are these bases destroyed as the universe destroys the material world. Take an uninhabited planet at the outermost reaches of the cosmos. As the universe shrinks and destroys it, the subsumed parts of the planet simply depart existence. There are no pillars of fire or apocalyptic storms- as the planet is in the process of being destroyed the already destroyed parts simply cease to exist.

Because [the terrestrial sphere](#_Cosmology) is at the centre of the cosmos the entire surface would be destroyed at the same time, so one couldn’t walk from an intact part to a subsumed part. Remember that the universe both expands and contracts in all directions simultaneously, like a sphere constantly changing surface area. However, for planets in different cosmic spheres, there would be a line bisecting the planetary sphere, with the universe ending at that line. Imagine a hollow sphere with a hemisphere clinging to the internal wall. Now, imagine a man standing on that hemisphere trying to cross to the other side of the planet- this is of course a hypothetical situation. They wouldn’t be able to do so because the other side of the planet would no longer exist. But what would that man perceive as he reached the bounds of reality?

Religious texts actually address this. The Way states that the man would simply perceive an endless wall of blackness at the boundary of the cosmos. This is not because the edge of the universe actually looks like that: this is simply because the human body lacks the capacity to perceive what the actual wall of the cosmos looks like. Human eyes simply aren’t complex enough to do that. There is therefore a ‘gap’ in what humans are able to perceive, and the eyes- being crude sensory organs compared to the great phenomena of the cosmos- simply fill in this gap with blackness.

As the cosmos continues to contract, eventually the Sun will be subsumed too, causing an end to human life. Eventually, the cosmos will shrink until the sphere of the cosmos is the same size and location as the sphere of Jagannath. Jagannath will thus be the entire cosmos. Humankind at this point will be no more due to the subsummation of the Sun. First, the surface of Jagannath will be erased from existence. Then the layers of the planet, one by one in order of closest to surface to furthest, will be destroyed. Finally, only the core of the planet will remain. Eventually, the universe will contract yet again to an infinitely small point, the cosmic pivot. And then the whole process shall repeat again.

All of the aforementioned processes and concepts are driven by the One. Remember: the One is *not* a deity, it is a force- the Way does not recognise a creator deity. The One drives both the cycles of the cosmos and the gradual creation and destruction of the material world. Everything *in* the material world is indirectly made of the One (see the Ten Bases and the Three Hosts)- i.e. a form of the One that has been incarnated into the material world. All the changes of the cosmos, including its expansion and contraction, are driven by the flows of the One. When discussing cosmogeny in any context, it ultimately comes down to the One.

##### The Genesis of the Higher Powers

Just as the cosmos itself is eternal and lacks a genesis or terminus, so does the One. The One is the *only* thing in the cosmos that exists eternally, without its magnitude changing and without disappearing for an instant. In fact, the One is what drives the expansion/contraction of the cosmos and the creation of the material world. The One therefore is not created at the start of each eon because it is in constant existence. It is a necessary ‘first cause’: the question is not *when* was the One created, but *what has* the One created?

All of the other [higher powers](#_Higher_Powers_|) (except the [Ten Animal Deities](#_The_Ten_Animal)) are created at the very beginning of each eon and die at the very end of each eon. In the first moment of the universe’s expansion for each eon they come into existence and at the very final moment they depart from it. This means that the higher powers are constantly present in the cosmos *except* for in the cosmic egg. The instant of the cosmic egg is the only point in time where the other higher powers don’t exist.

However, the higher powers aren’t quite created and ended exactly simultaneously. They are often described as coming into being at the same instant, but this is a colloquial simplification. Take a second, for example. A second is a unit of time which can be halved to produce two half-seconds. Each of these can be halved to create four quarter-seconds. Each of *these* can be halved to produce eight eighth-seconds. This process can go on eternally, forever halving to create smaller and smaller increments of time, forever tending towards zero but never actually reaching zero.

One therefore gains a division of time which is an infinitieth of a second, and is thus infinitely small. The Way describes this increment of time as a hyposecond, and a hyposecond as an infinitely small division of an instant. The [supreme beings](#_The_Dualism_of) come into existence a hyposecond after the instant of the cosmic egg, and the [Three Human Deities](#_The_Three_Human) come into existence a hyposecond after [Mahomedes and Zorothestra](#_The_Dualism_of).

The Ten Animal Deities are not brought into existence as each eon is because they exist solely in the material world. They therefore need a material place to inhabit before being incarnated. Therefore, the Ten Animal Deities are not created by the One until the terrestrial sphere is fully complete. They are the first things to inhabit the material world and the first form of life in the material world.

##### The Genesis of the World’s Entities

In theonomic [the Ethigean word for theology is ‘theonomy’] discourse, higher powers refers to the One, the supreme beings, and the human and animal deities. The term deities refers to the [divines](#_The_Three_Human) and the [gods](#_The_Ten_Animal). Entities refers to all forms of life that are not deities: i.e. humans, animals, and [botanics](#_Natural_Alphabetics). Entities are created by the One after the universe expands enough such that the terrestrial sphere is fully formed- but not immediately. There is a period of time between the completion of the terrestrial sphere and the genesis of the world’s entities where the only inhabitants of the material world are the Ten Animal Deities.

The entities of the world are only brought into existence after the universe has expanded to the point where the [luminarious sphere](#_Cosmology) has been fully incarnated, because the lives of the world’s entities require the existence of the Sun and, it is believed, the Moon, to exist.

The first of the world’s entities to be created is humankind. However, humankind is not created all at once. Just as the universe expands from the cosmic egg (an infinitely small point), so does humanity expand from the smallest possible point- a single human. The first human to exist in each eon is referred to in the Way as the Prime Genitor. For a single day, the Prime Genitor walks the terrestrial sphere as the only living entity. Then, after an exact twenty-four hour period, the One brings another human into the world. After two days, a third human is brought in. A three days, a fourth. After four days a fifth, and so on and so on. For information on how this works, see [here](#_The_Cyclic_Cosmos).

When a human is ‘brought in’, it means that a soul is given presence in the material world and a new cycle of human lives begins. Each new soul is incarnated at an exponentially slower pace, preventing a rapid premature overpopulation of the terrestrial sphere. Eventually, however, the exponential change begins to plateau, and new souls get brought into the world at a constant rate. Far, far later- only a few thousand years before the present- new souls get brought into the world at an exponentially faster rate, but on the scale of centuries and not days.[[23]](#footnote-24)

After the second human is brought into existence, animals are also brought into existence. More specifically, the various populations of the ten genitor animals are brought into existence. The ten genitor animals are those made in the image of the Ten Animal Deities. The ten genitor animals are hippopotami, elephants, leopards, harpy eagles, lions, crocodiles, sharks, octopi, zebras, and hyenas. Unlike humans, the genitor animals are not brought into existence individually, but a small population (large enough to be self-sustaining and self-increasing, however) of each genitor animal.

This means that several thousand of each genitor animal is brought into existence at the exact same instant. The populations of each genitor animal increase naturally: animals lack souls and thus aren’t periodically ‘brought into’ the universe the way humans are. The total population of any animal increases by purely ecological means.

Other animals are brought into existence in much the same way: i.e. a population of animals is simultaneously incarnated rather than individuals being incarnated in sequence. There is, however, a sequence as to *which* animal populations are incarnated first. Animal populations are incarnated in order of their physical similarities to the genitor animals. For example, a cheetah is incarnated before a crab because a leopard is more similar to any one of the genitor animals than a crab is. A cheetah and an alligator, are incarnated simultaneously because a cheetah is extremely close to one of the genitor animals (a leopard) and an alligator is also extremely close to one of the genitor animals (a crocodile). A cheetah and an alligator are thus in the same ‘series of genesis’, a phrase shortened to the word ‘series’.

Each series is incarnated a hyposecond (an infinitely small unit of time) after the other, and there are exactly ten series, although the number of animals in each series varies and lacks a fixed value. The first series consists of the ten genitor animals. Examples of animals in the second series include cheetahs (the Way considers these animals to be the most closely related to a leopard), alligators (crocodile), golden eagle (harpy eagle), and a cuttlefish (octopus). The only animal in the tenth series is the flatworm. Hundreds of species are in the others, however. Some genitor animals, like hippopotami or elephants, are not extremely physically similar to any others, with the result that the second series also include animals that look moderately different to either, like the rhinoceros.

A hyposecond after the tenth animal series is incarnated, all the world’s botanics [Ethigean taxonomy (a discipline they would call ‘natural alphabetics’) defines these as plants and fungi] are incarnated at the exact same instant. Plants also lack souls and thus aren’t brought into the universe as humans are; a certain number of each individual botanic is incarnated at that instant and the population of each botanic increases by natural ecological means.

Humans, animals, and plants are the only forms of life recognised by natural alphabetics. Substances that are not derived from either of these [supraclasses](#_Natural_Alphabetics) (a taxon of natural alphabetics) are created as the material world is created: e.g. stones and metals. These are not recognised as entities.

### Shurhaths of Ethagis

#### Index of Shurhaths

This index uses the [Allaxcisean Calendar](#_Calendar). Dates are confirmed or cited as ‘c./cc./(pm)’ depending on whether Ethigeans have the historical evidence to confirm dates of reign or existence of the [Shurhath](#Shurhath) in question. Such evidence is sufficient enough that Ethigeans know of every Shurhath’s existence (i.e. there aren’t any missing from this list that Ethigeans simply aren’t aware of), but not specific dates. Moreover, the first three are possibly mythical: whilst they appear in written records, historians consider that they may be works of fiction.

There have been many points in Ethigean history when multiple individuals have simultaneously declared themselves Shurhath. If all of these were included, this index would be almost twice as long. Ethigean historians definitively exclude any such claimants, however. The rationale is that Shurhath means ‘mightiest’, and one cannot be the mightiest if there is another mightiest. Hence, only individuals that have been the *sole* extant Shurhath at some point in their lives are included here.

*However*, the starting dates of reign for these Shurhaths are those when they claimed the title, even if during some parts of their reign there were other claimants. As long as the indexed Shurhath was the sole Shurhath for some period of their reign, no matter how brief, they are included here. Historians are more conflicted over how to mark end dates. When a Shurhath dies, then the end date is obvious, but many Shurhaths have been cast out of power by other claimants, factions, etc.

Most historians date the end date of their reign as when the Shurhath no longer occupies the imperial throne or, in the times before the court became stationed in one city, when the Shurhath no longer occupies enough power to reasonably describe them as a ruling monarch. This, of course, is highly subjective, and the end dates used in this index are those of the prevailing consensus.

r.= Reigned

i.= Interregnum

c.= Circa

cc.= Very approximate circa

(pm)= Possibly mythical

*Alhecanis*

I. r. cc. 1000 (pm)

II. r. 900s-880s (pm)

III. r. 850s (pm)

IV. r. 810s

V. r. 790s-780s

VI. r. 760s-740s

[i. cc.730-cc.470]

VII. r. 460s

VIII. r. 430s-410s

IX. r. 410s

X. r. 400s

[i. cc.400-c.60]

XI. r. 50s

XII. r. 40s and 30s

*Althaloris*

I. First confirmed Shurhath r. 0-c.20

II. r. c.65-78

III. r. 78-85

IV. r. 91-103

V. r. 109-118

[i. 118-279]

VI. r. 279-286

VII. r. 286-302

VIII. r. 302-320

IX. r. 320-323

X. r. 323-345

XI. r. 345-357

XII. r. 357-368

[i. 386-581]

XIII. r. 581-597

XIV. r. 597-620

XV. r. 620-633

XVI. r. 633-650

[i. 650-739]

XVII. r. 739-752

XVIII. r. 752-768

XIX. r. 768-775

XX. r. 775-791

XXI. r. 791-809

XXII. r. 809-825

#### Definition | What is a Shurhath?

For a brief summary of what a Shurhath is, click [here](#_Shurhath).

The Shurhath of Ethagis is the monarch of the Empire of Ethagis. The position of Shurhath is- theoretically- that of an absolute monarch, whose power exceeds that of anyone else in the country and whose will transcends the law. The position of Shurhath has supreme military, political, judicial, and religious authority.

The Shurhath is the supreme commander of all armed forces in the country, and all people of the realm owe allegiance to him. Every person is, either directly or indirectly, his [levy](#_Feyriatal), who he can call on to provide a service for him. All the mighty lords provide military service for the Shurhath, all askary lords provide military service for the mighty lords, and this chain continues down the social hierarchy all the way down to the lowliest slaves. The Shurhath thus has the right to command every individual in the whole country. All others in the realm with the right to command (e.g. noblemen) derive this power *from* the Shurhath, and any commands they issue can be overridden and ignored by him.

The Shurhath has the ability to create, amend, and terminate laws and decrees entirely at will. These edicts can apply to the whole nation, to several domains, to a single domain, to individuals- the scope and scale are entirely variable. His will in this matter is indisputable and cannot be overridden by any other individual in the realm. Members of the court may do this with his approval, but they are his servants- not his equals- and derive legislative authority through him. Their position and edicts can be overturned at any time.

Similarly, owners of a domain (e.g. an askary lord ruling a county) may determine laws for their own domains, but these can be overridden at the will of the Shurhath and exist by his permission. The Shurhath may change the position of any individual in the [Feyriatal hierarchy](#_Feyriatal) at will, and his decisions cannot be overridden. All such owners derive their legislative power through the Shurhath. The Shurhath’s will is law, and he is above the law.

All judicial authorities of the realm drive authority from the Shurhath, who may at any times relinquish their authority or override their decisions. The Shurhath has the right to make judicial decisions at any circumstance, and these decisions cannot be overridden. He can condemn any individual to any sentence he desires, and it is his duty and right to bring justice to the realm.

The Shurhath also has prime religious authority. There are no institutions for organised religion in Ethagis, and no clerical hierarchy exists in the realm. Religious authority thus isn’t an official role akin to that of a Pope, for example. The Shurhath merely acts as a religious figurehead, organising and participating in religious rituals and events.

These are the rights of the position of Shurhath of Ethagis. But whether the Shurhath in office has the power to actually exercise these rights is an entirely different matter. The Shurhath’s power is often limited by a host of different variables. The main ones are the strength of character/merits of the Shurhath, the power of the nobility, and the size/remoteness of the various parts of the realm to the centre of power in Semidon.

The number of Shurhaths in all of Ethigean history who have actually exercised all of these rights isn’t even in double rights. One must also consider the *extent* to which each right is exercised. It is very easy to enslave or execute a farmer, but few have ever dared to strip a mighty lord of his nobility. Only four Shurhaths in all of history have ever ordered a nobleman to be enslaved during peacetime and had those orders obeyed.

The Shurhath is in theory above the law and can act with impunity, but in practice is restrained by the other powers of the country.

# The Story

This page is for the story written in 2024. This is a rewrite of the original story in Mightiest, created from 2021 to 2023. This old version of Mightiest, its spin-offs, and its character profiles can be found in the Extras section of this document or will be demarcated by the label ‘Old’ or the label ‘[2021-2023]’.

## 4. Characters

Armageddon

Arzachel

the Blackfish

Chainbreaker

Crossbow

the Darkstar

the Desert Ripper

the Dragonfly

Elphensbane

Firewalker

the Grizzly Falcon

the Hammer of Ilyzor

Hazin -> the Emerald Champion

Hurricane

Jackdaw

the Juggernaught

Kingsparrow

Lanna -> the Sorceress

the Liquid Lion

Lord Morningstar

Panthercaul

Purgatory

the Red Mantis -> the Revenant

the Reefshark -> Indigo -> Ironhand

the Scorpion

Scython -> the Hydra of Semidon

Shadowbound

Sharkjaw

Steelbird

Soul Eater

the Sword of Semidon

Tarantula

the Valorous

the Wraithwreaker

Zerzura

Corus (Crossbow companion)

Izaria (Crossbow companion)

Mace (Crossbow companion)

Nassany (Firewalker companion)

Srigo (Firewalker companion)

Thalorian (Firewalker companion)

Voai (Crossbow companion)

## 5. Books

Mightiest is an epic composed of 12 volumes. Each volume is a single, separate book. The stretch of the story covered by each book is referred to in this document as a ‘part’. Hence Volume I = Book I = Part I; Volume II = Book II = Part II; etc.

The colour assigned to each part in this document is the main colour of the corresponding book’s cover. In the part of the document dedicated to writing out the story, it is also the colour used to denote which events fall under which part.

Each book consists of many chapters, and different chapters are told from the perspectives of different characters. These perspectives, or ‘points-of-view’, can be recurring (the same perspective is present in >2 chapters throughout the book) or exceptional (only 1 or 2 chapters this book are from the point of view of X character.

Individual battles may span multiple chapters, but these chapters will always be consecutive. For example, the First Battle of Semidon is experienced through the perspectives of Cyzinian, the Reefshark, and Hurricane, but the chapters dedicated to it are not interrupted by any other event. Major battles are almost always shown through multiple points of view.

Part 1: White

Part 2: Magenta

Part 3: Crimson

Part 4: Sunset

Part 5: Gold

Part 6: Green

Part 7: Sky

Part 8: Cobalt

Part 9: Purple

Part 10: Lilac

Part 11: Charcoal

Part 12: Black

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Book No. | Cover Colour | Front Cover Character | Back Cover Character | Points-of-View |
| I | White | Chainbreaker | the Dragonfly | *Recurring (5)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; the Reefshark; the Darkstar; Elphensbane  *Exceptional (4)*  Soul Eater; Firewalker; Crossbow; the Valorous |
| II | Magenta | Shadowbound | Lanna | *Recurring (9)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; the Reefshark; the Darkstar; Lord Morningstar; Elphensbane; the Valorous; Soul Eater; Shadowbound  *Exceptional (2)*  Crossbow; Hurricane |
| III | Crimson | the Sword of Semidon | Kingsparrow | *Recurring (8)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; the Reefshark; The Nagalens; the Valorous; Lord Morningstar; Crossbow; Shadowbound  *Exceptional (5)*  Firewalker; Elphensbane; Hurricane; Soul Eater; Zerzura |
| IV | Sunset | Lord Morningstar | Zerzura | *Recurring (6)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; Zerzura; the Valorous; Lord Morningstar; Shadowbound  *Exceptional (6)*  The Nagalens; Elphensbane; Crossbow; Arzachel; Soul Eater; the Darkstar |
| V | Gold | the Juggernaught | the Desert Ripper | *Recurring (9)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; the Reefshark; the Valorous; Lord Morningstar; Crossbow; the Darkstar; Soul Eater; Shadowbound  *Exceptional (4)*  Zerzura; Firewalker; the Nagalens; the Liquid Lion |
| VI | Green | Purgatory | the Liquid Lion | *Recurring (9)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; Indigo; the Sword of Semidon; Elphensbane; Crossbow; Soul Eater; the Darkstar; Shadowbound  *Exceptional (5)*  Firewalker; the Red Mantis; the Nagalens; Lord Morningstar; the Liquid Lion |
| VII | Sky | Soul Eater | the Hammer of Ilyzor | *Recurring (9)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; Indigo; the Sword of Semidon; Crossbow; Elphensbane; Lord Morningstar; the Liquid Lion; Shadowbound  *Exceptional (4)*  Soul Eater; Kingsparrow; Firewalker; Tarantula |
| VIII | Cobalt | Elphensbane | the Grizzly Falcon | *Recurring (7)*  Court of Semidon; Chainbreaker; Indigo; Elphensbane; Crossbow; Lord Morningstar; the Darkstar  *Exceptional (1)*  Tarantula |
| IX | Purple | the Darkstar | Hurricane | *Recurring (6)*  Chainbreaker; Indigo; Elphensbane; Hurricane; Arzachel; the Darkstar  *Exceptional (1)*  Court of Semidon |
| X | Lilac | the Revenant | Firewalker | *Recurring (5)*  Chainbreaker; Crossbow; Indigo; Arzachel; the Darkstar  *Exceptional (2)*  Elphensbane; Firewalker |
| XI | Charcoal | Ironhand | Armageddon | *Recurring (6)*  Court of Semidon; Armageddon; Typhoon; the Sword of Semidon; Elphensbane; Panthercaul  *Exceptional (1)*  Crossbow |
| XII | Black | Sharkjaw | Crossbow | *Recurring (5)*  Typhoon; Crossbow; the Sword of Semidon; Elphensbane; Panthercaul  *Exceptional (1)*  Armageddon |

## 6. Narrative

#### Context

* The story takes place on the continent of Ethagis, which consists of a single polity: the Empire of Ethagis, sharing the same name as the continent
* The Empire of Ethagis is a feudal bureaucracy, similar to Ancient China’s system of fengjian under the Zhou dynasty
* The title of its monarch is ‘Shurhath’, which means ‘Mightiest’ in the Ethigean language
* The Shurhath maintains a sizeable court at the imperial capital, Semidon- capital of the country as a whole and the Crownlands- and also maintains a central government to administer the Crownlands and to a lesser extent the country as a whole. There is considerable overlap between the imperial court and central government, but they are not identical
* The Crownlands is a region of the empire directly administered by the Shurhath. The remainder of the country is divided into different fiefs of varying sizes administered by different lords on the Shurhath’s behalf
* There is no national standing army and the fiefs that the country is divided into are hereditary although subject to the Shurhath approving their succession. Lords sworn to the Shurhath are expected to raise levies in times of war
* However, Ethagis is not feudal. Lords can be dismissed and appointed entirely at the Shurhath’s pleasure, and the whole country has a unified currency, law, tax system, and customs union
* The Shurhath maintains a large bureaucracy to administer the Crownlands and supervise all the lords of the realm as they govern fiefs on the Shurhath’s behalf. They do not nominally own these lands, but govern them for their ruler
* The Shurhath also has a small personal standing army of many thousands, referred to as his retinues. All major lords have their own personal standing armies in the form of retinues, but a much, much smaller size so as not to pose a political threat
* The Ethigean sociopolitical hierarchy is called Feyriatal
* Its rough structure is Shurhath-nobility-soldiery-gentry-commonry-slaves
* Each tier in this hierarchy is seen as legally, politically, socially, and culturally superior to the below ones. The relationships between two individuals in different tiers is called a liege-levy relationship
* The liege is the superior class and the levy is the inferior. E.g. the Shurhath would be a liege to a lord, which would be a levy. A lord would the liege to an asthan, would which be a levy
* The levy owes the liege military service whenever called upon as well as other services, and owes their political and moral allegiance to them. In exchange, the levy receives a ‘due’
* There is no specific definition of a due but it generally involves a means of livelihood: either money or land, and various services, e.g. protection
* There are different grades of nobility based on seniority and power: a mighty lord, askary lord, and nazul lord. There are currently only six mighty lords in the realm, each ruling over very large fiefs (the Marches, the Delta, Aedemon, Nagal, Santai, and the South)
* In many cases, a more senior lord can be the liege to a more junior lord. This hierarchy of liege-levy relationships extends all the way from the Shurhath to commoners
* All commoners in Ethigean society are legally free (unlike e.g. European serfs) but Ethagis also has a large social class of slaves upon which the economy is dependent and who have no legal rights
* The relationship between a slave and their owner is not a liege-levy one but a master-slave one. Slaves are not owed any services nor are they entitled legally to a livelihood
* Theoretically, the Shurhath is an absolute monarch who has no limits on his power and authority
* Also, the legitimation for being is a Shurhath is theoretically to be the mightiest warlord in the whole country. A Shurhath’s legitimacy can therefore be challenged at any time by a warlord who feels as if he is mightier. If he can best the Shurhath in war and assume the imperial throne, they are legitimately the new Shurhath
* In practice, often dynasties of several successive generations sit the throne. In each dynasty, the luxury of the imperial capital, Semidon, produces successively more ineffective Shurhaths
* Central authority declines gradually and regional authority of the lords increases until the empire fragments into multiple independent warlords each contesting the title of Shurhath. One warlord will succeed in uniting the continent and start a new dynasty
* This cyclical process of unity-decline-fragmentation has characterised Ethigean history for many centuries
* Ethigeans follow a polytheistic philosophy-religion called the Way, which is based on Chinese philosophy-religions like Taoism/Confucianism; Buddhism; African polytheism; and animism
* Unlike in e.g. medieval Europe, there is no clergy social class. Religious authority is monopolised by the Shurhath though often delegated to members of the gentry
* The people of Ethagis’ desert- Nagal- are called Nagalens. They follow a different religion based on sun worship, Legally, this is forbidden, but its illegality is not enforced
* Ethagis can also be divided into different regions. The words used to describe the different regions of Ethagis can be geographical terms, political terms, or both
* For example: ‘the South’, ‘the Delta’, ‘Aedemon’, ‘Nagal’, and ‘the Marches’ all refer to geographic parts of the country that is Ethagis, but they *also* refer to united fiefs ruled over respectively by a single Mighty Lord
* Other regions, e.g. the Autumnlands, the Springlands, and the savannah are geographic distinctions only and are divided into different fiefs, all ruled by lords which are not necessarily mighty lords but are still direct levies of the Shurhath with no other, stronger lord ruling them
* There are also some terms e.g. the Western Commanderies and the Eastern Commanderies, which are political distinctions and not geographic. The Western Commanderies refers to a collection of lordships in the west of the continent that are all direct levies of the Shurhath and are not ruled over by a stronger lord. The same goes with the Eastern Commanderies
* Another example of this is Kacharias, a small region on the eastern coast ruled over by a lord named Sharkjaw. The word Kacharias refers *only* to whatever stretch of land is owned by Sharkjaw and has no independent geographical meaning separate from Sharkjaw’s house

#### Background

* The Empire of Ethagis is currently ruled over by the Axum dynasty. The Axum dynasty has ruled over Ethagis for many decades now and many successive Shurhaths
* As per the pattern of Ethigean history, the dynasty has ruled long enough that central authority in the country is now fairly weak and another great civil war caused by fragmentation of the country is coming up
* Five years before the events of Mightiest begin, another war occurred, though this time an international war between the Empire of Ethagis and the neighbouring Empire of Abyssinia
* Abyssinia is a country on the continent of Fasilides, which is south of Ethagis and separated from it by water. It is ruled by a figurehead Emperor and a ‘Khagan’ which de facto rules the country and holds all power
* Abyssinia and Ethagis have sporadically engaged in conflicts at varying points throughout history
* The Khagan of Abyssinia invaded Ethagis due to its growing weakness and decentralisation over the past decades and its mismanagement by the ruling Shurhath, the Dragonfly
* The Khagan landed forces in the South- the closest region of Ethagis to Abyssinia and the most climactically similar one. His ferocious combat style and national infamy led to Ethigeans giving him a sobriquet: the Meteor
* Many important characters in the story of Mightiest fight in this war, establishing relationships between them and helping to interweave the various strands of the narrative
* The Juggernaught, an askary lord of the Western Commanderies, becomes oath brother to one of Kusaila (the Mighty Lord of the South)’s sons, the Valorous
* The Reefshark, a senior official in the Delta, becomes oath brother to another of Kusaila’s sons, Hurricane
* Oath brotherhood is a recognised tradition and institution in Ethagis wherein two unrelated individuals who are strongly attached to each other pledge to defend, support, and care for each other. They become legally recognised as brothers and their families thus merge
* Another consequence of the ‘Meteor War’ as many colloquially call it is that Hazin Atheas’ father, the Mighty Lord of Santai, dies in combat. Hazin’s mother dies shortly after from grief and Hazin enters a long period of depression
* Moreover, one of the sons of the Mighty Lord of Nagal, known by the sobriquet the Desert Ripper, becomes exiled from Ethagis due to his brutality and insubordination. He rides to Amphiction with a large contingent of loyalists and travels around there
* The South, during the conflict, gains a desire for independence. They are dissatisfied with the disrespect given to them by other Ethigeans (who are ethnically and culturally different to them) and resent the impositions of Ethigean rule
* Sharkjaw, a slave trader, makes a huge sum of money during the conflict selling captured prisoners-of-war from Abyssinia into slavery and uses this money to purchase a lordship from the Shurhath
* Finally, many characters in Mightiest who have sobriquets before the events of the story earn their sobriquets during this conflict
* Ethagis is successful in the war after a year and a half, and the Meteor leaves the continent. Ethagis is not strong and united enough to launch a counter-invasion, however, and the Shurhath concludes a white peace with Abyssinia which many find humiliating

#### Strand 1: The Commonwealth of Free Men | Chainbreaker; Armageddon; Kingsparrow; Zerzura; Purgatory; Shadowbound; Soul Eater; Hurricane; Crossbow; the Darkstar; Sharkjaw; the Sword of Semidon; Lacaideon

* For the Dragonfly’s birthday, slaves are being hauled by Sharkjaw into Semidon to fight in a large spectacle for his amusement. This is unusual and reflects the vast decadence and corruption of the court at the time
* Amongst this cargo are two slaves who will later gain the sobriquets Chainbreaker and Armageddon, strongly bonded due to formerly labouring as galley slaves on the same oar
* Chainbreaker was captured in a slave raid by Sharkjaw’s troops less than a year ago. He was a soldier on one of the islands east of Ethagis
* Armageddon, by contrast, has been a slave for well over a decade. Formerly a smith and of a monstrously formidable figure, he’s been working as a galley slave for much longer. The longer duration in slavery has left him incredibly hateful
* The cargo of slaves are loaded onto a ship at the tributary of the River Antavar, in a remote region of the Eastern Commanderies where population density is very low. The ship is also delivering gunpowder to Semidon as Harpax has discovered this material from war with the Meteor and wants to experiment with it
* Chainbreaker organises a mutiny on the ship but his plot is discovered by betrayal from one of his fellow conspirators. Before being tortured to death, he has Armageddon ignite the gunpowder and blow up the ship
* He and several dozen surviving slaves swim to shore and begin inciting more slave revolts in the Eastern Commanderies’ countryside
* These are wildly successful due to the hordes of oppressed and brutalised field slaves working in plantations here seeking freedom. Local lords send troops after them which are overwhelmed by numbers and the equipment captured
* Chainbreaker and Armageddon gain their sobriquets during this process but alert the Shurhath to their plundering by attacking a far-off possession of the Crownlands
* The government, without accurate information/insight as to what’s happening, initially views this as some kind of major crime wave, and dispatches a small expeditionary force of a few thousand men to slaughter the bandits
* Chainbreaker ingeniously defeats this force (same tactics as Spartacus’ Battle of Mount Vesuvius), inspiring even more slaves and commoners to flock to him and swelling his ranks to tens of thousands. The defeated soldiers struggle back to the Crownlands and report a huge slave insurrection
* Chainbreaker starts heading west: he wants to hijack some ships and escape home
* Cyzinian is furious and wants to command a punitive army to annihilate the rebels, but the Dragonfly is completely worthless and lazy and wants to stay in the luxury of Semidon with Cyzinian at his side
* Instead, the Dragonfly orders all the lords of the Eastern Commanderies *and the Blackfish and Aedemon* to mobilise for war and empowers them to act independently of him- very dangerous, as central authority is already weak
* Chainbreaker, acting with lightning speed due to having no supply lines, starts picking off lordships as they mobilise, before they form a united army against him- a successful strategy
* Armageddon isn’t a good tactician and, the reader is led to believe, probably not a good leader either, but as a warrior and general he’s amazing. His brute strength and furious rage makes him genuinely terrifying to his opponents, and inspires the slaves under his command greatly
* As more slaves join Chainbreaker from the fields and mines, he starts training and organising them. He also starts reflecting more generally about the brutality of life for both slaves *and* commoners
* Cyzinian is by now consumed with impotent rage and finally gets leave to lead a massive army south to crush Chainbreaker himself- but just before he can leave, the Dragonfly dies from a ‘stroke’ (we later discover that Sharkjaw had Shadowbound assassinate him)
* Both Soul Eater and the Blackfish, already mobilised, declare themselves the new Shurhath- as well as the Juggernaught, though he’s further away- and Cyzinian is forced to defend the Crownlands
* Chainbreaker sees an incredible opportunity here: all the great powers of the realm who might crush his rebellion are distracted
* Factions have developed in his force now: some want to go home and others want to stay in the east and keep plundering. But Chainbreaker has a vision: he wants to establish a new, better state, one with no slaves or nobility
* He declares the formation of a new realm: the Commonwealth of Free Men, with himself as its new head of state- the Grand Marshal. The tens of thousands of rebels enthusiastically swear allegiance
* The Commonwealth controls some countryside in the Eastern Commanderies and is provisioning itself by raiding neighbouring countryside. They raid the hinterlands of towns for food and win a chain of victories over resisting forces, seizing arms and armour
* Chainbreaker runs into Kingsparrow here pretty much entirely by accident: Shadowbound accidentally leads the latter to Chainbreaker and they meet
* Kingsparrow is an asthan- the only one in the countryside who hasn’t attempted to resist Chainbreaker by force and has just surrendered. He’s actually sympathetic to Chainbreaker’s cause and asks to help
* Kingsparrow is a great tactician and advisor, a sort of Jorah Mormont/Zhuge Liang figure. Armageddon is symbolic of Chainbreaker’s id, and Kingsparrow is symbolic of his ego. He gets shit done and helps Chainbreaker realise his aims
* Chainbreaker wants more than this, however- he wants to liberate a town or a city. He wants to free slaves, and he’s starting to run out of people in the nearby countryside to free. He also needs a secure, walled base of operations to manufacture arms, provide a staging post for future operations, and be safe in
* The city with the most slaves is Azariad, a city in eastern Aedemon which is pretty near Chainbreaker’s forces. Chainbreaker has over 100,000 under his command but some of these can’t fight and in any case it’s not a professional army and he can’t seize the city by himself
* But because Azariad is jammed with slaves, he uses Kingsparrow to foment a massive revolt in the city, catalysed by his own army besieging Azariad and launching broken chains into the city to encourage revolt
* The revolt, being that of an oppressed class against their masters, is extremely violent. Nonetheless, Chainbreaker enters the city victorious
* The slave revolt was a success but a bloody one. Many non-commoners have been crucified around the city, many were slaughtered in the streets, many have fled. The remaining patricians are forced to take an oath of loyalty or exiled
* Some of the rebels have enslaved their former masters, but Chainbreaker decrees that these people are either to be exiled or executed (to the discretion of those enslaved by them formerly) as there will be no slaves in the Commonwealth. All slave-masters still in the city receive this same treatment
* Kingsparrow begins advising Chainbreaker on the crucial and unprecedented task of how to actually run a city e.g. how taxation, infrastructure, political institutions work etc
* Kingsparrow also uses Zhuge Liang’s straw boat (fictional) tactic to get more arrows for the Commonwealth, which CB appreciates and finds very amusing
* Chainbreaker, on his advice, begins manufacturing arms and armour, plundering aristocratic property to trade for merchants with bronze and iron, building ships to trade with, and drilling his troops
* He wants to build siege equipment but the scholars in Azariad refuse to work for him. He strongly considers enslaving them to do so but decides against it, believing that it betrays his principles and that any kind of slavery is wrong
* Chainbreaker forms his own civil service using literate commoners present. He starts creating and organising tax agents, customs sergeants, toll collectors, smiths, horse breeders. He also introduces universal conscription of men- completely unprecedented- and organises militias for defending the city
* An apothecary in Azariad, Zerzura, has been having powerful visions of the eagle god Qarthal (due to ergot poisoning), who show her that she is a force of order and justice in the world and must inspire the soldiers in Azariad
* She begins preaching around the city, assuring the militias that their cause is just and that the gods are behind them. Through immense force of personality, she starts raising their spirits and inspiring loyalty
* Asthans and patricians in the city attempt to assassinate Chainbreaker, who is saved due to Armageddon’s intervention and his own quick thinking
* Chainbreaker realises that non-commoners will never reconcile themselves to Commonwealth rule. He may need the gentry for administration and medicine, but the nobility and soldiery are of dubious loyalty as fighters anyway and cannot lead as they will only subvert his rule
* Armageddon wants to execute everybody who isn’t a slave or a commoner, but Chainbreaker is a little less brutal
* He offers all members of the nobility and soldiery a choice: leave voluntarily, or be executed. They flock out of the city and seek refuge in nearby lordships, especially Aedemon. These émigré figures start agitating for the Commonwealth to be crushed
* Purgatory has the Reaper Guard spy on the Commonwealth as a result
* Armageddon leads more forces around the Eastern Commanderies, seizing more territory including some small towns- without any siege equipment, they do so by inciting slave revolts, leading to similarly violent takeovers
* The armies also start inciting revolts in the Springlands nearby. Sharkjaw doesn’t commit any soldiers into battle but garrisons the borders of his domain heavily, preventing raids
* Zerzura knows many of these soldiers by now from preaching in the city and often rides with them outside, encouraging them in the front lines and putting herself at great personal danger. She starts actively participating in combat and tactics, sort of like a Joan of Arc figure
* She becomes a beloved and admired figure, and Armageddon has a set of armour made for her incorporating Qarthal’s eagle wings
* The rebellious slaves however, after years of brutalisation, have years of bottled up hatred impelling them, and they begin indiscriminately butchering all non-commoners, mounting the heads of adults and children on pikes
* They parade them around Azariad, genuinely shocking Chainbreaker, who furiously rides out to confront them, denouncing their actions as evil and demanding to know who killed kids
* The slaves’ leaders step forward, tell some chilling anecdotes about how brutal their lives were, and how Chainbreaker had it easy by comparison as he had only been a slave for the fraction of the time. They vehemently defend their own actions and say they’ll do it again
* CB formally declares them exiled from the Commonwealth. They threaten to rebel and kill CB instead: Armageddon, oath brothers to CB, says they’ll have to kill him too. They still march forward
* Zerzura, however, admonishes them for their treachery, and makes them leave peacefully. They decide to make their way to the Springlands in order to plunder the regions there. This is the first time CB has met Zerzura and really likes that she condemns the violence of the Commonwealth Exiles
* CB is still horrified that Armageddon allowed this to happen and fears that he ordered it, but Armageddon assures him firmly that there’s nothing he could do about it and hated it himself. It is *very* strongly implied that this is a lie
* CB, scared and disillusioned of the vast violence being wrought by his troops, decides to enslave the scholars of the city with great reluctance: he needs them to make siege engines so that cities can be taken without inciting violent revolts
* He decides to make Zerzura the general of his forces in the hope she’ll restrain the violence of his soldiers. He also decides that to get food for the city, he’ll stop raiding the countryside and start taking cities with Zerzura and just levying tribute on them
* Zerzura’s a good person and kind of symbolises the superego when it comes to the trio of CB’s main advisors
* Zerzura uses the siege engines to seize some small towns nearby, and leaves the inhabitants mostly intact as she forbids troops from sacking the city. She levies tribute on them and they provide it, allowing CB to feed Azariad
* There are still many sightings, rumours, and whispers of Commonwealth soldiers committing war crimes like slaughtering surrendered slave-owners during countryside raids, however
* Purgatory decides to use the Reaper Guard to try and undermine the Commonwealth and retake Azariad. She does so in clever ways that impose moral and personal dilemmas on Chainbreaker, doing so three times, although in all cases he manages to pull through
* In the final trial, a member of the Reaper Guard manages to strike CB with a poisoned dart in the left forearm. He believes that he will not survive unless he amputates the limb
* In a dramatic spectacle to win the loyalty of his troops, he stands at the city keep and for everybody to see, amputates his own limb, declaring that he will do anything for the Commonwealth, including subjecting himself to agonising pain
* The people of the Commonwealth cheer wildly for him, pledging their eternal loyalty and adoration of him, before he passes out from pain
* Shadowbound hears that the ruler of the Commonwealth has just lost his hand (and forearm but still) and because he’s desperate to fulfil his own prophecy, decides to come meet him
* Shadowbound appears at the Commonwealth, wondering whether the prophecy means for him to kill or help CB. He figures that as Azor told him it was a form of redemption, he should help CB
* He appears to CB and offers to help him out, saying something about a prophecy (but not the Ironhand part). CB doesn’t really get this but is so happy at this golden opportunity that he can’t help but accept
* He tells him to assassinate Sharkjaw and he agrees. In the meantime, Shadowbound meets CB, Armageddon, Kingsparrow, and Zerzura and talks with them, but especially CB
* Shadowbound opens up a bit to CB and they form a real bond, inciting some personal changes in Shadowbound
* Regardless, however, CB soon declares to the people of the Commonwealth his intentions: he will not be wearing a prosthesis, iron or no, for his hand
* He sees his amputation as a badge of honour, of conquering adversity and loyalty to his nation, as well as determination to continue pursuing his ideals
* This means, though, that Chainbreaker cannot be the ‘Ironhand’ of SB’s prophecy. SB, actually really hurt by this, slinks away, and the deal to kill Sharkjaw is off
* Soul Eater and Purgatory by now sit the imperial throne in Semidon, and Soul Eater dispatches a massive army against the Commonwealth, a force numbering bigger than anything the Commonwealth has yet faced
* Soul Eater *despises* the Commonwealth: he genuinely hates these slaves and commoners for daring to be free, for daring to defy an aristocrat’s authority. He detests them so much that he determines to lead this army against them
* Soul Eater not only engages the Commonwealth militarily by armies, but employs other, more cruel and unusual means to do so
* He has 15,000 dogs trained to attack on sight and forbids anybody from feeding them. Crazed with hunger and rage, he then lets them loose in Commonwealth territory and Azariad, where they viciously tear people apart
* He also invents the first ever gas chambers, trapping any prisoners he captures or enemies he sees into buildings, boarding up the windows, and igniting sulphur within them to produce deadly sulphur dioxide
* Tragically, the Commonwealth’s forces are not a professional army and are pushed to their limit. Lacking heavy cavalry and pitted up against huge numbers of heavily-, iron-armoured asthans and lords who have trained their whole lives for war, they are continually defeated
* This also happens because Soul Eater imposes brutal discipline on his men and they fear him more than the enemy
* His forces reach and besiege Azariad, and start attacking it. CB starts losing this battle and realises that there’s no way he’ll be able to win and that if he continues this battle, everyone will be slaughtered
* He decides to retreat from the city and let Soul Eater retake it. As many men as possible, still tens of thousands but way less than before, follow him, but in the Battle of Azariad Kingsparrow dies
* Chainbreaker is sad not just because he’s lost his friend but also Kingsparrow was a very important advisor. Symbolically, the weakening of an individual’s ego in Freudian psychology reduces their ability to mediate between the id and superego and predisposes them to psychological problems
* Chainbreaker realises that he can’t fight a conventional war with the Empire of Ethagis and will have to fight a guerrilla war instead. He can make the Commonwealth survive only if it’s in a highly defensible location which conventional armies won’t be able to twat up
* The only place in Ethagis where he can feasibly do that is the South, as it has the rainforest that he needs to wage the war
* He decides to take his forces to the South, effectively moving the Commonwealth of Free Men southwards with him
* Armageddon opposes this: he’s not like CB, calculating what could bring him a long-term victory. He wants revenge- he wants to swarm Aedemon and destroy it, even if it destroys him and the Commonwealth
* But he’s loyal to CB, and goes South with him
* CB arrives in the South with Armageddon and Zerzura. He doesn’t yet begin an all-out guerrilla war with Kusaila, but starts establishing himself
* He incites slave rebellions, builds up covert infrastructure and bases in the rainforest, and launches hit-and-run attacks
* For now, Kusaila is still occupied fighting his enemies and Chainbreaker lets him- but in one of the hit and run attacks launched on garrisons stationed around the South, Armageddon manages to capture Hurricane
* Hurricane expects to be abused or tortured, but Chainbreaker treats him genuinely well and whilst is he is a prisoner, he’s treated like a guest
* CB starts talking to him about what the aim of the Commonwealth is and why they’re fighting and Hurricane actually understands. Kusaila has always disliked slavery and neither kept slaves nor allowed his children to keep slaves, and Hurricane already dislikes the brutality of Ethigean life towards slaves and commoners
* Crossbow also pulls up and asks to join the Commonwealth, and is accepted
* No sooner does Kusaila clear out the invading armies bankrolled and controlled informally by Sharkjaw than the Commonwealth launches a full-on attack, with its armies now properly attacking the South and genuinely partaking in guerrilla war
* Kusaila fights back- he’s actually reluctant to do so because he lowkey understands the plight of the Commonwealth, but he has to defend his country and also many of Chainbreaker’s troops aren’t as noble as he is and have been acting brutally
* Hurricane continues to speak to CB and slowly comes round to his cause, starting to genuinely share his worldview. He eventually decides that he actually not only condones, but positively agrees with their course
* CB continues to be kind and respectful to him. He’s intelligent, eloquent: he fabulously articulates why the Commonwealth is doing what it’s doing and why the Empire of Ethagis and Kingdom of the South are evil
* Hurricane recalls how vehemently the lords clashed with Kusaila when he tried to limit their abuses on the common people and ultimately, like CB, concludes that hierarchical states based on aristocratic rule will always be corrupt
* Now converted to the Commonwealth cause, Hurricane becomes a general for Commonwealth armies, willingly defecting to their side and leading armies against Kusaila
* Crossbow serves under his command and is quickly promoted by Hurricane when he sees her masterful aim and ability to command
* It’s a really tragic situation: Hurricane loves his father. He doesn’t want to fight him. But he can’t fight for a cause he no longer believes in; his own beliefs and principles impel him to fight for the Commonwealth
* Hurricane knows the South really well and as a result kinda turns the war in the Commonwealth’s favour, which wins him the respect and loyalty of all of the Commonwealthers
* He feels really guilty about fighting his father and hates it, but it’s a noble cause
* Eventually, the Commonwealth attacks Kahina in an all-out battle, and Hurricane and Kusaila face each other directly. Neither can bring themselves to kill the other, and they kinda just break down and Hurricane goes away
* Regardless, the South are still losing the battle. Armageddon charges through the city to the castle and nearly kills Kusaila, but at the last moment Elphensbane and his troops show up to defend Kusaila and turn the tide of the battle, causing the Commonwealth to retreat back north and Armageddon to fall back too
* Zerzura dies in the Battle of Kahina and CB and his forces straggle back to their bases in the north of the rainforest. Chainbreaker’s life is endangered in the retreat but Crossbow protects him, using the repeater crossbow and her excellent aim to cut down enemies
* Chainbreaker is grateful to Crossbow for her service and she becomes an advisor and friend to him. They are mutually attracted to one another and soon become romantically involved
* Hurricane *also* dies in the Battle of Kahina and Kusaila is completely consumed with guilt as he’s basically killed his own son
* Both Chainbreaker and Kusaila are good people, and reflect that the Commonwealth and the South both share a common enemy: the Empire of Ethagis. In another life, they could have been allies
* But due to the losses of both Zerzura and Hurricane that’s impossible now. Both want a bloody battle to avenge their losses, and Kusaila marches north
* Crossbow is given command of all the army’s archers, a role which puts her into contact with Armageddon as he also has a command role. They get on well, basically united by mutual hatred
* The two armies engage at a town called Kulema, just on the border with the Springlands. The two armies fight desperately and exhaust each other. It seems as if the bloody Battle of Kulema will settle into a stalemate
* But then another army enters the field: this one is Sharkjaw’s. This whole time, he’s been waiting. Allowing all his enemies to fight each other, getting rich off of selling them arms, then taking over with his elite retinues when they’re weak
* Now, he’s consolidated control of all the Springlands and Eastern Commanderies, whilst nobody’s been paying attention
* He’s been drilling his troops this whole time, moulding them into an elite fighting force, and now they swarm upon the battlefield and decimate both armies
* Sharkjaw captures both Chainbreaker and Kusaila, although Armageddon + Crossbow escape. He gloats, explains to Kusaila that *he* sent that letter to him in the savannah so as to turn him on Luzon. Sharkjaw’s enemies always been the Commonwealth (for obvious reasons) and the South (Kusaila refuses to sell him arms or trade slaves so he can’t control it)
* He explains that with the death of CB, the Commonwealth will collapse, and with the death of Kusaila, the South will be defenceless against Sharkjaw and thus have to swear allegiance to him and pay him taxes
* He executes them both, and both bodies fall into the same grave
* Armageddon escapes with all the remaining rebels. There are maybe 25,000 remaining. Everyone else has been killed.
* It’s a far cry from when the Commonwealth had 150k citizens just before the Battle of Azariad
* Armageddon is symbolic of Chainbreaker’s id. He is a man constantly tormented by the rage and hatred he feels as a consequence of being a slave. He genuinely despises all non-commoners as a result: lords, asthans, jagals, even the gentry
* And now Chainbreaker’s dead. He didn’t agree with Chainbreaker a lot of the time: his strategy, tactics, statecraft, diplomacy, everything that wasn’t just putting soldiers in the field and slaughtering their enemies, venting his deep primal hate
* But Chainbreaker was his oath brother. They worked on the same oar in the galley for months and it bonded them irrevocably. He didn’t agree with how CB was conducting the war, but was undyingly loyal to him and wouldn’t interfere
* Even when soldiers started putting kids’ heads on spikes and he agreed with them for doing it, he still defended CB when they seemed mutinous
* Now his brother is dead. He is deeply hurt, deeply angry, and most importantly: uninhibited. The one check on his behaviour is gone. This is a man who even *Shadowbound* noted would do messed up things if he were unchecked
* He stages a grand meeting with all the remaining citizens of the Commonwealth in which he gives a speech, essentially asking to be made the new Grand Marshal. Armageddon is no dictator: he hates non-commoners, but feels affection to the Commonwealth and would not supersede their wishes
* But his election to Grand Marshal was always a foregone conclusion. He was CB’s lieutenant, his oath brother, his best friend, top advisor, one of his generals. Everyone pretty much unanimously elects him
* He makes Crossbow his lieutenant. He wants her martial prowess and glorious aim on his side to defend him in his campaigns, and besides they’re friends
* But whereas Crossbow expects Armageddon to remake the Commonwealth somewhere else, Armageddon has other ideas
* Armageddon doesn’t *want* to build a new country. He doesn’t want to deal with taxation, bureaucracy, admin, diplomacy, economics, siegecraft. He wants war. He wants violence.
* Sharkjaw killed CB, so in revenge Armageddon decides to take his remaining soldiers and just rampage around the Springlands and Eastern Commanderies, killing all non-commoners they encounter in a Dessalines-style campaign
* Indeed, Armageddon and Jean-Jacques Dessalines closely parallel each other
* The Commonwealth becomes an army without a state and just starts killing. Armageddon and most of the remaining soldiers are so hateful and angry that they’re OK with this
* But Crossbow is *not*. She whole-heartedly supports the mission and ideals of the Commonwealth, but she’s a Chainbreaker figure not an Armageddon figure
* She’s an idealist who wanted to construct a better society. Violence, she always knew would be the necessary means of building that, but her actions are fundamentally motivated by idealism and not hate
* Chainbreaker was the exact same. The whole point of all these wars was just to strengthen, secure, and continue the independence of the Commonwealth. He wanted to build something, not burn it all
* Eventually, Crossbow deserts Armageddon. There is a particular incident that catalyses this: around a dozen asthans in the Springlands willingly hand one of their cities to Armageddon, saying that they hate Sharkjaw and are secretly sympathetic to his cause
* Armageddon thanks them but says that they’re still asthans, has them hanged, and ‘cleanses’ the city of all non-commoners or slaves
* Crossbow takes a few thousand like-minded citizens with her. She doesn’t attempt to kill any non-commoners she just lays low and finds some random forest to camp in for a while
* Armageddon is furious- but he’s always furious. It doesn’t really change what he’s doing and the loss of a few thousand people doesn’t bother him because he’s not thinking like a general trying to achieve a goal, he’s just lashing out
* Ironhand takes the throne from Lord Morningstar and becomes Shurhath. He takes over Lord Morningstar’s old allegiances so controls all the continent bar the Eastern Commanderies, the Springlands, and the South
* His first priority has to deal with Armageddon. He simply cannot allow a group of ~20,000 hardened and motivated rebels to indiscriminately slaughter people
* It’s difficult for him because he actually hates slavery and the hierarchical and unfair nature of Ethigean society, but Armageddon is just wreaking havoc and also if Ironhand refused to stop him his lords would probably rebel against him
* Ironhand’s authority is vast amongst the Ethigeans and some superstitious lords actually think he’s more than human, but they’re so frightened and angry at Armageddon that if Ironhand didn’t act, they’d be induced to do something
* Ironhand prepares to engage Armageddon, but he doesn’t need to lure him into open battle or deploy any skilful generalship against him: Armageddon willingly wheels his army to attack Ethagis’ army
* This is kinda suicidal. There’s no way Armageddon’s unprofessional army will be able to stand up to a numerically superior force with iron-armoured heavy cavalry, abundant light cavalry, and lots of disciplined commoners
* Armageddon deep down knows this but doesn’t care. His motivation is not to establish a new state like Chainbreaker’s was: it’s just to fight and inflict harm to the people he hates
* In the ensuing battle, the Commonwealth under Armageddon is decimated. Armageddon, armed with his classic warhammer and on horseback, takes out a huge number of Ethigean asthans and lords, but eventually an arrow hits his hamstring and he tumbles wounded to the ground
* Ironhand comes across him, on horseback alongside some of his most trusted followers, who circle Armageddon on their steeds
* Even now Armageddon is a threat. He lashes out blindly and hatefully, a wounded animal, and manages to kill one of the people surrounding him by knocking him off his horse and beating him to death
* Armageddon sees Ironhand and starts screaming abuses at him. He tells him that although he may *think* he’s a good person, he is ruling and enforcing an objectively evil rule. Ironhand is Shurhath of Ethagis, a state which enforces oppression of 95% of the population, slavery, torture, despotism, etc
* Ironhand responds that he actually agrees: the Ethigean system *is* in fact evil. But that he’s a good man in a bad system trying to do what he can to bring the downtrodden slaves and commoners justice
* For a second, Armageddon thinks about this, and just for that second his face, usually contorted by wild rage, softens and turns neutral. In that split second, Ironhand, acting lightning fast, beheads him
* The battle is won. Many prisoners are captured from the Commonwealth. The Ethigean lords want to have them all crucified, but Ironhand refuses and just treats them normally as prisoners of war
* Crossbow and her five thousands or so citizens are all that remains of Chainbreaker’s great dream. She knows that she won’t be able to stand up to the Empire of Ethagis and that her forces will be crushed
* But she also hears that Ironhand refused to crucify all the captured prisoners, and this gives her hope. Perhaps this man can be reasoned with?
* They also have a common enemy: Sharkjaw. Ironhand no longer has the manpower to tackle Sharkjaw’s informal empire. He’s manoeuvred himself throughout this entire series to silently consolidate power, and now he’s kinda invincible
* He cannot be killed by a conventional army: but Crossbow, the greatest crossbowman in the continent, may be able to kill him William Tell style. She also wants to do this for obvious reasons
* She decides to approach Ironhand at night and talk to him in person. She knows this is probably suicidal as she’s the leader of a slave/commoner revolt but she will need his help to get close to Sharkjaw and she has faith that Ironhand may be amenable to talk. She brings a dagger and plans to kill herself is shit goes sideways as otherwise she’d for sure be tortured to death
* But she finds that Ironhand not only is amenable to talk, but actually *sympathises* with Chainbreaker’s dream of a better, equal world. Crossbow is shocked and delighted- she’s speaking to the Shurhath of Ethagis, the ruler of this state she despises, and he’s actually saying he WANTS to help
* They work out a deal. Ironhand will get his troops to escort her to Kacharias, and she’ll assassinate Sharkjaw with her repeater. In exchange, Ironhand will use the Ethigean navy to ferry her troops to an uninhabited island east of Ethagis, where she can remake the Commonwealth and build a better world
* The lords of the realm HATE this plan. They hate the Commonwealth and here they find that not only will Ironhand let them go, but he’s going to PERSONALLY FERRY THEM TO FREEDOM.
* But Ironhand justifies it masterfully by reminding them it’s their only realistic shot at killing Sharkjaw and also…he’s Ironhand. It would take something more hateful than this to cause a rebellion. If Ironhand had supported Armageddon or outlawed slavery, they would rebel, but this is just about acceptable
* Cyzinian meets Crossbow again briefly before she leaves. Cyzinian obviously despises her for being the leader of the Commonwealth- but he can’t deny to her that what she told him was correct. Satisfied, she walks away
* Crossbow is escorted to Kacharias and uses the hills and woods to creep silently to Sharkjaw’s keep, living off the land. She eventually assassinates him with a bolt and then runs cross-country out of Kacharias before meeting Ironhand’s troops again to escort her back
* Sharkjaw’s empire collapses without him, and Ethagis is able to reconquer the Eastern Commanderies and Springlands without resistance. The lords here would rather be ruled by Ironhand than Sharkjaw and Armageddon’s killed the more independent-minded ones
* Ironhand meets with Panthercaul and afterwards decides that the South should be granted independence. Again, his lords despise this and again, Ironhand justifies it to them by claiming that they can’t afford another war (with the South) at this time and it works because he’s Ironhand
* Ironhand uses the realm’s navy to ferry the Commonwealthers to and fro the island east of Ethagis whilst he rebuilds. He says a genuinely amicable and mutually respectful goodbye to Crossbow and they shake hands, as equals
* Crossbow finds her island. It is totally empty and fertile. She sets about rebuilding a new society (although the fate of it is unknown) setting out to create a better state, a republic where nobody has to bow to anybody and nobody will be tortured, crucified, or made to be afraid

#### Strand 2: Lacaideon | Lacaideon; the Blackfish; Hurricane; the Hammer of Ilyzor; Shadowbound; Tarantula; the Revenant; the Grizzly Falcon; Lord Morningstar; the Sword of Semidon; Elphensbane; Armageddon; Sharkjaw; Crossbow

* Assur Laqi, sobriquet the Blackfish, is a Mighty Lord who uses Lacaideon as a naval constable, leading soldiers on ships, typically in anti-piracy operations
* Lacaideon is charming, handsome, an excellent fighter- he is a figure of very high social status in the Delta. He’s a good man though, and deep down he feels like his life doesn’t really have meaning. None of his confidantes get or relate to this though, so he kinda just suppresses this
* Assur and Lacaideon have a highly amicable relationship. Assur seeks likeable on the surface although keener readers will note a hidden cunning to him
* As Chainbreaker defeats the Dragonfly’s expeditionary force, he foolishly orders the Blackfish to mobilise so as to defeat the rebels: when the Dragonfly suddenly dies, the Blackfish seizes the opportunity to declare himself Shurhath and declare war on the crown
* The Blackfish is a very wealthy man as the Delta is Ethagis’ trade nexus, and he commands the largest navy in the realm- he is a significant threat
* But he’s in a difficult situation as he’s at war with both the Crownlands *and* Aedemon and ideally wants them to fight each other
* The Blackfish is cunning: he uses his ships to blockade Semidon and try to starve it, whilst having his army defend the Delta rather than invade the Crownlands itself
* He also has another idea: the Blackfish has lots of ships but a small land army, and he notes that the South has just declared independence
* The Blackfish knows that the Reefshark and Kusaila’s son Hurricane are oath brothers, and he uses this link to make a deal with Kusaila
* He approaches Kusaila with an offer: give me regiments, and I’ll give you ships to repel the Abyssinians with
* Kusaila accepts, and sends Hurricane north with several regiments, sending Luzon with him as he doesn’t trust him near a source of power
* The Blackfish has ordered Lacaideon to enforce the blockade, a brutal and deeply unethical job where he knows he’s starving innocent civilians out
* The trauma of this gradually changes him. He changes from a charismatic, confident leader into an increasingly cold and reserved shell. Guilt and stress bear down on him
* Meanwhile, the Blackfish decides to strike at the capital- he does this now for four reasons
* The bulk of the Crown’s forces are engaging Soul Eater and so preoccupied; the Scorpion has just declared himself Shurhath and the Blackfish wants to move on Semidon before he does; there will be a tidal anomaly approaching soon where the eastern River Antavar’s currents will flow the opposite direction, allowing him to strike; Hurricane and Luzon have just arrived to fight and it’s unlikely they’ll stay long
* Assur moves west and launches his assault on the capital: the First Battle of Semidon begins
* Lacaideon is playing a pivotal role in the attack, leading the ships on the River Antavar in the amphibious assault
* But the brutality of the attack causes Lacaideon to enter a nervous breakdown, paralyzing his ability to command just at the apex of the battle
* Lacaideon is passively suicidal at this point and therefore has refused to wear metal armour, opting for a lighter armour that won’t really protect him
* An arrow sinks into Lacaideon’s thigh and he falls off his ship into the river, hitting his head on some debris on his way down and falling unconscious. Due to his refusal to wear armour, he doesn’t drown
* The Blackfish’s assault loses discipline and direction without Lacaideon at the helm. Although some troops have already landed at the beach, the offensive loses momentum and these forces are eroded by crown troops
* Assur fights on but is wounded and surrounded by his immediate guard, before bleeding out and dying- the assault, already losing traction, collapses in on itself
* Luzon sees this and abandons the attack and instead, with Hurricane as the Reefshark’s brother, has him claim the fleet in the absence of both Assur and the Reefshark, sailing it south to defend Southern waters
* The Crown has won, but it’s a Pyrrhic victory: much of the armed forces have been destroyed and central authority over the realm is now nearly non-existent
* Before, most of the realm was still nominally loyal to the crown but now imperial suzerainty just dissolves. The realm fractures into independent warlords
* Not all these warlords want to be Shurhath- in fact, most don’t- but they declare independence because they don’t want to pay tax to a central authority which can no longer really enforce its collection, and they want to expand their own lands and powers
* The nation collapses into complete war and chaos
* Lacaideon drifts up the River Antavar, injured and unconscious but alive. As the tidal anomaly begins to ebb, his body is spotted by a boatsman. Lacaideon is dressed sort of similarly to the semadai by coincidence as he’s not wearing his armour, and the boatsman decides to row him up the river and ransom him to them
* The boatsman takes an unconscious Lacaideon there, where Batay comes down and meets him. Batay is known by the sobriquet the Hammer of Ilyzor, renowned for his martial prowess but also his piety and gentle nature
* He can clearly tell that Lacaideon isn’t a semadai, but he’s a really good guy and figures to himself that this boatsman probably needs the ransom money anyway as he’s poor and maybe this lord that’s washed up can be patched up as they’ll probably die otherwise
* He takes Lacaideon up the mountain and starts nursing him back to health
* Lacaideon wakes up
* But he wants to leave as he doesn’t believe that he’s worthy of being saved after what he’s done. Batay basically starts lowkey giving him therapy and talking through it
* Lacaideon recovers physically and tries to leave, but Batay asks him to stay so he can better mentally as well as physically
* But Lacaideon is furious at himself for what he’s done and can’t stand that Batay doesn’t hate him as well as he thinks be deserves it. He kills some livestock and repeatedly begs Batay to hate me but Batay says he can’t ‘because I understand you’
* Lacaideon just breaks down crying. Batay consoles him and he agrees to stay for a bit
* Batay decides to give him a new sobriquet, something neutral and a blank slate so he can remake himself. He decides to give him a really simple one, just based on the colour of Lacaideon’s clothes: Indigo. Lacaideon likes it and ‘the Reefshark’ is no more
* Gradually, under the martial and emotional tutelage of Batay, he starts to recover. Mentally, he begins to forgive himself but also just become a wiser, more self-aware person who gains a better worldview
* As the semadai are a warrior order, Batay knows how to fight, and starts teaching Lacaideon as a way of keeping him occupied and healthy
* The semadai are the most technically skilled fighters in Ethagis and know a huge range of different techniques
* Lacaideon has trained from birth to fight with dual blades so coupled with the skill and technical advancement of the semadai he genuinely starts to become unstoppable
* He starts to talk to some of the other semadai as well. Most are generally decent, but not as wise and kind as Batay. Many pay more attention to the hierarchical aspect of religion rather than the empathy aspect
* Lacaideon does also befriend a member of the semadai who also has a sobriquet: Typhoon
* By part 6, Lacaideon is doing well and seems to actually be pretty happy. He’s the greatest fighter in all of Ethagis- possibly the world- but is also a very wise and emotionally healthy person
* Batay strongly condemns slavery, unnecessary violence, inequality, and hierarchy- very unusual views for this time, but he imbues them onto Lacaideon, who kind of always thought slavery was messed up and the rigid class hierarchy was unfair anyway
* Batay serves as a mouthpiece here for a good worldview to be transferred to the reader, one in line with the principles of happiness in my Understanding Happiness podcast
* Lacaideon, despite everything, is actually happy
* He is violently ripped from this newfound peace when the Revenant sends the Reaper Guard to assassinate all the semadai
* The Revenant does this because he genuinely sees himself as the spawn of Kalawi, and because Kalawi and Ilyzor are enemies and the semadai are sworn to Ilyzor, he feels instinctively that he should deploy the Reaper Guard against them
* Lacaideon’s life is saved by Shadowbound, completely unbeknownst to him- Shadowbound has actually been watching him for a while now, with everyone being totally unaware of this
* Shadowbound doesn’t manage to save Batay’s life, however. Tarantula personally kills him, and he dies in Lacaideon’s arms
* Distraught and shocked but unsure whether the semadai mountain is safe anymore, Lacaideon decides to go home. Typhoon, by now strongly attached to Lacaideon, wants to come with him. Lacaideon accepts, and they journey to the Delta together
* Lacaideon, still going by the sobriquet Indigo, arrives at the Delta and sees how dangerous and devastated it all is. The death of the Blackfish caused a complete collapse of central authority and law and order there, with crime skyrocketing
* The individual lords barricaded themselves in their keeps and the common people suffered. Then, Lord Morningstar arrived and sucked out what remaining wealth anyone had
* Whilst travelling, he does manage to find one lord which is actively patrolling his domain with soldiers in order to try and protect the commonry. Lacaideon approaches him- this lord is the Grizzly Falcon
* It takes a while for the Grizzly Falcon to recognise him- he looks the same of course, but has changed so much since he was the Reefshark. Eventually, GF invites him into his keep
* GF basically explains that all this ruin is caused by each lord stubbornly pursuing their own independence and hiding away behind their walls. Lacaideon decides that this needs to end and the lords of the Delta need to collaborate
* He sends ravens from GF’s place to every lord (with GF’s enthusiastic consent) and invites them to a meeting. He tries to convince them to work together to some kind of coalition. Lacaideon used to be a naval constable and he was good at it. He therefore tries to convince the lords of the Delta to pool their ships together to create a unified anti-piracy fleet, with Lacaideon at the helm
* The lords are of course sceptical. They do not want to commit any of their material resources, they are wary of sacrificing their independence, they are especially wary of Lacaideon offering to lead the fleet as it could easily be a power play
* The whole thing is carried through by Lacaideon’s personality. There’s just something about him- he seems genuinely trustworthy and well-meaning. Eloquent, serious, understanding human nature well from his conversations with Batay, he carries himself in the right way and says the right things
* Lacaideon takes his small fleet and begins patrolling the Delta, actually protecting commoners, allowing trade to restart, and combatting the endemic piracy
* The men under his command become extremely loyal to him. Not only is he doing something really good, not only does he actually care for their wellbeing, but by now he’s the greatest fighter in Ethagis, and in a martial culture that’s essential. He’s also a great constable and has a natural faculty for leadership and personal magnetism
* He also makes a point of bringing various lords into the field with him and having them command. This both assuages their egos and also allows them to work with him directly, where many become captivated by his strength and virtue of character
* Lacaideon frees any slaves he comes across during this operations, a source of controversy amongst the lords whose ships he’s using as they support it
* A few recalcitrant lords decide to enslave some dozens of people whom Lacaideon frees from raiders. Lacaideon, furious, confronts them, wherein they remind him that he has no formal authority over them and they can do as they like
* Lacaideon agrees- they haven’t violated any authority. However, he explains, throwing his gauntlet down at them, they have violated his honour, and for that he challenges them to a duel
* To silence their protests, he tells all three of them that they can attack him *at the same time*. They do so, and Lacaideon kills them all within seconds. This earns him the respect- and the fear- of the other lords, and nobody takes any slaves again
* Lacaideon is starting to make the Delta a functioning place again, when a new threat arrives- one greater than anything ever faced before
* The Revenant arrives with thousands and thousands of ex-soldiers, all intent on bringing about an apocalypse and ‘ending civilisation’. They start systemically destroying everything in the Delta
* The lords of the realm are *terrified*. The situation is a desperate and bleak one. They all convene in a great council, and Lacaideon convinces them to pool their armies and fight the Revenant in a war with a single force: a force led by him
* Again, they initially resist this strongly, but Lacaideon being Lacaideon and the Grizzly Falcon being the first to agree, they do so. The Delta and the Revenant go to war
* The Revenant is not just brutal: he is genocidal. His explicit aim is to wipe out all people and buildings and he does so systematically. The Desert Ripper did horrible stuff on a similar scale to towns that defied him but he at least spared places that surrendered. The Revenant simply doesn’t care
* Lacaideon campaigns against him but he genuinely has thousands and thousands of suicidal disciples under his command
* Lord Morningstar, the ostensible Shurhath of the realm, finally turns up. He’s arrived, after pursuing his own political needs and gaining the allegiance of the West, and takes formal command
* But everyone can tense the tension between Lord Morningstar and the Deltamen, who despise him, and crucially that between LM and Lacaideon
* It’s not that Lacaideon himself is disrespectful or disobedient to LM: he’s genuinely trying to avoid politics, and accepts LM’s authority. There’s a tense moment when LM pulls up and demands everyone bends the knee, and they look to Lacaideon to see what he does. He bends the knee, and everyone follows
* It’s just that Lacaideon is the real leader amongst these people- they looked to *him* to deicide whether they should bend the knee, and they would have fought behind him he had refused
* Lacaideon *knows* these people, he’s been there for them in their time of need, he has every single quality of a leader
* LM by now has become increasingly tyrannical and arbitrary, and although he has rulership over everyone else fighting, nobody likes him. A few instances occur which heighten tension between LM and his loyal soldiers and the Deltamen, although for now everyone stays united
* With LM commanding troops on land and Lacaideon commanding the ships, they can now jointly slay the Revenant and his horde. The revenants have seized every fishing, trading, or sailing vessel they’ve found in the Delta and have a kinda ramshackle fleet of their own, although the Revenant, Tarantula, and other key figures have actual warships
* The two sides muster all their forces and engage in the Battle of the River Antavar- this is it, a final great glorious battle, good vs evil, order vs chaos. The stakes are absolutely fucking immense- if they lose, the Revenant could literally end the world
* It’s a hyper-climactic battle, taking place at night. LM leads the fight on land, Lacaideon on the water. He fights through the various ships of the Revenant’s fleet, heroically leading his men at the vanguard, cutting down dozens of revenants
* Ships are burning and the fire lights his way. He makes his way across ascending bigger ships until he reaches a warship. He finds Tarantula, who taunts him about killing Batay and telling him that he did it on the orders of the Revenant
* Lacaideon gets genuinely angry and kills Tarantula brutally. His death is almost poetic: as a member of the Reaper Guard he crucified civilians for suspected treason, and Lacaideon now uses his own daggers to nail him to the mast of the ship by hands and feet
* Lacaideon storms the flagship of the Revenant’s fleet- he’s angry so he’s charged ahead so rapidly he’s overtaken all his soldiers. On the flagship, he calls for the Revenant to show himself
* The Revenant uses a blowgun to shoot a dart dipped in hallucinogen at Lacaideon, who starts tripping the fuck out. The Revenant does this essentially just to toy with him. In Lacaideon’s eyes, the sky- already red and black from fire and night- starts adopting crazy patterns
* All the revenants swarm him, and he cuts them down one by one. But because he’s literally high, he imagines that he’s killing the Revenant over and over just for him to repair his limbs and come back to life
* The Revenant meanwhile is circling him, taunting him, saying that he cannot be killed. He also says that even if he were killed, it wouldn’t make a difference: he’s become a symbol now, an idea. He represents the primal human urge to dominate and destroy
* As long as evil men exist in the world- and they always will- the Revenant will therefore always be alive, he will act through every evil man in all space and time. Kalawi, the demon god that supposedly resurrected him, will make a thousand Revenants, all evil men who simply want to destroy
* Lacaideon finally kills all the revenants and faces the man himself, the Revenant: but he’s got it through his head that he can’t just cut him as he’ll just repair his body and come back to life- he has to burn him so all that’s left is ash
* The flagship itself is on fire due to a stray flaming arrow and has been very slowly burning and sinking for a while now. Lacaideon disarms the Revenant, drags him to the flames, and holds his head in the fire
* This is absolute *agony* for Lacaideon as he’s burning his (left) hand to do this. But he sticks with it because he believes that this is the only way he can kill the Revenant
* The Revenant himself has a neuropathy and feels no pain- but this only applies to his peripheral nervous system. Once the fire reaches his brain and lights up the pain centres there, he screams and writhes in agony
* When he dies, Lacaideon hallucinates a swarm of flies leaving his head and snaking up to the sky, wherein they form a giant version of Kalawi’s scowling head. Lacaideon, in utter agony and totally exhausted, nonetheless draws his sword and prepares to fight
* But the head shatters as all the flies disperse, and Lacaideon passes out from the pain
* He awakes in the GF’s keep- specifically in his master bedroom. Typhoon is sitting next to him and says he’s working on a prosthesis for his hand and it’s nearly finished. He smiles- they won the battle! The burn wound has been cleaned and bandaged
* Typhoon tells Lacaideon that he’s an absolute hero now- some superstitious commoners, he mentions in an off-hand way, see Lacaideon as the return of the folk hero Ironhand
* Lacaideon enters the great hall and is given wild ovations by everyone there, who adore him. Elated and devoted, they all proclaim him Mighty Lord of the Delta. Just then Typhoon comes out with Lacaideon’s new prosthesis- it’s made of iron and is highly complex as Typhoon has been shown from the beginning to be a great craftsman
* One of the lords excitedly exclaims he truly is Ironhand the return of the folk hero- they all start chanting ‘Ironhand! Ironhand! Ironhand!’ He has his new sobriquet
* *This* is the individual that Shadowbound’s prophetic vision was talking about- this is the Ironhand that Azor mentioned. Shadowbound, completely inexplicably, saved his life and therefore allowed all this to happen
* Lord Morningstar outside hears this elated chants and scowls, riding off back to Semidon, pissed off that they aren’t chanting *his* name. He clenches his fist: perhaps a war is coming
* Ironhand gets to work fixing up the Delta, which he does well. News of his greatness and goodness has spread across the entire realm, and various influential figures flock to his service
* LM starts to grow paranoid about the popularity of Ironhand and the prosperity of the Delta. He tries to stifle it by levying crushing taxes and putting loads of censors there to watch what’s happening- this succeeds in pissing everybody off
* Many Deltamen murmur about making Ironhand Shurhath, but for now he refuses. He genuinely doesn’t want war or power
* But the murmurs grow louder and people start flocking to his service from across the realm, having heard tales about the heroic lord who slew the spawn of Kalawi, who can fight better than anybody alive, who supposedly is the reincarnation of the old folk hero and a demigod sent by Ilyzor
* One of these figures is the Sword of Semidon, Cyzinian. Cyzinian has spent the last few homes at home, rebuilding his keep and replanting his fields. He has been gathering the nearby, scattered commoners and protecting them from the revenants successfully, creating a small pocket of peace in the chaos that north-east Ethagis
* Cyzinian told himself he wouldn’t serve anybody who didn’t deserve it: but from what his commoners have told him about Ironhand, he may deserve it
* Cyzinian comes to see Ironhand, basically just to suss him out. Ironhand receives him and they talk
* Ironhand mentions something about his religion and how it has guided him to be a just ruler and Cyzinian scoffs. Cyzinian is a man of, to use Nietzschean terms, ‘master-slave morality’ and he disdains what he sees as the softness and weakness of the Way
* Ironhand asks him to elaborate and Cyzinian speaks his mind, basically being super disrespectful to the Way and kinda to Ironhand. Ironhand, wordlessly, throws down his gauntlet: he challenges him to a duel
* This is an absolute shock to everyone, including Cyzinian. NOBODY challenges Cyzinian to a duel- he’s an absolute monster in a fight. Cyzinian, surprised but also invigorated by this unexpected challenge and show of strength, accepts
* Ironhand ensures that the fight takes place in a random courtyard and nobody watches it- this disappoints everyone but Ironhand is Ironhand so everyone accepts it. Typhoon alone understands why Lacaideon does this: if there are witnesses to Cyzinian’s defeat, the latter will feel humiliated and never serve Ironhand
* If the series has a TV show then throughout the series whenever Cyzinian prepares to fight his theme will play and the beat drop will be when Cyzinian’s greatsword first collides with another and he starting kicking ass
* Cyzinian’s theme plays in the build-up to the battle but right when the beat’s about the drop and swords collide, Lacaideon manages to kinda knock him off balance and the theme just cuts out, replaced by total musical silence and just the sounds of steel and the combatants
* Cyzinian gets more and more frustrated and starts attacking in powerful, brutal strokes but Lacaideon just coolly parries each time, tiring out his opponent, completely fluid and meeting Cyzinian’s strikes like water
* Lacaideon eventually disarms Cyzinian and places his blades to his neck. Cyzinian refuses to yield and demands to be killed. Lacaideon refuses and just waits. Cyzinian growls in rage and makes to attack and kill Ironhand
* Twice, Ironhand avoids this attack, gets Cyzinian in a totally vulnerable position, refuses to kill him, and provokes another attack. Eventually, a tired and confused Cyzinian asks why he won’t kill him
* Lacaideon basically says that he just doesn’t want to, and if Cyzinian refuses to yield that’s fine: he’ll just refuse to kill him. He helps him back up and tells him to rest in his castle overnight
* Eventually, all the rumours about Ironhand being a future Shurhath make their way back to Lord Morningstar, who demands that Lacaideon present himself at Semidon to be questioned
* Everyone understands that this is a death sentence and encourages Lacaideon to actually declare himself Shurhath and seize the throne. He decides to do so
* As Shurhath, Ironhand is now responsible for the whole realm. He notes what’s happening with Sharkjaw and Armageddon but decides that Lord Morningstar is the priority
* Many, many lords flock to his banner. Elphensbane turns up as well and pledges allegiance to Ironhand, seeking to have a more just ruler than Lord Morningstar. So do all the lords of the Western Commanderies and the Mighty Lord of the Marches
* Ironhand accepts and prepares to move into the field: but the thing is he needs a general
* Lacaideon is a great admiral and naval constable but he’s not a great land general. He needs one, and by process of elimination as all the better generals are dead by now, his best bet is Cyzinian
* Cyzinian by now, however, has agreed to serve under Ironhand, deeming him a worthy Shurhath, and becomes his lieutenant
* Ironhand doesn’t actually like Cyzinian and sees him as too brutal and not empathetic enough- an honourable man, but not a good one. However, he acknowledges that he needs a general
* He also acknowledges that a Shurhath’s lieutenant needs to be someone militarily skilled and intimidating in combat. Whilst he much prefers Typhoon and would have Typhoon as his number one confidante and advisor, he recognises the need to have Cyzinian actually be his lieutenant
* Ironhand and Cyzinian take to the field. Lord Morningstar battles against them but even though he’s a much, much better general, he can’t win any battles because all his troops just defect to Ironhand
* They too have heard the tales of a demigod in the Delta and of his kind and noble deeds, and they have suffered under the rule of Lord Morningstar. LM is forced to withdraw to Semidon and prepare for one final battle
* In the Fourth Battle of Semidon, Ironhand’s forces are victorious. Ironhand kills Lord Morningstar himself in a climactic duel in the throne room. The Grizzly Falcon dies in the battle
* Ironhand assumes the throne
* He does not control the whole continent, however. The Eastern Commanderies, the Springlands, and the South are all nominally independent: everybody knows they’re ruled by Sharkjaw though
* Armageddon is also wreaking havoc in the Eastern Commanderies. Under Armageddon, the armies of the Commonwealth have engaged in a campaign to indiscriminately slaughter all non-commoners they find
* The Commonwealth has ceased to occupy any towns or cities and is now essentially a large, marauding army
* Not everyone in the Commonwealth is happy with this new turn of events: Crossbow and several thousands Commonwealthers have detached from Armageddon and are laying low, licking their wounds and watching the coming fight between Ethagis and Armageddon
* Armageddon, unlike Chainbreaker, has no strategy for allowing the Commonwealth to survive in the face of being so outgunned by Ethagis. He seeks only to vent his deep, primal rage
* Ironhand is sympathetic to the ideals of the Commonwealth but acknowledges that he has to stop this marauding army: both because *everybody* under his command virulently bays for their blood and also because by slaughtering all non-commoners, he believes that they have ethically erred
* Armageddon shows no qualms about engaging Ironhand in open battle, despite this being suicidal
* The Commonwealth and Ethagis engage in a vast, violent final battle, lit by a red sunset. Armageddon butchers huge numbers of Ethigean soldiers, but eventually catches a stray arrow in the hamstring and falls down
* Ironhand and his closest followers ride up and surround him. Even now, Armageddon still manages to kill one of them and is clearly very dangerous
* Many in Lacaideon’s army want to capture him and torture him to death, but Lacaideon just dismounts and solemnly and respectfully kills him. Armageddon’s forces are massacred. Many thousands of prisoners are captured
* Again, many in Lacaideon’s army want to torture all of them to death, but he just orders them to be treated like normal prisoners-of-war
* Now for the final task: to unify the realm by eliminating Sharkjaw
* But Ironhand and his followers realise in horror that by now they kind of can’t. They’re completely militarily exhausted and have barely any manpower left. Meanwhile Sharkjaw, throughout this whole series, has been building up a massive army of highly trained heavy cavalry and infantry
* Sharkjaw throughout this whole series has been this quiet, scheming mastermind, pulling all the strings and setting everything in motion. And now we see the culmination of his efforts: he’s consolidated a third of the realm and has the power to conquer the rest of it
* Ironhand is mulling over this impossible situation when he is approached by Crossbow, asking to meet. In secret, Lacaideon does so
* Crossbow explains that she and her thousands of followers, currently hiding out in the Eastern Commanderies, represent a branch of the Commonwealth that disagreed with Armageddon’s methods and genuinely just want to leave
* She says that in exchange for allowing them to do this and ferrying them outside of Ethagis with his fleet, she will assassinate Sharkjaw
* This is kind of a win win for both sides: Crossbow wants to kill Sharkjaw anyway and Ironhand wants to let Crossbow and her followers go anyway
* Ironhand does genuinely agree with the Commonwealth’s ideals and it seems that Crossbow truly hasn’t lost sight of them. He sees how good Crossbow is with her repeater. This is a crazy idea and probably won’t work…but it might
* Ironhand decides to agree. The lords under his command *hate* this because they violently hate the Commonwealth- but the situation is clearly desperate, the deal only goes through if Crossbow succeeds, and it’s mf Ironhand. Some of them believe he’s an actual demigod
* Crossbow makes the attempt to kill Sharkjaw and miraculously actually succeeds. His empire collapses and Ironhand swoops in with his soldiers and gets everyone’s allegiance
* He meets Panthercaul and talks with him, learning about the hardships of the South and their desire for independence
* Ironhand is a genuinely benevolent man and to everyone’s surprise actually grants it. Ironhand feels it’s immoral to force the Southerners to remain in a state they despise and to deny them their desire for freedom after so long
* It would also be completely horrible to initiate *another* war. Ironhand cares about the common people and just thinks they’ve been through enough wars and bloodshed. Why would he allow thousands more to die just to bind another people to his empire that will probably just rebel and start another war when they can
* Again, this is not a popular choice and people call him crazy, but he justifies it by saying that a rebellious South cannot be conquered and occupied as they can wage guerrilla war from the rainforest
* With this settled, he uses the realm’s fleet to ferry Crossbow and her followers to the unoccupied islands east of Ethagis, to allow them to build a new state, a republic, in which there will be no lords or slaves and humanity can try to construct a better world
* This aligns perfectly with his moral sensibilities and he is pleased. Crossbow of course really likes and respects Ironhand by this point and promises to correspond with him regularly and give him updates
* Ironhand rules over a realm at peace, and tries to rebuild
* In the epilogue it is revealed that he has passed many reforms aimed at improving the lives of commoners and slaves, and is diligently promoting a new legalist ideology that promotes rule of law and applying the law equally to all people regardless of social status
* He commissions an inventor to create a primitive printing press and uses it to mass-produce a book of his memoirs, *The Deeds and Chronicle of Ironhand*. It becomes the most famous piece of literature in all Ethagis and is mass-produced, helping to promote literacy across the realm and his legalist ideology and views
* Lacaideon dies in his bed. As he dies, he sees a vision of Ilyzor, who congratulates him for his goodness, tenderly places him on his great back, and walks into the light
* The last lines of the series are Ironhand asking ‘Where are we going?’ and Ilyzor responding ‘To see Batay.’

#### Strand 3: The Hydra and the Sword | the Dragonfly, Scython, the Sword of Semidon; Jackdaw; the Red Mantis; Wraithwreaker; Harpax; Lord Morningstar; Firewalker; Steelbird; the Blackfish; Soul Eater; Crossbow; Lacaideon

* Firewalker (currently no sobriquet) in his village in the western Crownlands talks to his sister and discusses how he wants to live a better life than just a peasant. He longs for glory, social status, and fame. As war is the only mechanism for social mobility in Ethagis, he longs to fight
* Ethagis is currently ruled by the Dragonfly, an extremely mediocre, lazy, and decadent ruler
* He presides over an indulgent court paralyzed by factional conflict and intrigue, a focus on etiquette and ritual at the expense of action, and with no real leader at the helm
* The factions of the court vie for influence over the Shurhath and compete for wealth and honours and neglect the actual governance of the realm
* The power of his dynasty has been steadily declining for about a century now, with imperial authority gradually weakening. The Shurhaths have grown successively weaker and more interested in sampling court luxury than ruling, and corruption/misgovernance have risen greatly
* The growing decentralization of the realm has led to local rulers (i.e. the great lords of the realm) consolidating strength and influence
* Many magnates are now strongly considering challenging the Shurhath’s right to rule and taking over. People have a general sense of war being imminent
* The Dragonfly has a son: Scython. He’s a young, impressionable child, and is kinda like a blank slate. He’s not a cruel child by any means, and is fairly sweet, but isn’t particularly kind or brave. Fundamentally, he can be manipulated
* The Dragonfly is a lazy and self-indulgent man and spends his days at court in decadence rather than raising his son. Nobody has really raised this boy properly
* The person who Scython really holds as a father figure is the Dragonfly’s body and lieutenant: Cyzinian Rath, the Sword of Semidon
* Cyzinian is extremely loyal and genuinely means well for the boy, but his skillset is entirely one of combat, leadership, and traditional masculinity. He has none of the emotional intelligence or communication skills required to raise a child
* Cyzinian also intensely disdains court culture, politics, and intrigue. He therefore doesn’t want to influence or mould the boy or play a part in court life. He doesn’t see his role as providing a role model or mentor for the boy- just a bodyguard
* He also has this idea that a ‘man’ should be independent of external influences and should find their own way in life- like he did
* All these ideas are highly counter-productive because other courtiers and court factions WILL try and manipulate the boy for political purposes, but Cyzinian is a man of his principles and doesn’t yield
* The major political players at court are Jackdaw, the Red Mantis, and Wraithwreaker. All these characters have various allies at court and jockey for influence
* Jackdaw is the court jester. Because of this, he has lots of informal influence over the Shurhath and his son and can kinda go where he likes as well. He is known for speaking truth to power and being able to insult powerful courtiers with impunity
* Jackdaw is probably the least malign major player as he does care about the realm and people, but cares about himself more and still very much wants power
* The Red Mantis is the Grand Lord Censor of the Realm and is arguably the most influential politician at court, with lots of plans, schemes, and allies
* He is also the courtier with the most retinues exempting the Shurhath and his lieutenant Cyzinian
* The Red Mantis is a bad guy, and although right now he’s just playing politics, readers get a sense that there’s some kind of bigger darkness in this guy that’s waiting to be released
* The Wraithwreaker is the Grand Seneschal of the Imperial Harem who administers the Shurhath’s concubines. This *also* gives him lots of informal influence, and a quirk of this position is that it answers directly to the Shurhath and is subordinate to nobody else
* Wraithwreaker has a whispered reputation for poisoning his enemies that earned him his sobriquet. He is also a eunuch and heads a large eunuch faction in court
* He’s not *as* influential or powerful as the Red Mantis but still very much so. He’s also evil, but in an Umbridge way rather than a Voldemort way. He is cruel, petty, and rigidly upholds the Byzantine court etiquette so as to call out anyone who fails to abide
* Another player is Harpax. Harpax is the court inventor and is working on a repeater crossbow that can fire multiple bolts before needing to reload. He’s also a good military tactician
* Harpax isn’t a major player but is still relevant. Cyzinian dislikes *all* these political players but can stand being around Harpax as he at least has military usefulness
* The Dragonfly’s birthday is coming up. In a first in Ethigean history, he wants to have slaves fight for his amusement
* This is widely seen as a bad omen but he’s the Shurhath so Sharkjaw starts shipping out slaves to him. A group of these slaves led by Chainbreaker escapes and starts leading a rebellion
* The court doesn’t really get what’s happening though and just sees it as a big crime wave. The Dragonfly dispatches a small expeditionary force of a few thousand
* Some lord from the Autumnlands called Lord Morningstar has just arrived at court to join the civil service, being appointed a messenger. He rapidly capitalises on his position to build up political allies
* The expeditionary force straggles back and says it’s not a crime wave but a massive slave revolt
* Cyzinian is furious: he’s a quintessential aristocrat and firmly believes in the values of hierarchy, authority, and deference. He finds the idea of a slave revolt repugnant and really wants to lead a force to crush it
* But the Dragonfly’s a lazy little shit and doesn’t wanna leave the palace to go deal with it, so he tells the lords in the Eastern Commanderies to mobilise and deal with it
* He is also convinced (partially) by Lord Morningstar to mobilise Aedemon and the Blackfish as well. Morningstar recommends this solely to provoke a war, which will provide an opportunity for social advancement
* They do so, and one day overnight two vastly important things happen at once
* Firstly, the Shurhath dies, making Scython the new emperor (the court officially says that the Dragonfly died to a stroke), and secondly a woman called Purgatory is released
* Purgatory was previously jailed in the darkest underground cell of the palace by the Red Mantis for committing some great, unspecified crime that is currently left to the reader’s imagination. She is discussed covertly in hushed whispers as an extremely dangerous woman
* Nobody even knows her name, and they refer to her either by her sobriquet or just by ‘the witch’
* Firewalker enthusiastically joins the war in the crown armies
* Scython is now Shurhath. Immediately the major political players at court engage in a complex game of manipulating him. Cyzinian, trying to stay above politics, doesn’t partake, but the manipulation of Scython begins in this part and various players encourage his dependence, paranoia, and resentment. He gets a little more messed up in this part
* Aedemon and the Blackfish declare themselves Shurhath, claiming that they are mightier warlords than Scython and thus deserve the throne. They’re already mobilised, so start marching
* The South also declares independence, and the desertmen in Nagal start sporadically raiding other lordships nearby
* Scython’s court care about self-preservation so encourage Scython to stay put at the palace where it’s safe rather than campaigning
* Cyzinian is highly loyal to Scython- he’s been raised all his life to be loyal and base his self-identity on loyalty- and really wants to stick with him to protect him
* He badly wants to go out and campaign and lead armies, but Scython could be attacked by the same assassin so sticks with him
* He still takes over all the military functions of court though- he has to, as Scython has zero competence in warfare himself. He raises various armies and puts them under command of his generals, including the famous fighter Steelbird
* As Soul Eater has invaded the Crownlands, Cyzinian has Steelbird lead an army against him, whilst the other armies stay close to Semidon now for defence, waiting to anticipate everyone else’s move
* Lord Morningstar, allied with Jackdaw, seeks to engineer a palace coup. He aims to keep Scython on the throne and just eliminate the Red Mantis/Wraithwreaker so Cyzinian doesn’t participate
* The coup nearly succeeds but is thwarted by Wraithwreaker. Morningstar escapes, however, taking the imperial crown with him and fleeing to the Autumnlands
* He gives it to his liegelord, the Scorpion, in order to advance himself politically. The Scorpion then declares HIMSELF to be Shurhath, giving the crown a third enemy
* The rest of the realm is still nominally loyal, however- nominally. In reality they’re just kinda spectating what happens rather than commit soldiers to the imperial cause
* Cyzinian is furious at the crown being stolen, but it’s fine he can just have a replica made
* MEANWHILE THROUGHOUT THIS PART Steelbird has been deployed by Cyzinian to engage Soul Eater in the field, and is beating him. He reaches Naraka and surrounds the city
* Firewalker gains his sobriquet in the siege. He volunteers to be a sapper to undermine the walls. The enemy burn the tunnels but Firewalker RUNS THROUGH THE FLAMES to capture an enemy soldier so he can gain intel. For this, he’s made a sergeant
* Purgatory eventually convinces Steelbird to defect and he does so. Cyzinian is furious but defence-wise it’s fine cos Soul Eater needs to engage the Juggernaught now anyway
* The Blackfish decides to attack Semidon. The First Battle of Semidon is a victory for the crown, but only because the Blackfish’s admiral, Lacaideon, has a nervous breakdown mid-fight
* Cyzinian, showing his full prowess as a general and fighter, defends the city victoriously
* The victory is a Pyrrhic one, though. The crown’s army has been shattered and central control over the empire kinda breaks down
* Now, every warlord in the realm declares themselves independent. They don’t declare themselves SHURHATH, but just that they’re independent and no longer paying taxes to the crown or recognising their authority
* This effectively means that for now, the Empire of Ethagis no longer exists as a political entity
* Cyzinian frantically tries to raise new armies in the Crownlands. The Crownlands are a large area with a large population so this will be successful, but just for this part there’s a vulnerable period
* Luckily though the crown’s enemies are too busy fighting each other right now
* Meanwhile at court, Wraithwreaker makes a risky move: he openly defies and disrespects Cyzinian
* Cyzinian responds by grabbing his neck and lifting him in the air. Wraithwreaker appeals to Scython but he hasn’t been manipulated enough yet: he still likes Cyzinian and sees him as a father figure ish, so he takes Cyzinian’s side and tells WW to fuck off
* The manipulation of Scython accelerates. The Red Mantis and WW keep manipulating him, and gradually make him paranoid, aggressive, impulsive, and cruel by basically pouring poison into his ear
* Cyzinian notices this and it makes a him a little concerned, but for now brushes these off
* By now, the new armies have been raised and the Crownlands are safe again. Harpax has also successfully finished his repeater crossbow and starts making them, although at this stage so few exist that only Cyzinian and a few others get access to them
* Firewalker also independently leads a raid against the Delta, angered by the crown’s lack of offensive action and thus opportunities for social advancement. He steals some of Morningstar’s artillery and brings it back to the crown
* Cyzinian hears about this and is pleased, making Firewalker a jagal. Firewalker remarks, ‘So, the Sword of Semidon knows that there is a Firewalker in this world’
* Scython starts to get *really* corrupt. Paranoid, unprincipled, bloodthirsty, but fundamentally just weak, deliberately kept malleable. He gains the sobriquet the Hydra of Semidon for his viciousness
* Cyzinian feels bound to him as he’s been raised to make loyalty and service part of his identity. He’s been groomed since birth to be the ultimate retinue. But secretly he’s starting to really genuinely despise this guy and hate having to serve him
* He undergoes decision paralysis, which the bold Cyzinian has never yet faced: what do I do? Listen to his loyalty and keep serving, or his values and get the hell out of there? But he swore an oath to be loyal and the idea of breaking an oath is anathema to who he sees himself as
* Eventually, the decision is made for him: the Red Mantis and Wraithwreaker team up to organise a coup to kill Cyzinian. They turn Scython against him and go ahead, ordering the palace soldiers to kill him
* Scython now sees the Red Mantis and the Wraithwreaker as more father figures than Cyzinian so is okay with this. He emotionally and literally abandons Cyzinian
* Cyzinian knows many of the imperial retinues personally though as he’s trained and drilled all of them lots because he’s in charge of military stuff, and makes them pause by exhorting them and *also* by being a scary arch-killer who could easily cut through all of them
* Eventually he leverages his relationships with the retinues and his capacity for extreme violence to escape the court, heading east on horseback
* The RM/WW then purge the court of all his retinues overnight (they’ve been summoned for that evening ostensibly for a banquet, in reality to kill them), fearing that they might avenge their liegelord. Jackdaw is the only main player who sees this as the disaster this is
* Cyzinian and his retinues were literally the only militarily competent people in the whole court- without them, they’re super vulnerable. His retinues have been the ones commanding and officering the armies in the field defending the Crownlands
* True to form, Purgatory/Soul Eater starts marching on Semidon now and rapidly gains victories because all the competent generals just killed and the other ones are just political appointees
* But despite the imminent death, everyone at court is just too busy bickering and scheming and playing at politics to actually do shit about it
* Eventually she arrives and there’s a Second Battle of Semidon, and Soul Eater wins
* Nearly the whole court (only the high-level politically active echelons but still) is massacred by the invading troops, and the Red Mantis alone escapes
* Even the Red Mantis gets hit with a poisoned dart however and nears death
* Firewalker fights valiantly with his command but once he realises it’s a lost cause decides to retreat and turns east, intending to join Lord Morningstar as he sees the lord as a better bet to gain power
* Scython is killed trying to flee, his horse slipping and falling and crushing him. In his last moments he privately expresses regret for sending Cyzinian away and dies alone
* MEANWHILE in this part immediately after the successful coup Cyzinian is heading east from the Crownlands to the dynastic homeland of House Rath, just next to the Delta and east of the Crownlands
* He’s in a real state of psychological distress and uncertainty and is wrestling with his values here. He’s questioning what’s important and resolves to himself that he doesn’t want to serve anyone now except someone who’s really, REALLY worthy
* He gets home and finds that bandits, in the absence of any kind of law and order, have destroyed his entire ancestral estate and its agricultural productivity. He ekes out a living on food reserves
* He realises that without being sworn to a liege and receiving food from them though, he can’t actually survive. He’s never had to actually procure his own meals so has no idea how to forage for food or set traps
* It’s then that he runs into Crossbow, passing through his territory escaping Lord Morningstar
* He confronts her and she thinks fast: she really needs an escort to get back home because it’s not safe to do so by herself
* But Cyzinian is strongly disdainful of commoners and would never agree to help a commoner, so she pretends to be a noblewoman
* She says she’s been kidnapped by Morningstar and wants to go back home to her ancestral seat in the Autumnlands (in reality her village)
* In exchange for Cyzinian providing an escort, she will teach him how to forage for food and set snares- she deduces that he’ll need to learn this because she’s smart and knows he can’t get food by himself
* They start travelling there and get quite close doing so. Cyzinian actually comes to almost enjoy taking care of her as it gives him a form of meaning at the moment and Crossbow gives him some emotional guidance with his current situation
* Cyzinian also genuinely respects Crossbow as she’s brave, principled, and stubborn
* They have some nice lil adventures and Cyzinian twats up some criminals. He notices Crossbow’s really good with a crossbow (shocking) and often lets her use the repeater crossbow that Harpax fashioned
* Crossbow learns to be better at fighting and Cyzinian learns how to live off the land. More than that though, it sort of seems like for the first time he’s maybe learning some compassion as they develops an almost father-daughter dynamic
* They eventually reach the keep at the Autumnlands that Crossbow said her house owned and Crossbow veryyyy nervously explains that she lied
* Cyzinian gets genuinely furious and feels betrayed- this whole time he’s been helping a commoner? It even seems like he’s about to attack Crossbow but he snatches his repeater crossbow and aims it at him, preventing him from moving
* They have a face-off as Crossbow says she basically had to lie to him or she’d just be killed on the road (true) and that despite lying she’s the same person Cyzinian has come to like and respect (true)
* She points out how Cyzinian’s worldview that commoners are inferior to aristocrats makes no sense as all the noblemen he knew at court were slimy little shits and she’s actually a brave fighter
* This is pretty unassailable and Cyzinian will think about it later, but for now doesn’t wanna hear it and tells her to get the hell out or he’ll kill them both by suicidally charging into her. She does so and goes home
* Cyzinian, infuriated, decides to just go back home. He’s not just angry that he wasted all this time and is now in the Autumnlands, not just angry he aided a commoner, not just angry he was lied to, but he feels *betrayed*
* Despite himself, he actually liked Crossbow, so to have been lied to hurts just that much more
* Almost worse, what Crossbow pointed out was actually *right*- he did respect her far more than all the noblemen he was surrounded with in the capital, and this is a catastrophic assault on his worldview which he can’t really admit to himself
* Angry, hurt, confused, he rides back home. His dynastic homeland, remember, is between the Autumnlands and the Delta, just east of the Crownlands

[Nothing for Parts 7, 8, 9, 10]

* Cyzinian stays out of the story until much later, when we see him again in his homeland. House Rath owns land just north of the Delta and thus vulnerable to the Revenant and his depredations
* Cyzinian has heroically defended his homeland and the surrounding lands, keeping the people there alive and safe
* He hears that the threat is over: the Revenant has been slain by a man named Ironhand. Cyzinian asks his commoners: what have they heard about this man?
* They regale him with all kinds of tales, a blend of truth, exaggeration, and fantasy. How he re-united the Delta, how he commanded its armies against the spawn of Kalawi, how he slew him personally, how he gave up his left hand for his people, how he himself is the son of Ilyzor and a demigod, how he can’t be killed, how he may even *be* Ilyzor
* Cyzinian has told himself that he will not serve under a lord unless they are worthy of his service, and ever since Scython truly hasn’t sworn allegiance to anybody else
* But he thinks that he should check this Ironhand out. He seems like he meets all his criteria: strong, very skilled, noble, inspires loyalty, wise. He goes to find him at the Delta
* He meets Ironhand and they talk. He is impressed with Ironhand’s manner: he conducts himself truly like a Shurhath and inspires loyalty and deference from those around him. He notes, as everyone else does when talking to Lacaideon, that this is a man who has been through a lot and has come out of it a very unique man
* But it’s also clear that Cyzinian and Lacaideon have different value systems. Cyzinian carries a Graeco-Roman conception of morality whereas Lacaideon has a Buddhist conception of morality
* Lacaideon’s much more about kindness and empathy than Cyzinian, who’s about honour and masculinity
* Lacaideon mentions something to do with his religion and Cyzinian involuntarily scoffs. Ironhand asks him what’s up and Cyzinian roasts Ironhand’s religion and by extension Ironhand himself
* A silence descends on the court. People do not disrespect Ironhand like this, but what will he do? Arrest Cyzinian? Will he even be able to, given that Cyzinian is such an intimidating fighter?
* Ironhand, to everybody’s surprise, throws his gauntlet down: he’s challenging Cyzinian to a duel. Cyzinian is also surprised: NOBODY has challenged him to a duel in over a decade. The last time he duelled someone, he fully split them in half
* Cyzinian’s also almost pleased though. He’s pleasantly surprised at Ironhand’s daring- he’s kinda thinking ‘hmmm maybe I underestimated this guy’ but he wants a challenge and some action
* Ironhand takes Cyzinian to a courtyard to duel but it’s a private courtyard and he tells everyone to get on with their work. He doesn’t want any witnesses because he doesn’t want Cyzinian to feel humiliated
* Cyzinian initially thinks it’s because IRONHAND wants to save face and he teases him about it, but Lacaideon gives him a look in response and he just KNOWS it’s not because of that, and for a second he just thinks ‘what am I getting myself into?’
* They duel and Lacaideon, as soon as swords collide, disrupts Cyzinian’s balance. Cyzinian notices this and is angry- nobody has got one up on him in combat in recent memory. Lacaideon continues to match his strikes seemingly effortlessly and Cyzinian gets more and more frustrated and humiliated
* He hits Lacaideon with more and more force, hammering down vast blows, but Lacaideon is like water, calmly dodging and parrying and tiring Cyzinian. He eventually disarms him entirely and Cyzinian feels shock. He expects to be killed but Lacaideon spares him and asks him to yield
* It is against every instinct Cyzinian has to yield. It is a core part of his identity that he does not yield. But he’s also genuinely shook: how did this guy beat him?
* He tells Lacaideon that he’s going to attack him as soon as Lacaideon moves his sword from his neck. Lacaideon does so, and Cyzinian does so. Again, Lacaideon almost immediately gets his sword to Cyzinian’s neck and refuses to kill him, and Cyzinian refuses to yield
* The whole sequence plays out again, except this time Ironhand doesn’t ask him to yield and just announces the duel is over. He does not gloat or tease Cyzinian at all, but acts entirely solemnly. He helps Cyzinian up and tells him to spend the night at his castle and rest
* Stunned, Cyzinian accepts. He goes to bed and thinks to himself. His worldview has taken a hard knock- he is no longer the greatest fighter in the realm
* But then he comes to respect Ironhand. If Ironhand had gloated, or if his defeat had been witnessed, he would grow furious with humiliation and storm out, but none of that happened
* Instead, he sees that Ironhand did indeed best him and resolves that although he initially thought Ironhand weak because of his beliefs, Ironhand can’t be weak if he’s able to best Cyzinian
* Cyzinian decides that Ironhand deserves his service, and after a few days approaches Ironhand and pledges fealty to him
* Ironhand, to Cyzinian’s surprise, offers to make him his lieutenant. Unbeknownst to Cyzinian, Ironhand doesn’t really want to do this as he sees Cyzinian as brutal, but he acknowledges that Cyzinian’s generalship will be needed to beat Lord Morningstar and that he needs an ‘enforcer’ as many of his edicts he knows will be unpopular with the lords
* Cyzinian is deeply honoured and accepts. Cyzinian has been raised his whole life to be loyal and transfers this loyalty to Ironhand, pledging sincerely to always further his interests and never defy him
* Cyzinian leads Ironhand’s armies in the Crownlands to Semidon. On Ironhand’s orders, he frees any slaves captured in battle, doesn’t take any other slaves, and treats prisoners of war respectfully
* He doesn’t agree with these measures: Cyzinian is all about hierarchy and does not wish to curtail slavery, but he obeys Ironhand’s commands despite personally disagreeing with them
* Ironhand seizes the throne with Cyzinian as his lieutenant. Cyzinian is genuinely proud to serve him and really respects him
* Cyzinian is one of the myriad lords clamouring for Armageddon to be stopped and the Commonwealth massacred
* Ironhand agrees to stop Armageddon and the two engage each other in a massive climactic battle wherein the Commonwealth is decisively and totally defeated and Armageddon killed personally by Ironhand
* Ironhand explicitly orders his forces before the battle to take prisoners. The lords of the realm, thinking that all the rebels will later be crucified, agrees
* Ironhand, to everyone’s shock and anger, orders they be treated normally as regular prisoners-of-war. Cyzinian is one of the lords who wants all the rebels to be crucified- torture and death is standard practice in Ethagis and indeed all of pre-liberalism human history for treason
* But Cyzinian is loyal to Ironhand and it’s here that his value as lieutenant comes out. The combined force of personality of Cyzinian and Ironhand silences dissent. Cyzinian also ensures that the lords don’t grumble about this behind his back
* Cyzinian is *also* very unhappy that Ironhand is allowing Crossbow and her rebels not only to go free, but that the realm’s navy will actually escort them to freedom. But again, Cyzinian truly respects Ironhand and although he dislikes these divergences in judgement, he is generally very pleased with what Ironhand does and just tolerates it
* Cyzinian actually runs into Crossbow again before she leaves to assassinate Sharkjaw. Cyzinian has very mixed feelings
* On the one hand, he still hates her for lying to him and he HATES her for not only joining the Commonwealth but LEADING it (!!!). He would kill her, but she’s under Ironhand’s protection
* They talk and Crossbow, defiant as ever, criticises Cyzinian for his brutality. She also challenges him to disagree with what she told him earlier about his worldview not making sense because she was braver and more noble than 99% of all the noblemen he’s dealt with
* Cyzinian cannot bring himself to accept this because he can’t deny his worldview. At the same time, he cannot deny what Crossbow has said- it’s completely true. He also lacks the eloquence to respond to her criticisms
* Cyzinian hates her but can still admit to himself that she basically meets all the criteria to earn his respect: bravery, principles, self-discipline, resilience, martial skill. This gives Cyzinian lots of internal conflict because she’s a woman and a rebel
* He also knows to himself that she’s the only real chance of beating Sharkjaw because the Ethigean armies are too depleted now after all their fighting and there are no deus ex machina assassins present like Shadowbound
* Crossbow succeeds and Ironhand does indeed take her and her followers to safety. Meanwhile, Cyzinian is campaigning around the realm enforcing Ironhand’s authority. He is proud to be serving Ironhand and is essential in projecting his power and authority across the realm whilst Ironhand himself is ruling in Semidon

#### Strand 4: The West | Elphensbane; Hazin; Lanna; Juggernaught; Valorous; Purgatory; Soul Eater; Steelbird; the Desert Ripper; the Darkstar; Panthercaul; Lord Morningstar; Lacaideon

* House Atheas rules the south-west. The patriarch of the dynasty died in the war against the Abyssinians and his wife died of grief soon after
* Only Hazin and his younger brother are left, both unhappy and lonely although genuinely benevolent rulers and good people. Hazin is depressed and has no motivation to do anything and his younger brother is forced to act on his behalf
* When the Dragonfly dies, neither House Atheas nor the Savannahmen have no desire for war or power and stay (nominally) loyal to the crown. Hazin’s parents’ death have left him too depressed for action and Elphensbane is a young, inexperienced ruler
* He’s ~18 years old, old enough to rule without a regent but still really young and his advisory council kinda start usurping power
* He doesn’t really know anything about rulership so decides to read up on it in the castle library, where he finds Lanna in the castle library reading there too
* Lanna is the castle’s apothecary but those close to her know she’s also a herbalist/healer and a sorceress. Magic isn’t real in this world but many believe it is and she has the personal magnetism and mystique- as well as the herbal and folk knowledge- to sustain this belief in her
* She’s in the library reading about herbs when Elphensbane walks in. He has no clue who she is and has never met her but has a really nice conversation with her where he feels heard as a human being for the first time in ages
* Elphensbane feels really, really lonely at the moment and he genuinely enjoys and appreciates connecting with this person. He’s a good man and doesn’t care she’s a commoner as well
* He admits that he’s having problems keeping his council in line, especially as the Nagalens are launching raids on the savannah and he doesn’t really know what to do
* She advises bold action and tells him to actively try and fight them. In the meantime, she can try and talk to Hazin and see if she can cheer him up
* Elphensbane really likes this advice and resolves to mobilise his forces and attack
* The Juggernaught is one of the lords of the Western Commanderies. He rules his domain with an iron fist but commoners support him because he dispenses justice against everyone in the realm and applies the laws to lords as well
* He is an *extremely* good general, the second best in the realm behind Lord Morningstar. The reader is never told the specific hierarchy of generals in the realm but based on the descriptions of LM, Juggs, and Kusaila they can figure it out
* Juggs runs his domain not as a feudal bureaucracy, as the realm and other lordships within it are structured, but as a fully autocratic hierarchy. To use a Chinese parallel, the realm and its other fiefs are governed according to fengjian, whereas Juggs is like Qin Shi Huang and the junxian system
* His territory is divided into simple administrative districts run by viceroys, with these officials rotating at regular intervals so they can never build up a powerbase
* Reorganising the structure of his domain in this way would have been perceived as too independent for former Shurhaths but the Dragonfly is pretty useless and doesn’t do anything
* He has a highly authoritarian personality but also an older sister whom he genuinely respects and looks up to, and has since he was young
* There are rumours that Juggs is a bastard, and because he wields a bastard sword he’s mockingly called by his enemies ‘the bastard lord with a bastard sword’
* The Juggernaught mobilises immediately for war when the Dragonfly dies. He has been training and drilling his men for years now so they mobilise very quickly
* His oath brother, Valorous, is with him at the time, and agrees to be his lieutenant
* The Western Commanderies are still *nominally* loyal to the crown but independent or so, if the Juggernaught is to be Shurhath he demands their loyalty
* Most of them refuse to give it and the Juggernaught determines to embark on his first campaign
* He is the second best commander in the realm, known as somewhat of a master tactician. Cautious, determined, frugal, beloved by his soldiers, a strict but genuinely fair ruler: he blazes through them
* The northernmost lord, seeing the power of the Juggernaught, then is the only one to willingly submit to the Juggernaught without a fight
* With the Western Commanderies consolidated under his rule, he prepares to attack the Crownlands but there is another key obstacle: Aedemon. He readies his troops, resting briefly, before attacking them
* Purgatory rightly recognises the Juggernaught as the vast threat he is and that whilst he still has less resources and wealth than Aedemon currently, this is like to change
* In the desert, at the end of this part we see a single scene from Nagal: the Desert Ripper arrives back in Nagal, having heard some time ago that the realm was at war and immediately heading back home from exile
* MEANWHILE THROUGHOUT THIS PART, we gain some insight on what’s happening in the savannah and desert, owned by House Atheas
* Elphensbane is leading the defence of the savannah and it’s kinda going OK although people are still getting hurt and Elphensbane isn’t a great general. He’s campaigning and has his brother and Lanna with him
* Hazin still isn’t motivated enough to do anything. He hates himself for his inability to act and feels super guilty making his brother do stuff on his behalf, but this just worsens his depression
* Lanna’s out there with him as his personal apothecary but is also acting as a herbalist healer for the troops, working with the field doctors. She has a reputation amongst the troops for being a woods witch and sorceress, kinda like Zhang Jue
* However, the soldiers believe this magic isn’t insidious but rather makes her a great healer, able to cure patients and soldiers of grievous wounds. Soldiers really like her for her personality as well as she’s very charismatic and she’s a source of inspiration and morale to them
* She’s a religious woman and strongly believes in the value of helping others, no matter their social status, and justice in the world, believing (just as Batay does) that all people are equal
* Elphensbane is a good guy who kinda already believes this deep down, so her articulation of these beliefs doesn’t fall on deaf ears
* Lanna and Elly get romantically involved
* There is a brief lull in the sporadic raids from the desert and Elly hears from captured Nagalen prisoners that the Desert Ripper has returned to Ethagis and that his father Undagai is dead
* Raiding has stopped for a moment as a power struggle occurs in Nagal wherein all of the Desert Ripper’s siblings and their children are killed. The Desert Ripper promises the desertmen that he shall conquer all of Ethagis for them in a rousing speech, and they enthusiastically hail him as their chieftain
* MEANWHILE THROUGHOUT THIS PART the Juggernaught engages in another campaign, this time against Steelbird, who’s now working for Soul Eater- it’s sort of a stalemate, however
* The Juggernaught definitely outclasses Steelbird, and classically uses the Empty Fort Strategy against him, as Zhuge Liang fictitiously did, but can’t actually get past Aedemon
* The stalemate ends when Steelbird, after having a dispute with Soul Eater over a woman, defects in the night as he fears he will be killed. He tries to kill Soul Eater in the process, but Purgatory’s machinations manage to prevent this
* The Desert Ripper begins his conquest, moving his army into the Eastern Commanderies first as its disunited and offers the least resistance, although sporadic raids by small detachments of desertmen continue in the savannah and Marches
* DR starts demanding everybody’s allegiance. They say no and he doesn’t just sack recalcitrant cities: he totally annihilates them, slaughtering men, women, children, and babies
* The Juggernaught is still fighting Purgatory. To break the stalemate and to try and tip the battle in her favour before Steelbird reaches Juggs, she blinds nearly all of the prisoners she’s captured and sends them all back to Juggs
* Juggs euthanises them all so as not to undermine morale amongst his men and to avoid having to feed them all. He compensates their families greatly for this
* Steelbird reaches the Juggernaught and defects to his service
* With Steelbird now suddenly on side, the Juggernaught takes advantage of the momentary disorder in Soul Eater’s forces to charge through Aedemon at maximum speed to reach the throne
* Just then, however, he gets news that the Desert Ripper has seized control of Nagal and is planning to take over all of Ethagis. Not only that, he’s currently massacring everybody in the east
* The Juggernaught has a golden chance to go east here and probably take the crown, but he realises he has a duty to the realm and that there’s no point winning the throne if a maniac is massacring his people on his land
* Steelbird pleads with Juggs to get the throne first- he’s not like Juggs and doesn’t really care about defending the people as much as he cares about securing his own power
* But Juggs refuses. He wheels his army west to face down the Desert Ripper
* The Desert Ripper is something of a Genghis Khan figure, and has hordes of zealous, highly effective cavalrymen at his command. They are lightly armoured, but highly mobile, disciplined, and dangerous
* They act incredibly brutally, sacking cities and then annihilating their populations. One time, famously, he lines up everyone over the linchpin of a wagon and cut above the top of the wheel, beheading or dismembering anyone taller than 90cm
* The Juggernaught immediately seeks to build a coalition against him of all the domains neighbouring the desert, which is successful because the DR has been so brutal and destructive
* The coalition is coercive though, with people being forced to swear allegiance to him. Th Mighty Lord of the Marches does this, under duress, as does Elphensbane, who lacks the psychological strength to stand up to Juggs
* The desertmen do some more evil shit, including diverting a river into a city to capture it. Like the Mongols, if a city *does* surrender, DR will generally just stroll in, kill its rulers, replace them with his own, and stroll out. But also like the Mongols, resistance was met with unparalleled brutality- a brutality exacted on all the citizens as a result of one lord’s refusal to surrender. The desertmen are portrayed accurately as the villains they are
* Steelbird is a great fighter but not great at strategy and keeps wanting to engage them head on in a great battle in the desert. Juggs is strongly against this as he knows they have the advantage in an open field and admonishes Steelbird’s desire to display his fighting prowess at the expense of sound strategy
* The Juggernaught recruits crossbowmen and longbowmen en masse and utilises combined arms tactics to defeat the DR in a big battle, wherein a small force lures the desertmen near a forest and from there, loads of foot archers protected by wooden stakes and shield-bearers attacked
* The DR doesn’t die and his forces aren’t defeated, but it is a setback and his soldiers are discontented. He’s heard that Steelbird is an unreliable general that can be convinced to be defected, and basically just flatters him
* Steelbird, tired of his advice being ignored by Juggs and being admonished for his presumptuousness, agrees to lead Juggs into a trap. He goes to a valley and sends a messenger to Juggs that he’s in trouble and needs urgent help as his troops are being slaughtered
* Juggs, wanting to fight alongside his men, pulls up with an army with his lieutenant the Valorous into the valley, only to find nothing wrong. Suddenly, the desertmen stream down from the sides of the valley and charge into his forces, decimating them
* Juggs and the Valorous are captured and Steelbird reveals his deception, standing by the DR’s side. The DR gloats and is about to sacrifice them to his sun god, but Juggs manages to grab the sacrificial knife, kill the Valorous, then himself
* Juggs’ coalition of the Marches, Western Commanderies, and the savannah collapses without him at the helm, but many of the former soldiers in it join Elphensbane’s banner as they all really want to kill the DR
* Elphensbane suddenly has this influx of new soldiers under his command and he’s grateful and honoured for this but he’s just not an amazing general and is stressed and upset and doesn’t know what to do
* Lanna is really key in helping him keep his mental health. She and Elly talk to Hazin and just spend time with him, and he seems to get a little better
* Elly’s obviously still sad, afraid, and angry tho, and a continuing theme is that he misses having a family (as his parents died)
* But the situation is still bad: the Desert Ripper is winning and he’s just tearing shit up as the Mongol Empire did. He conquers all the Western Commanderies and makes his way south to the savannahmen
* He also tries to have Steelbird killed, sending soldiers in the night to have Steelbird stabbed under his blanket. However, Steelbird was suspicious of this and got one of his retinues to hide in his bed under his blanket instead. Steelbird flees east, deciding to see Lord Morningstar
* The Ripper’s defeat of Juggs has made him extremely arrogant and he starts genuinely believing himself to be the son of the Sun God worshipped in Nagalen religion
* He begins sacrificing captured prisoners to the sun and gradually becomes convinced that it’s his divine destiny to conquer all of Ethagis and bring it all under his yoke. He sends his hordes against the savannah, seeing them as his biggest obstacle
* The situation for the savannahmen is slightly helped by an unexpected ally: Kusaila. He’s here with an army of Southerners to avenge the death of his son and attack the Ripper
* Elly and Kusaila, despite being like chalk and cheese, actually get on really well. They’re superficially very different but are ultimately two good people in shitty situations trying to do what they can for the good of those under them
* Elly opens up about how he feels lonely and misses having a family and Kusaila opens up about his own feelings. It’s all very nice and touching
* Kusaila’s also a really good general- the 3rd best in the country- and sort of shows Elly the ropes, teaching him tactics, strategy, organising and deploying forces, etc
* His job is difficult because the savannah is mostly open territory and it’s where the DR’s swarms of light cavalry are most effective. Kusaila has troops construct traps and ditches all over the entire country and has every town fortified
* This is good in and of itself but crucially it shows Elphensbane how to be a good general
* Meanwhile, Elly and Lanna are strongly in love at this point and Elly wants to marry her, but knows that if he marries a commoner there’ll be a massive backlash from the aristocracy
* Kusaila eventually gets an anonymous letter (actually from Sharkjaw, although we only find out much later) telling him that Luzon has launched a coup in the South and seized the throne
* Angry and betrayed, he needs to return to the South- his grief tells him to stay and avenge his son, but his duty to the South tells him to go and restore his rule from the roguish Luzon. But he says an emotional goodbye to Elly first
* Some Southerners choose to stay with Elly, however, wanting to kill the Desert Ripper. Kusaila allows this and goes back
* The Desert Ripper notes that Kusaila has left and seizes his chance, launching an all-out assault on the capital, Qahira. The Battle of Qahira is a desperate and bloody affair, and Hazin watches it all from his castle, hating himself for not doing anything and just so, so angry
* Eventually, as the tide of battle turns against the savannahmen, Hazin decides that he’d rather kill himself fighting than just watch everyone else die in his name. Wearing barely any armour, he sallies out on a horse and starts rallying his men
* The sight of him and his bravery inspires the troops, and in a final heroic effort manages to repel the DR, who angrily goes back north to recoup
* Hazin’s people hail him and it feels *good*, genuinely helping him feel better. Even though e’s not exactly happy, he begins to regain executive function and starts campaigning with Elphensbane, inspiring his troops
* Hazin starts launching hit and run attacks on the *Nagalens* using his own cavalry, a shocking audacious move that everybody adores him for. To do this, he and his men wear very minimal armour to maximise mobility
* The men hail him with the sobriquet ‘the Emerald Champion’, and he starts properly recovering from his depression and regaining his personality back
* However, on one fateful day the DR lures him into a trap whilst he’s launching his own raids, and Hazin and Elphensbane are both captured along with their best men. The DR gloats and proclaims he’s going to sacrifice them
* Hazin appears to lose all his newfound confidence and completely submit, breaking the hearts of all his men who have seen his character arc. But at the last moment, he reveals it was all a ruse, and punches the DR in the temple, temporarily knocking him out
* Chaos ensues. Hazin, Elly, and the savannahmen hop back on their horses and charge as fast as they can. The DR recovers consciousness and chases them, but fails to keep up and the savannahmen return to Qahira
* Tragedy, however- the savannahmen notice that Hazin has been struck in the back by a stray arrow and has been bleeding out. Elly hurriedly tries to get him a doctor but it’s useless
* Hazin, however, is happy- in his last moments he found his old self back and feels good that he’s restored hope to his men. He tells Elly that he loves him- and also Lanna, and says that they should be together. He dies
* Elly vows to kill the DR once and for all and marches on his capital, Efitra. He starts to besiege it and threatens to assault it. The DR cannot accept this and goes to attack
* The Battle of Efitra is a hugely climactic one, and Elly manages to win but only because of everything Kusaila’s taught him about generalship. He captures the Desert Ripper and has him burnt alive. He has all of the Desert Ripper’s raider cavalry executed and maintains a garrison in Efitra to ensure the rest of the Nagalens stay loyal
* Everybody is extremely ecstatic and loves Elly for doing this. Elated and currently untouchable, he formally marries Lanna. The lords don’t really protest as he’s just basically saved Ethagis
* But Elphensbane realises that this victory was only possible due to Kusaila’s help, and wants to pay him back
* He knows that Kusaila’s currently at war and resolves to help him. Many of the Southerners that stayed behind to fight have made oath brothers and deep friendships whilst fighting side by side with the savannahmen and thousands of savannahmen soldiers volunteer to come with
* Elphensbane reaches Kusaila as he’s fighting the Battle of Kahina. It seems as if Kusaila is about to die, when Elphensbane- utilising the one combat talent he has- throws a spear, and it lands in the skull of Kusaila’s assailant. With his help, they win the battle
* Elly and Kusaila have an emotional reunion. They pledge themselves to be oath brothers, and Kusaila welcomes Elly into his family. This is a huge moment for Elly: he’s been lonely for years now, and finally has a family. He gets along with Kusaila’s wife and remaining two kids well
* Elly privately doesn’t really like the fact that he has to fight the Commonwealth as he sympathises with abolitionism, but Kusaila’s just lost his son so he doesn’t say it
* Elly wants to stay but nearly as soon as he pledges himself to be brothers, he receives news that Lord Morningstar, the current Shurhath, has reached the savannah and is claiming its allegiance
* This is a dangerous situation: Elly is now Mighty Lord of the region and needs to be there to actually pledge that allegiance. If he doesn’t, LM might go to war with the savannahmen and thousands will die
* Reluctantly, he and his men hightail it back to the savannah
* He pledges allegiance to Lord Morningstar and LM stays the night to rest. Elly holds a feast for him. LM really alienates people during this: he’s changed from the man he was and has become more cruel, more paranoid, more tyrannical
* He angers the savannahmen and Elly but what can they do about it? There’s a moment where it looks like a fight will break out, but Elly defuses the situation and shows deference
* LM is happy with this and sees that his work here is done- the west is pacified. The South, Springlands, and Eastern Commanderies still are not of assured loyalty to him, but they can wait. The Delta needs his attention
* Elly and Lanna enjoy an interval of peace and try to rebuild
* Lord Morningstar levies large taxes on them, angering the savannahmen and eliciting rebelliousness, but so far they’re not strong enough to do anything
* When Ironhand declares himself to be Shurhath of Ethagis, many important lords flock to his banner and pledge their allegiance to him due to the unpopularity of Lord Morningstar and the popularity of Ironhand
* Elphensbane is one of these people. Lord Morningstar is universally disliked in Santai and Elphensbane personally thinks LM will be a capricious and tyrannical ruler. He would much rather throw in his lot with Ironhand
* Ironhand graciously accepts and they both get on well. Their values and ideals are very similar and Ironhand is one of the few people who genuinely doesn’t judge Elphensbane for marrying a commoner
* Ironhand wins the throne of Shurhath and Elphensbane is genuinely really happy
* Elphensbane loyally fights by Ironhand’s side against Armageddon, agreeing with his decisions and views
* He is also one of the few lords that agree that Ironhand’s treatment of Crossbow, and is pleased that the Commonwealth will be able to have a fresh start and build a better world
* Ironhand then has to handle the South. With Sharkjaw gone, Panthercaul has declared the South’s independence
* Elphensbane is the oath father to Panthercaul and therefore has a personal bias in advocating permitting Southern independence, but he correctly argues that Ethagis is not in the shape for another war and that the South is too big to be occupied and eternally subdued
* Ironhand ends up meeting Panthercaul and speaking with him. He eventually decides to permit Southern independence, believing that it would be immoral to bind the Southerners into the country that has acted unjustly to them and to a people prejudiced against them
* The South are granted independence. Many lords protest this, but Ironhand silences these protests
* Elphensbane returns home to Santai and finds out that Lanna is pregnant and that he is to have a child. He tearfully embraces her. He receives word from Panthercaul that Kahina is holding a massive festival to celebrate independence and the royal family would like Elphensbane to be present as a guest of honour
* Elphensbane gratefully accepts and is genuinely happy

#### Strand 5: Lord Morningstar and Troops | Lord Morningstar; Court of Semidon; the Scorpion; Crossbow; Arzachel; the Sword of Semidon; Firewalker; Srigo; the Grizzly Falcon; Purgatory; Steelbird; Elphensbane; the Revenant; Lacaideon

* Lord Morningstar is a minor askary lord in the Autumnlands whose liege is the Scorpion. The Scorpion is mediocre: not especially cruel, but still greedy, vain, and ambitious- certainly not kind. He does not inspire much confidence from others, but is the only Mighty Lord in the Autumnlands and is powerful
* Morningstar is the exact opposite: charismatic, dynamic, daring, brilliant. Someone who truly inspires confidence and seems like a real leader. Morningstar is the best general in the realm- but we don’t know that yet
* Despite Morningstar’s merit, he’s currently a bit of a nobody politically. His own lands and wealth is small, but through a lifetime of networking with the right people he’s managed to blag a role at the imperial court. He has a daughter but leaves her at home in peace whilst he embarks for court. The book starts with Morningstar just arriving
* It’s not an honourable one: one of the civil service court messengers, basically just passing messages between influential people in the civil service, but it’s one which a clever man can do a lot with as he’s seeing influential people
* Morningstar starts forming allies and making connections, including Jackdaw, although he antagonises the Red Mantis
* He doesn’t have any contact with Cyzinian or any military officers as he’s in the civil service, but he makes contact with some important civil service officers who are involved in the household guard e.g. the administrator who provisions them, feeds them, takes care of their armour
* When news comes back that Chainbreaker has defeated the expeditionary force, Lord Morningstar gives a rousing speech in front of the Dragonfly whilst delivering a message about the importance of taking bold strokes
* This (albeit with other factors) motivates the Dragonfly to mobilise the Blackfish and Soul Eater as well, and on the suggestion of Jackdaw he agrees to promote Morningstar to the office Jackdaw suggests
* Jackdaw suggests making him the administrator who is responsible for delivering pay to the troops: not a very honoured role but a wildly important one for obvious reasons
* The Dragonfly doesn’t really think much of this and basically agrees on an impulse
* Lord Morningstar starts making connections with the officers of the Dragonfly’s retinues
* Parallel to all this stuff with Morningstar, Crossbow (this is her sobriquet but she earns it later) is a fisherwoman in a random village in the Autumnlands
* She’s a strong-spirited person who’s good with a bow, but because she’s a woman archery is discouraged for her and her father forbids her from using his bow. Her younger brother is secretly supportive but recognises there’s not much she can do
* Before the war breaks out, people talk about how a war seems to be coming along and how it’s going to be shit for everyone
* After the Dragonfly dies, Lord Morningstar, now with significant influence over the household retinues now inherited by Scython, a totally impressionable and controllable boy
* He allies with the Jackdaw to engineer a coup, wherein he seeks to eliminate the Red Mantis and Wraithwreaker and their allies in the court. He gains the loyalty of many of Scython’s retinues
* The coup fails, however, due to the Red Mantis’ retinues and his own political allies at court occupying key positions e.g. head of the stables, giving him access to cavalry which strike down many of Morningstar’s troops
* Cyzinian, being apolitical in court intrigue, stays out of it as it’s clear that Scython is safe
* Lord Morningstar hurriedly escapes the palace on horseback, but manages to steal the imperial crown before he does so as the Jackdaw opens the imperial vault to him (his ally is the vault keeper). Jackdaw is not implicated in the coup
* Morningstar returns to his liegelord, the Scorpion, and in a dramatic ceremony presents the Scorpion with the imperial crown and urges him to declare himself Shurhath
* The Scorpion is delighted- the crown is a massive sign of legitimacy and the Scorpion is an ambitious and greedy man anyway who seeks power. He declares himself Shurhath and appoints Morningstar a colonel of a middling-sized force
* As the Scorpion is now at war, the commoners in his lands are conscripted. This means that Crossbow’s brother is conscripted as each family needs to yield one boy. Crossbow decides to dress up as a man and volunteer herself for service as an archer to take her brother’s place. She just so happens to be assigned to Morningstar’s force
* His first priority as Shurhath is to gain all the Autumnlands under his control. He asks Morningstar to use his middling-sized force to take a province to the east
* Morningstar immediately starts training the hell of his men, gaining their loyalty and adoration with the force of their personality and teaching them lots of manouevres and tactics
* This includes Crossbow, and because Morningstar explicitly tries to promote merit at all levels of the hierarchy, she gets made a sergeant of a battery of archers
* He sets up elaborate supply trains and teaches all his soldiers how to construct fortifications, earthworks, siegeworks, bridges, and traps
* Morningstar uses this massive force to defeat the province easily- but decides to keep on going and push through the whole Autumnlands
* He masterfully conducts the campaign, winning battle after battle undefeated against larger enemies used ingenious tactics based on the battle tactics of Julius Caesar e.g. at Alesia, although he only does the Alesia thing later
* Crossbow sustains a minor injury at some point and is sent to a field doctor: Arzachel, who’s PoV we start to see here. They talk, and find they both agree on the brutality and violence of war. Arzachel makes a kind of off-hand comment about how there’s no reason any of this has to happen bar to sate a few egos of some lords, and Crossbow finds it curious, but thinks little of it
* Crossbow and Arzachel become friends during the campaign though, although there are some likeable side-characters around both of them. Crossbow tells nobody she is a woman
* In fact, her soldiers think she’s pretty good, and after she shoots the helmet off some bully’s head during a dispute with a crossbow, the soldiers in her battery give her a sobriquet: Crossbow
* Morningstar now controls the entire west of the Autumnlands and the Scorpion holds the east. Morningstar is technically a vassal of the Scorpion but is as powerful as him now and only because he disobeyed his orders and conquered the whole west on his own initiative
* The Scorpion summons Morningstar to his capital, Silphax, to stand trial. Morningstar replies saying he accepts and will come- he fails to mention he’s doing so at the head of an army
* Morningstar besieges the Scorpion at the top of the hill at Silphax that the capital is built on. He builds loads of trenches, earthwork walls, watchtowers, etc. The Scorpion allows this because his main force is coming to attack Morningstar from below
* Morningstar has his soldiers construct loads of traps down the hill and *another* set of walls, and his soldiers fight between the Scorpion at the top and his relief force at the bottom
* They nearly lose but Morningstar rides out up and down the walls to invigorate his exhausted and demoralised soldiers. They love him so much that they succeed
* Morningstar reaches the Scorpion, kills him, takes the imperial crown, and declares himself Mighty Lord of the Autumnlands and the Shurhath of Ethagis
* The vast majority of the Scorpion’s troops flock to Morningstar’s banner after he gives a rousing speech and talks about how he’ll give all of them glory and plunder. They all love this and enthusiastically swear allegiance
* But Crossbow doesn’t actually care about glory. This whole time she’s been thinking about how brutal war is, and now she just starts thinking that if all this brutality and violence is done in the name of giving a few powerful lords some glory, this is wildly unfair
* But she doesn’t develop these thoughts any further. She’s clever, but has no education or political consciousness at all and this is just the way of the world
* The battle between Morningstar and the Scorpion is bloody and floods Arzachel’s medical tent with casualties. After the battle, Arzachel desperately needs some fresh air and ventures into the empty field, where he sees a dying soldier
* With great sadness, he sees that the soldier is a man of the Scorpion, and treating enemy soldiers is treason. After much deliberation, catalysed by the dying’s man agonised screaming, he decides to treat him anyway
* The dying man can’t be saved, but he has a meaningful, genuinely tender moment with Arzachel, and Arzachel is glad that he helped the dying man. The latter gives him a personal keepsake- an elephant figurine his wife gave him before he was conscripted- before he dies
* A personal enemy of Arzachel sees this and tells the doctor-general, who tells Lord Morningstar. He rides out angrily to the field and claims he’s trialling Arzachel, right there and then, for treason. He asks Arzachel bluntly if he treated an enemy soldier. Arzachel, not wanting to lie, says yes
* Lord Morningstar is about to sentence him to death but Crossbow, who is practising archery nearby, breathlessly intervenes, claiming that he had a moment of sentimentality but is an extremely competent doctor and has saved many soldiers’ lives
* Lord Morningstar agrees to let him live, if he burns the elephant figurine as evidence that he won’t let sentimentality distract him again. Arzachel does so with extreme reluctance, and never really forgives him
* Morningstar also asks to see Crossbow at his tent. He says that when Crossbow was talking, he realised she was a girl. Crossbow is all like oh shit are you gonna kill me because technically what she did is treason
* But Morningstar laughs and says no he just really wanted to talk to her out of curiosity and ask why she’s here. Crossbow explains and Morningstar is impressed with her spirit. She tells him as they part what a good doctor Arzachel is and convinces Morningstar to promote him to a sergeant-doctor
* Crossbow tells Arzachel and he’s pleased. He asks why Morningstar summoned Crossbow and she tells him- the first person she’s told- that she’s secretly a girl. She also reminisces more on how messed up the elephant thing was and how unfair it was, and then thinks more about needless an unfair ALL of this war stuff is
* Meanwhile, Morningstar wants to make a move on the Crownlands, but Cyzinian has raised another army, and he decides to bide his time and build his strength before attacking
* The Autumnlands are one of the poorest regions in Ethagis: united control of it doesn’t grant him much
* However, the Delta is the richest region of the Crownlands, and because Scython’s courtiers have manipulated him so as to forbid any excursions there, its plunder is completely ripe for the taking
* Morningstar does just this, moving his forces there and occupying the rich Delta. Remember, Hurricane and Luzon took its navy so Morningstar doesn’t get this, but it’s still a boon for him
* He forces the lords there to swear allegiance to him and they do, but he also pisses them off because he’s basically just plundering the region. He restores some law and order, much needed as government has vanished there in the power vacuum left by the Blackfish’s death, but it’s still a dangerous place
* The Grizzly Falcon asks Morningstar to stop plundering the shit out of the place and stealing everyone’s stuff. Especially as many peasants are already being plundered by bandits and have very little. Morningstar basically tells him to fuck off- this really, *really* alienates Crossbow and is kinda the last straw
* Throughout the series, Morningstar is designed to be a really likeable and charismatic character and he isn’t sadistic or overly cruel- for example, he agrees not to tell anyone that Crossbow is a woman as he doesn’t want her to get raped
* But unbiased readers will also put together that he’s not really a *good* person either and ultimately just wants power and glory, not welfare for his people
* She decides that she doesn’t want to serve such a man and whilst the Delta is super dangerous, she’d kinda prefer to just die there rather than kill people for the guy. She says bye to Arzachel and leaves camp
* She goes south and whilst passing through the homeland of House Rath she runs into Cyzinian, who has returned to his homeland after nearly being killed at court only to find it’s been destroyed
* Thinking fast, she pretends to be a noblewoman, kidnapped by Morningstar’s forces from her dynasty’s home in the Autumnlands. She says that if Cyzinian brings her back (i.e. to her family), he’ll be handsomely rewarded- she really needs an escort through these lands and Cyzinian is basically unstoppable
* She also very cleverly deduces that Cyzinian doesn’t actually know how to live off the land and to survive- if he doesn’t want to serve anyone at the moment- he’ll have to learn
* Cyzinian has been trained since birth to be a great warrior, but he’s never learned how to forage for food or set traps, and he realises he actually kind of needs her to learn this
* He decides to escort Crossbow back home and in exchange, Crossbow will show him how to forage and set traps and snares
* They eventually form a bond between them. They walk around having adventures and Crossbow has the emotional depth and intelligence to try and help him with his problems
* MEANWHILE throughout this whole part Lord Morningstar finds out that Soul Eater’s forces are tearing through the Crownlands. He decides to leave them to it: let Purgatory bleed her strength seizing Semidon and when her forces are exhausted from battle, LM will move in
* In the meantime, he squeezes all the last drops of tribute out the Delta and prepares to march on the Crownlands
* As a result, he begins to feel genuinely grateful to her and even a little compassionate, a first for the former hardened warrior
* Crossbow for her part learns to be a better fighter and gets to use Cyzinian’s repeater crossbow to great effect
* Eventually, they reach the castle in the Autumnlands that Crossbow said she lived in, and she has to explain that she lied to Cyzinian to get a safe escort back home and she’s a commoner
* Cyzinian is furious both at being lied to and personally guarding a mere commoner, and it almost seems like he’ll attack her
* But Crossbow grabs his repeater crossbow and aims it at him, holding him at bowpoint. She uses this leverage to get back home
* She gets home and finds most of her family still alive- most. Her little brother, however, was killed by marauding soldiers of some nearby lord
* Furious and devastated, she decides then to join the Commonwealth of Free Men and take revenge on all the malign lords and the brutal social system that allows them to do this
* MEANWHILE during this part Lord Morningstar is engaging Soul Eater in campaigns in the Crownlands. It’s true that Soul Eater’s sent an army to attack the Commonwealth, but he has a lot of manpower available to him and still outnumbers LM
* Steelbird arrives in the east at this point, pledging his service to Lord Morningstar and saying he wants to serve him as one of his generals. LM is smart, however- he knows Steelbird is unreliable and will only ever really serve himself
* He pretends to accept but then has Steelbird arrested, claiming that he won’t wait for Steelbird to betray him and mess up his plans. Steelbird promises his everlasting loyalty and fealty, proclaiming that he can help LM win this war and put him on the throne
* LM is tempted by this, and Steelbird would be a good general to have on side. But he’s clever, as adept in politics as he is in generalship, and reminds Steelbird that he’s betrayed every liege he’s had. LM executes Steelbird
* Firewalker also reaches Lord Morningstar and pledges his allegiance. Lord Morningstar is impressed that he managed to escape from Semidon and that he, a commoner, has earned a sobriquet
* LM rewards skill, and makes Firewalker an asthan, an honour which makes Firewalker genuinely ecstatic: he’s gone from a farmer to one rank off a lordship
* As an asthan, Firewalker is entitled to have a retinue, and is randomly appointed one from the conscripted levies of LM’s armies. He is given liegeship over another random farmer, a seventeen year old named Srigo
* Srigo and Firewalker are kind of opposites, as Srigo is shy, mild-mannered, dislikes conflict, and doesn’t have any desire for glory. Although this leads to initial conflict and mutual desire, the hardships of battle bring them very close together. Firewalker begins to feel paternal towards Srigo and Srigo in turns begins to really like and respect Firewalker
* Purgatory is viciously clever and her own twisted genius is able to match LM’s tactical genius
* They engage in a kind of chess match, and she utilises scorched earth tactics to nullify LM’s gains and force him to rely on slow, clunky supply lines and baggage trains
* In one memorable instance, LM masterfully wins a battle only for Purgatory to take all the nearby livestock, load them up with hay, light them all on fire, and prod them burning alive at the enemy to prevent them from being pursued
* Much of these games are shown thrown the PoV of Firewalker to show how this actually plays out on the ground and how people experience it
* Crossbow travels south to the Eastern Commanderies, using her repeater crossbow to defend herself. Honing her aim constantly, it becomes extremely good, and Crossbow kills some evildoers with it that she encounters on the way
* She arrives, only to find destruction there: Soul Eater’s army has by now already routed the Commonwealth of Free Men, causing Chainbreaker to head to the South
* Chainbreaker is aiming to launch a guerrilla war from there, realising that he can’t take on the Empire/the Kingdom of the South in a conventional battle
* Crossbow arrives at the South at around the same time Hurricane is captured
* MEANWHILE Purgatory dies, killed in a fit of anger by her son’s own hand
* The one obstacle that really stood in Lord Morningstar’s way has now been removed
* Soul Eater still has far more resources at LM’s disposal, but Lord Morningstar is the greatest general in the country. He can prevail even when heavily disadvantaged: what stopped him was the combo of being disadvantaged and facing someone as clever as him
* Soul Eater is leagues below LM, however, with Purgatory’s viciousness but none of her cunning
* Lord Morningstar absolutely *tears* through the Crownlands, basically charging straight to Semidon. Soul Eater tries putting armies in his way but LM bats them aside
* As he moves, thousands of people flock to LM’s banner, people who are terrified by Soul Eater and deeply despise him
* There’s something extremely heroic about LM’s campaign here. Unbiased readers will note that LM isn’t actually a heroic person after all and really just wants money, but he’s designed to be a very likeable character who the reader would likely root for
* Soul Eater on the other hand is reprehensible. This campaign and the Third Battle of Semidon are meant to be very satisfying and glorious for the reader: finally, this great and charismatic general who’s worked his way up from nothing is going to vanquish a pure evil tyrant
* The Third Battle of Semidon is a resounding victory for Lord Morningstar. His troops are highly motivated and fight because they genuinely want him on the throne and believe in him: Soul Eater’s troops fight out of either viciousness or fear
* Soul Eater’s lieutenant, the Revenant, leaves the battlefield when it’s clear LM is going to win. He takes thousands of men with him, all loyal to him and who worship him like a kind of god. LM doesn’t know this yet, however
* LM heroically charges up the palace steps and storms through the palace as triumphant music plays. This is it- the achievement of everything LM has ever wanted
* He finds Soul Eater trying to run away through the palace. He immobilises him, plucks the crown from his head and crowns himself, and gives Soul Eater a suitably grisly and satisfying death
* Lord Morningstar is now the only man who claims to be Shurhath still alive in Ethagis. Effectively, he is now the real Shurhath
* He now controls the Autumnlands, Crownlands, Delta, and Aedemon
* Firewalker distinguishes himself during the fight and LM makes him a lord: Firewalker is wildly ecstatic at this. This is all he’s ever wanted, and LM has given it to him- like all of LM’s soldiers, he becomes undyingly loyal
* Arzachel has also distinguished himself during the battle and is promoted to doctor-general of all Lord Morningstar’s forces. With this newfound influence, Arzachel is often close to the new Shurhath and thus we sometimes hear about Lord Morningstar’s doings through his perspective
* Now, LM turns his attention to bringing the whole continent/country under his banner
* He starts with the easy stuff. He travels to the Marches and its Mighty Lord proclaims allegiance without any kind of fight
* He moves southwards, to fill the power vacuum in the western third of the continent. The area is pretty devastated: the Desert Ripper really messed it up. The Western Commanderies fold to this rule immediately, unable to offer any resistance
* He hears that shit’s going down in the Delta, but he minimises it in his own head. He wants to focus on seizing the west and consolidating his rule first- the tumultuous south-east can follow later- and then he’ll deal with it. He rationalises his actions, reasoning that it’s probably just a crime wave
* We can see our formerly beloved hero LM start to change- he gets crankier, crueller, more paranoid, more arbitrary
* The Mighty Lord of the savannah, Elphensbane, is absent. He’s helping Kusaila in the South with the Battle of Kahina. LM is furious- this is a delay, and he needs Elly’s allegiance
* He sends an angry letter to him by raven threatening to go to war if Elly doesn’t get here right away, Elly hurries over, pledges allegiance, and hosts LM’s forces for a dinner as they ‘need’ to rest overnight
* LM acts arrogantly and poorly during the dinner, alienating the savannahmen. But there’s nothing they can do about it so far. Lord Morningstar is satisfied with their deference and heads to the Delta to deal with the Revenant
* He arrives and there’s a tense moment between him and the Deltamen as he demands their allegiance. He notices that they all look to Lacaideon to see what he does. Lacaideon decides to submit, and they all follow
* There’s continuing tension in the Delta. He is nominally their all accepted Shurhath and liegelord, but they don’t really see him as a leader: they see Lacaideon as a leader. After all, LM plundered the Delta, only turned up to beat the Revenant after subduing the west, and is now increasingly unjust
* Lacaideon is acceptably civil and deferential towards him: he genuinely does not want conflict or power. This mollifies LM, but he’s very suspicious of Lacaideon still
* A few other moments of tension occur between LM and the Deltamen, initiated by LM feeling resentful and aggressive due to his incomplete authority. The Deltamen increasingly openly show that they dislike him, but nonetheless they still kneel to him
* In the final battle with the Revenant, LM leads the ground forces to battle with the Revenant and soundly crushes them. He takes no prisoners and exterminates every enemy combatant that doesn’t flee
* Firewalker is killed in the fight here after acting heroically and sacrificing himself to save the men under his command, devastating Srigo who by now is very close to him
* But although LM is successful on the field as always, the main confrontation is on the River Antavar itself- hence the name of the battle. Navally, Lacaideon is leading the ships and Lacaideon actually kills the Revenant
* This means that he gets pretty much all the glory for the battle which REALLY angers Lord Morningstar. He sees all this stuff with the Revenant as a diversion from his mission of conquering the whole continent and expects the Deltamen to be grateful for his help
* Instead, they’re rabidly cheering Lacaideon on and declaring him their Mighty Lord
* LM angrily listens to this from outside the great hall and clenches his fist in rage. He will not forget this. For now, he leaves
* Lord Morningstar has levied harsh taxes on the areas of Ethagis that he’s conquered, but he at least doesn’t squander it all on court luxury. It’s worth noting that he doesn’t currently use it to rebuild, but rather build up his army again
* He intends to march south to destroy Sharkjaw, who has consolidated a large informal empire of his own by now
* He’s really paranoid though that if he goes south, Ironhand will just march into the Crownlands and take his throne. He’s starting to hear rumours that the Deltamen want Ironhand to be Shurhath
* To try and prevent this, he levies crushing taxes on the Delta so as to limit its prosperity and floods it with censors from the central government to spy on them
* LM is hearing even more rumours about Ironhand and Shurhaths. Rumours get twisted as they travel so he hears rumours about Ironhand wanting to be Shurhath- a fiction, but LM doesn’t know that
* He prepares to move, but Arzachel, who by now is a kind of advisor to him, criticises his decision, and basically tells him what he needs to hear: people like Ironhand because he’s a just ruler, and dislike LM because he’s not
* Lord Morningstar, however, completely misinterprets this. He believes that Arzachel is being treasonous- he’s not- and decides to execute him. In his last moments, Arzachel curses LM and laments that he ever burned that wooden elephant, saying ‘I should have spat in your face instead you fucking b-’ before dying
* This whole episode makes LM even more paranoid about Ironhand and he decides to summon him to Semidon to talk to him. Basically, LM wants to put him on trial to deduce his loyalties, but everyone knows at this point LM’s just gna kill him
* Ironhand in response to this actually declares himself Shurhath, so LM ironically fulfils his own fears
* Ironhand has Cyzinian as his lieutenant who’s a pretty good general but LM is still the best in the realm. The problem is that LM will plan some masterful tactics to win a battle and it’ll fall apart cos his lords will just defect to Ironhand
* LM decides therefore that he can’t meet Ironhand in the field and just falls back to Semidon which he can heavily fortify
* Ironhand attacks in the Fourth Battle of Semidon. Srigo dies in this battle, as does the Grizzly Falcon. The battle is a victory for Ironhand
* Ironhand encounters Lord Morningstar in the throne room, easily slays the retinues stationed there, and quickly kills Lord Morningstar. Ironhand becomes Shurhath and the regions formerly sworn to LM: the Marches, the Western Commanderies, Nagal, and the savannah all swear allegiance to Ironhand instead

[Nothing for Part 12]

#### Strand 6: Soul Eater | Soul Eater; Purgatory; Tarantula; Steelbird; Shadowbound; the Juggernaught; the Revenant; Chainbreaker; Lord Morningstar

* Soul Eater is an atrociously cruel and tyrannical Mighty Lord whose mother, Purgatory, in practise ruled his realm for him. Whereas Soul Eater is impulsive and stupid, Purgatory is highly cold and cunning, and a malignant narcissist
* For a few years now, the Dragonfly has had Purgatory imprisoned as punishment for some great unspecified crime that we don’t yet know about, but it’s clear that this woman is DANGEROUS and should not be left out
* At the end of the part, Shadowbound frees her from her cell
* Once the Dragonfly dies, Soul Eater is still in the field (whilst Purgatory rules Aedemon from the capital, Naraka) and impulsively declares himself Shurhath and invades the Crownlands
* Cyzinian sends an army to engage Soul Eater led by Steelbird. Soul Eater is a poor general and loses battles after battle
* Purgatory reaches Soul Eater- much to her son’s vast dismay
* Purgatory immediately berates Soul Eater for his hasty invasion of the Crownlands as she wanted to wait until his enemies had exhausted each other to do this, but eventually accepts the situation and plays the hand she’s dealt
* Frustrated by Soul Eater’s independence and incompetence, she creates a secret police force loyal to her personally, which she calls the Reaper Guard. The Guard is both a secret police, espionage, and intel force and are armed with poison darts. The poison has hallucinogenic qualities as well
* To maintain the loyalty of Aedemon’s citizens, Purgatory has the Reaper Guard crucify any citizens suspected of treason. This gives the Reaper Guard massive notoriety in Aedemon and the commoners begin referring to its leader as Tarantula
* Purgatory expands the Reaper Guard further and will continue to do so incrementally throughout the series
* She also has diseased corpses thrown into towns loyal to her enemies to try and spread plague
* Steelbird reaches Naraka and begins besieging it. Purgatory burns the entirety of the slums in Naraka, which are on its outskirts, so she can fortify the area in case Steelbird breaks through
* Purgatory, however, has used the Reaper Guard- by now highly feared and hated throughout the realm by the commoners- to gain intel on Steelbird, deducing his weak loyalty
* She offers him swathes of land and great titles, and Steelbird defects to her side
* But by now, the Juggernaught has finished his campaign unifying the Western Commanderies under his banner and is directly next to Aedemon. Purgatory rightly identifies him as the biggest threat facing her and engages him
* The Juggernaught and Steelbird reach a stalemate. The Juggernaught is the superior commander, but Aedemon has more resources at their disposal
* Eventually, Steelbird and Soul Eater fall out. This is for several reasons- this arc gets revealed to us through Shadowbound’s PoV
* Soul Eater feared being assassinated, so kept Steelbird almost constantly by his side as bodyguard, and made him his lieutenant. During bouts of frustration when Soul Eater failed to win decisive victories, he would try and take his anger out on the nearest person: Steelbird, by throwing daggers at him
* Steelbird would dodge them or use his armour to deflect and Soul Eater would calm down, but it really annoyed him. He was also having an affair with one of Soul Eater’s concubines, famed for being one of the most beautiful women in the realm, and was terrified about being found out as Soul Eater was getting suspicious and would be tortured if so
* He decided, on the urging of the Juggernaught in secret, to betray Soul Eater. He tried to kill him in the palace, but is prevented from doing so by the machinations and plans of Purgatory, so flees instead
* At some point in the stalemate, Purgatory tries to break the tie by doing something really fucked up: she orders all the thousands of prisoners-of-war from the Juggernaught to be blinded. Every 1 in 100 prisoners is left with a single eye, so that they might lead all the blinded soldiers back to the Juggernaught
* The idea is that these thousands of weakened soldiers will be a massive blow to morale and force Juggs to spend money, time, and food taking care of them
* This action genuinely shocks Shadowbound, who now seriously regrets setting Purgatory free
* The Juggernaught himself euthanises every single blinded soldier so they don’t obliterate his troops’ morale and force him to take care of them. He compensates their families by granting them his personal protection and access to aristocratic privileges, and promises to financially compensate them in peacetime
* Steelbird arrives at the Juggernaught’s camp and pledges his service. Soul Eater’s forces are temporarily in disarray as their prized general has now left, and are just for a little bit stunned
* The Juggernaught decides to take advantage of this opportunity to dash east to seize Semidon as rapidly as possible- and his plan is working. He breaks the stalemate and passes Aedemon to get to the western boundary of the Crownlands
* At the last moment, however, Juggs decides that he has a duty to defend his people from the Desert Ripper, even if that means passing up this golden opportunity to seize the throne. The Juggernaught and Steelbird head west
* With Juggs engaged in the west, Purgatory can now move on the throne without fear of being attacked by him. The Crownlands are easier to defend than Aedemon so this makes sense
* But Cyzinian’s raised new armies at this point and is putting them against Soul Eater, for now engaging them
* Purgatory spends this time deploying the Reaper Guard to try and retake Azariad and undermine the Commonwealth, as she hasn’t yet had the breathing space to deal with Chainbreaker
* At the end, Purgatory hears that Cyzinian has fled Semidon and that his retinues- i.e. the people commanding and officering all the enemies- have been wiped out in a palace coup
* *And* that the Juggernaught is dead. Her planning has worked: she now has the ideal opportunity to make her son Shurhath
* The Desert Ripper is still active but that doesn’t actually matter to her- what matters is the throne, and she can deal with him however later. The Commonwealth is also still active but again, the priority is the throne
* Without credible resistance, she can now invade the Crownlands
* Soul Eater and Purgatory engage on a campaign in the Crownlands, defeating the crown armies put against them using Purgatory’s cunning and the lack of effective crown leadership
* The Second Battle of Semidon occurs. The court is utterly divided, weak, and incompetent and cannot defend the city without Cyzinian: Soul Eater wins
* His soldiers slaughter all the high ranking courtiers as per Purgatory’s orders, who seeks to eliminate loyalists to the previous dynasty. Jackdaw and the Wraithwreaker are killed trying to escape
* The Red Mantis actually manages to escape, but is confronted in a forest clearing by Tarantula, leader of the Reaper Guard and hit with a poisoned dart in the groin
* The Red Mantis staggers into the dark forest- this is all at night- and though he escapes Tarantula starts tripping the fuck out and bleeding out
* Terrified, he staggers into a cave nearby and suddenly time seems to stand still and from the forest, a massive and ancient evil approaches him
* He’s having a vision of the demon hyena god Kalawi, who grins and explains to the Red Mantis that he’s going to die. However, Kalawi will give him a choice
* He promises to resurrect the Red Mantis, reincarnating him as a powerful demon who will be immune to both pain and fear, half man and half god. In this new form, he will be able to indulge his deepest, darkest desires
* The Red Mantis, dying and delirious, asks what Kalawi wants in exchange. He answers, ‘Your soul’. The Red Mantis accepts, and just before Kalawi leaves him he gives a final warning
* Kalawi leaves, and the Red Mantis falls into a deep, deep sleep
* He wakes up with severe nervous system damage as a result of the poison, now having a total neuropathy. Just as Kalawi said, the Red Mantis can no longer feel pain anywhere in his body: but it’s as a consequence of his neuropathy
* The poison dart also affects his brain massively as well. It has indeed made him totally unable to feel fear, but his personality is wildly affected
* He acts more like a zombie than a human being- or some kind of god. His old desires to win petty politics no longer appeal to him. He genuinely sees himself as the spawn of Kalawi and wants to subsume the world in chaos, inaugurating an apocalypse and the end of days
* The parts of his brain responsible for inhibition are damaged beyond repair. He always had a destructive streak and readers could always tell that there was something a bit off about him, a hidden darkness
* Now it completely comes out, and he doesn’t behave like a human anymore: there is something wildly unsettling and Uncanny Valley about him
* He’s had a complication from the poison: a whole body dermatological reaction. The top layer of his skin has necrosed and is rotting/flaking away. He wraps himself in rags from his torn up clothes to disguise his appearance
* The Red Mantis- although he knows that isn’t really him anymore- has one goal in mind: apocalypse. He wants to burn the world to ashes, making it chaos and destruction- serving the chaos god Kalawi
* To do that he needs force, and he decides that Soul Eater is undoubtedly the best man for the job. Not only is Soul Eater an evil, violent piece of shit who would happily allow mass-destruction with a bit of manipulating, he’s very easily manipulatable
* The same mind for politics is still there: the Red Mantis begins calculating what to do. He has a plan.
* Limping and hobbling like a zombie, the Red Mantis staggers back to Semidon. Guards see him approach the palace but, unnerved, nobody stops him
* He enters the throne room. He does not bow or even announce his presence; just walks up to the throne where Soul Eater sits. A guard puts a spear in front of him: ‘Halt.’ The Red Mantis, without even blinking, grins and walks straight onto the spear, partially impaling himself
* Horrified, the guard stands aside and the Red Mantis pulls it unfeelingly from his chest. Soul Eater is transfixed: what the fuck is this creature?
* He begins to explain to Soul Eater that he wishes to serve under him as a soldier. He was formerly the Red Mantis- an enemy of the current Shurhath, yes, but now reborn. He calls himself the spawn of Kalawi unironically and to delineate his new self, calls himself a new sobriquet: the Revenant
* Some people, seeing how inhuman and wretched the Revenant is, actually believe he is the spawn of Kalawi. Most don’t, but everyone is afraid of and fascinated by him
* Soul Eater gleefully accepts this offer: he is a man whose whole governing philosophy is ‘pain and fear’ and who better to inspire fear than the Ethigean version of the antichrist? His mother isn’t in the throne room for this and he makes the Revenant a courtier
* Soul Eater and Purgatory have plans. Purgatory, now in Semidon, has lots of resources, land, and manpower available to her. She is able to conduct simultaneous campaigns in different theatres
* Her most pressing threat is Lord Morningstar, whom she engages in a sort of battle of wits with. Lord Morningstar is the better general and is undefeated in battle, but Purgatory has her own kind of twisted genius
* She foils his aims and impedes his progress not only by simply outnumbering and outgunning him but by various inventive, vicious tactics, including spreading plague in his ranks by launching diseased carcasses at settlements loyal to him
* Another threat that needs to be taken care of now is the Commonwealth of Free Men: they’ve been raiding the Crownlands and Aedemon for too long, and they still hold Azariad
* But they’re not professional soldiers and they lack resources and heavy cavalry: a smaller army will suffice to crush them
* Soul Eater vitriolically hates the Commonwealth: he despises the slaves and commoners for daring to assert themselves and defy aristocratic- and his personal- authority.
* He insists on leading his small army himself. Purgatory cannot dissuade him from this course even though it’s risky- why endanger his life? But she also wants him out of Semidon for the time being so she can organise the city’s defence without him interfering
* She decides to let him go, but sends a lot of the Reaper Guard with him- including Tarantula- to defend him. Soul Eater will leave with his army soon
* The Desert Ripper is still active, but the savannahmen and Western Commanderies are engaging him for now. Purgatory plans to let them fight it out and bleed each other dry, before swooping in and crushing the victor. She just keeps forces garrisoning the borders of the Crownlands and Aedemon for now
* Soul Eater moves with his army to the south, his new toy the Revenant in tow. Purgatory has heard of this creature by now and is infuriated that Soul Eater recruited him without consulting her. She has the Reaper Guard keep a close eye on the Revenant
* But the Revenant rapidly begins to amass his following. He behaves like some kind of malign eldritch god, and transfixes people. Many of Soul Eater’s followers are malign people anyway, and the Revenant’s promises of violent apocalypse where his followers will be kings appeals to them
* He simply promises them the full indulgence of all their darkest desires, and they love him for it
* Soul Eater himself also really likes the Revenant, as his talks of violence and death appeal to him too. He is utterly blind to how the Revenant is building up his own power base
* He prosecutes the war against the Commonwealth with consummate viciousness, releasing thousands of starving angry dogs into the Commonwealth to savage people on sight and executing people by the first ever gas chambers invented
* The Revenant meanwhile begins to gain disciples. His most devoted followers dress up, like him, in rags and bandages and call themselves ‘revenants’, naming themselves in veneration after him. A cult of personality develops
* The number of revenants spreads, and because the Reaper Guard are watching the Revenant so closely and spending so much time with him, they eventually become taken in with him too and become revenants
* The Revenant uses his influence with the Reaper Guard to deploy them on a mission: he sends them to the semadai to butcher everybody there whilst they sleep
* This is because he sees himself as the spawn of Kalawi and thus the ancient enemy of the god Ilyzor, who is worshipped and served by the semadai. The Reaper Guard manage to kill a good proportion of the semadai, although many survive
* Crucially, at the semadai mountain the assassin Shadowbound saves the life of a man named Lacaideon, who decides to head home
* Soul Eater’s forces successfully assault Azariad, smashing the Commonwealth. Chainbreaker decides that he can’t fight his enemies in a true, conventional war- they’ll win every time
* He therefore decides to leave Azariad and go south, all the way to the rainforest where he can launch a guerrilla war against the whole continent, both Ethagis and South
* Soul Eater meanwhile is satisfied, thinking that he has routed the Commonwealth and ended their existence. Really, all this bloodshed has sated his bloodlust
* He has his men search for Chainbreaker’s corpse once the smoke clears but presumes that he’s dead. This isn’t really based on any logical deduction, he’s just sorta like ‘yeahhh… I’m done’. He sends his army home
* Soul Eater and the Revenant return to Semidon, where Purgatory is waiting for them
* Purgatory is faced with an assassination attempt from the legendary assassin Shadowbound
* However, she’s extremely wily and cunning and although she would have never predicted to be a target of Shadowbound, she has made lots of preparations for the possibility of assassins
* She always has a decoy sleeping in her bed at night, a woman paid to mimic her and be prey to assassins. She actually sleeps, like a rat, in a chamber hollowed out from the ceiling
* Shadowbound sneaks in and kills the decoy, but Purgatory notices this, slinks down, and immobilises him with a poisoned dart shot by blowgun
* As Shadowbound dies, Purgatory gleefully reveals to him his true parentage: he was a bastard sired by Soul Eater, specifically a product of rape unto a commoner. She relishes this last bit of emotional pain she’s able to inflict before the assassin dies
* Purgatory goes to talk to Soul Eater in his room, wherein her son reveals, entirely accidentally, without realising its significance, that the Revenant sent multiple members of the Reaper Guard- including Tarantula- on a mission without letting her know
* This makes her *furious*. She’s angry because this clearly shows that the Revenant is a massive threat to both and her son’s authority. By using *her* secret police and by gaining their loyalty, the Revenant has almost in her eyes launche a coup
* She’s angry because her son, Soul Eater, has blindly let this happen, and is too fucking stupid to even realise that he’s being manipulated and his soldiers are being converted to the Revenant’s side under his nose
* She hurls abuse at her son, calling him worthless, idiotic, pathetic. Purgatory has emotionally abused her son all his life, but this is particularly bad. It is some of the spiteful, hurtful sentences ever spoken thrown at him in quick succession
* Soul Eater, in anger and anguish, pushes his mum- but a little too hard. She trips and bashes her head on the corner of a piece of furniture, dying, killed by her own son
* Soul Eater is distraught but who should comfort him but the Revenant, who flatters him and soothes the burning wounds inflicted on his ego
* Grateful and attached, Soul Eater makes the Revenant his lieutenant
* Lord Morningstar hears that Purgatory is dead and immediately marches on Semidon, batting away any forces Soul Eater puts in his way during a lightning fast campaign
* Purgatory gets to Semidon quickly after Cyzinian died- Lord Morningstar, the best general in the country, gets there almost immediately
* The Revenant sees this but doesn’t really care- after all, he’s now converted tens of thousands of Soul Eater’s soldiers into his revenants. He’s essentially gotten what he wanted: an army
* True, it would perhaps be ideal to continue to grow that army and to wield it with a puppet Shurhath on side, but Soul Eater can be discarded. The Revenant plans to bring about an apocalypse, after all
* The Third Battle of Semidon begins. Lord Morningstar’s forces crush Soul Eater’s: they’ve been trained, drilled, organised, and coordinated with utter masterfulness
* Lord Morningstar heroically, triumphantly ascends the palace steps and kills Soul Eater personally in the palace, spotting him trying to run away. LM becomes the new Shurhath
* The Revenant, now Soul Eater’s lieutenant recognises mid-battle that it’s futile to fight and decides to lead as many of his and Soul Eater’s men out of Semidon as possible, including almost all of the Reaper Guard
* This includes Tarantula, who is one of the Revenant’s most devoted disciples and who sort of becomes his lieutenant, although he’s not formally appointed as such or anything
* The Revenant decides to go to the Delta. It’s the wealthiest and most developed part of Ethagis and the Revenant takes a sick pride in the idea of burning it all to ashes
* Between the costs of the battle and the Revenant’s huge defection, very few of Soul Eater’s men survive the battle. Lord Morningstar thus declares that Aedemon is under his control and is able to do so as basically nobody is there to stop him
* He prepares to conquer the rest of the continent

[Nothing for Parts 9,10, 11, 12]

#### Strand 7: The South | the Darkstar; the Liquid Lion; the Valorous; Hurricane; Panthercaul; the Blackfish; Elphensbane; Chainbreaker; Sharkjaw; Lacaideon

* Kusaila (sobriquet the Darkstar) is the absolute ruler of the South, respected as a strong but wise man and beloved by his people for curtailing the authority (and abuses) of the nobility over them in order to give his people a better life
* Secretly, many lords resent his authority and his curtailment of their powers, and kinda wanna plot against him, but they lack a figurehead at this stage to lead a rebellion
* His brother, Luzon (sobriquet the Liquid Lion), reinforces his authority by being a charismatic but feared figure who keeps the nobility in line
* The South itself is a part of the Empire of Ethagis but is politically, climactically, and culturally different from it. Southerners and Ethigeans are often distrustful of each other because of this
* Some years before the start of Mightiest, the Meteor invaded the South, and a huge number of imperial soldiers were camped there, stretching resources and behaving badly to the Southerners
* There is a strong desire for independence because of this, shared by everybody in the South
* Though Kusaila’s authority is unassailable by his nation, his family is divided amongst itself
* His older half-brother, Luzon, is deeply jealous of him: he was set to inherit the throne but his father remarried and made his heir to his new wife his designated successor instead because he loved her
* As half-prince rather than full prince, Luzon lost various privileges and influence and growing up Kusaila and Luzon had a very antagonistic relationship
* The two fought for the hand of Kusaila’s current wife and Kusaila scarred Luzon in the duel
* As adults, they no longer openly fight each other but have a strained relationship. Luzon’s wife is jealous of Kusaila’s wife for stealing Luzon’s affections, so has a bitter hatred of that side of the family and encourages Luzon to pursue his ambitions
* He doesn’t really love his wife though as it was a political marriage, and he envies Kusaila a lot for having a loving marital relationship and a loving family. He has a soft spot for Kusaila’s nephew Panthercaul
* Luzon is a foil to Kusaila. Kusaila is principled, cool, laconic, cautious, dutiful, a great general but a mid fighter. Luzon is pragmatic, heated, charismatic, reckless, ambitious, a great fighter but a mid general
* Kusaila knows Luzon wants his position and would just give it to him as he doesn’t rly want power all that much, but he thinks Luzon would be a bad ruler and he wants to do right by his people and have them ruled by someone who cares about them
* When the Dragonfly dies, Kusaila immediately declares independence, and is heartily backed by all the South.
* However, he fears that the Meteor will invade the South again, as their independence from the rest of Ethagis has cut them off from the strength of a united realm. Kusaila cannot stomach the thought of all the destruction another invasion would cause and builds up his navy to prevent the Meteor from crossing the sea
* He doesn’t really have enough ships, however. The Blackfish knows this and offers Kusaila a deal- land levies in exchange for his fleet
* Kusaila accepts sends his son Hurricane at the head of a few regiments- he also sends Luzon, as he doesn’t really want his scheming brother near a centre of power
* On the way, by passing through Springlander territory with an army Hurricane angers all of them a lot and Luzon just manages to defuse the situation. But the Springlanders, who already dislike the South, now especially dislike them
* Hurricane arrives on the eve of the battle. The Blackfish hurriedly incorporates them into his forces
* Hurricane seeks his oath brother, the Reefshark, again, and is genuinely shocked and disheartened by his current state. The Reefshark is literally traumatised by this point and Hurricane privately doubts to himself that he’ll survive the battle
* After Assur dies at the First Battle of Semidon, however, Hurricane and Luzon claim his fleet as their own and sail it back south
* Along the way, the charisma and leadership skills of Luzon binds a lot of the Southerners to his side and make them loyal to just him. Again, these people already dislike Kusaila because he’s an absolute ruler who doesn’t give the aristocracy much special treatment at the expense of the people, so they bind to Luzon easily
* Luzon arrives back in the South and Kusaila immediately notes this. Luzon’s loyalists he terms Luzonites
* Meanwhile, the Pyrrhic victory of the crown has totally ended central control, and now the entire realm fractures into independent warlords, although they don’t necessarily claim to be Shurhath, just independent
* The Springlanders war with each other, as warlords compete for rulership over the region and Kusaila mans the frontiers
* Unbeknownst to the South, Sharkjaw is actually selling arms to all the Springlanders, loan sharking them, and building up his own standing army using all this money
* Four warlords emerge in the Springlands, locked in a stalemate, all by now dependent on Sharkjaw’s loans- although nobody yet knows this. A group of vicious exiles from the Commonwealth also starts attacking the Springlanders, making their material situation more desperate
* The warlords start raiding the South for slaves and resources. Luzon advocates a full-on war with the Springlanders in revenge. Since Luzon is such an eloquent speaker and many lords already agree with him, the Luzonites loyal to him grow in number and demand action
* But Kusaila doesn’t want that. He’s a cautious man but he’s also right: the South can’t really afford a full-on war with the Springlands and whilst the raids are infuriating, he wants cooler heads to prevail and to just garrison the frontiers
* But he’s not the same speaker that Luzon is, and doesn’t really convince people of his point of view
* The key thing is that whilst Luzon is trying to further his power, he does genuinely believe that the Springlands should be punished with war for enslaving Southerners, and many agree
* It’s just that Kusaila realises that in a war with the Springlanders, so many more Southerners will be killed or enslaved. He forbids any attacks on the Springlands
* That night, Luzon leads a large contingent of Luzonite lords and their levies with the captured ships and sails up the river, bombarding the Springlands from their ships and counterattacking their castles
* This provokes a full-on war and Kusaila is furious. He’s furious because he fears his loss of status amongst the lords and that Luzon now looks like a strongman, because there’s now a big war that could potentiallyyy have been averted, and Luzon disobeyed his orders
* It’s not necessarily that Luzon has CREATED discontent, more that the lords of the South have always resented Kusaila’s absolutist rule and Luzon is just taking advantage of that discontent
* He summons Luzon to his keep for trial, and this time doesn’t make it public. He has a heated argument with Luzon for disobeying his authority, and it brings up a lot of old childhood enmity between them
* It’s clear that whilst Kusaila is in the right, he was a bad brother growing up who didn’t defend Luzon against his father or comfort him adequately, but also he tried he just lacked the communication skills to do this
* Kusaila, forced into war, conducts it well as he’s a great general. He expels the Springlanders from his territory and leads a counter-invasion into the Springlands, capturing many of the ruling warlords’ castles and shattering their armies- this leaves a power vacuum
* However, because Luzon is so charismatic, he is able to successfully take credit for these and gets many of the lords of the Springlands on side. His wife also gives birth to a son, which Luzon is genuinely really fond of
* Suddenly, Kusaila gets notified that his son, the Valorous, has been killed by the Desert Ripper, and that the Desert Ripper wanted to sacrifice him. Kusaila hasn’t been told that this plan failed and thinks he was sacrificed
* Furious, he decides to go west. Some Southerner regiments follow him out of loyalty, although he doesn’t force anyone to go and the bulk of the armed forces remain at home
* He doesn’t trust Luzon at home and wants to bring him with, but Luzon refuses, saying that he can’t possibly travel all the way west as he has a young son. They both know that this is an excuse for Luzon to maybe consolidate power
* But Luzon has too much support amongst the lords for his position to be assailable now, and Kusaila finds he’s lost his authority amongst them. He goes west, and although he doesn’t kill the Ripper he teaches Elphensbane a lot about leadership and genuinely becomes close to him
* Kusaila opens up about his conflicted feelings about Luzon and how he deep down just wants to get along but there’s so much bad blood between them that they can’t. Elphensbane comforts him about this and they form a strong bond
* Meanwhile in the South, Luzon is basically acting as king and is commanding armies himself. Here’s the thing: Luzon doesn’t actually want to declare himself king at this stage, but the Southern lords want him to be king as they resent Kusaila and believe Luzon will give them more power
* They coronate Luzon forcibly- he wants to be king of course, but something stops him from actually seizing it himself, it’s more thrust upon him
* Kusaila receives an anonymous letter whilst he’s in the savannah saying that Luzon has seized power- it doesn’t explain that this was forced upon him though, and implies he grabbed it forcibly. This letter was actually written and sent by Sharkjaw purely to foment discord and cause a war in the South, but we don’t find this out until later
* Kusaila is furious but he’s also just *hurt*- he didn’t think Luzon would actually go this far. He says goodbye to Elphensbane and charges home to Kahina, planning to throw Luzon in jail
* But when he gets to Kahina, the lords of the South throw *him* in jail instead, with Luzon’s acquiescence
* Throughout this part, Kusaila remains in jail and Luzon periodically visits him and also commands the South against the Springlanders. Hurricane and Panthercaul are not technically prisoners but are made ‘wards’ of Luzon
* Hurricane despises Luzon for this and has to be closely monitored to ensure he doesn’t kill Luzon, but Panthercaul doesn’t really get what’s happening and is sweet to Luzon
* Luzon already has a soft spot for Panthercaul so he kinda lets him just chill, and Panthercaul’s love for Luzon contributes to making him feel bad about what he did to Kusaila
* Firstly, it’s clear both that Luzon is not the general Kusaila was and can’t prosecute this war properly. It’s also ominously apparent that some force has managed to unify most of the Springlands as the warlords are now coordinating attacks as if they were colonels of a superordinate
* This is actually Sharkjaw: the power vacuum left in the Springlands by Kusaila’s attacks on it allowed him to effectively take over. Nobody knows this yet though
* Luzon gradually starts to feel genuine guilt at betraying his brother, and also realises that ruling is harder than he thought and he’s not good at it. His element really is being a fighter and colonel, not a ruler and general
* Even the lords of the realm that put him in power are kinda getting pissed at him now because he’s losing battles with the unified Springlanders. He starts feeling genuine remorse and a desire to reconcile with Kusaila
* Luzon’s feelings culminate in a desire for action. He and his retinues in Kahina organise a coup. They summon the rebellious lords who crowned him to a big banquet and during it, frees Kusaila from his jail cell and starts attacking them
* Their retinues fight back and there’s this massive palace war in Kahina. Luzon and Kusaila fight side by side for the first time and it feels really good for them both and they kinda reconcile
* It looks like Kusaila is going to get killed but then Luzon sacrifices himself in battle for him
* Kusaila wins the palace war and gets rid of the rebellious lords, once again consolidating his authority in the South. One of the lords manages to escape. He throws a massive funeral for Luzon and mourns him
* But now, the Commonwealth of Free Men has pulled up to the South and is inciting rebellions there
* Kusaila masterfully and gloriously campaigns in the South, full Belisarius-style, knocking down army after army- all led indirectly by Sharkjaw. He thinks he’s done with the Springland armies and suddenly another one appears from the Eastern Commanderies- again, we’re not told this, but Sharkjaw has consolidated power there too
* Again he beats these armies back
* Whilst all this is happening though, the Commonwealth of Free Men has now arrived at the South, and is establishing itself there in the rainforest, inciting rebellion and building itself up
* They manage to capture Hurricane whilst Kusaila is campaigning. Kusaila is devastated and afraid but keeps fighting. So far, there’s no open war between the Commonwealth and the South because Kusaila’s prioritising this, but we know and fear one will be coming
* Eventually, Kusaila defeats the enemy armies from the Springlands and the Eastern Commanderies
* But now the Commonwealth of Free Men launch an all-out war from within the South itself. Thousands of commoners and slaves join them. Although Chainbreaker himself is noble, many of his troops are not
* Kusaila dislikes slavery and understands the Commonwealth cause but he has to defend his homeland. He also has to listen to the Southerners, who are all terrified and angry and demand that the Commonwealth is eliminated
* Kusaila dutifully starts doing this. He’s a fantastic general and knows the South well, whereas the Commonwealth doesn’t
* He starts making progress, but notices that the Commonwealthers have suddenly gained a considerable knowledge of the rainforest, which confuses him
* In a dramatic reveal wherein the two generals face off, Kusaila sees that his own son, Hurricane, has been converted by Chainbreaker to the Commonwealth cause and is now actually fighting for them
* Kusaila’s a real tragic hero here: he’s been fighting with his brother all his life and now he has to fight his son. He’s a good family man who’s had to spend his life in conflict with family, and the worst thing is he can’t even demonise Hurricane because he lowkey admits the nobility of the Commonwealth cause
* The Commonwealth eventually attacks Kusaila’s capital, Kahina, in an all-out battle. It’s a really close call and it almost seems like the Commonwealth will win, but at the last moment Kusaila is saved by an unexpected ally: Elphensbane
* Elphensbane never forgot how helpful Kusaila was in aiding him and Elly and Kusaila did become very close. Elly wanted to repay Kusaila for his help and therefore made for the South to aid him in the battle. Elly’s brought thousands of volunteers too
* This turns the tide and Kusaila’s troops win. Ecstatic at the help, Kusaila names Elly his oath brother and welcomes him into his family. For Elly, this is really nice, as he’s always wanted a big family
* Elly has to leave almost immediately though, as Lord Morningstar has just arrived at the savannah and wants to gain the allegiance of the Mighty Lord there- Elphensbane. Elly fears that LM will declare war if he doesn’t hightail it back, so he does so
* In the Battle of Kahina on the Commonwealth side, both Zerzura *and Hurricane* die
* Kusaila is consumed with grief and anger. He hates the Commonwealth for pitting him against his own son and getting him killed, and he hates himself for indirectly killing him
* Kusaila, always throughout his whole life cautious, measured, letting the enemy make the first move, decides enough is enough. He marches north to the northern border of the rainforest, where he knows Chainbreaker is camped
* Chainbreaker, too, is filled with grief at the death of his friend and important Commonwealth figure Zerzura and wants to fight a bloody battle as revenge
* The two forces engage each other near a town called Kulema. It seems the Battle of Kulema will become a stalemate, when suddenly a third army rushes the field’s: Sharkjaw’s
* Sharkjaw has been slowly and quietly been consolidating control of the Eastern Commanderies and Springlands. He’s not formally lording over all of it but everyone ruling there are puppet rulers, vastly in debt to him, with hostages in his court, and constantly at threat from Sharkjaw’s by now numerous and highly trained retinues
* These regions are still nominally independent, but in practice Sharkjaw has built an empire here
* Now, he’s taken his retinues- heavily armed, highly trained heavy cavalry- waited for Chainbreaker and Kusaila to exhaust each other, and sent all of them swarming through the battlefield, butchering both sides and taking the two leaders prisoner
* He tells Kusaila that *he* was the one who sent him that anonymous letter whilst he was in the savannah, deliberately manipulating him. His intention was solely to start a war: Sharkjaw’s aims this whole times have been to start wars as this gives him access to lots of slaves (due to the collapse of law and order) and huge demand
* He plans to execute both Chainbreaker *and* Kusaila. Without Chainbreaker, he explains, the Commonwealth will collapse in on itself. Armageddon may still be alive, but under his leadership the Commonwealth will be easily destroyed by the Empire of Ethagis
* Without Kusaila and with the South completely exhausted from war, Sharkjaw will come to rule it. He’ll do so indirectly, allowing Kusaila’s only surviving son Panthercaul to rule with his mother and younger sister still alive, but will pull the strings and collect tribute
* Chainbreaker and Kusaila are both decapitated- quick and clean as Sharkjaw isn’t a sadist- and tumble into the same pre-dug grave
* Panthercaul does indeed assume leadership. Still a teenager and devastated over the cumulative losses of his brothers and now his father, taking command of a realm totally powerless to resist, he acquiesces to Sharkjaw’s demands
* The South, nominally independent, becomes a part of Sharkjaw’s empire. Panthercaul *hates* having to submit to the man who killed his father, but he has zero choice realistically
* Elphensbane visits the South for Kusaila’s funeral with Lanna. Elly meets Panthercaul and the rest of the family and they mutually comfort each other, with Elly acting very paternally towards his nephew and niece and respectfully towards his brother’s widow
* Elly joins Lacaideon on campaign to replace the Shurhath but Panthercaul doesn’t
* Panthercaul and the South want independence- the Shurhath of Ethagis is not their concern. In any case, Panthercaul is a teenager and wouldn’t be much use to Lacaideon, and he’s too sad to even want to
* Lacaideon takes the throne and becomes Shurhath and Crossbow assassinates Sharkjaw
* As soon as Sharkjaw dies, his informal empire collapses. Panthercaul, nominally independent even under Sharkjaw, is now independent in reality- but this all come to an end if the current Ethigean Shurhath intervenes
* Ironhand, to his surprise, asks to meet him and speak to him. Panthercaul doesn’t believe that this is a trap (and it isn’t) and ac. Both like each other as both are good people
* Panthercaul tells him about how the South has always been treated badly under the Shurhaths. About how, unlike the Nagalens, they have never sought to conquer or destroy, just be left alone and leave others alone. About how damn hard they’ve fought and what they’ve had to go through
* Panthercaul, talking about how his father and brothers are all dead, tears up, and Ironhand comforts him. It’s a very touching moment
* Ironhand decides to let the South be independent. This is undoubtedly an altruistic move from him and is because Ironhand genuinely doesn’t want to force them to remain in Ethagis as he thinks it’s wrong
* But it’s also because- and it’s justifiable to the lords of the realm because- the Empire of Ethagis is genuinely exhausted. It couldn’t go to war against Sharkjaw because it lacked the strength, and it would be nearly as hard to go to war with the South for the same reason
* The South is also exhausted so Ethagis would probably win- but then what? The South would either be quiescent for a generation before starting a war again or they’d just wage a guerrilla war immediately. They’ve been through so much after all- they wouldn’t just meekly lose a conventional war and then give up
* And how would Ethagis fare then? The South is huge and its all rainforest- it can’t be occupied. If the populace were determined enough to actually wage a guerrilla war, Ethagis would never win
* This hasn’t happened before because the South has never been that determined before, but after all it’s been through now it may be
* Panthercaul celebrates, genuinely happy and proud of himself. He holds a massive festival in Kahina to celebrate independence and invites Elphensbane, his oath father, as guest of honour

#### Strand 8: Shadowbound | Shadowbound; Sharkjaw; Purgatory; Chainbreaker; Lacaideon; the Hammer of Ilyzor

* Shadowbound is the most feared assassin in the realm, and has spent his life being contracted by various noblemen to kill other noblemen for money. He is *extremely* good at it and kind of just lives his life from day to day, completing mission after mission
* He doesn’t really *enjoy* it but it’s something to do in his life, and whilst it doesn’t give his life meaning because he just sees it as pointless manoeuvres in the aristocracy’s power game, it at least occupies and tests him
* Shadowbound kills the Dragonfly on Sharkjaw’s orders during the early stages of the Great Slave Revolt
* He has been paid to do this by Sharkjaw, whose intention is solely to start a massive war in order to profit from it. He saw his chance once the Blackfish and Soul Eater both mobilised for war. We don’t find out Sharkjaw was the man who paid him to do this until much later
* He *also* does something else on Sharkjaw’s orders- he frees Purgatory
* Sharkjaw and Purgatory have no friendship or connection but Sharkjaw recognises that Soul Eater is an idiot who can’t command and Purgatory’s leadership will prolong the war
* The first time we see Shadowbound, he silently drops off Purgatory’s body at the edges of Soul Eater’s camp
* Purgatory was unconscious the whole journey there: she got a glimpse of Shadowbound’s face when he rescued her, long enough to recognise him, but the light from outside her cell was such a shock to her system (she’d been living in total darkness in her cell) that she lost consciousness
* Shadowbound then begins to make his way to Sharkjaw’s domain to receive his payment
* Along the way, we get a glimpse into his psyche and see he’s not quite sane. He’s clearly been through a lot of trauma growing up, although we don’t know what this is
* As a response to the trauma, he’s developed some split personalities. He actively talks to two versions of himself
* One of these avatars represents his ruthlessness and violence. It is clear that this developed as a survival mechanism to allow child Shadowbound to survive in the slums of Naraka (where he grew up, although we don’t yet know anything else), and frequently credits itself for doing so
* The other avatar is a bit stranger and appears only once. It talks about how Shadowbound needs to be loyal to and stay in favour with the crocodile god Azor. It comes out that Shadowbound has ‘spoken’ with Azor a few times, and the audience can piece together that this is from Shadowbound taking hallucinogens
* On a deeper level, which keener audience members will be able to deduce, this avatar is symbolic of Shadowbound’s search for meaning in his life, which so far has eluded him
* To reach Sharkjaw, Shadowbound passes through the Eastern Commanderies and the Commonwealth of Free Men
* Entirely by serendipitous accident, his actions end up leading Kingsparrow to Chainbreaker and thus causes them to be acquainted. This proves to be very important but is meaningless to him
* Shadowbound meets Sharkjaw and receives a *huge* payment- enough to keep him in comfort for the rest of his life
* In the handover, Sharkjaw expresses an interest in Shadowbound and says that he sees them as ‘the same’- completely cold individuals who simply calculate to get what they want
* This actually gives Shadowbound a bit of unease: he knows who Sharkjaw is and has seen his massive slave empire when he was passing through Kacharias. Shadowbound hasn’t ever really thought of morality in his life but this comment, he notices, does prick his limbic system just a bit
* He brushes this off and makes his way back to his home and on the way back kind of realises that actually this amount of money isn’t a good thing
* He never has to work or complete any mission for money again- he has all the means he could need
* But he’s been living his whole point doing his missions, living each day like a predator in the wild, fighting, moving, surviving. It’s not fulfilling and he’s not *happy*, but like an animal he survives
* But now he doesn’t have to do that anymore. He doesn’t have anything to do with his life and as he goes back home to Naraka he starts getting scared
* Shadowbound has arrived in Naraka only to find that his home no longer exists. As Steelbird approached the city, Purgatory had allthe slums at the outskirts of the city burnt down to clear the area and fill it with fortifications
* Shadowbound could just buy a new home but he hasn’t up to this point because he has a sentimental attachment to the slums here. He did grow up here but it’s made known to the audience that there’s another reason why he’s got that- but we don’t know yet. We don’t know anything about him other than that he grew up in the Naraka slums and it was a hard, hard life
* He immediately regrets setting Purgatory free, but for now it’s just for selfish reasons. He falls asleep, and for the first time in memory sheds a tear
* He decides to remain in Naraka and sees several crucified subjects, nailed to crosses overnight by the Reaper Guard on Purgatory’s reasons on various suspected crimes like treason, insulting the Shurhath, hoarding food, etc
* Shadowbound has a conversation w a crucified citizen who hunted game in a lord’s forest to feed his family. He euthanises him. He starts thinking that maybe letting Purgatory was a bad move morally
* He starts spying on Purgatory and Soul Eater’s court- not to hurt them necessarily, more because of boredom at this point. Remember this guy has nothing to do with his life rn. It’s through Shadowbound’s PoV that we see about what’s happening in the Aedemon court in this point
* He finds out that Purg is launching diseased carcasses into any settlement loyal to the Juggernaught in order to spread disease there. He really starts thinking like ‘damnnn releasing her was not good’
* He starts systematically mercy killing all the crucified slaves and commoners in Naraka and Aedemon
* What really messes with Shadowbound though is when he sees what Purg does to try and break the stalemate. He looks upon the blinded army of all the thousands of prisoners and is like ‘holy shit I basically did this’
* Killing the Dragonfly started a war and he regrets that but people knew a war was coming anyway. But releasing Purg? That was bad
* Shadowbound’s been killing noblemen and doing random shit for them his whole life and it’s never really mattered as they’re all kinda the same evil little bastards but he really gets the sense that *this* time *this* job was different
* He starts freaking out a little. His religious avatar keeps urging him to see Azor again and he takes hallucinogens/ entheogens and does so
* Azor basically tells him that he’s right- it *is* different. A war was inevitable anyway, but the combo of killing the Dragonfly and starting it now and freeing Purgatory was bad
* He tells Shadowbound that he has a chance for redemption should he seek it, however, and it starts with a name- Ironhand (a name in his consciousness as there’s a folk hero in Ethigean history called Ironhand who reportedly saved the world from a demon invasion). That’s *all* the info he gets and Azor leaves. Shadowbound wakes up
* He spends this whole part roaming through Ethagis, using all his contacts and connections in the empire’s underworld to try and find anyone called Ironhand
* He finds nobody. There is nobody currently alive with that name. The lack of success of his search really messes with him- this search is currently his only form of meaning, and it’s being thwarted
* Finally, he hears at the end of the part that Chainbreaker, the ruler of the Commonwealth of Free Men, has just lost his left forearm and hand
* This is all wishful thinking as he really wants to fulfil the prophecy, but he thinks to himself that if CB gets an iron prosthesis for his hand, he would be Ironhand
* He decides to travel to the Commonwealth
* He arrives at Azariad and starts watching Chainbreaker. Is the prophecy telling him to kill or help him?
* He eventually decides that if Azor is telling him this name Ironhand as a way to redeem him, it probably involves a departure from killing. He decides to speak to CB and offer his help
* This shocks CB. What the hell is a world famous assassin offering to help an ex-slave? And in return for no money? But he’s not going to turn this offer down
* He tells Shadowbound to assassinate Sharkjaw. The former agrees
* Shadowbound has conversations with CB, Armageddon, Kingsparrow, and Zerzura
* Zerzura’s clearly religious like SB is, albeit in a different way, but she’s too zealous, optimistic, and fanatical. SB thinks she’s *too* idealistic and fundamentally just can’t relate to her profound hope and devotion
* SB notes that Armageddon clearly has a deep violence within him and SB is unsettled by it. He thinks Kingsparrow is clever, and isn’t too idealistic or pessismistic, but Kingsparrow doesn’t really get through to him emotionally
* SB has some conversations with CB- it’s clear that they have extremely different worldviews. CB is still a genuinely good person who wants to make the world a better place. Shadowbound is a man who’s been living as some kind of predatory animal all his life
* But CB’s not an overly idealistic person- he has clear ideals that guide him, which SB admires, but is still a realist and has seen some shit, meaning that Shadowbound can relate to and understand him
* This is the first time Shadowbound’s had a conversation with anyone who actually shows him some empathy and decency however- he’s never spoken to a genuinely good person before
* It kinda makes him think about ideals and redemption, about maybe doing some good in the world. He also reveals something about his past: only his mother was around to take care of him, although she lived in Naraka’s slums in poverty
* She died of some illness a long time ago, and Shadowbound was really devastated when Purgatory burned the slums of Naraka as that’s where she grew up
* CB consoles him and Shadowbound actually feels *good*- it’s in a bittersweet way, of course, but it really impacts him
* Shadowbound’s about to go off and kill Sharkjaw, when he hears that CB has refused to wear a hand prosthesis so as to draw attention to and thus glorify his sacrifice of a limb in order to continue serving the Commonwealth
* This means though that CB can’t be the man in the prophecy. Devastated, frustrated, shaken, he decides to abandon his search. It’s too much. He’s been looking too long, thwarted too long, and he finally places his hope in this guy and it’s not even him
* He decides to just go to the semadai mountains as they’re quiet and isolated. He thinks to himself that he just wants to go somewhere and die in peace
* He gets to the semadai mountain and settles down in the forests, surviving off of wild forage
* Every day, he sees Lacaideon training here and meditating. He hears him speaking to Batay and whenever Batay talks to Lacaideon about the value of kindness, morality, and connection, Shadowbound hears it too
* This is really healing for him to hear. By dint of this, and just seeing Lacaideon and Batay all the time and seeing what good people they are, he starts to grow attached to them
* He reflects on his conversations with CB and his attachment to these people and starts seriously thinking about how he should try and be a better person and redeem himself
* Eventually, the Reaper Guard are sent by the Revenant to the semadai mountain as the Revenant feels that as the spawn of Kalawi he should eliminate the Ilyzor-worshipping order
* The Reaper Guard slaughter huge numbers of semadai before anyone realises what’s going on or even makes up, but Shadowbound saves the life of Lacaideon- Lacaideon doesn’t realise this as it’s all behind the scenes, indeed he’s never aware of Shadowbound’s presence at any point
* SB is unable to save Batay, however. Batay bleeds out in Lacaideon’s arms and the latter resolves to go home
* Batay’s death is the final catalyst for SB’s redemption. He resolves firmly, once and for all, to use his skills for some kind of good, if only by killing all the evil people in the world
* He decides to start with the one who he freed in the first place, starting this whole emotional journey: Purgatory. He’s going to kill Sharkjaw afterwards, and severely regrets reneging on his deal with Chainbreaker to do so. He decides that after Sharkjaw’s death, he’ll surprise CB with the news and fantasises about them embracing and being friends again
* For now, he travels to Semidon to assassinate Purgatory
* But Purgatory is outstandingly cunning, and manages to outwit Shadowbound, getting him to fall into a trap and mortally wound himself before he can kill Purgatory
* She begins to gloat and as SB bleeds out, reveals to him that he is a bastard son of Soul Eater, who raped his mother with the result that Shadowbound was born
* Heartbroken and shocked by this knowledge, Shadowbound dies
* Though he never realises it, by rejecting his own hallucinatory conversation with Azor and deciding not to try and find Ironhand, he inadvertently ends up accomplishing his own made-up prophecy
* He saves Lacaideon’s life, and Lacaideon eventually kills the Revenant, becomes Ironhand, and becomes a great and benevolent Shurhath

[Nothing for Parts 9, 10, 11, 12]

## 7. Analysis

Batay, by giving therapy to Lacaideon and discussing the Way, should teach the reader genuine self-help principles that align with my own personal philosophy.

A key message of the story is that although evil initially appears to triumph over good as morality is a restraint on action and fear is a good motivator/deterrent, ultimate good always triumphs. This is simply because it is ultimately more effective: inspiring loyalty and being likeable is always a better long-term strategy than inspiring fear and being resented. Resentment should always be avoided because, as things are constantly changing, you are never permanently on top, so if you inspired resentment (i.e. badwill) in someone rather than goodwill, as soon as they have the chance they will act on it. Acting immorally and selfishly ultimately forsakes every evil character.

Chainbreaker surrounds himself with three key confidantes, each representing/encouraging a different part of his psyche. Armageddon represents the id: he is characterised by an immense anger and drive to act on this anger by murdering slavers. He lacks any qualities of pragmatism, diplomacy, or long-term planning. Kingsparrow represents the ego: he has the same desires that Armageddon does, but encourages Chainbreaker to pay attention to logistics, discipline, organisation, and complex planning to do this. Lazaria is the superego: she advocates mercy, civility, and gentleness, and by doing so is always directly at odds with Armageddon. Chainbreaker fails on his quest to liberate all slaves because the odds against him are simply too overwhelming, but the eventual triumph of the latter and the subsequent dominance of Chainbreaker’s id over his superego also contributes to his eventual failure.

The narrative features death so heavily for several reasons. Firstly, it is true to the destructive nature of war in our world. Secondly, it raises the stakes of the narrative and adds drama: the aim is to instil a kind of fear in the reader that any character, no matter how central to the plot, could be killed at any time. The aim is for ‘plot armour’ to be absent in the narrative: every character’s fate is determined entirely by their own deeds and merits. Just as in the real world before late modernity, death can often be from arbitrary causes, for example infection. The Battles of Semidon feature so much death partly to raise the stakes but also to instil in the reader a fear of the inevitable upcoming loss of liked characters, which mirrors the character’s fear of their inevitable potential death in what will be a bloody battle.

Pain and fear are common themes in Ethagis. It is a theme in the narrative that negative phenomena- especially fear- are key components of what makes us fundamentally human, and that courage- a virtue- cannot exist in the absence of fear. The most moral characters in the narrative are generally those that act the most *in spite of* their fear, for example Ironhand. The more immoral characters are generally less courageous, but only the three most malevolent characters in the whole narrative are incapable of feeling fear at all: Purgatory, the Revenant, and Sharkjaw.

Virtue in general cannot exist without the backdrop of human failings. Unlike characters in the narrative such an Ironhand, who are heroic because their resolve is unbreakable *despite* their human feelings and emotions, supernatural beings like [a demigod](#_Demigod) literally cannot lose heart even if they tried. They are not capable of doing so, and therefore are less virtuous than human characters who overcome their failings through great and constant effort rather than divine intervention.

Batay paraphrases these principles whilst in conversation with Indigo in part 4 (also book 4) of the narrative.

[2021-2023] Ideals and personal philosophies are a major theme in the series, to the extent that almost every main character has a personal philosophy of their own, which can be neatly summed up in a word. Those that don’t are shown to suffer for it, wondering their place in the world and what the purpose of everything is. The most villainous characters have obviously cruel ideals, but the aim is that different, morally grey characters have different, morally grey ideals, none of which are perfect. They seek to balance morality/practicality in different ways and approach the concept of justice from different angles. Politics ties into this: different main characters have different political philosophies, which ties into their worldviews, ideals, and goals.

[2021-2023] Question: What single guiding principle motivates the characters of the narrative?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Character | Ideal |
| Elphensbane | Decency |
| Chainbreaker | Equality |
| Batay | Harmony |
| The Juggernaught | Order |
| Armageddon | Retribution |
| Lazaria | Reformation |
| The Sword of Semidon | Tradition |
| The Brimstone Leopard | Duty |
| The Winged Prophet | Religion |
| Shuriken | Hatred |
| Thundermaw | Philosophy |
| Crossbow | Fairness |

Many characters discover/change their ideals throughout the course of the narrative.

# The Extras

## 8. Mightiest: The Game

Game Title: *Shadowbound*

* Shadowbound is a video game set in the universe of Mightiest and in the country of the Empire of Ethagis
* I conceptualised this game first in 2023, when the game was based off the 2021-2023 write of Mightiest
* After rewriting Mightiest’s story/worldbuilding in 2024, I rewrote the game
* This version of the game is the second version I made in 2024, with the original formatting that I wrote all this information out in

### Introduction

* Shadowbound is a first person, action-adventure immersive sim with RPG elements which can be played as a stealth or hack-and-slash game
* It takes place in the fictional world of Mightiest, which is experienced as a series of self-contained areas focused on achieving a goal. The player plays as Shadowbound, the same character as in the Mightiest epic, and encounters the same slew of characters in the game as in the epic
* In the terminology of the game, these discrete goal-based areas that the world of Ethagis is experienced in are called ‘missions’
* Each mission is a kind of sandbox where the player can achieve their goal in many different ways, navigate the mission in many different ways, complete side-objectives, explore and find unique situations, kill/confront/aid different characters as they see fit, etc
* Missions are designed as dense, dynamic locales which can be explored and exploited in lots of different creative ways by the player using the toolkit of powers and equipment given to them
* The repertoire of these tools available to the player is designed to be both powerful and have lots of potential uses, including uses beyond the developers’ initial intentions as players experiment with how their tools interact with the environment
* The game explicitly tries to make the player *feel* overpowered whilst still balancing their monumental abilities (e.g. time control) by things like mana costs, short durations, strong enemies, etc
* Nonetheless, an important thematic concept is that Shadowbound explores the morality of its titular character when given god-like abilities
* The key emphases of this game are responsivity, consequences, and replayability
* The world is fundamentally designed to respond to your actions and abilities. Almost everything in the environment can be interacted with and exploited in unique ways based on the player’s imaginativeness. Doors/structures/defences can be destroyed, snuck under, commandeered; foliage and natural structures like trees can be climbed, hidden in, burnt down; lanterns can be toppled to change light levels or start fires; food and water can be consumed; items carried; hidden passageways and nooks found and explored; wells poisoned; etc
* The responsivity of the world isn’t just geared towards allowing creative ways of utilizing the environment: it also changes according to the player’s actions
* The player’s level of violence affects the brutality and violence of the world they explore, and the people they choose to spare/kill/help have real effects on the world around them that the player notices and is affected by
* Part and parcel of the game’s responsivity to these kinds of actions is the consequences borne by players for committing them: as a general rule, brutality and immorality increase the difficulty of navigating missions, produce a darker overall tone, and a worse ending for Shadowbound, the titular character
* The huge diversity in the ways players can approach a mission, interact with the environment, and affect the story/gameplay by their choices contributes a high replayability of the game
* This replayability really correlates to player *freedom­*- they can *choose* to complete missions how they see fit, adopt whatever playstyle they choose, and utilize their creativity to do what they choose to do to the world/inhabitants of each mission

### Background

* The game takes place in the world of Mightiest as formulated in the 2024 rewrite of the story/worldbuilding, and features the characters as formulated in the 2024 rewrite
* The Empire of Ethagis and the wider universe of Mightiest are identical in this game and in the epic except with one difference- in this game, the Ten Animal Gods and the Three Human Deities are real
* Deceased humans are reincarnated based on their morality in life. The best humans pass into oblivions, most humans are reincarnated as people again, and the worst humans are reincarnated into the ‘shadow plane’, a kind of hell
* Although all ten gods exist and occasionally speak to humans, Kalawi and Ilyzor are the only gods that actively intervene in human affairs. Their ability to do this is limited in some way by the Three Human Deities and the cosmic laws of the universe, but the mechanisms of this are not told explicitly to the player and will only be pieced together by the most dedicated players
* The events of Mightiest unfold in the game as they do in the epic with the key alteration that in the game the gods are real, causing events to of course diverge significantly from in the epic
* Kalawi and Ilyzor intervene in human affairs by incarnating ‘servants’, mortal and sentient creatures (which are not human, though often appearing/behaving very similarly)
* Kalawi’s servants are colloquially called demons and seek to spread chaos, indiscriminately attacking others and spreading violence, fear, and destruction
* Ilyzor’s servants are colloquially called angels and seek to spread order, working with and often dominating humans to establish authority, structure, and conformity
* You, the player, play as Shadowbound- this is the same Shadowbound as seen in the Mightiest epic
* Before each mission, a cutscene will play where Shadowbound and his avatars speak over a slideshow of various images, discussing his internal state and motivations. This propels the story as we understand why the player is doing what they’re doing and provides insight into how the player’s actions have affected Shadowbound’s psyche
* The game consists of discrete, separate missions. Each mission after Act I takes place in a ‘part’ of Mightiest’s story and the player’s actions will affect subsequent missions
* There will be an overarching mission objective, for example find out about XYZ, but the player can choose how they do so, dealing with key figures lethally, non-lethally, or not at all
* Each mission is a sandbox and there are various side-quests, different ways of meeting the same objective or going to the same place, etc
* The game as a whole therefore has a linear structure of a sequence of missions but each mission individually is an open-world sandbox
* The player’s levels of lethality and cruelty affect the story, characters, and Shadowbound himself, similar to the Chaos mechanic in the game Dishonored, although in this game the mechanic is called ‘brutality’
* The story/characters/Shadowbound are also affected by the individuals the player kills or aids e.g. the Revenant
* The player also has non-supernatural equipment: a dart gun, chemical weapons, poisons, etc which are upgraded in black markets found in each mission
* The player has two stats: Will (essentially health) and Mana. These are increased by objects which act as health/mana potions which are scattered throughout the level

### Story and Missions

#### Prologue (Mission 0)

* Takes place in Part 1 of Mightiest
* The prologue is Shadowbound’s final contracted mission: to eliminate the Dragonfly and free Purgatory
* The cutscene beforehand showing Shadowbound describe how this will be his last mission as Sharkjaw will give him a huge sum of money. He does not make any value judgements on the ethicality of this mission, himself, or Sharkjaw at this stage
* He has already infiltrated the palace of Semidon at the start and the prologue itself is just him navigating the level and completing those aims
* The player can die during this level and if so will just be returned to their last savepoint: the lore explanation for this is that canonically Shadowbound survives this mission so the player is able to just achieve this
* The Dragonfly doesn’t need to be killed: he can instead he taken to Purgatory’s cell and swapped with her to languish inside the cell. The key is on his person
* The player can approach the mission in any way they want.
* The optional boss in Mission 0 is the Sword of Semidon
* Purgatory is very light so Shadowbound just ties her to his back and carrying her does not affect gameplay or mechanics at all. Any other NPCs being carried occupy both the player’s hands and thus do affect gameplay. Other NPCs can be carried whilst Purgatory is strapped to Shadowbound’s back
* The player does not yet have supernatural powers, just a sword and equipment
* Along the way, the dialogue of guards around the palace provides information about the world
* The player deduces the basic nature of Ethagis and its politics; the realm has been getting decentralised for some time; a war is imminent; some angels created by Ilyzor have been stationed in the palace to help govern the realm and keep it united;
* people dislike the angels as they’re emotionless and don’t really care about human suffering, just order; Kalawi has been making some demons to try and kill the Dragonfly and therefore cause a chaotic war; these attempts have been unsuccessful as no demons are strong enough to enter the palace;
* many demons are lurking outside the palace though; the Dragonfly is a poor Shurhath; an extremely dangerous and malign woman is locked in a special isolated cell somewhere
* The prologue ends once Shadowbound carries Purgatory’s unconscious body outside the interior of the palace (excluding outdoor courtyards, which the player may pass through in the level)
* Optional Boss Fight: the Sword of Semidon
* As with certain other missions, there is an optional boss fight which the player can handle by a stealthy assassination, a stealthy non-lethal kill, or a full-on battle
* As with all optional boss fights, the boss can be neutralised lethally or non-lethally. Both count as a win. The player is rewarded with an idol and whatever loot can be gleaned from the boss
* The boss in this level is the Sword of Semidon. Killing him will affect future dialogue and actions of characters and have a minor role in the story
* A cutscene after the prologue shows Shadowbound slinking away from the castle through the forests nearby
* He arrives at the same clearing where the Red Mantis gets hit by Tarantula’s poison dart. A fiend (the largest and most powerful kind of demon) lurking near the palace finds and mauls him, mortally wounding Shadowbound
* He crawls away into a nearby cave- the same one the Red Mantis subsequently crawls into- and is approached by Kalawi. The approach of Kalawi is suitably frightening and demonic
* Kalawi explains that Shadowbound will undoubtedly die here. Nobody will save him and nobody *could* save him- with the exception of Kalawi himself
* Kalawi proposes a deal to the player. He has the ability to bring him back to life- he only does this for very consequential individuals, ones whom he senses have the potential to wreak huge amounts of chaos
* He hasn’t offered to resurrect anyone in generations, but he offers to do so for Shadowbound
* Not only will Shadowbound return to life, but he’ll come back to life nearly invincible. He will have access to a huge array of supernatural powers, which can be made even more potent by the collection of occult charms
* He will be immune to pain, illness, fear, fatigue, hunger, thirst, bodily wounds, and he will be unnaturally quiet and hard to detect
* If he ever does die, Kalawi will simply bring him back to live again
* In exchange, Kalawi wants his soul
* Therefore when Shadowbound dies *of old age*- and Kalawi will resurrect him if he dies for any reason that isn’t old age- his soul will travel to the shadow plane, a kind of hell
* The player can actually refuse this, but if they do so Kalawi grins and says ‘Then die.’ And the game closes
* If the player reboots the game, they will return to the meeting with Kalawi. He will give some unique dialogue (taunting the player- not Shadowbound, but the name of the computer’s user specifically) about crawling back to him and offer the choice
* The player can reject this choice even more times, generating unique dialogue, although eventually the dialogue just becomes the same and the player will just return to the screen where they have to choose
* To begin the game, the player must accept this deal, and a cutscene plays of Shadowbound coming back to life

#### Missions

The missions in Shadowbound are divided into three acts, each reflecting different stages of the story as Shadowbound is trying to do different things. Each mission corresponds to a book in the Mightiest epic and features the events and dramas of that part of the narrative.

##### Act I

Mission I – Find Sharkjaw

* Takes place in Part 2 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene elaborates Shadowbound’s aims. Slight difference based on Depravity level- all pre-mission cutscenes have this
* Setting is the Kacharian capital, where Sharkjaw’s main trade harbour and his quarters are
* No NPCs know about Shadowbound’s deal with Sharkjaw so will treat him as hostile as Shadowbound is a wanted, feared assassin whom people suspect killed the Dragonfly and started this war
* Aim is to find Sharkjaw to trade in Purgatory and claim reward. Sharkjaw is encountered in a cutscene so the player can’t kill him

Mission II – Go home

* Takes place in Part 2 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound slightly concerned about Sharkjaw believing they’re one and the same
* Setting is Naraka, where Shadowbound makes his way to the slums on the outskirts
* No NPCs know that Shadowbound saved Purgatory so will treat him as hostile as Shadowbound is a wanted, feared assassin whom people suspect killed the Dragonfly and started this war
* Aim is just to reach the outskirts, but various obstacles bar this and many side-quests can be completed. The player will also see crucified citizens
* The second black market is encountered here (first one is in Mission I). Shadowbound cannot actually convert all the platinum bars Sharkjaw gave him into currency so can only use the coin he collects during the missions. This mechanic does not change, otherwise the player would have infinite currency
* The end cutscene shows Shadowbound reach ‘home’, only to find it’s been totally burned out. Shadowbound falls to his knees

Mission III – Spy on Soul Eater’s court

* Takes place in Part 3 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound, aimless without missions and bereft at the loss of his home (we don’t yet know anything about his backstory) decide to just spy on Soul Eater out of boredom and to loot idols (to upgrade powers), charms (to confer abilities), and masks (to change playstyles)
* Setting is Soul Eater’s castle
* The player can eavesdrop on conversations to hear that Purgatory is launching diseased corpses into settlements to win the war. As in all missions, the player will also overhear lots more lore and gameplay-relevant intel
* There is no fixed ‘aim’ but the castle can be exited once the player enters a large courtyard and sees the blinded army of the Juggernaught’s prisoners
* Purgatory is absent from this mission, but Soul Eater and Steelbird are here
* The player can ignore them, kill them, or eliminate them non-lethally. Soul Eater can be knocked out and carried to an isolated cell in the darkest pits of the castle, where he will live out his days being fed by guards who cannot hear his cries due to the cell’s design (the same principle applies to the Dragonfly)
* Optional Boss Fight: a Fiend
* As with certain other missions, there is an optional boss fight which the player can handle by a stealthy assassination, a stealthy non-lethal kill, or a full-on battle
* As with all optional boss fights, the boss can be neutralised lethally or non-lethally. Both count as a win. The player is rewarded with an idol and whatever loot can be gleaned from the boss
* The boss in this level is a fiend encountered underneath the castle
* After finishing the mission, having seen the blinded army, Shadowbound will freak out and take entheogens to speak with Azor
* Azor comments different things based on the player’s morality, but ultimately does what he does in the epic
* He affirms Shadowbound’s fears that he’s done something different in ethicality and scope from his usual assassinations. He tells Shadowbound that there’s something he can do about it, and mentions the name ‘Ironhand’ before disappearing

##### Act 2

Mission IV- Find information about Ironhand in Kahina

* Takes place in Part 4 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound’s network of information in Ethagis find nothing, so Shadowbound decides to visit the newly independent South
* Setting is Kahina. Named NPCs encountered are the Darkstar, the Liquid Lion, and Hurricane
* The god that appears at the mission’s shrine is Namur. Namur references some kind of upcoming battle between good and evil, order and chaos- the player’s first hint to the events of Act 3- but this is all we hear
* In subsequent missions throughout Act 2, an increasing number of references will be made to this
* The mission can be ended once the player finds out about Lanna, a sorceress in the West who’s had visions with the same mentioned name- Ironhand

Mission V – Find information about Ironhand from Lanna

* Takes place in Part 5 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows the player going west. The mission begins and the player speaks to Lanna, who explains that she’ll tell Shadowbound what he wants to know in exchange for a favour
* The mission takes place in the Western Commanderies. The Juggernaught’s and Desert Ripper’s camps are near each other. Lanna wants the player to neutralise the Desert Ripper and take his body to the Juggernaught’s camp
* Lanna will refuse to help if Elphensbane/Hazin is killed or if the Juggernaught is brought to the Desert Ripper’s camp instead
* The mission can still be completed by either aiding the Desert Ripper, who will attack the camp, capture Lanna, and make her tell all. It can also be completed by bringing Lanna to a torture rack and interrogating her
* Lanna tells the player about her visions: a man dressed in indigo, training on a mountain. She also divulges that someone in the Commonwealth, Zerzura, has also been having visions
* Optional Boss Fight: an Archangel atop an Elephant
* As with certain other missions, there is an optional boss fight which the player can handle by a stealthy assassination, a stealthy non-lethal kill, or a full-on battle
* As with all optional boss fights, the boss can be neutralised lethally or non-lethally. Both count as a win. The player is rewarded with an idol and whatever loot can be gleaned from the boss
* This mission’s boss is found in the no man’s land between the two camps
* The boss in this level is both the archangel *and* the elephant they ride on- both need to be neutralised. The elephant can be non-lethally neutralised with a quicklime gourd (with the Depressant Quicklime upgrade), iceblast, or using the environment
* A nearby ballista can be loaded with a ‘sleep bolt’ to neutralise the elephant, but the bolt has to be made in the Juggernaught’s camp. Multiple sleep bolts can be used so the archangel can be neutralised this way first

Mission VI – Find information about Ironhand in Azariad

* Takes place in Part 6 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows
* Setting is Azariad. Named NPCs encountered are Chainbreaker, Kingsparrow, and Zerzura
* Aim is to gain information from Zerzura, either by helping or coercing her. Zerzura tells the player about a man wielding two swords and living on a beautiful mountain
* Shadowbound figures that this is the semadai mountain and goes to investigate
* There is a post-mission cutscene where Kalawi appears; this is the first time he does so since the prologue. He confirms to Shadowbound that the rumours the player’s heard this whole Act about an upcoming battle between good and evil are true, and warns you (using the computer’s username) not to interfere

Mission VII – Find information about Ironhand in the Semadai plateau

* Takes place in Part 7 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound arriving at the semadai mountain and wondering whether his path should be to help or hurt this prophetic figure
* Setting is the semadai mountain/plateau where Indigo lives
* Aim is to find Indigo. After doing so, members of the Reaper Guard led by Tarantula will lead an attack on the mountain
* The player can choose to repel them, or appear to Tarantula and actively help him
* Killing Indigo will cause him to vanish in a puff of white smoke- the player learns why later. Whether the player chooses to save or kill Indigo has large consequences for Act 3
* The player can also kill the other named NPCs present if they choose to: the Hammer of Ilyzor, Typhoon, and Tarantula
* Post-mission cutscene shows Kalawi reacting to the player’s actions: who they saved, killed, helped. The dialogue is also tinted by whether the player has a low brutality or high brutality rating
* If the player has a low rating, they will call the player Shadowbound. At a high brutality rating, Kalawi will address the player by the username on their computer
* If they kill Indigo, Kalawi will be satisfied with the player’s servility towards the pursuit of chaos, but mention that his death has allowed Ilyzor to reincarnate him, and Indigo has been reincarnated as something *extremely* powerful, perhaps more so than Shadowbound
* Optional Boss Fight: Tarantula & the Reaper Guard
* As with certain other missions, there is an optional boss fight which the player can handle by a stealthy assassination, a stealthy non-lethal kill, or a full-on battle
* As with all optional boss fights, the boss can be neutralised lethally or non-lethally. Both count as a win. The player is rewarded with an idol and whatever loot can be gleaned from the boss
* The boss in this mission is Tarantula and the whole Reaper Guard- they can be all summoned to the courtyard by ringing the large bell there. The battle begins after this
* Simply picking them off one by one does not count as the boss battle

##### Act 3

Mission VIII – Look for the Revenant in the imperial palace

* Takes place in Part 8 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound using his network of information to discover that an antichrist-like figure, the Revenant, sent the Reaper Guard to the plateau and has been amassing a huge following and that he regularly mentions a figure called ‘Ironhand’. Shadowbound hears he’s sworn to Soul Eater and goes to find him at the imperial palace
* Setting is the imperial palace- Purgatory has placed many traps here. Purgatory can actually be killed, non-lethally neutralised by placing her back in her old cell, or helped
* The state of Semidon depends massively on which people the player has killed until now and their brutality level. Many NPCs talk about the Revenant, describing him either in terror or awe as a kind of god and the spawn of Kalawi. It is by now common knowledge that some great battle is approaching
* The mission can be ended once the player discovers that the Revenant isn’t here but is a sworn arch enemy to Ironhand and will be confronting him in the Delta. Shadowbound resolves to track them and moves east

Mission IX – Track down the Revenant

* Takes place in Part 9 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound in the Delta where the Grizzly Falcon is encamped. Indigo is not encountered in this part, as he is currently not encamped and on the move
* Aim is to find where Indigo will be engaging the Revenant for the final battle
* It is revealed through NPC conversations and lore that if the player killed Indigo in Mission 7, he has been reincarnated by Ilyzor as some kind of super-angel. In this form he is practically a god, but NPCs note his loss of humanity and empathy
* Post-mission cutscene shows Kalawi appear again, saying that the next mission will be the final, ultimate battle

Mission X – Deal with the Revenant

* Takes place in Part 10 of Mightiest
* Setting is the Battle of the River Antavar. The player cannot encounter Indigo in this level but he is fighting. They encounter Lord Morningstar and the Revenant, and the aim is to deal with the Revenant in some way
* The Revenant can either be killed, non-lethally neutralised, or helped. Whether the player neutralises or helps the Revenant determines which side wins the battle
* ALTERNATIVELY the player can ignore the Revenant and instead just try and facilitate a battle between Indigo and the Revenant and let fate determine who wins. They do this by neutralising all other NPCs on the Revenant’s flagship
* In low brutality, Indigo will win this battle by burning the Revenant alive, burning off his hand in the process. In high brutality the Revenant will win and Indigo will run away after the Revenant cuts off his hand
* The battle is shown in a post-mission cutscene and is suitably epic
* Post-mission cutscene shows Kalawi speaking to Shadowbound/the computer user (depending on brutality level) and commenting on their actions throughout the game
* Mission XI has two variants based on whether Indigo or the Revenant wins
* Optional Boss Fight: the Revenant
* As with certain other missions, there is an optional boss fight which the player can handle by a stealthy assassination, a stealthy non-lethal kill, or a full-on battle
* As with all optional boss fights, the boss can be neutralised lethally or non-lethally. Both count as a win. The player is rewarded with an idol and whatever loot can be gleaned from the boss
* The boss in this mission is the Revenant. The Revenant is extremely strong and dangerous, the second-hardest NPC in the game to fight after Seraph Ironhand

Mission XI – Deal with Ironhand

* Takes place in Part 11 of Mightiest
* This mission has two variants- an Ironhand Victory and a Revenant Victory version
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound tracking down Ironhand to deal with him and complete the prophecy
* Setting is the eastern Crownlands as Ironhand makes his way to Semidon. This is either to seize the throne from Lord Morningstar; seize the unoccupied throne if LM is dead; flee the Revenant if he won the battle
* Aim is to either kill, non-lethally neutralise, or help Ironhand. Ironhand can be helped even if the Revenant won in the preceding mission and with the player’s help will eventually win
* ALTERNATIVELY the player can decide to just do nothing and leave. If the Revenant is neutralised, Ironhand will assume the throne. If the Revenant is still active, a post-mission cutscene will play
* In low brutality, Ironhand will dramatically chop up the Revenant into lots of pieces and nail them to underwater rocks in the seas surrounding Ethagis. In high brutality, the Revenant will strike Ironhand down
* Post-mission cutscene shows Kalawi speaking to Shadowbound/the computer user (depending on brutality level) and commenting on their actions throughout the game
* Optional Boss Fight: Ironhand (Human *or* Seraph)
* As with certain other missions, there is an optional boss fight which the player can handle by a stealthy assassination, a stealthy non-lethal kill, or a full-on battle
* As with all optional boss fights, the boss can be neutralised lethally or non-lethally. Both count as a win. The player is rewarded with an idol and whatever loot can be gleaned from the boss
* The boss in this mission is Ironhand *in either form*. Human Ironhand is a much, much easier bossfight than Seraph Ironhand, although Human Ironhand is surrounded by other NPCs to make the bossfight harder
* Seraph Ironhand is the strongest, most difficult NPC to fight in the whole game

Mission XII – Deal with Sharkjaw

* Takes place in Part 12 of Mightiest
* Pre-mission cutscene shows Shadowbound explaining the current political situation in Ethagis: Sharkjaw in control of much of it, and either facing Ironhand, another Shurhath chosen from the surviving named NPCs (or just a nameless archangel if none are left), or the Revenant. As Sharkjaw is clearly relevant to the whole Ironhand-Revenant scenario, Shadowbound decides to deal with him
* This mission has two variants- a Low Brutality and a High Brutality version
* Each variant also has a lot of further variation based on who Sharkjaw is facing
* Setting is Kacharias and Sharkjaw’s quarters- now remade with his wealth to be a large and opulent palace
* Aim is to either kill, non-lethally neutralise, help, or ignore Sharkjaw. Helping Sharkjaw will cause his informal empire to survive
* In low brutality if Sharkjaw isn’t helped, Sharkjaw will be defeated by the Shurhath OR will slay the Revenant by burning him into ash but also be slain. His empire collapses and is reabsorbed into Ethagis
* In low brutality if Sharkjaw is helped, Sharkjaw will defeat the Shurhath OR the Revenant by burning him. His empire remains, but Sharkjaw can’t really run it all properly and in practice everyone’s independent
* In high brutality if Sharkjaw isn’t helped, Sharkjaw will be defeated by the Shurhath OR will be defeated by the Revenant. If the Revenant wins, they end human civilisation in Ethagis and then it is strongly implied the world
* In high brutality if Sharkjaw is helped, Sharkjaw will defeat the Shurhath OR joins the Revenant and swears allegiance. Civilisation in Ethagis still ends and Sharkjaw’s actions definitively confirm to the player that it ends in the world as well
* Post-mission cutscene is the game’s ending

#### Endings

* There are many, many different possible endings, all depending on the player’s actions and their brutality score
* All characters in Mightiest that the player encounters can be killed or spared. Some characters can be neutralised but in a non-lethal way, e.g. putting Soul Eater in the Black Cells. This removes them from the narrative but allows the player to pursue a non-lethal playthrough
* Some NPCs can be spoken to and aided by the player, e.g. Purgatory, Chainbreaker, Sharkjaw, Ironhand, or the Revenant
* These of course lead to wildly different endings
* Every ending that the player can unlock via their actions has a low brutality and a high brutality rating variant- the high brutality endings are always worse
* The endings that the player gets is based mostly on what happens to Ironhand; what happens to the Revenant; which named NPCs are still alive to take the throne (the more named NPCs the player kills, the worse the eventual Shurhath is; what happens to Sharkjaw
* All of these possible endings then have low brutality and high brutality variants
* The best possible ending is low-brutality, no named NPCs killed (evil ones can be killed without affecting the ending), Ironhand helped, the Revenant defeated, Sharkjaw defeated
* The worst possible ending is high-brutality, all named NPCs killed, Ironhand defeated, the Revenant helped, Sharkjaw helped
* At the end of the game, a cutscene plays describing how your actions have affected Ethagis and its various important characters: this is narrated by the hippopotamus god, Shurhath
* A second cutscene plays afterwards, describing the fate of Shadowbound after his death. In this cutscene, Shadowbound is shown to die and Kalawi will once more appear to the player and tell them their fate
* The one exception is in a low-brutality, no named NPCs killed (evil ones can be killed without affecting the ending), Ironhand helped, the Revenant defeated, Sharkjaw defeated playthrough. In this case, Ilyzor will appear to the player instead and tell them their fate
* In any playthrough, Shadowbound eventually dies, but their fate after death and the manner in which they died varies depending on the player’s actions
* In any high-brutality playthrough OR a low-brutality playthrough where the Revenant or Sharkjaw is helped, Kalawi explains that when the player dies they pass into ‘unending shadow’ as promised
* The degree of torment to which they are subjected to depends on their actions. A low-brutality playthrough where only Sharkjaw is helped is the least horrific, a high-brutality playthrough where the Revenant and Sharkjaw are helped is the most
* In any other playthrough- i.e. one which is low-brutality *and* the Revenant/Sharkjaw aren’t actively helped, Kalawi explains that Shadowbound cannot pass into the shadow plane as he wasn’t evil enough
* However, the actual fate of Shadowbound still varies. In most endings, Kalawi still owns Shadowbound’s soul, so inflicts as much torment as he can
* If the player does any majorly unethical action during the game to a named NPC (neutralizing Ironhand, helping Purgatory, helping Soul Eater, etc) Kalawi reincarnates them as a mines slave
* If the player doesn’t help anyone malevolent but fails to actively help Ironhand, neutralize the Revenant, or neutralize Sharkjaw, Kalawi explains that he can’t reincarnate Shadowbound as a slave as he wasn’t evil enough, so reincarnates him as a hyena who lives in the wilderness
* If the player actively helps Ironhand, neutralizes the Revenant AND neutralizes Sharkjaw (all in a low-brutality playthrough) then a unique cutscene plays
* Ilyzor appears and explains that due to Shadowbound fully redeeming himself and defying Kalawi by being a good person, the gods have all personally intervened in his fate to override Kalawi. Shadowbound lives a long, happy life, and after dying of old age his soul passes peacefully into oblivion

### Gameplay

The game has singleplayer and co-op modes. In the co-op mode, both players play as (different avatars of) the character Shadowbound, and other NPCs will react to them in the same way. The game as a whole- rather than individual players- has a brutality rating. Idols, charms, money, and equipment are given to all players when one unlocks it. Players share the same stock of money. Objectives completed by one player apply to all of them.

#### Supernatural Powers and Abilities: Mechanic

* After the prologue, the player will have access to powers and abilities
* Powers are active: the player must equip them in their left hand (the weapons wheel only applies to the left hand- the right hand always just carries a sword) and using them consumes mana
* Each power has three tiers of upgrades. The third tier consists of two mutually exclusive upgrades
* Abilities are passive: they are not equipped and the player can use them whenever relevant without using mana.
* Some abilities have three tiers of upgrades, with the third tier being two mutually exclusive ones, and some just have two
* The only power available to the player at the start of the game is Phase. All other powers are unlocked, and all powers upgraded, by collecting idols
* These are small figures of Kalawi scattered throughout the missions, called idols
* Idols are used to unlock and upgrade supernatural power and abilities
* Different powers/upgrades use different numbers of idols. Idols are expended on use
* Some idols are found on shrines, which are dedicated to various different gods. Taking an idol from a shrine will prompt dialogue from the god whose shrine it is, and they will say different things based on the player’s actions and depravity
* There is always maximum one shrine per mission

#### Powers

Phase

*A short range teleportation which can move the player through human and animal NPCs*

Tier I - Power is described as above. It is available immediately after the prologue.

Tier II – Phase has an increased range

Tier III – Time is stopped when you stand still using Phase /// Phase into any Level 1 or 2 NPC to kill them instantly. This reduces a small amount of Will

Dark Reach

*A telekinesis power where the player’s left arm becomes a shadowy tentacle. This can manipulate objects from afar, throw around NPCs, or pull them towards you*

Tier I – Power is described as above. Only Level 1 NPCs can be manipulated

Tier II – Dark Reach has increased range and can manipulate Level 2 NPCs

Tier III – Dark Reach can manipulate Level 3 NPCs /// Dark Reach produces two tentacles instead of one, allowing the player to tear Level 1 or 2 NPCs in half or have the second tentacle automatically defend attacks whilst the first is being used

Iceblast

*Release a blast of ice. This can create icy platforms for the player to use, freeze doors shut, nullify flames/explosions/fuels, freeze Level 1 NPCs, and more*

Tier I – Power is as described above. Frozen NPCs do not thaw unless the player thaws them but are not counted as killed (they unfreeze after the mission). Prolonged fire will also melt ice

Tier II – Iceblast has increased range and can freeze Level 2 NPCs

Tier III – Instantaneously freeze Level 3 NPCs and freeze Level 4 NPCs after prolonged use /// Instantaneously freeze Level 3 NPCs and freeze all NPCs around you when used

Cyclone

*In a large area of effect, the player can disable or multiply gravity for Level 1, 2, and 3 NPCs. This can cause them to float and scrabble for balance, or press them violently to the ground*

Tier I – Power is as described above. Enemies bound to the ground will be face down so unable to see you, but immediately go on alert. Archangels can still fly, allowing them to nullify this power’s effects. Floating enemies can still attack you but are much less accurate and cannot move midair

Tier II – Area of effect is larger and the power lasts longer

Tier III – The area of the power applies to a *massive* radius around the player, essentially occupying the entire screen /// Level 4 enemies are also affected and archangels cannot fly

Parasite

*Possess Level 1 animals, allowing you to move and attack in their body for a limited period of time*

Tier I – Power is as described above. Small animals like spiders and fish can move through grates, bars, under wooden doors, etc

Tier II – Possess humans as well, being able to move around and attack using the armaments in their hand

Tier III – Possess Level 2 NPCs except angels, being able to move and attack using their held armaments and powers /// Remotely cause any animal or human to turn hostile to everyone, attacking indiscriminately

Scourge

*Cause a Level 1 or 2 NPC to explode into a cloud of ravenous spiders, which will swarm enemies and eat them alive before exploding into a cloud of obscuring smoke*

Tier I – Power is as described above. Exploding an NPC instantly kills them

Tier II – Scourge has increased range and produces more spiders

Tier III – Explode any NPC into spiders. Fiends and elephants produce larger numbers /// Spider swarms do not despawn and will guard the player instead until being slain

Splendour

*Assume the form of a vast, powerful hyena for a limited amount of time. Whilst in Splendour form, you cannot use your sword or weapons wheel (including powers). This form deals huge damage; withstands huge damage; jump very high/far; run very fast; is nearly impossible to see in shadow; topple trees on impact; and can destroy any breakable doors and structures on impact*

Tier I – Power is as described above. The Splendour form has a Terror value of V and is large but the player can manually adjust its size. If the player tries to enter a doorway, passageway, any space which a standard sized hyena could access, the Splendour form size will automatically adjust

Tier II – Splendour lasts for longer

Tier III – Splendour form can breathe explosive fire. This has no cooldown /// Splendour form has a Terror value of VII and lasts for even longer

Impunity

*Bend the fabric of time, vastly slowing the world around you whilst you experience time normally*

Tier I – Power is described as above. Non-supernatural projectiles thrown by the player travel very slowly instead of near-instantaneously

Tier II – Stop time completely instead of slowing it. Non-supernatural projectiles will remain static in the air once deployed

Tier III – Significantly increase the duration of this power /// Allows the player to stack jumps on jumps when time is stopped, effectively allowing flight

#### Abilities

Zephyr

*Increases movement speed and slightly increases jump height*

Tier I – Ability is as described above

Tier II – Allows the player to double jump and slightly increases movement speed even more

Ravenous

*Consume animal corpses to destroy the corpse and restore mana*

Tier I – Ability is as described above. The amount of mana restored depends on the animal. Spiders cannot be eaten

Tier II – Consume human corpses to destroy the corpse and restore mana

Wyvern

*Glide using bat wings from large heights, travelling a long distance and slowly descending so as to avoid fall damage and land quietly*

Tier I – Ability is as described above. Direction can be changed mid-flight

Tier II – Lose altitude more slowly when gliding and thus travel faster

Dark Conduit

*Equip a greater number of charms at once and slightly increase mana regeneration*

Tier I – Ability is as described above. Increases maximum active charm number from 4 to 6 and increases mana regeneration from 20% of (normal) maximum to 25%

Tier II – Increase maximum active charm number from 6 to 8 and increases mana regeneration from 25% of (normal) maximum to 30%

Wrath

*Break down wooden doors with just your sword*

Tier I – Ability is as described above. This is loud and takes a few hits

Tier II – Break down wooden structures with your sword e.g. watch-towers. This is very loud and takes many hits

Leech

*Cling silently onto the underside of horses without the animal nor any other NPC being able to detect you. Uncling at any time*

Tier I – Ability is as described above. Whilst clinging, you can use your left hand but not your sword. You cannot steer or move the horse whilst clinging: they move of their own accord (although you can influence this e.g. by firing explosives behind them to get them to charge). Horses will not react to you clinging or unclinging

Tier II – Cling and uncling onto the undersides of elephants

Bloodlust

*Killing enemies builds up bloodlust, which can be expended to insta-kill Level 1 or 2 NPCs*

Tier I – Ability is as described above. When sufficient bloodlust is reached for an instakill, the part of the HUD showing what is equipped in the left hand will glow red

Tier II – Bloodlust builds up faster and sufficient bloodlust remains for longer

Tier III – Level 3 and 4 NPCs can be instakilled /// Sufficient bloodlust never goes away by itself and takes less time to build up

Foresight

*Cut through incoming projectiles by swinging your sword*

Tier I – Ability is as described above. Explosive projectiles will still explode on impact but do less damage

Tier II – Blocking with your sword deflects projectiles back at the sender

Tier III – Time slows to a crawl when an enemy spots you, allowing you to react quickly. This has a cooldown /// Staring at walls allows you to see NPCs, items, and security systems through them briefly. This has a cooldown

#### Charms

* Charms are objects scattered throughout every mission, with multiple per mission
* They confer a miscellaneous benefit onto the player (or a malus on their enemies)
* Only a limited number of charms can be equipped at once, but the unlock and upgrade of the Dark Conduit ability can increase this
* Some charms, called ‘corroded charms’ confer uniquely powerful abilities, but reduce the maximum amount of will the player can have by 15%
* The player can never equip more corroded charms than their maximum will can allow
* When the player is using the Eye of Kalawi to search for idols/charms, corroded charms have a different icon and label than regular charms

*Corroded Charms*

Phase | Players can place down phase ‘markers’ on the map and instantly return to them from anywhere on the map afterwards as long as the phase power is equipped. The player cannot phase between placing down the marker and returning to them

Cyclone | Multiplying gravity and slamming Level 1 and 2 NPCs to the floor knocks them out

Parasite | Power duration increased. Chain possession from one host to another as many as times as the player chooses. This does not reset the duration of possession but doesn’t cost mana

Splendour | Splendour duration massively increased

Profane | Profane shrines and angel corpses/unconscious bodies (heavily implied to be urinating on them) to fully restore will and mana

Shadow Spear | Throw your sword like a spear at a target. This does large damage and cannot be parried. Your right hand will be non-functional during the sword flight, but as soon as it makes impact with a surface it returns to your hand

*Regular Charms*

Armoured Bones | Become more difficult to knock down

Barbed Bolts | Dartbow bolts deal more damage

Bloodthirsty | Bloodlust charges faster

Bull | Running into Level 1 enemies knocks them down

Cast Out | Throw objects much further

Cat | Fall damage reduced

Chameleon | You are less visible when hiding in foliage/greenery

Creeping Flood | Firing monsoon shells from the hand siphon is silent

Crocodile | Assassinate enemies on land whilst swimming in nearby water, simultaneously dragging them into water

Crooked Silhouette | Enemy accuracy with projectiles is decreased (doesn’t apply to Angels)

Deathly Fog | Arsenic clouds lingering below Tier 4 enemies’ faces will drift up towards them if the elephant/fiend gets too close

Desperation | Attack damage is increased when will is low

Dolphin | Hold your breath for significantly longer

Dominant | Staring at hyenas will always cause them to back away unless they’re in a large enough group size to attack the player instead

Eagle Eye | Magnification of vision when peering through keyholes or using the spyglass

Elephant | Choking out enemies takes less time

Elixir | Drink water from spouts to restore some mana

Embers | Fires caused by grenades and Splendour Tier III last longer

Falling Star | Drop-assassinations restore a small amount of Mana

Faltering Aim | Enemies are more likely to miss with bows and crossbows

Fearsome | Killing enemies sometimes has an increased Terror value by 1

Fireflesh | Take less fire damage

Food Chain | Killing members of the Reaper Guard restores a small amount of mana

Forceful | Knock back enemies slightly when striking them with the sword

Gift of Power | Enemies turned against each other with the Parasite power deal slightly more damage

Gods’ Armour | When damaged, lose Mana before will

Harpy | Drop-assassinations restore a small amount of will

Heart of Darkness | Maximum Mana increased

Hippopotamus | Damage output increased

Iron Bolts | Dartbow bolts are much less likely to break on impact

Karma | Killing slavers increases Mana

Lasting Swarm | Spider swarms generated by Scourge last longer before dispersing

Leopard | When following enemies in stealth mode, move faster

Lightning Arm | Shadow Spear can be thrown further

Lion | Significant advantage when locking swords with NPCs

Long Claws | Dark Reach range is slightly increased

Mammon | Find slightly increased amounts of gold

Midnight Iris | See better in darkness

Mightiest | Maximum will increased

Needle Flesh | Enemies dealing damage to you take a small amount of recoil damage

Obscuration | Smoke from smoke bombs lasts longer and archangels cannot see through them

Octopus | Become far less visible in water

Outlaw | Killing asthans and lords restores a small amount of mana

Pest Control | Killing spiders increases bloodlust

Quenched Grenades | Enemy grenades sometimes malfunction and won’t explode

Resourceful | Find slightly increased amounts of ammunition

Rhinoceros | Take less damage from explosions

Ripper | Phasing into enemies doesn’t reduce any will

Shark | Movement speed in water is increased

Shurhath Shoulder | Break down wooden doors with a single hit with Wrath Tier I and wooden structures with two hits with Wrath Tier II

Simian | Climbing speed increased

Skybound | Altitude descent from Wyvern is slowed

Strength of Darkness | Immediately win wrestling matches with Dark Reach vs Radiant Arms

Thaumaturge | Increases mana regeneration capacity by an additional 5% of the normal maximum

Torn Reality | Cyclone power effects lingers for longer

Tortoise | All shells have slightly increased range

Unstoppable Force | In Splendour form, wrestling with elephants and fiends is instantly settled as a win for the player

Vengeance | Getting damaged increases bloodlust

Voracity | Consuming food restores more will

Whirlwind | Swing speed for the sword is increased

Wisp | Werehyenas and hounds cannot smell the player

Yeti | Platforms and frozen NPCs made by iceblast do not melt from fire

Zebra | Horses take longer to detect your presence

#### Masks

* Masks are collectible items found by the player throughout missions
* By default, A mask is found in every mission from missions 4-11 inclusive. Each mission has a specific mask in it, and this mask will be specifically referenced by notes and conversations throughout the level
* This can be changed however, as there is a game setting allowing randomization of mask appearances. A mask will still only appear in a random Act 2 and Act 3 level however
* There is also a cheat (an open secret which players will know about) that will unlock the New Game + masks for a first time playthrough. The NG+ masks will appear in missions 1-3
* Different masks can be worn at the start of each mission- they can be removed during a mission and reworn, but whenever a mask is removed or reworn the player’s will is reduced to 5%. They can only be removed/reworn when the player is at full will
* Only *one* mask can be brought with the player as the start of a mission, but the player can also choose to bring zero masks with them on a mission
* If a player picks up a mask in the middle of a mission, this mask can only be worn for that mission if the player does not have a mask in their inventory (they have brought none with them at the mission’s start)
* Each mask confers a bonus and a malus. The aim is to increase replayability and player freedom by allowing different playstyles
* There are three NG+ masks. These are available in New Game + *or* after a completed playthrough. Their inclusion in a subsequent playthrough can be disabled
* The Mask of Gods is available after beating the game in low-brutality (the ‘The Graceful Demon’ achievement
* The Mask of Fury is available after beating the game in high-brutality (the ‘Shadowbound’ achievement)
* The Mask of Lightning is available after beating all bosses in one playthrough (the ‘Shurhath’ achievement) OR beating the game with under 25 detections (the ‘Spectre’ achievement)

Mask of Tempests

+ Move faster, jump higher, and take no fall damage unless from a colossal height

- Take more damage

Mask of Nightmares

+ All actions have a +2 terror rating and the player is harder to detect

- The player’s maximum will is reduced by 30% of its original value. Even if the player’s maximum will is increased, the percentage chance of 30% still applies to the normal, base game standard maximum will

Mask of Might

+ Deal more damage, take less, build up bloodlust faster, all powers can affect Level 3 NPCs by default without upgrades

- You are more visible to NPCs

Mask of Warlocks

+ Maximum mana is increased and charms have a slightly greater effect

- Using a non-magical item drains a small amount of will: 3% of maximum (the default maximum, not any new maxima imposed by e.g. corroded charms) for every charm equipped

Mask of Abominations

+ Level 1 and 2 enemies can be eaten alive if the player is behind them, regardless of whether detected or not. This is instantaneous and restores will and mana. Devoured NPCs are considered dead

- Will and mana cannot be restored in any other way other than doing this, Ravenous and Profane. Mana does not regenerate

Mask of Creatures

+ Animals will not attack you. Scourge and Parasite cost half mana. Scourge is silent and can be used to summon spiders from nothing. Spiders never despawn and can be ordered to follow the player. Parasite Tier I allows all animals to be possessed and all animals to be remotely turned hostile to your enemies

- The player cannot use their sword. Scourge or Parasite must be equipped in the right hand

Mask of Elements

+ The ‘elements’ in this game are fire, water, and nature. For a very small will cost, the player can take any pre-existing fire, water, or natural element (vines, trees, etc) and morph them into a different element. Elements can be shifted into fire to wreak destruction, water to knock out enemies douse fires and trip NPCs up (knocking them out), nature to produce new platforms manipulate the environment and immobilize NPCs

- Mana does not regenerate and corroded charms cannot be equipped

Mask of Chaos

+ Half of the player’s equipment and powers, randomly selected at the start of the mission, will have greatly increased effectiveness

- Half of the player’s equipment and powers, randomly selected at the start of the mission, will be unusable

[New Game +] Mask of Gods

+ For half their maximum mana, the player can duplicate any item (bar idols/charms/quest items) or NPC. Duplicate NPCs can be turned hostile at the click of a button. Named NPCs can be duplicated but if the original dies, the named NPC is considered dead by the story (canonically, duplicates despawn at the end of the mission). Duplicates cannot be spoken to nor advance the story. Only Seraph Ironhand and the Revenant cannot be duplicated

- The player will occasionally hallucinate NPCs that do not exist. Hallucinations will disappear once taking any damage, and cannot be interacted with by the player’s abilities/powers or NPCs (e.g. Dark Reach cannot grab them and NPCs will walk through them without comment)

[New Game +] Mask of Fury

+ Deal significantly more damage, build up bloodlust faster, all actions have a terror rating of +2, all powers can affect Level 3 NPCs by default without upgrades, all Tier III powers can affect Level 4 NPCs

- You take far more damage from NPCs

[New Game +] Mask of Lightning

+ Move faster, jump higher, and be harder to detect. The player can Phase onto walls and walk one-dimensionally on the wall (they can jump off) and Phase costs less mana. Phasing through Level ½ NPCs kill them. The sword is replaced with a kusarigama, which has a ranged attack (replacing the block feature) and disarms NPCs when crossing weapons. This can be dual wielded

- Charms do not exert effects

#### Equipment & Upgrades

* The term equipment refers to anything that can be equipped in the weapons wheel and wielded in the left hand that *isn’t a power*
* This excludes anything that costs mana to use as it is a power, and the sword wielded by the player is not equipment as it is wielded in the right hand
* Equipment is found around the world or can be bought with money at black markets or from individuals
* Upgrades are also bought with money, but can only be done so at black markets or by craftsmen. Most upgrades require the player to find or buy the blueprint for an upgrade before it can be purchased
* Different types of ammunition for the same device- e.g. darts for the Dartbow- is counted as different
* Some equipment is supernatural, and only work when the player uses them. In this case, the player collects or buys the mundane version of the equipment from the world or black markets, and using them is what gives them powers

##### Equipment

Dartbow

All darts make no noise on shooting and minimal noise on impact.

* Razor Dart | A sturdy, accurate, sharp projectile that exerts physical force on what it hits
* Sleep Dart | A fragile dart dipped in sleep toxin that instantly knocks out Levels 1, 2, and 3 NPCs. It does not exert physical force so e.g. will not combust fuel, cut ropes, press buttons, etc. Level 1/2 NPCs are knocked out instantly outside of combat, Level 3 NPCs have a slight delay. All knockouts are delayed for in-combat NPCs
* Terror Dart | A fragile dart dipped in hallucinogenic fear toxin that exerts a Terror V effect on any target. It does not exert physical force
* Fire Dart | A sturdy, accurate projectile with a naphtha charge at the end that explodes and starts fires on impact

Hand Siphon

A loud handheld device that shatters hollow ceramic ‘shells’ (small jars), collected/sold as ammunition as the player already owns the device, and forcibly releases their contents. Short range and spray-and-pray level of accuracy

* Shrapnel Shell | Throws out shrapnel, shredding NPCs
* Fire Shell | Throws out an incendiary chemical weapon, burning NPCs
* Monsoon Shell | Throws out water, dousing fires. They will also knock out Level 1-3 NPCs after one direct close-range face hit, and Level 4 NPCs after three consecutive ones

Gourds

Silent bombs that take a while to detonate and can be cooked in the player’s hand. ‘Bitumen’ variants of gourds can be purchased once the blueprint for it is found. Bitumen gourds stick to surfaces when thrown

* Smoke Gourd | A quiet thrown bomb that instantly releases a large cloud of thick black smoke, obscuring the player. The player and any archangels can see through this
* Lime Gourd | A quiet thrown bomb that instantly releases a large cloud of quicklime on impact, temporarily non-lethally incapacitating any nearby NPCs on impact who breathe it in
* Arsenic Gourd | A quiet thrown bomb that instantly releases a large cloud of arsenic gas on impact, silently killing any nearby NPCs on impact who breathe it in

Hand Grenade

* A loud, large ceramic spherical jar filled with an incendiary chemical weapon. Explodes and starts fires on impact

Tripshot

* A quiet proximity landmine that silently releases a large cloud of shrapnel on activation, shredding or damaging NPCs caught in the radius

Hyena Head

* A supernatural tool whose raw material is a shrunken hyena head, collected and sold as a good luck charm amongst superstitious Ethigeans
* Can be triggered remotely or on impact to unleash a grating hyena laugh, which attracts and distracts nearby NPCs. Terror value II

Spider Sac

* A supernatural tool whose raw material is a spider egg sac, collected from the wild and collected/sold by humans due to perceived alchemical properties
* A proximity landmine that will seize, knock unconscious, and hold a captured Level 1 or 2 NPC closely. Can be deployed on ceilings to make captured victims invisible to NPCs

##### Upgrades

* Upgrades for equipment or their carrying capacity. Bought for money at black markets or from individuals
* Some upgrades require blueprints before they can be bought. Blueprints are found in the world at various missions. Some blueprints are sold by individuals found throughout various missions (or can be stolen/coerced from them)
* Some upgrades have two tiers, I and II. Tier I must be purchased before Tier II

Dartbow

* Silk Quiver I | Increase carrying capacity of all darts, by a different number depending on the dart type
* Silk Quiver II | Further increase carrying capacity of all darts, by a different number depending on the shell type
* Bamboo Sight | Increase dartbow range and accuracy
* Neurotoxin Potency | Sleep darts instantly knock out Level 1 and 2 NPCs struck in combat
* [Blueprint] Mastercraft Mechanism | Increases dartbow rate of fire
* [Blueprint] Datura Supply | Enables black markets to sell terror darts
* [Blueprint] Naphtha Supply | Enables black markets to sell fire darts
* [Blueprint] Muscaria Supply | Terror darts inflict a terror value of VII
* [Blueprint] Deadly Razor | Razor darts can pierce through NPCs and damage all NPCs in their trajectory

Hand Siphon

* Silk Bandolier I | Increases carrying capacity of all shells, by a different number depending on the shell type
* Silk Bandolier II | Further increase carrying capacity of all shells, by a different number depending on the shell type
* Longer Muzzle | Increase hand siphon accuracy and range for all shell types
* Breech Slot | Decrease hand siphon reloading time
* [Blueprint] Carbon Steel Chamber I | Allows 2 shells to be shot before reloading
* [Blueprint] Carbon Steel Chamber II | Allows 3 shells to be shot before reloading
* [Blueprint] Rifled Muzzle | Greatly increases amount and destructiveness of shrapnel thrown from shells
* [Blueprint] Silvered Muzzle | Greatly increase damage to demons
* [Blueprint] Silk Bellows | Greatly increases the amount of fire or water emitted from shells and their cone of range

Gourds, Grenades, Tripshot

* Silk Pouch I | Increase carrying capacity of grenades and all gourds, by different numbers depending on which type
* Silk Pouch II | Further increase carrying capacity of grenades and all gourds, by different numbers depending on which type
* Sulphur Packing | Hand grenades have a larger radius and deal more damage
* Reinforced Gourds | Throw gourds further, increasing their range
* Shrapnel Packing | Tripshot releases more shrapnel and has a bigger range
* Quicklime Supply | Allows lime gourds to be purchased in black markets
* Arsenic Supply | Allows arsenic gourds to be purchased in black markets
* [Blueprint] Bitumen Supply | Bitumen varieties of gourds can be purchased, which stick to surfaces when thrown
* [Blueprint] Quicklime Potency | Lime gourds have a larger radius and incapacitate NPCs for longer
* [Blueprint] Saltpetre Ignition | Smoke gourds have a larger radius and clouds linger for longer
* [Blueprint] Realgar Refining | Arsenic gourds have a larger radius and clouds linger for longer
* [Blueprint] Mastercraft Tripshot | Tripshot can be activated twice before disappearing
* [Blueprint] Stub Fuses | Gourds explode on impact
* [Blueprint] Depressant Quicklime | Quicklime gourds clouds knock out NPCs caught in the cloud rather than just incapacitating them (this feature can be disabled in the weapons wheel)

Supernatural Items

* Head Preservation | Hyena heads emit a louder noise, increasing radius of effect
* Sac Preservation | Spider sacs have a larger radius of effect
* [Blueprint] Vocal Cord Thickening | Hyena head screams have a terror value of IV
* [Blueprint] Sac Doubling | Spider sacs can be activated twice
* [Blueprint] Goliath Sacs | Spider sacs can neutralise Level 3 NPCs

Clothing

* Boiled Leather | Slightly decrease damage taken
* Jet Coating | Slightly decrease visibility when in shadow
* [Blueprint] Boot Cushioning I | Make no noise when walking and less running
* [^ Same Blueprint] Boot Cushioning II | Make no noise running

### Non-Playable Characters

* Non-playable characters are categorised according to two systems
* One of these systems is the ‘nature’ of the NPC: whether they are an animal, human, demon, or angel
* Another of these systems is the ‘level’ of the NPC: this ranges from 1 to 4 inclusive
* NPC level isn’t based on how strong or dangerous the NPC is, although it often correlates with this, but rather it’s based on how resistant the NPC is to the player’s supernatural powers
* For example, all powers will be able to affect Level 1 NPCs on unlock, but to affect Level 4 NPCs powers will have to be fully upgraded or not be able to affect Level 4s at all
* Spiders, fish, chimpanzees and all humans are Level 1; humanoid demons and regular angels are Level 2; horses, werehyenas, and archangels are Level 3; fiends and elephants are Level 4
* All NPCs have Courage levels, although for some NPCs this is infinite
* Some player’s actions have Terror levels
* When an NPC witnesses a terror action that exceeds its courage level, it will be ‘terrified’
* Different classes of NPCs behave differently when terrified. Animals will hurriedly retreat, often destroying things in their path and moving in a straight line
* Humans will scream and frantically run away, sometimes attacking NPCs that are in their way or impede them
* Demons will hiss and cower. If in direct light, they will retreat to a shadowed area, with a preference for corners, and ball up there
* Angels have an infinite courage level and will never be terrified
* When an NPC witnesses a terror action that equals its courage level, it will be ‘unnerved’. Unnerved NPCs slowly back away. They will defend themselves if attacked and sometimes make occasional, halting attacks, but mostly act non-aggressively and in self-defence
* This is a list of *generic* NPCs- it is not exhaustive for all types of NPC encountered by the player, nor does it include specific NPCs which are named

#### Level 1 NPCs

[Level 1] [Animal] Spider

* A large (for its species, not objectively) tarantula that is aggressive and carnivorous in large groups. When alone or in small groups, they will not attack NPCs or the player even when provoked
* Courage levels vary depending on swarm size from 0 (they will always retreat when approached) to IV for the largest, most colossal swarms
* Courage 0-IV

[Level 1] [Animal] Tigerfish

* An aquatic, aggressive, carnivorous fish. They usually occur alone although are still dangerous when so. Rarely, they form larger swarms, which can tear NPCs apart almost immediately
* Courage I

[Level 1] [Animal] Hyena

* Hyenas do not occur in urban, built-up areas but are sometimes found in more rural settings
* Hyenas are usually found in packs of 2-5 and are more aggressive in larger numbers. They will never seek out NPCs to attack but at their most aggressive levels (in a group of 5 or larger) will attack anyone in proximity
* Isolated hyenas will back away from the player after prolonged eye contact. Hyenas in groups of 4 or above will attack the player after prolonged eye contact
* For every X point increase in a player’s terror level, a group size of 1 + X hyenas will back away from the player after prolonged eye contact with one, and a group size of 4 + X hyenas will attack the player after prolonged eye contact
* Courage II

[Level 1] [Animal] Hound

* A large, vicious mastiff dog owned by lords and angels which either tail them, guard areas, or freely roam
* They can sniff out the player if given enough time and will loudly bark to alert others’ to their presence if they detect the player
* They will also attack a player or a hyena on sight. A hound will always win a one on one fight with a hyena
* Courage II

[Level 1] [Human] Subject

* A catch-all term for any non-armed civilian who will not attack the player even if provoked
* These could be slaves- although not all slaves are subjects as more unique types of NPC not listed here will attack the player if provoked or on sight
* They are typically commoners or members of the gentry
* Subjects who detect the player will typically grow afraid and call for help, alerting nearby hostiles
* Courage I

[Level 1] [Human] Levy

* A catch-all term for a basic, generic hostile NPC that will attack the player on detection
* Levies are usually infantrymen but will rarely ride horses. They have different varieties of armaments they can wield
* Levies can wear no armour or leather armour. They typically have just a sword, although sometimes have a bow + dagger. More rarely, they will have a crossbow + dagger
* Courage II

[Level 1] [Human] Sergeant

* A levy which will lead other groups of levies. They are more disciplined, motivated, and dangerous. Sergeants are sometimes cavalrymen and can ride elephants, unlike normal levies
* They will wear a metal helmet and breastplate, giving some protection, but the player can still phase into them. They will have a sword and sometimes a hand grenade
* Killing a sergeant will often make his surrounding levies flee
* Courage III

[Level 1] [Human] Jagal

* A member of the soldiery. They are more highly trained than levies/sergeants, braver, quicker, and better armed. They are usually infantry, though can sometimes be seen riding horses and elepants
* They wield a sword and a dartbow. They wear a lamellar metal tunic and helmet- they can still be phased into, however
* Courage III or IV- randomised

[Level 1] [Human] Asthan

* A rare, elite soldier. They wear full body armour. Asthans have a sword, dartbow, and sometimes a hand grenade. Often rides a horse, sometimes found as infantry or as elephant cavalry
* Usually found in the field commanding levies. If killed, they will make surrounding levies flee. Sergeants, jagals, and other asthans will be unaffected
* Courage IV

[Level 1] [Human] Semadai

* Semadai wield a spiked staff and a gourd. They wear only leather armour, but are very quick, brave, disciplined, and motivated
* Courage V

[Level 1] [Human] Lord

* A rare, elite enemy. They wear full armour, have a sword, dartbow potentially with fire darts, and sometimes a hand grenade
* Almost always mounted, sometimes on elephants
* Usually found in the field commanding others. If killed, levies and sergeants will flee. Jagals and asthans will become unnerved
* Courage IV

#### Levels 2-4 NPCs

[Level 2] [Demon] Demon

* A dark, humanoid creature with glowing eyes armed with a sword and the supernatural power of Phase I. They wear red and black clothes
* Lore-wise, all creatures in the demon class are incapable of emotionless rationality and are creatures of emotion. They will attack non-demons on sight and will attack other demons who get too close
* They will never coordinate, cooperate, or try to integrate into society
* Courage IV

[Level 2] [Demon] Ghoul

* Morphologically based on a gibbon skeleton. They are vaguely humanoid but have long, gangly limbs and just a gibbon skull. Their body is skeletal with scraps of flesh and tendons visible adorning it
* They will attack anything on sight, bounding towards them at huge speed on all fours and jumping into them, knocking NPCs to the floor (not the player). They will then bound up on hind legs and slash at the victim with their claws
* Ghouls can break down wooden doors by charging at them and structures by repeatedly ramming them. They will also consume corpses
* Courage IV

[Level 2] [Angel] Angel

* A human with a very large, bulky frame and grey, keratinised skin. They wear a silver tusked helmet and breastplate. They wield a silver sword
* Angels are often found commanding or leading humans. Named humans will sometimes command angels. Angels will cooperate with each other (and humans) and coordinate their attacks
* Lore-wise, angels are emotionless creatures of supreme analytical thinking. They are physically and emotionally sterile, do not feel pride/shame, and act to promote the cosmic principle of order in all doings
* Courage Infinite

[Level 3] [Animal] Horse

* A mount ridden by humans and sometimes angels. Horses will rear up and kick nearby players if they see them. In combat, unridden horses will charge at players
* Courage III

[Level 3] [Demon] Werehyena

* Large, prowling, humanoid hyenas. Their eyes glow and their skin is dark blue. They walk on their hind legs and will sniff out nearby NPCs and players
* Werehyenas are fast and dangerous, quickly able to tear apart NPCs or the player. They are taller than angels
* Werehyenas are colloquially called ‘werenas’, ‘hyenamen’, or ‘hyena demons’ by NPCs
* Despite the name, werehyenas are never encountered in human form, nor are they ever seen shifting into humans or shifting from humans into werehyena form. Sometimes, NPCs will point this out and comment on the inaccuracy of the name
* Courage IV

[Level 3] [Angel] Archangel

* Angels with tusks, silvery wings that resemble elephant ears, full body silver armour, and supernatural powers
* They will always command nearby NPCs except for named individuals and have the ability to fly. They will often fly when navigating the map or in combat
* Archangels have supernatural powers:
* Charge | Rapidly burst in the direction of their sword, dealing large damage on impact
* Radiant Arms | Telekinesis akin to Dark Reach Tier II but with a golden instead of black arm
* Meteorite | Throws an explosive ball of fire which starts fires on impact with surfaces

[Level 4] [Animal] Elephant

* A very large, rare animal that serves a mount ridden by humans or angels
* They will charge at the player if detected
* Courage V

[Level 4] [Demon] Fiend

* A huge, elephant-sized hyena with glowing eyes, large canines, and dark-blue fur matted with blood
* A fiend is the form the player takes when using the Splendour power. Fiends are not as strong as the player is in this state but are still extremely powerful
* Fiends will always attack elephants preferentially and will always be able to overcome them as long as they are unaided
* An archangel riding an elephant will be able to kill a fiend- a lone archangel unaided by other NPCs will not
* Courage VI

#### Named NPCs

* NPCs fall into three categories: generic, specialist, and named
* Generic NPCs are all listed above
* Specialist NPCs are narrower categories that only exist in specific contexts. E.g. a slaver, Reaper Guard, Commonwealther. They often have unique armaments and clothing
* Named NPCs are unique and one of a kind. The only named NPCs are the characters from the Mightiest epic that the player encounters in the game
* Ironhand and the Revenant are listed here. The Revenant and Sharkjaw are the only named NPCs with infinite courage levels

[Level 1] [Human] Ironhand (Human Version)

* This is the version of Ironhand that exists in Act 3 *if Indigo is not killed by the player*
* The best swordfighter in the game, moving incredibly quickly and with two swords. Nearly impossible to parry and fully armoured, also equipped with a dartbow
* Ironhand plays a massive role in the story and the player can help him, neutralise him, or completely ignore him
* Ironhand is the only human NPC in the game who can command archangels. He will never ride a horse or elephant. He is the bravest NPC in the game bar angels
* Courage VIII

[Level 4] [Angel] Ironhand (Seraph Version)

* This is the version of Ironhand that exists in Act 3 *if Indigo is killed in any way by the player*
* This version of Ironhand has a considerably larger flame, grey skin, large curved tusks, two sets of wings that resemble elephant ears, and full-body silver armour *including wing armour*
* Seraph Ironhand is the strongest NPC in the game. He has some degree of resistance of all the player’s supernatural powers (including total immunity to Scourge, Possession, and Impunity), some resistance to all equipment, huge amounts of health, and deals a huge amount of damage
* He dual wields two flaming swords which deal large damage and is still the best swordfighter in the game
* Seraph Ironhand can use his wings to fly and will do so
* He also has supernatural powers of his own, granted to him by Ilyzor:
* Transpose | Instantaneously swap positions with the power’s target. The user of transpose will always face their target after this by default
* Righteous Charge | Move with extreme speed in the direction of the user’s sword, dealing large damage and knocking the target into the air on impact
* Thunderstrike | Call a bolt of lightning from above to strike a target. Deals large area of effect damage and causes fires
* Sunder | Telekinetically seize a target from any distance and slam them violently in any direction. Colliding with a surface deals them large damage. This attack cannot be parried, but the player can use Phase to escape it if they react fast enough
* Legion | Create four identical copies of the user. These cannot deal any damage or affect anyone but serve as a source of distraction/intimidation. They will disappear on taking damage
* Seraph Ironhand’s mana quickly regenerates to full, but he will never use any potions
* Courage Infinite

[Level 4] [Demon] the Revenant

* The most difficult enemy in the game to fight due to his massive power and equipment resistance, his own powers, and the difficulty of killing him
* The Revenant can only be killed by being chopped up into pieces and holding them in a fire until his whole body is completely burned to ash and cannot regenerate
* The Revenant is immune to sleep darts, quicklime gourds, arsenic gourds, hyena heads, and spider sacs. He is immune to many of the player’s powers and has resistance of some kind to all of them
* Like Ironhand, the Revenant also plays a massive role in the story. He can be killed, non-lethally eliminated (chopping him up and packing his pieces into sealed boxes that sink to the riverbed), helped, or ignored
* His powers are as follows:
* Evanesce | Short-range teleportation leaving a small spider swarm in its wake. Multiple uses of this power generate a spider horde large enough to attack NPCs
* Smite | Casts down a pillar of fire from the sky which causes explosions of ground impact and writhes like a tornado
* Communion | Rises into the sky and release a flurry of dark crossbow-like bolts from his body
* Hook | His left arm becomes a large shadowy hook that impales targets and pulls them helplessly towards him. Hook impaling deals damage. The hook takes a short amount of time to reach its target and can be parried with the sword/Dark Reach
* The Revenant’s mana gradually regenerates to full (unlike the player’s, which will only regenerate by 20%), but he will never use any potions
* Courage Infinite

## 9. The Future of the World

### The Reign of Ironhand

* Ironhand, in becoming Shurhath, unites the Delta and the Crownlands into one domain held under the Shurhath, greatly increasing the size and power of the crown
* In putting down a rebellion by an unruly Aedemonian lord, a swathe of Aedemon also bolsters the might of the Crownlands
* Ironhand centralises the realm through highly competent governance and expanding the bureaucracy, but Ethagis still remains a hybrid feudal-bureaucratic society and the nature of it doesn’t change
* Though no feudal lord dares defy Ironhand and he imposes much central control over the country, Ironhand feels that he lacks the power to fundamentally change society’s institutions by e.g. replacing feudal lords with viceroys
* Ironhand’s ultimate goal is to create a centralised bureaucratic imperial autocracy. His concern is not patriotism or glory or anything like that, but rather the good of the people
* Ironhand believes that the only way to avoid a continuous cycle of brutal, destructive civil wars in Ethagis every time the central authority breaks down is to ensure that the central authority can never break down
* A centralised state can still be oppressive, but a decentralised state can be oppressive as well. At least the former is protected from the additional evils of civil war and anarchy
* Lacaideon understands that centralising the realm will require two positive feedback loops, both of which requiring generations to act over and un-accomplishable in the span of a single reign
* One is that the bureaucracy must be expanded and empowered to collect more tax and thus support a greater bureaucracy to bolster imperial wealth and power
* The other is that greater imperial wealth will have to support a large standing army loyal to the state itself, with the Shurhath as the embodiment of this, rather than to a feudal liegelord
* This change in the balance of domestic power will then allow the nation’s central authority (the Shurhath) to actually change the domestic order
* Eventually, a system of provinces ruled by salaried viceroys and bureaucrats- rather than a system of fiefs ruled by feudal liegelords- could be imposed, fundamentally changing the political and social structure of the realm to a truly centralised one
* To enable this centralisation, a strong money economy is needed as without it, individuals must be paid in land for services to the Shurhath/their superiors rather than in the form of a salary, and land appointments create a system of feudalism
* Ironhand therefore lays the first steps for centralisation by greatly expanding and encouraging commerce, the mercantile classes, manufacturing, and trade
* He also greatly expands the bureaucracy and its reach, as well as conducting several censuses of land/urban productivity (to determine tax values) and sending officials around the empire to monitor and impose central authority on feudal lords
* He has travelling officials accompanied by a greatly expanded band of his personal retinues, who he uniforms in the manner of a professional corps and extensively trains and drills
* Ironhand understands that this will not be enough, however- he will have to rely on subsequent Shurhaths being competent enough to continue this process and prevent the breakdown of central authority that has been so prevalent in Ethigean dynastic history
* He also needs long-term domestic peace to allow the crown to assert central control and continue expanding the bureaucracy and a standing army
* He therefore decides against forming a royal house and having any descendants, thus permitting the eventual process of subsequent heirs growing increasingly decadent and incapable
* Instead, Ironhand declares that his immediate successor will be Typhoon but subsequent Shurhaths will exclusively be chosen from the semadai
* He believes that the way of life and extensive philosophical conditioning of the semadai will prevent them from succumbing to court decadence and uselessness, and that the semadai will, by their religious-philosophical-military nature, endure as a wellspring for capable and rigorous rulers
* Lacaideon remains celibate for the rest of his life so as not to risk any heirs being born that could contest the succession and ruin this process; he knows that substituting a ruling dynasty for the semadai is contentious and that if he had any actual children it could prevent this
* He would not want his descendants on the throne as he believes that every dynasty eventually, through the generations, grows corrupt
* Ironhand himself actually suspects that the semadai, if given the throne throughout generations, might actually themselves grow decadent and corrupt, gradually losing their previous virtue and rigour
* He sees semadai rule as the lesser of all evils, however. There are no alternative forms of government bar hereditary autocracy that he thinks would be feasible or ethical
* Democracy or a merchant republic would be unthinkable at Ethagis’ current stage of development, but an elective monarchy or aristocratic parliament would just preclude centralisation
* But starting a standard dynasty based on inheritance has been shown over and over again by history to lead to disaster. Ironhand grimly acknowledges that semadai rule may do the exact same, but at least this process may take longer, and in the meantime real progress may be made
* Ironhand’s rule is in itself somewhat of a golden age, however. The sheer authority and legend surrounding him precludes anyone from contesting his right to appoint the semadai as his successors
* He also introduces several new legal codes which emphasise the value of a concrete, universal law in the rule of the nation, rather than customs and imperial caprice
* Explicitly declaring that the Shurhath is below the law would be too strong an affront to imperial authority (and thus lead to his vassals not respecting him and growing unruly): this is too revolutionary an idea
* But Ironhand tirelessly tries to spread a culture and intellectual climate of respect for the law and the primacy of the law in government. The aim is to create a political ideology in Ethagis of the supremacy of the law, rather than the supremacy of whatever the Shurhath wills
* He also uses the law as a tool for controlling the nobility, stressing the aristocracy’s subjugation to legal codes in culture and edicts. Similarly, he stresses the authority of the law to try and boost the position of commoners and slaves in society
* Ironhand passes away in his sleep after a long reign. He is universally and intensely mourned by all social classes
* Also the legend that Ironhand was an angel created by the god Ilyzor was a fairly common superstition among the peasantry, after his death the commonry view him as at least an angel and at most an actual god- which is technically heresy
* Even the scholarly classes and the semadai canonise Lacaideon as a sort of great religious prophet, credited with being the first to truly unite the Way with government and, due to his patronage of the arts and sciences, bringing about a genuine renaissance

### Jagannath’s VS Earth’s History

* The ‘Great Divergence’ originates in two cores: Eastern Cathan/north-east Amphiction on the mainland and Eastern Kanem, rather than just Western Europe in our time
* Modern politics and industrialisation do notarise in the same place
* Modern politics and industrialisation do not arise simultaneously
* Unlike in OTL where a handful of countries divide the world between them, this does not happen because one small region fails to assert global supremacy

### Historiography of the Future

#### Calendars

This document refers to multiple calendars, all of which are used in different ways by the inhabitants of modern Jagannath.

1. West Seminine Archaeological Calendar (WSAC)

* This is not a commonly used calendar in Jagannath, only used nowadays by some academicians in Kanem, but is referred to in this document to allow comparisons with the historical progress of Jagannath to that of our own world
* To do so, simply add 500 years to the date cited in the WSAC calendar to show when event x would have happened in our world according to the Gregorian Calendar
* For example, industrialisation initiated in Jagannath during the mid WSAC 1800s, whereas in our world it was initiated during the late Gregorian Calendar 1700s
* This provides a way to compare how historical institutions like the Industrial Revolution occurred relatively later or earlier between Jagannath and Earth, and to compare the proximities of different phenomena
* For example, in Jagannath the scientific method was created during the late WSAC 1700s, meaning it almost directly preceded industrialisation. On Earth, it was created during the Scientific Revolution in the Gregorian Calendar 1600s, so the gap between it and industrialisation was larger
* However, because in Jagannath the first states appeared ~500 years before they did on Earth, the reader should add 500 to see when events in Jagannath would have actually happened
* For example, if the Gregorian Calendar was suddenly transplanted into Jagannath, it would pin the start of the Industrial Revolution as 2340-2380
* The WSAC, like all mainstream calendars in Jagannath, has a zero point
* The WSAC Zero is the date to which the first excavated minted coin of currency still recognisable today has been radiocarbon dated to
* Like nearly all mainstream calendars in Jagannath, years before the zero point are written with a – sign before them; e.g. the years -5, -183, -2024, etc
* As with all calendars using this signifying mechanism, when spoken, this is pronounced as ‘ante 5’, ‘ante 183’, ‘ante 2024’, etc, although colloquially it is acceptable to simply say ‘minus 5’ or ‘negative 5’
* Years after the zero point are technically supposed to be written with a + sign before them, but it is acceptable to simply omit the sign
* When spoken, technically one is supposed to say ‘plus 5’, ‘post 5’, or ‘positive 5’, but the absence of any preceding word is also acceptable

1. Revolutionary Calendar (RC)

* The Revolutionary Calendar is used by the overwhelming majority of countries identified as socialist, and as such is the second most commonly used official calendar by the population numbers of the countries employing it
* It is the newest mainstream calendar in Jagannath, created shortly after the First World Revolution
* Like the majority of mainstream calendars used in Jagannath, the RC signifies years before its zero point with a – sign and the years after technically with a + sign but colloquially with no sign needed
* The RC Zero is the outbreak of the Centennial War, which directly (along with the Great Crash) caused the First World Revolution and thus the establishment of socialism

#### Periodisation

Ancient Era: -> ~-1750

Classical Era: ~-1750 -> ~-750

* Resembles the period of our world’s history consisting of Late Antiquity, the Early Middle Ages, and the High Middle Ages
* The Gregorian calendar equivalent would be ~250 to ~1250

Horizon Era: ~-750 -> ~-200

* Dated as the discovery of Insulinde by Kanema states
* Resembles the period of our own world’s history consisting of the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Era
* The Gregorian calendar equivalent would be ~1250 to ~1775

Protomodern Era: ~200 -> 0

* Consisted of two time periods referred to as revolutions: the Chromatic Revolution and the Industrial Revolution
* Both initiated in Kanem/South Insulinde although industrialisation spread rapidly to eastern Cathan, which formed a second nucleus for its spread after the abolition of slavery there
* The Chromatic Revolution was the invention of modern politics, often referred to as ‘chromatic politics’, and their revolutions
* The subsequent Industrial Revolution, whose emergence followed and was strongly contributed to by the establishment of liberal bourgeois-constitutionalist regimes, was the invention of industrialisation
* The Chromatic Revolution in turn metastasised to other world regions/was sustained by industrialisation and the sociopolitical changes it brought
* It also took on new forms, notably socialism and moralism, as the revolution continued and as industrialisation influenced it
* This Era is a transition period between premodernity (all of prior recorded history) and modernity (history following the outbreak of the Centennial War)
* The Gregorian calendar equivalent would be the long 19th century

Modern Era: 0 -> ~70

* Dated between the start of the Centennial War (Gregorian equivalent ~1900) and the end of the Greater War (Gregorian equivalent ~1960-70)
* Any sequel to Mightiest (i.e. Project 9) would be set here, specifically just before the outbreak of the Second Ethigean Revolution

Contemporary/Postmodern/Atomic Era: ~70 ->

* Consisting of the Global Age, around 50 years, and the Silicon Age, around 35 years
* Future ages/eras cannot be predicted as radical technological changes akin to our world’s 21st century threaten to make politics and socioeconomics entirely different

### Kanema History

* The region of Seminine east of the Dragoore Rainforest is known as the Kanem (or just ‘Kanem’)
* Kanema history mirrors that of Northern European, West African, and early Roman history. This contrasts with Cathanai history which mirrors Mediterranean (especially Graeco-Italian history)
* Sociopolitical structure in this period moves from hunter-gatherer -> tribal chiefdoms -> farmer-raider chiefdoms -> farmer-raider kingdoms -> sedentary kingdoms -> empires
* In terms of centralisation, states moved from tribes -> tribal feudalism -> imperial feudalism -> feudal bureaucracy -> imperial bureaucracy
* There are no sudden setbacks to development (i.e. no Dark Ages), but neither is there a Scientific Revolution
* The institutions, milestones, and processes of Kanema history are different to those of Europe but are similar and have similar consequences
* West Seminine Archaeological Calendar
* Institutions are either scientific/technical [SCI], economic or commerical [ECO], or based on politics or other social sciences thought [POL]
* The dates here are when these institutions *began*, not their entire span
* For equivalents to Gregorian calendar dates, add 500 years or so

Archaic period, agricultural clans gradually established

Clans unite, Kingdoms form

First Dragoore Empire

Eastward Colonisation

Migrations, General Anarchy, Commonwealths

Irian Age, Wars of Religion

Great Rising, Peasants’ War, migration to commonwealths

Centralisation/standing armies + civil wars and noble revolts + colonisation, movement west beyond Dragoore

Supervolcano eruption -> wars between diff kinds of states, popular revolts, hundred schools of thought incl. liberalism

Wars, failed revolutions and revolts of diff schools

Massive nationalist/liberal-revolutionary war of unification across religious lines, becomes brutal war and fails

Prolonged overpopulation, middle-class growth, continued revolutionary waves without industrialisation

Revolutionary dictatorships/empires on 2nd French Empire model, ‘democratic experiment’, radical agitation

Inspired by Cathan, industrialisation using palm oil as biofuel ~100yrs after OTL (Cathan in TTL had biphasic industrialisation)

### Chromatic Politics and Ideology

Chromatic politics refers to modern ‘spectral’ politics wherein views and ideologies resemble those of our own modern world and, like our modern political views, are arranged in the form of a spectrum.

* Chromatic politics was established by the Chromatic Revolution, a sociopolitical phenomenon originating in Kanem, a region east of the Dragoore Rainforest on the mainland of the Seminine continent
* The Chromatic Revolution was in its early stages the development of liberalism, an ideology based on the concepts of private property, civil liberties, rule of law, and scepticism of traditional politics/institutions
* Since then, various new ideologies has formed and the spectrum has widened and changed to accommodate them and the new normative beliefs throughout history
* The position of various ideologies on the chromatic spectrum has varied throughout time; generally as time elapses and normative beliefs become more progressive, the centre wavelengths of the spectrum have shifted left
* For example at the start of the Bicentennial Era, radical democracy would have been ultrabright, whereas during the Modern Era this was orange or yellow
* On the eve of the Second World Revolution, sparked in Ethagis, the ideologies at different parts of the chromatic spectrum were as follows:

Ultrabright

Infrared: Humanism: An ideology specific to this world, essentially being direct-democratic anarchism

Red: Socialism: Encompassing most of the umbrella term of socialism (any economic system wherein workers own the means of production, including systems with markets), also referring especially to infrasocialism (centrally planned, non-market socialism)

Orange: Social Democracy, Radical Democracy: Democratic capitalism with universal suffrage and social services. Usually republican but can occur with a figurehead monarch. Social and radical democracy tend to be differences of degree rather than kind: radical democracy pays more attention to private property, social democracy more to trade unions and social services. Economically, radical democracy is further right but still with regulation

Yellow: Radical Democracy, Liberal Democracy: Capitalism with universal suffrage (radical democracy) or restricted suffrage based on property (liberal democracy). Liberal democracy spans a wide ideological range (radicalism is a sub-category of liberalism) depending on suffrage, economic intervention, and workers’ power. At this tier of the chromatic spectrum, however, civil liberties are almost always guaranteed

Green: Liberal Democracy, Liberal Constitutionalism: Capitalism with non-universal suffrage and in the case of liberal constitutionalism, a power-exercising monarch answering ultimately to a bourgeois oligarchic parliament. Moralism is an example of this. Social security is absent or very limited and whilst suffrage is present, there is a strong property restriction. Civil liberties will usually be guaranteed

Blue: Liberal Autocracy: Capitalism (or emerging capitalism) with an autocrat or autocratic party/group ruling according to liberalist ideas. Civil liberties tend to be curbed in parts but generally present. A real world example of this would be the Second French Empire. Sometimes liberal autocracy can be so progressive that it fits into the centre or even the brighter part of the chromatic spectrum. In real life, the First French Empire was undoubtedly left-wing for its time, for example

Indigo: Autocracy: Capitalism or traditional economies with a reforming but still not liberal autocracy or small ruling elite. A real world example of this would be 19th century Prussia or enlightened despotism. The autocrats at this stage of the chromatic spectrum are almost always monarchs

Violet: Traditionalist autocracy: Capitalism (or more usually traditionalist economies) ruled autocratically or by a small ruling elite according to traditionalist ideology and policy. The autocrat here is always a monarch and the elite always an aristocracy. A real world example of this would be Tsarist Russia

Ultraviolet: Fascism: Reactionary, but in a radical manner

Ultradark

* Some examples of different regimes in the world fitting these descriptions are as follows:

Infrared: Humanist Ethagis for its brief existence, before its twilight period when the stresses of war caused centralisation and authoritarianism

Red: Socialist Ethagis and Axam, as well as the post-revolutionary Seminine loser states of the Centennial War

Orange: Various states in Seminine after the Centennial War and then again after the Colossal War

Yellow: Various states in Seminine during the right-wing shift throughout the Modern Era

Green: Most of the Seminine great powers before the Centennial War and various moralist states in Cathan by the end of the Bicentennial Era

Blue: Various moralist states in Cathan, especially at the early Bicentennial Era

Indigo: Various states around the world, particularly those exposed to Cathanai-Seminine aggression and thus galvanised into modernisation

Violet: Various states around the world

Ultraviolet: The fascist regimes of southern Insulinde

### International Ideologies and Geopolitics

On the eve of the war between the International and Moracol, the main geopolitical blocs formed by ideological factions are as follows:

The Standing Moralist Coalition

* Rarely referred to by this name colloquially, instead being called the SMC, the Moralist Coalition, the Coalition, or most ubiquitously: Moracol
* Consists exclusively of Cathanai countries, mostly in the east of the continent, which are wealthy and developed
* Not all Cathanai countries are part of Moracol or even have a moralist ideology, but these are either less developed or have been forced into geopolitical quiescence by Moracol’s military power
* Moracol is based on the ideology of moralism, which is itself strongly based on the ideology seen in the game *Disco Elysium* of the same name, although with some differences and a wholly different backstory/context
* Moralism is essentially bourgeois quasi-liberal ‘democratic’ plutocracy. Men and women above a certain age and who pass a modest property qualification can vote although electoral processes tend to favour conservatism (as in the current US electoral system)
* There is some social security provision, but the country is as plutocratic as democratic. Real political power is equated to wealth and actual democratic processes make little difference
* Moralism as an ideology is essentially a formalisation of bourgeois principles, but like our world’s communism, is a very ideologically developed viewpoint with huge amounts of theory and scientific framing
* It was pioneered both by leading ideologists and general bourgeois consensus so lacks the unambiguity of humanism, and doesn’t stem from a single germinal body of work in the way our world’s Marxism does, so has lots of interpretations and shades, but is still fairly coherent
* Moracol is violently frightened of and opposed to socialism in any form, virulently so with humanism
* Ideologically, moralism is mostly sympathetic to liberal democracy although mistrusts its popular/social democratic aspects. It disdains fascism and dislikes its lack of liberalism, although sees this as a preferable alternative to socialism. It disdains traditionalism for its primitiveness but sees this as less volatile and concerning than fascism
* Moralism is the result of industrialisation and capitalism reaching a continent which has mercantile institutions capable of absorbing these phenomena but no indigenous tradition of liberalism or complex political thought
* Whilst liberalism developed in the continent of Cathan eventually due to the rise of the bourgeoisie, the ideas of democracy, the rights of man, and equality before the law were never native to political thought here
* The result is a de facto plutocracy dressed up as a rights-based democracy so as to be in vogue with political trends originating from (and actually practised in) Seminine
* This is the key thing to understand about moralism: it reflects a bourgeois capitalist political philosophy *without* the independent development of liberalism
* Hence, whilst some principles of liberalism have been adopted simply as by-products of industrial capitalism and the formation of a bourgeoisie (rule of law, private property, market economics, secularism), major aspects of liberalism are absent from moralism
* These include freedoms of speech, assembly, the universal and equal right to happiness, and true liberal democracy

The International

* The International refers to an alliance of varying socialist countries in the world, mostly in Insulinde but led unofficially by Socialist Ethagis and with a few allied or aligned states in Seminine.
* The socialist nations of the International all vary quite considerably in their ideology (‘socialism’ being strongly open to interpretation), policies, and specific political nuances
* Market socialism is overwhelmingly predominant, with only three countries (all of which undeveloped) in the International not having a recognised market/private enterprise sector
* A mixed economy is the economic philosophy of the International. Central planning in the communist mould is practised by a single country
* The nature of socialism is more variable: the International spans a larger than expected part of the chromatic spectrum, encompassing variants of democratic socialism, one-party socialism, syndicalism, cooperative-based
* Socialism in its mildest practised form is actually just a slightly more intense social democracy
* In all socialist countries that still survive, classes and hierarchy still exist. Many nations actually recognise the formation of new classes. There is still a difference between those with power and those not, although in the democratic socialist states this is admittedly much less than in moralist/liberal democracies
* The variety in the International engenders strong divisions. The presence of Moracol so far keeps the International unified, but many think (though few dare to say) that without it the faction would collapse
* The International on principle hates fascism more than moralism, but Moracol poses considerably more of a threat

Other ideological groupings are:

The Combine

* The Combine is a small grouping of undeveloped states, mostly in Amphiction and Abyssinia, who identify as humanist- it is analogous to the vast sector of the developing world in our timeline who identified as communist whilst simultaneously completely defying the ideals of said communism
* In this world, the current humanist countries are all totalitarian or highly authoritarian states which are mostly agrarian and are classed as undeveloped
* They do not adhere to the actual ideology of humanism, which is rooted in democracy, freedom, and equality, although their policies do adopt some aspects of the humanist programme in a bastardised form
* The various humanist countries of the world form a rough international grouping called the Combine, under the leadership of Amphiction, the largest and most developed humanist country
* The Combine is not a cohesive alliance and some wars have been fought between its members, mainly for traditional objectives such as land or the settling of national disputes
* There is some cohesion between these nations, however, mostly of an ideological nature. They collectively revile Moracol, although have little power to deal with them, and are also bitterly hostile to the International

The Accord Nations

* The Accord Nations, otherwise known as the Nations of the Accord, the Accord powers, the democratic powers, or just the Accord, are an ideological grouping (though not a military alliance) of liberal democracies in Seminine, although liberal democracies do exist in other continents
* On the eve of the war between Moracol and the International, the Accord is the dominant group in Seminine
* The name comes from the treaties establishing defensive alliances between the liberal democracies in Seminine against aggressive fascist/militarist powers there
* A large war was fought in Seminine between liberal democracies and ultradark (i.e. far right) powers
* The liberal democracies were successful but due to state breakdown, revolution, and socialist parties leading resistance against occupying fascists, socialism gained a huge foothold on the continent
* The various socialist nations all joined the International. The Accord nations fear and despise socialism (despite mostly being social democracies after the wars themselves) but have been too weak and war-weary to do much about it

The Iron Pact

* The Iron Pact is a military alliance between the two remaining fascist nations in the world, both of which are in southern Insulinde- fascist states did exist in Seminine, but were eliminated during the Seminine War
* The Iron Pact thus used to be a larger geopolitical body consisting of a greater number of states- it has now ‘passed its prime’ and exists mostly as a counterweight to the International presence in Insulinde

### Modern Era History

Years 0-5: The Centennial War

AKA the Imperial War, the War of Empires, the War of Nations, the War of Supremacy, the Global War

Belligerents: Seminine great powers; Axam & Luzon in Insulinde; United States of Cathan

Result: Victory of one Seminine great power coalition, Luzon, USC; First World Revolution

Years 5-9: The Great Crash

* A post-war slump made global by a banking crisis in Seminine, leading to massive world-wide depression of economies, mass-unemployment, and radicalism
* Resulted in the transfer of power from civilian to military rule in Ethagis and the First World Revolution

Years 6-7: The First World Revolution

Result: Establishment of liberal and social democracies in Seminine; various socialist regimes in Insulinde, a socialist regime in western Cathan, and two socialist regimes on mainland Seminine; independence of Seminine colonies in northern Insulinde

* A massive wave of left-wing revolutions, originating from Axam and spreading across most regions of the world
* In many countries, revolutionary activity was crushed- in almost all undeveloped countries this was the case, although the vast population centres of northern Insulinde achieved independence, followed by various wars of unification, secession, and ethnic conflict
* In the developed world that had fought in the Centennial War, the revolutions were far more successful- except in Cathan, where they achieved no fundamental changes (although a few reforms)
* In Seminine, revolutions took the form of socialism/nationalism, and were broadly successful
* Two socialist regimes were successfully established in mainland Seminine, and one islandic regime was
* On the mainland, various nation-states were established as liberal democracies, and various empires or plutocratic liberal democracies transformed into mass- liberal democracies or into social democracies
* In subsequent decades, the world economy recovered from the Great Crash but remained in general difficulty
* Economic difficulties and consequent political malaise thus led many social democracies to regress into liberal democracies and liberal democracies into moralism- this process was catalysed by intervention from Moracol

Years 13-25: The Coalitionary Wars

* Two unconnected series of wars taking place in different continents: (western) Cathan and (southern) Insulinde
* In both, a socialist regime was repeatedly attacked by coalitions of non-socialist countries: in Cathan the coalitions were successful and a moralist regime was imposed, in Insulinde the socialist nation of Axam survived and threatened continued expansion
* Axam, unlike other socialist regimes, was and remained genuinely committed to a true world revolution, of spreading socialist by force of arms to its neighbours, severely concerning them and pushing many into fascism

Years 20s, 30s, 40s: The Rise of Reaction

* The wars in Insulinde with the socialist nation of Axam- large, powerful, and committed to spreading world revolution- coupled with economic difficulties led to the rise of fascism in the continent
* Luzon becomes the originator and centre of fascism. Many other countries in Insulinde switch to fascism as well
* However, after the initial coalitionary wars in the 20s, major war leaves Insulinde: the continent maintains a highly uneasy balance of power between socialism, fascist regimes, and liberal democracy
* Fascism spreads to a single country in Seminine, an islandic nation. This country acts aggressively but is a relatively minor power and isn’t strong enough to start a general Seminine war so doesn’t do so
* Fascism doesn’t spread elsewhere in Seminine as the loser nations of the Centennial war have already embraced radical socialism
* Instead, moralism becomes a vastly more prevalent source of domestic unrest, and fascist agitators tend to form coalitions with the more powerful moralist ones to unite against social democracy
* During the 30s, various moralist regimes in Cathan begin to fund moralist-fascist coalitions in Seminine against the ruling social/liberal-democratic regimes, although as of yet these cannot seize power
* In Seminine, economic malaise undermines the ruling social democracies and generally the Seminine nations that aren’t socialist backslide into more economically right-wing policies, abandoning the social democracy seen after the First World Revolution
* An element in Seminine geopolitics is revanchism of the defeated great powers, inflamed by harsh post-war treaties
* The two Seminine socialist regimes, both of which defeated during the war, have abandoned the internationalism of socialism and are nationalistic
* They haven’t declared war yet as the terms imposed by the victors of the Centennial War were harsh and socialism doesn’t encourage warfare and militarism, but rather affinity with the social democracies

Year 39: Second World Revolution

* Originating in Ethagis against military rule and leading to two main consequences: the establishment of the Standing Moralist Coalition (Moracol) and a wave of left-wing revolutions around the world
* The revolutions almost all took place in developing countries and were mostly successful, establishing radical left-wing (or ‘ultrabright’) regimes who soon lapsed into civil war, anarchy, or totalitarianism
* Various colonies also achieved independence, aided by the Seminine socialist nations giving aid to rebelling colonies so as to damage their enemies
* The old Seminine great powers suppressed many other colonial revolts and retained much of their empire, however
* The 2WR also triggers the Insulindian War

Years 39-42: The Insulindian War

* War breaks out in Insulinde between the socialist and fascist powers in Insulinde, backed by the International and the moralist nations respectively
* The moralist-fascists are victorious on the continent and the fascists impose an occupation of Axam
* The liberal democracies dislike both moralism and fascism and especially fear this shift in the balance of power, but for now don’t act
* The fascist nations are tied up with this occupation for a while but soon become increasingly aggressive towards the liberal democracies here

Year 44: Moracol Invasion of Ethagis

* The Standing Moralist Coalition, newly formed due to fear of humanism, invades Ethagis, which is at this point under a humanist government, and establishes a puppet moralist government there

Years 45-55: Seminine Cold War

* The Standing Moralist Coalition sends soldiers to back moralist coups in the various Seminine countries where moralist political thought is already prevalent and moralist-fascist groups already exist
* These are broadly successful and establish several moralist countries in Seminine, completing the indigenous process here of social democracies slowly becoming more rightist
* The form of moralism here is less severe than in Cathan, and in fact various important reforms from the First World Revolution still persist
* But the fact that these regimes now *identify* as moralist massively inflames the socialist countries on the continent, who are already dealing with strong revanchist sentiments
* The socialist nations now genuinely want to go to war, although are aware that the combined weight of half of Seminine *and* Cathan is insurmountable and therefore are prevented in doing so
* At the same time, the moralist nations of Seminine genuinely don’t want war and the SMC is reluctant to commit to a full war having already achieved its objectives
* For now, peace prevails in Seminine, with an uneasy Cold War being established here between the moralist and socialist nations
* Both blocs draw increasingly closely together and try to subvert and spy on each other, but avoid waging actual war as they each fear each other

Year 56: The Scarlet Revolution

* An uprising occurs in Ethagis against the puppet regime and socialism is established in Ethagis
* Moracol is terrified and furious at this, but doesn’t act just yet as they need to maintain troops in Seminine to prevent war there

Years 56-64: The Smouldering Peace

* An extremely uneasy, temporary peace prevails in the world as Ethagis re-arms and establishes itself as the de facto leader of the International
* In Seminine, the moralist and socialist nations prepare for war. In Insulinde, the fascist and liberal democracies do so

Years 64-74: The Colossal War

AKA the Final War, the Supreme War, the Ideological War, the Global War, the Greater War

* Ethagis attacks Fasilides to re-take its lost territory on the Ethigean continent
* This sparks Moracol’s declaration of war on Ethagis, sparking the International’s declaration of war on all moralist nations
* The fascists also declare war on the International but are tied up in their occupation of Axam, which grows highly difficult with the outbreak of war
* sparking the fascists’ declaration of war on the International. The liberal democracies in Insulinde declare war on the fascists as they fear the fascists getting too powerful
* Neither Ethagis nor the United States of Cathan can invade each other’s islands so the war in the northern hemisphere mainly takes place in the South, captured by Fasilides during the Ethigean Civil War
* In Seminine the socialist nations are successful and invade Insulinde to take care of the fascists, wherein the liberal democracies declare war on them for fear of losing the balance of power and push them out of Insulinde as they’re so weak by this stage
* Neither the socialist powers of Seminine nor the liberal democracies of Insulinde
* Ethagis re-captures the South but cannot invade Fasilides and the war there becomes a stalemate
* Eventually both Ethagis and the USC independently research atom bombs and each nukes each other once, in the capital cities of the USC and the Delta respectively
* Moracol launches a nuclear weapon on Ethagis first
* The two countries then establish an armistice and the war ends after a wave of revolutions in Cathan ends moralism there

Years 73-75: Fall of Moracol

* Triggered in Cathan by revolutions deposing the moralist regimes there and establishing social democracies, which make peace with Ethagis soon after

## 10. Spinoff Story: Zealotry

Note: This is a separate series to Mightiest, taking place in the same universe and (de facto) same cast of characters but with a completely different time period and circumstances for each character

Premise: Zealotry takes place nearly a millennium after Mightiest. Ethagis is a modern, unified state ruled by the Shurhath. Firearms are the basis of modern warfare although Ethigeans lack access to machine guns at the series’ beginning. Zealotry, like Mightiest, explores philosophy and psychology, but its core is politics, political ideologies, and political philosophy

### Characters

The characters are not technically the same as their counterparts in *Mightiest*- in fact their counterparts are often mentioned explicitly by them as separate figures e.g. the humanists often talk about the old Chainbreaker. However, the characters in *Zealotry* have the same personalities, skillsets, and viewpoints as their counterparts- adapted into a later age. The role listed here is what the character’s livelihood is at the start of the narrative.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Character Name | *Mightiest* Sobriquet | Role |
| Red Rage | Armageddon | Coal mine, radical politician |
| Arzachel | Arzachel | Doctor, liberal politician -> nationalist politician |
|  | the Blackfish | Steel magnate |
| Vanguard | Chainbreaker | Radical politician |
|  | Corus | Radical politician |
| the Silver Death | Crossbow | Radical sniper |
| the Lightning Lord | the Darkstar | Liberal politician |
| Imperator | the Desert Ripper | Fascist politician |
| the Raptor | the Dragonfly | Shurhath |
| Zephyr | Elphensbane | Liberal politician |
| Torpedo | Firewalker | Nationalist airship pilot |
| Ultramarine | the Grizzly Falcon | Liberal politician |
|  | the Hammer of Ilyzor | Clinical psychologist |
| Hazin Atheas | Hazin -> the Emerald Champion | Liberal politician |
|  | Hurricane | Liberal politician -> radical politician |
|  | Izaria | Radical politician |
|  | Jackdaw | Liberal newspaper writer |
| War Machine | the Juggernaught | Colonel -> authoritarian politician |
|  | Kingsparrow | Radical politician |
|  | Lanna -> the Sorceress | Radical politician |
|  | the Liquid Lion | Nationalist politician |
| the Dragon | Lord Morningstar | Radical politician |
| Wildcat / Wildcat Mace | Mace | Liberal politician -> radical politician |
|  | Nassany | Nationalist soldier -> nationalist politician |
|  | Panthercaul | Southern administartor |
| Nemesis | Purgatory | Secret police chief |
| Godhead | the Red Mantis -> the Revenant | Imperial politician -> fascist politician |
| Archangel | the Reefshark -> Indigo -> Ironhand | Liberal politician -> humanitarian aid foundation founder -> diplomat |
| Bloodhound | the Scorpion | General -> nationalist politician |
| Sithan | Scython -> the Hydra of Semidon | Shurhath’s heir |
| Shadowbound | Shadowbound | Mercenary |
| Catshark | Sharkjaw | Arms dealer |
|  | Steelbird | General -> nationalist politician |
| Strikedown | Soul Eater | Mining magnate -> nationalist politician |
|  | Srigo | Conscript soldier |
| the Sabre of Semidon | the Sword of Semidon | Generalissimo |
| Abomination | Tarantula | Secret police operative |
|  | Thalorian | Radical politician |
|  | Typhoon | Radical spy |
| Legionnaire | the Valorous | Authoritarian general |
|  | Voai | Radical politician |
|  | the Wraithwreaker | Imperial politician |
|  | Zenith | Fascist general |
|  | Zerzura | Liberal revolutionary |

### Narrative

#### Context

* ~8 centuries after the events of *Mightiest,* the Empire of Ethagis is a unified, modern, fully centralized/bureaucratic state with a standing army
* Technologically, the world *roughly* resembles that of Earth c.1900- but this is more of an aesthetic guideline than a rule. Ethigeans use smokeless powder, cartridge non-automatic repeater rifles, airships, and radio- but horse cavalry is still used and machine guns, though known, are rare
* A fairly small number of industrialised nations predominate over a still mostly agricultural world, but within the couple dozen or so industrialised nations, most have modern economies, scientific industries, electricity, and large corporations
* These nations are grouped into three geopolitical ‘cores’, representing three global regions wherein modernity has arrived. All the countries within these regions know of each other’s existence and have mapped virtually the entire globe
* These regions are the Cathanai Seaboards; Ethagis; and Eastern Kanem. The Seaboards and Kanem contain multiple industrialised nations which share a broad cultural identity but nonetheless vie for power and often attack each other
* Ethagis, Cathan, Fasilides, and Amphiction are collectively grouped together in Ethigean scholarship as the ‘Old World’. Anteus and Seminine are grouped as the ‘New World’, and the largest world continent, Insulinde, is the ‘Newer World’
* The Cathanai Seaboards refer to the eastern coastline of Cathan’s eastern landmass and the western coastline of Amphiction which faces the continent of Cathan and is primarily ethnically Cathanai
* These countries are mostly free-market plutocracies analogous sociopolitically to early Victorian Britain or Gilded Age USA. The strongest country in the Seaboards by far is the United States of Cathan, which occupies most of the north of Cathan’s eastern landmass and is the wealthiest country in the world
* Eastern Kanem is the eastern part of Kanem, itself the eastern part of the continent of Seminine and separated from the rest of that continent by the Dragoore Rainforest
* Eastern Kanem is the birthplace of liberalism in the world but adopted industrialization fairly later, after Cathanai nations did so first. The nations here are a mixture of agrarian (semi-)democracies, liberalist dictatorships, republican oligarchies, constitutional monarchies, and liberalist theocracies
* Ethagis is the most recent major power to industrialise and modernize. Its massive population and resource base propelled it into geopolitical significance, but scientifically and economically it’s behind the other two cores. In particular, the countryside is broadly untouched by modernity and sharply contrasts with the cities
* Ethagis is a hereditary imperial autocracy still ruled by the Shurhath, although by now the old legitimacy mechanism of being the ‘mightiest’ has given way to simple dynastic rule
* There is a very large mismatch between the social, economic, and political structures of Ethagis. Although there are by now a sizeable middle class and industrial proletariat which seek influence and political changes, these are denied power or economic reforms by the aristocratic imperial dynasty
* The past few decades have seen some clandestine liberal and socialist agitation. This is currently suppressed by secret police, state censorship, and lack of civil liberties, but liberals and socialists by now have some organizing bodies and growing popular support
* Nagal and the South are still part of the Empire of Ethagis- the latter was reconquered nearly two centuries after Ironhand’s rule
* Nagal is by now culturally and politically assimilated into Ethagis- sort of like Wales relative to England by the 19th century. Casual racism and stereotyping of Nagalens still exists, but they’re not seriously discriminated against
* The South is *not* yet fully assimilated owing to some centuries of colonialism and repression- sort of like Ireland relative to England. They want independence. Crucially, however, Southerners are subject to genuine racism in Ethagis and occupy few influential positions. Many right-wing Ethigeans reallyyy dislike them
* The semadai still exist as a religious order, although have zero military function by now and being a Serthan is mostly just an honorific now. Politically, they uphold the regime and are seen as a bastion of conservatism- kind of like a conservative Freemasons order. Batay and Typhoon are exceptions in this regard

#### Background

* The Empire of Ethagis is currently ruled over by the Fireze dynasty. The Fireze dynasty has ruled over Ethagis for many decades now and many successive Shurhaths
* True to historical pattern, the Fireze dynasty has produced increasingly decadent, impotent, and corrupt Shurhaths and misgovernment has risen greatly from their formerly skilled origins
* Although the early Fireze Shurhaths drove industrialisation and dragged Ethagis into the modern age, gradually the rulers have become worse and worse. The current Shurhath, the Raptor, essentially does zero governing and lives a life of spending massive sums of money and snorting ‘magenta cocaine’
* The real rulers of the country are influential figures at court: the Wraithwreaker, the Red Mantis, the head of secret police (Purgatory), and the top generals: the Scorpion, the Blackfish, and Steelbird
* They’re all self-serving and repressive to the populace, and struggle for power and influence in a decaying nation
* Normally in Ethigean history, this cycle of dynastic rise and decline would eventually lead to a national fragmentation and great civil war. Ethagis is too centralised and modern for this now
* However, another threat is rising: revolution
* The ideas of liberalism, originating in Kanem and having some historical parallel in Cathan, have led to zero official acceptance or liberalist reforms in Ethagis- with the exception of economic reforms required to spearhead industrialisation
* This complete political rigidity constrains two burgeoning social classes driven on by industrialisation, modern bureaucracy, and economic changes: the bourgeoisie and proletariat
* Liberals and radicals (humanists, socialists, social democrats) have by now formed clandestine parties which subvert authority and have been continually repressing them for the past few decades
* The liberal movement is much the bigger out of all of these, and is led by many aristocrats who want reform. It has the general nature of the French liberal movement in the 18th century. There are various liberal organisations with widespread support amongst the working and middle classes and some aristocrats
* The radical movement is smaller, more repressed, and more violent, and resembles the Russian socialist agitations of the 19th century
* Trade unions are illegal but the concentration of workers in factories in almost completely unregulated conditions provides the lifeblood for the radical agitation
* In the South, Kusaila is the regional imperial administrator and has used his personal influence with the Shurhath and political allies at court (the generals) to secure significant regional autonomy and personal influence
* He’s used this to enact extensive workers’ protections, e.g. limiting working hours, child labour, actually preventing employers using mercenaries to kill strikers, improving working conditions, etc. Whilst the people love him, the haute bourgeoisie naturally despise him and want to rebel against his authority
* Almost all Southerners are united in the desire for independence, and plan to declare it when a revolution occurs, which is sort of believed to be inevitable owing to the country’s massive discontent
* Indeed, the country is a powderkeg. The narrative begins when a bad harvest provides the spark to light the latent resentment into political action

#### Strand 1: The Revolution (Ethigean revolution, class factionalism, radical coup, LM coup)

#### Strand 2: The Anti-Revolution (nationalists, fascists, ethnofascists)

#### Strand 3: The South and Humanism

#### Strand 4: Lacaideon

#### Strand 5: War Machine

#### Strand 6: Shadowbound

* Mass protests in Semidon for liberalism: Zerzura as figurehead. Zerzura shot by Shadowbound, death blamed on the Shurhath, triggering full riots
* Liberal democratic revolution in Semidon: middle-class liberals and working-class radicals united, glorious
* Cyzinian’s imperial army routed by rebellious generals: the Juggernaught, Steelbird, the Scorpion. They join the provisional government in Semidon
* South declares independence: conflict brews betw business magnates and proletariat/Kusaila
* Provisional government becomes increasingly polarised, riven by deep conflict. Three factions: the non-liberals (led by generals), the bourgeois liberals, the proletarian radicals
* Class conflict gets massive and brutal. Well-meaning liberals get squeezed out by non-liberal ‘nationalists’ (although the nationalists still intend to keep some reforms) as two big blocs form
* Nationalists face internal conflict whereas radicals united for now. Radicals seize the city in a big military clash between the radicals, nationalists, and mechanists whilst the Juggernaught secedes from nationalists with his own progressive dictatorship. Remaining nationalists and secret police head to Springlands, a conservative bastion
* Radicals enact a Jacobin regime. Massive reforms are passed but the radicals disagree with each other nearly as vehemently as they did with the others, leading to a deeply factionalist chamber
* The factions develop amongst personal and political lines. The rivalry and power struggle between factions and people resembles that of the Russian Revolution’s Bolsheviks, and gradually the ruling faction gets more and more extreme, more brutal, more repressive, until eventually a Stalin-like figure seizes power
* The factions at Semidon amongst radicals are humanists (anarchists); left socialists (communists); and right socialists (socialists/social democrats)
* Chainbreaker is in charge for now and refuses to enact a Terror, but reluctantly agrees that civil liberties and democracy will have to be curtailed. He sympathises with humanism personally but tries not to encourage factionalism. Regardless, the government is highly divided and unstable
* Three-way war between radicals (who hold Autumnlands, Crownlands, Delta), Juggernaught (in the West), and nationalists (who hold Aedemon, Eastern Commanderies, Springlands). In South, there’s a coup against Kusaila, establishing a nationalist-friendly regime
* Eastern Autumnlands, a conservative bastion, rebels against radicals in support of the monarchy. Lord Morningstar puts this down and gains massive support. Nationalists become influenced by Desert Ripper and become fascist. They start beating the radicals due to better generalship
* Lord Morningstar, due to massive discontent in the polity, seizes power Napoleon-style with a coup. Chainbreaker, Armageddon, Kingsparrow, some radicals flee to the South. They free Kusaila and start to wage a guerrilla war for humanism (far-left anarchism). The Valorous dislikes this politically and joins Juggs
* Purgatory engineers alliance w Juggs. LM is defeated and fascists seize control over the centre and east of Ethagis. In the South, guerrilla war works and it becomes humanist. There’s a second spurt of genuine idealism here as the humanists are genuinely democratic and successful (reminiscent of Spanish Civil War anarchists)
* After a bloody battle in Kahina where the humanists get besieged Leningrad-style, the humanists rule the South. Vanguard is killed in the battle, massively raising the stakes of the power struggle in the party. Without Vanguard at the helm and in the subsequent conventional war waged with the fascists, the democracy and civil liberties of the humanist state gets gradually eroded until eventually by the end it’s totalitarian
* Juggs loses the fight with the fascists due to being outgunned massively and eventually killed by Shadowbound when it’s kinda clear he can’t win. It’s just fascists vs humanist South now
* The very uneasy alliance between Imperator and Nemesis breaks down and the Revenant takes advantage by seizing power himself and having both ‘cemented’. The Revenant becomes a totalitarian dictator and gears all his propaganda and military actions to enacting a racialist genocide of Southerners. He also promulgates the idea of him being a god (in the very ancient Ethigean mould of god-emperors at the River Antavar delta)
* Both sides are now super extremist and want to spark a world revolution. Lacaideon hears rumblings from the Cathanai states that this threatens their interest and maybeee something will be done about it
* The fascists control far more land than the humanists. But Kusaila is the best general alive by now and by massive ingenuity (campaign is reminiscent of Chinese communists’ gradual winning of power) wins and seizes Semidon
* Humanist Ethagis seizes control of the country and the humanists have every high-level fascist killed. The highest ranking ones are cemented
* Many of the humanists are genuine idealists but there’s a massive fear of domestic counter-revolution and by now foreign invasion from Cathan so things aren’t as democratic and liberal as most leaders want them to be
* Eventually a Stalin-like figure (Corus) seizes control and drives the state into full-on totalitarianism
* At this point the moralist coalition, led by the United States of Cathan, invade (with Sharkjaw’s help) and seize control of the country rapidly with overwhelming military force
* They establish a permanent occupation zone in the Crownlands and the Delta (the most developed regions) and the wealthy port cities of Ethagis. The rest of the country is put under a puppet Vichy-esque regime
* The moralist occupation is non-democratic and basically colonialism BUT stability and rule of law are brought back. Sharkjaw, as leading collaborator, is given governorship of the puppet regime. Lacaideon, as leading diplomat, also advises on policy but currently the moralists listen to Sharkjaw instead
* Crossbow, by now an extremely jaded sniper who deserted the humanists on the coalition landings, kills Sharkjaw
* This makes Lacaideon the most influential Ethigean in the moralist administration and he assumes governorship of the puppet state
* Crossbow strongly considers killing him as he’s a liberal but can’t bring herself to do it and eventually just walks away. She is captured by Moracol and is executed

Differences from OG narrative

* Batay gives ‘therapy’ to Kusaila and he becomes eloquent, a good fighter, and ideologically is willing to be a humanist. Batay killed by Imperator
* Lacaideon flees Semidon after the radical-nationalist military clash. Wanders around hating everyone and not knowing what to do. Eventually decides to start a humanitarian aid foundation, Elephantine (using his own money) and goes to diff countries asking for grants of money. Only country that does so for now is the eastern islands of Ethagis where the Commonwealth of Free Men was, but he becomes a kind of diplomat in the process and eventually acts as an actual diplomat
* Shadowbound instead of having a redemption arc goes fully insane and starts killing big figures indiscriminately for no pay including War Machine, becomes weirdly obsessed with Lacaideon and a kind of nemesis to him and eventually is killed by him

## 11. Etymology and Nomenclature

### Etymology

Abnothology

Comes from the Arabic word ‘abna’ meaning sons or descendants.

Aedemon

A Berber freedman in Mauritia in the 1st century AD who led a failed revolt against the Romans after they assassinated the client king there. His fate is unknown.

Agnoscon

Comes from the Latin word ‘agnosco’, meaning I acknowledge, recognize, or comprehend.

Akkar

The Icelandic word for squid.

Alfazel

Comes from the Arabic word ‘afazel’, meaning a learned or virtuous man.

Alharis

The Arabic word for sentinel.

Allaxacis

Comes from ‘Anax’, an ancient Greek title from the Mycenaean Era usually translated as military leader or king, and Abulcasis. Abulcasis is the Latinised name for Abū al-Qāsim Khalaf ibn al-'Abbās al-Zahrāwī al-Ansari, an Arab Andalusian physician, surgeon, and chemist. Abulcasis is considered to be the greatest surgeon of the Middle Ages, so much so that he is sometimes referred to as the ‘father of modern surgery’.

Animus

The Latin word for soul, mind, heart, or memory.

Antavar

The Tamil word for lord.

Arsenicum

Comes from the Greek word ‘arsenikos’, meaning masculine or male. This Greek word is also the root word of the chemical element arsenic. The word arsenicum- unknown to me at the time of the word’s inclusion into the document- is also the Latin word for arsenic.

Askary Lord

Comes from the Arabic word ‘askary’, literally translating to duke. The askari were a sociopolitical class in the Ottoman Empire being imperial administrators (effectively the ruling class).

Assur

The capital of the Assyrian Empire at various different points of history. Its inhabitants spoke Aramaic.

Asthan

Comes from the Thai word ‘than’, meaning sir.

Arzachel

Arzachel is the Latinised name for Al-Zarkali, an Arab Muslim astrologer and astronomer in the 11th century. His works were highly influential in Europe and there is a crater on the Moon named after him.

Atha

The Gujarati word for eight.

The Autumnlands

This is the name of a region from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Axum

The Kingdom of Axum was an Ethiopian kingdom existed from the 2nd to the 10th centuries. During the 3rd century, the Persian prophet Mani described the kingdom as one of the world’s four great powers, counting it amongst Rome, Persia, and China.

Azariad

Comes from the Kurdish word ‘Azadi’, meaning freedom, and the Welsh word ‘eithriad’, meaning exemption.

Azna

Comes from the Slovenian word ‘vlazna’, meaning moist.

Azor

Comes from the Amharic word ‘azo’, meaning crocodile, and the Malaysian word ‘voay’, meaning the same.

Cascus

A Latin word meaning old, ancient, or primitive, a reference to how this organ of the mind is highly primitive.

Cathan

Comes from the Tamil word ‘catanku’, meaning ritual.

Concionis

Comes from the Latin word ‘concio’, meaning I set in motion or I move, a reference to how this organ of the mind is responsible for movement and coordination.

Concitanium

Comes from the Latin word ‘concitamentum’, meaning urge, motive, or inducement.

Cutan

Comes from the Tamil word ‘cutana’, meaning warm.

Cyzinian

Named after Antiochus IX Cyzicenus, ruler of the Seleucid Empire in c.100 BCE. The Seleucid Empire was one of the rump states of Alexander the Great’s empire, and at its territorial apex spanned from the Levant to the edge of India.

Deilis

Comes from the Greek word ‘deilos’, meaning skulker.

Excercinum

Comes from the Latin word ‘exerceo’, meaning I discipline or I keep busy.

Efitra

The Malagasy word for desert.

Enzu

Another name for Nanna, the god of the moon in the Mesopotamian pantheon.

Ethagis

The word ‘Ethagis’ is one I first saw from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Ezana

Ezana was a ruler of the Kingdom of Axum (an Ethiopian state) during the 4th century. He is known for being the first monarch of the kingdom to embrace Christianity.

Gabbar

Comes from Gabbar, an Aramean (a Semitic people in the Near East who spoke Aramaic) king who reigned around 900 BCE.

Garash

An Arabic word meaning shark.

Ghalassa

Comes from the Maltese word ‘ghassa’, meaning watcher.

Halthia

Comes from the Hausa word ‘halia’, meaning malevolence.

Hazael

Comes from Hazael I, a ruler of the Kingdom of Aram-Damascus. This was an Aramean state in the 12th to 8th centuries BCE.

Hazin

The Arabic word for dolorous.

Hesnamur

Comes from the Icelandic word ‘hlebardi’, meaning leopard, and the Arabic phrase ‘namur althalj’, meaning snow leopard.

Ilyzor

Comes from the Berber word ‘ilu’, meaning elephant, and the Arabic prefix ‘-zoor’, meaning very strong or very vigorous.

Imazien

Comes from the word Imazighen, the contemporary self-name for the Berber people.

Intelligens

Comes from the Latin word ‘intellego’, meaning I understand, realise, or discern.

Intricinor

Comes from the Latin word ‘ratiocinor’, meaning I cogitate, argue, reckon, or think.

Isari

The Georgian word for arrow.

Jagal

Comes from the German word ‘jaeger’, meaning hunter.

Jakartyr

The name of a country in one of my previous worldbuilding projects, Project Five.

Kacharias

Comes from ‘karcharias’, the Greek word for shark.

Kahina

A Berber queen who reigned in the 7th century CE and who is known for her resistance against the Umayyad Caliphate conquest of the Maghreb. Though initially victorious, she was defeated in the Battle of Tabarka and died either in battle or by suicide (to evade capture). In recent times, Kahina has been used by Berbers as a symbol of resistance against invaders and for women.

Kalai

The Tamil word for weed.

Kalawi

This was one of the, if not the first, word I came up with this project. This word had no inspiration, I just came up with it spontaneously.

Kaptana

Comes from the Maltese word ‘kapatana’, meaning patriarch.

Karigraphy

Comes from the Arabic ‘karih ardih’, meaning globe (a translation to the spherical shape of the planet).

Khosgan

Comes from the word ‘Khoswan’, the name of a region from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Kriru

Comes from the Sinhala word ‘kuriru’, meaning cruel.

Kulema

Comes from the Finnish word ‘kuolema’, meaning death.

Kulir

The Tamil word for cold.

Kusailas

Comes from Kusaila, a 7th century Berber Christian king of Altava, an independent Berber kingdom. The name Kusaila means ‘leopard’ in the Berber language.

Lacaideon

Comes from two words: the first is Lacumazes, a king of a Numidian tribe (the Numidians were a North African, Berber-speaking people) in the 3rd century BCE. The second is Lacedaemon, a mythical king of Sparta.

Lahar

Comes from ‘lahu’, the Punjabi word for blood.

Lakare

The Swedish word for doctor.

Laqi

An Aramean state in the 9th century BCE (the Arameans were an ancient people in the Near East who spoke Aramaic).

Lycus

The Roman name for the river Nahr al-Kalb in Lebanon. It runs from a spring in Jeita (a Lebanese town) to the Mediterranean Sea.

Mabur

The Javanese word for roving.

Maesylin

Named after the Masaesyli, a Berber tribe of western Numidia (present day Algeria).

Nabi

The Malay word for prophet.

Nagal

The Maltese word for sand.

Nakal

The Javanese word for rogue.

Naraka

The Hindu equivalent of Hell, where sinners are tormented in the afterlife. Generally, Hindi religious texts describe the stay in Naraka as temporary, and after this stay souls are reincarnated.

Nazul Lord

Comes from the Arabic word ‘nabil’, being the word for a feudal esquire/gentleman. The word ‘nazul’ comes from a previous worldbuilding project of mine, Project Five.

Nebir

Comes from the Amharic word ‘nebiri’, meaning leopard.

Nepenthes

A genus of plant, used in this context to represent how the nepenthes is the only organ of the mind possessed by plants.

Peskhagen

Comes from the Albanian word ‘peskhagen’, meaning shark.

Qahira

The non-English spelling of Cairo, the capital city of Egypt.

Qarthal

Comes from the Azerbaijani word ‘qartal’, meaning eagle.

The Reefshark

This is the name of a character from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Retinentium

Comes from the Latin word ‘retinentia’, meaning recollection or memory.

Sakhonomy

Comes from the Arabic word ‘sakhar’, meaning rock.

Samarqand

The name of a capital city in a previous worldbuilding project of mine, Project Five.

Santai

The Javanese word for quiescent.

Sandesta

The Marathi word for prophet.

Scientius

Comes from the Latin word ‘sciens’, meaning aware, understanding, or knowing, a reference to how this organ of the mind is responsible for awareness. As a bit of trivia, this Latin word is also where English derives the word ‘science’.

Scython

Named after Scylas, a Scythian king who ruled in the 5th century BCE. Herodotus mentions him in his histories as being literate in Greek and an admirer of Greek culture- this led to his people rebelling against him. His brother eventually executed him.

Semadai

Comes from two names: Cemakar, a Mongol general who fought in the Levant, and Subutai, a highly senior Mongol general and the primary military strategist of Genghis Khan and his successor Ogedei Khan.

Semidon

The word ‘Semidon’ is one I first saw from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Sententium

Comes from the Latin word ‘sententia’, meaning opinion, judgement, view, decision, or thought.

Shurhath

The word ‘Shurhath’ is one I first saw from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Sibira

Comes from the Sinhala word ‘sibra’, meaning zebra.

Silphax

Comes from Syphax, an ancient king in the 3rd century BCE who ruled a Berber tribe, the Masaesyli. He sided with the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War against Rome and died as the Romans’ prisoner.

Sinthar

Comes from the Bengali word ‘sinha’, meaning lion. I initially wanted to name Sinthar ‘Aslan’ (the Azerbaijani word for ‘lion’), but I thought that the word sounded familiar and searched it up to find that it had already been used by the Chronicles of Narnia.

The Springlands

This is the name of a region from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Sugata

Literally translating to ‘well-spoken’, Sugata is an epithet for Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

The Sword of Semidon

This is the name of a character from a different worldbuilding project made by a different person. The project was created by Redditor u/flysquirrel775 and is called [World of Khoswan and Ethagis]. I asked for his explicit permission to use the terms that he first created, and he very kindly granted it.

Syndasticon

Comes from the Greek word ‘syndyasmos’, meaning combination.

Thylanicos

Comes from the Geek word ‘thilykos’, meaning feminine or female.

Ulaki

The Bengali word for tattoo.

Ultimases

Comes from the word ultimate and the Latin word ‘sese’, meaning self.

Uzara

Comes from the Latvian word ‘uzvara’, meaning victor.

Vadyan

Comes from the Marathi word ‘vaidyan’, meaning physician.

Varant

Comes from the Tamil word ‘varanta’, meaning arid.

Virtunis

Comes from the Latin word ‘virtus’, meaning virtue or morality.

Vizier

A minister or government official in countries in the near east.

Xaridor

The Uzbek word for warhorse.

Zaran

Comes from the Lithuanian word ‘ziaurus’, meaning cruel.

Zion

Comes from the Croatin word ‘sion’, meaning elephant, and is also used as a synonym for Jerusalem/Israel and thus has religious meaning on Earth as well. The Ethigean elephant deity, Ilyzor, was originally called this.

### Changes to Character Names

The Roving Deep -> The Revenant | --/--/21

The Sunset Leopard -> The Brimstone Leopard | --/--/21

The Roving Deep -> The Red Mantis | --/11/21

The Thunder Khagan -> The Meteor | --/11/21

Maesylin Laqi -> Assur Laqi | 10/11/21

The Inferno -> The Immortal | 07/03/22

Purgatory -> The Raptor | 11/03/22

Torment -> Purgatory | 11/03/22

The Shield of Spring -> The Monolith | 13/03/22

The Dauntless -> Elphensbane | 15/03/22

Lord Strychnine -> The Wraithwreaker | 15/03/22

The Immortal -> The Emerald Phoenix -> The Emerald Champion| 15/03/22

The Letharginous -> The Broken Champion | 15/03/22

The Raptor -> The Hydra of Semidon | 20/03/22

The Lapis Fox -> The Lazurite Fox | 21/03/22

The Lazurite Fox -> Lazaria | 27/07/23

Hazael Gabbar -> Atheas Hazael | 28/03/23

The Griffinspear -> Galar | 29/03/23

Atheas Hazael -> Aximan Morningstar | --/08/24

Santai Hazin -> Hazin Atheas | --/08/24

The Brimstone Leopard -> The Darkstar | 08/08/24

Cataclysm -> Hurricane | 11/08/24

### Changes to Concept Names

Ethnology -> Ethnogeny -> [Abnothology](#_The_Learned_Arts) | 12/12/21

Hesnamur -> [Namur](#_The_Ten_Animal) | 19/12/21

Azor Voay -> [Azor](#_The_Ten_Animal) | 19/12/21

Virtunis -> [Exercinum](#_Organs_of_the) | 24/12/21

Intelligens -> [Intricinor](#_Organs_of_the) | 24/12/21

Verdure -> [Kalai](#_The_Ten_Bases) | 01/05/22

Soma -> [Lahar](#_The_Ten_Bases) | 01/05/22

Mighty Lordship of Samarqand -> Mighty Lordship of Hazinim | 18/07/22

Mighty Lordship of Hazinim -> Mighty Lordship of Santai | 09/08/24

## I. [2021-2023] [Old Story] Books

This is how the old version of Mightiest’s story, created from 2021 to 2023, was divided into books. The words ‘book’ and ‘part’ are used interchangeably here.

Each book cover has a border filled with various characters from the books posing and doing things, with one character being placed at the bottom-centre and bigger than all others (a cover character). The middle of the cover has the title in the middle of an ornate pattern, and the author’s name at the bottom.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Book No. | Scope | Colour | Cover Character | Points-of-View |
| I | Up to and including:  Commonwealth of Free Men declared, Chainbreaker proclaimed Grand Marshal | White | The Sword of Semidon | *Recurring:*  Lacaideon; Chainbreaker; Lord Morningstar; Kusaila; Archangel; Crossbow; Valorous; Court of Semidon (VIII)  *Appearance:*  Elphensbane; Desert Ripper; Soul Eater |
| II | Up to and including:  Battle of Silphax | Magenta | Lord Morningstar | *Recurring:*  Shuriken; Lord Morningstar; Chainbreaker; Soul Eater; Crossbow; Kusaila; Archangel; Court of Semidon  (VIII)  *Appearance:*  Valorous |
| III | Up to and including:  First Battle of Semidon | Red | Chainbreaker | *Recurring:*  Lacaideon; Shuriken; Valorous; Arzachel; Chainbreaker; Winged Prophet; Archangel; Kusaila  (IX)  *Appearance:*  Court of Semidon |
| IV | Up to and including:  Death of the Juggernaught | Gold | The Juggernaught | *Recurring:*  Lacaideon; Valorous; Shuriken; Lord Morningstar; Arzachel; Crossbow; Thundermaw; Chainbreaker; Court of Semidon  (IX)  *Appearance:*  Elphensbane |
| V | Up to and including:  Second Battle of Semidon, Soul Eater becomes Shurhath | Green | Shadowbound | *Recurring:*  Lacaideon; Shuriken; Thundermaw; Soul Eater; Chainbreaker; Winged Prophet; Elphensbane; Kusaila; Crossbow; Court of Semidon  (X)  *Appearance:*  Lord Morningstar; Red Mantis |
| VI | Up to and including:  Battle of Kahina, Death of Purgatory | Blue | Soul Eater | *Recurring:*  Elphensbane; Kusaila; Thundermaw; Chainbreaker; Shuriken; Firewalker; Court of Semidon  (VII)  *Appearance:*  Red Mantis; Lacaideon; Cyzinian; Armageddon |
| VII | Up to and including:  Third Battle of Semidon, Lord Morningstar becomes Shurhath | Midnight | Elphensbane | *Recurring:*  Lacaideon; Cyzinian; Crossbow; Chainbreaker; Elphensbane; Lord Morningstar; Kusaila; Cataclysm; Court of Semidon  (IX)  *Appearance:*  Firewalker; Shuriken |
| VIII | Up to and including:  Death of the Meteor | Purple | Kusaila | *Recurring:*  Lord Morningstar; Chainbreaker; Cyzinian; Elphensbane; Kusaila; Kriru Zaran; Court of Semidon  (VII)  *Appearance:*  The Meteor |
| IX | Up to and including:  Lacaideon becoming Ironhand, Death of the Revenant | Charcoal | The Revenant | *Recurring:*  Lacaideon; Kriru Zaran; Cyzinian; Elphensbane; Panthercaul; Court of Semidon  (VI)  *Appearance:*  Shuriken |
| X | Up to and including:  Fourth Battle of Semidon, Ironhand becomes Shurhath | Black | Ironhand | *Recurring:*  Typhoon; Cyzinian; Crossbow; Court of Semidon  (IV)  *Appearance:*  Elphensbane; Panthercaul; Shuriken; Arzachel |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Spin-off Name | Nature | Description |
| The Sword of Ethagis | Alternate Timeline | An alternate timeline wherein Cyzinian becomes the Shurhath of Ethagis after the Dragonfly’s death, and Scython does not exist. For information on how this timeline unfolds, click [here](#_The_Sword_of). |
| The Scourge of God | Alternate Timeline | An alternate timeline wherein an epidemic of bubonic plague reaches Ethagis a few months before the Dragonfly’s death. For more information on how this timeline unfolds, click [here](#_9._The_Scourge). |
| The World of the Mightiest | Worldbuilding | A large, hardback, illustrated book compiling every single worldbuilding article on this document. ‘Mightiest’ is the current working title for this book series as of when I type this out, April 2022, and has been since the project’s conception. |

## II. [2021-2023] [Old Story] Characters

### Moral Alignment

This document uses various scales to describe the moral alignment of each character. Each character’s morality is mapped onto two axes: *motives*¸ referring to what a character wants; *means*, referring to how a character achieves them; and *nature*, referring to each character’s capacity for compassion for their fellow human beings. Each axis has several discrete, non-overlapping categories. Each character can fit into only one on each.

**The *motives* axis** refers to how benevolent or malign a character’s motives are- i.e., what do they want? What is the fundamental thought process behind all their actions? Apply these questions to judgement of people in real life: somebody who acts to benefit others and ‘do the right thing’ is likely a better person than someone who acts solely to benefit themselves. The motives axis has four categories:

Good | The character acts to benefit other people. The character’s motivations might be to preserve the lives, health, possessions, or general wellbeing of others, even when doing so adversely affects them or is at their expense.

Neutral | The character acts to benefit themselves, but their ends do not involve adverse effects for other people. The character’s motivations might be honour, a sense of duty, renown, wealth (as a reward), etc. These characters will always prioritise their own goals over those of others, but still act to minimise harm towards others.

Egoistic | The character acts to benefit themselves, and their ends may involve adverse effects for other people. The character’s motivations might be power, pride, land, wealth (as plunder), etc. These characters will always prioritise their own goals over those of others, and do not include the feelings of/harm to others in their decision-making.

Evil | The character acts to harm other people. The character’s motivations may be sadism, megalomania, hatred, etc. These characters will always prioritise their own goals over those of others, but still act to maximise harm towards others.

**The *means* axis** refers to the kind of methods which the character achieves their motives- i.e., do they avoid or utilise violence? Do they remain within the confines of the law? In this context, ‘immoral’ acts refers to murder, mutilation, and- as a general rule- acts that have a significant adverse effect on others. If there is any benefit of the act to anyone, it is unquestionably outweighed by these adverse effects. ‘Morally grey’ refers to acts which have adverse effects on others, but which also have benefits to others. The adverse and positive effects are somewhat balanced. The means axis has five categories:

Just | The character will never commit immoral, illegal, or morally grey acts to achieve their motives. They will remain within the confines of the law and impose further moral restrictions on themselves and their actions.

Lawful | The character will never commit immoral or illegal acts to achieve their motives, and will avoid committing morally grey acts whenever possible. They will remain within the confines of the law and avoid abusing it.

Neutral | The character will avoid committing immoral or illegal acts to achieve their motives when possible. They may commit morally grey acts.

Chaotic | The character will not hesitate to commit illegal acts or morally grey acts to achieve their motives. They may commit immoral acts.

Violent | The character will not hesitate to commit illegal, morally grey, or immoral acts to achieve their motives.

**The *nature* axis** refers to the disposition/nature of a character- i.e., what is their capacity for compassion? Do they care about other people? Are their views on other people positive or malign? The nature axis has five categories:

Benevolent | The character cares about other people and views them as worthy of respect and compassion. The suffering of others is disturbing to them and they will not tolerate it unless in exceptional cases. They have healthy and developed senses of empathy and compassion.

Benign | The character has generally satisfactory senses of empathy and compassion. They are disturbed by the suffering of other people, but will tolerate it (to a point) if needed. They generally value and respect other human beings and their lives.

Neutral | The character has muted senses of empathy and compassion. They are uncomfortable with the suffering of other people, but will tolerate it (to a point) if needed. They view other human beings mainly as means to their own ends, but still has respect for them and their lives.

Malign | The character lacks empathy or compassion, and are generally undisturbed by the suffering of others unless in exceptional cases. They view other human beings as pawns for their own ends, though they may still feel some emotion for them.

Sociopathic | The character has a complete and utter lack of empathy, compassion, or respect for other people. They are totally undisturbed by the suffering of others. They view other human beings as genuinely worthless.

### HEXACO and Merit

This document uses the HEXACO Model of Personality to summarise the personalities of the various characters of Ethagis and to provide insight/information. HEXACO is a model of personality whose development started in 2000. It consists of six factors: Honesty-Humility; Emotionality; eXtraversion; Agreeableness; Conscientiousness; Openness to Experience. Widely used and highly informative, it takes derivation from two main factors: NEO-PI and later lexical studies.

The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (or NEO-PI) is a personality inventory that assesses five main personality traits, called the ‘Big Five’, each based on various studies of the English language to determine the most fundamental, overarching factors of personality. The Big Five traits are summarised in the acronym ‘OCEAN’: Openness to Experience; Conscientiousness; Extraversion; Agreeableness; Neuroticism (this is exchanged for Emotionality in the HEXACO model, but the two are roughly synonymous). The Big Five is still the primary way of summarising personality, but HEXACO covers more depth and provides more information because it’s derived not just from the NEO-PI itself, but lexical studies from many more languages.

The HEXACO personality model is based off of new lexical studies after the Big Five became widely known. These studies analysed languages from across the world- not just English- to try and narrow down personality adjectives to as few major categories as possible. The new studies conducted after the 1980s were conducted in many different languages, including Dutch, French, Korean, Polish, Croatian, Filipino, Greek, German, Italian, Hungarian, and Turkish. This greatly broadened analysis revealed that there was another major category to personality, one which had, in the NEO-PI model, previously been incorporated in both Emotionality and Agreeableness but which didn’t fit neatly into either: Honesty-Humility.

For each of the six HEXACO factors, there are four ‘facets’ which best encapsulate the essence of each factor. There are also various personality-descriptive adjectives that typically belong to each factor. These are as follows (list taken from Wikipedia):

**Honesty-Humility (H):**

Facets: Sincerity, Fairness, Greed Avoidance, Modesty

Adjectives: {Sincere, honest, faithful, loyal, modest/unassuming} versus {sly, deceitful, greedy, pretentious, hypocritical, boastful, pompous}

**Emotionality (E):**

Facets: Fearfulness, Anxiety, Dependence, Sentimentality

Adjectives: {Emotional, oversensitive, sentimental, fearful, anxious, vulnerable} versus {brave, tough, independent, self-assured, stable}

**Extraversion (X):**

Facets: Social Self-Esteem, Social Boldness, Sociability, Liveliness

Adjectives: {Outgoing, lively, extraverted, sociable, talkative, cheerful, active} versus {shy, passive, withdrawn, introverted, quiet, reserved}

**Agreeableness (A):**

Facets: Forgivingness, Gentleness, Flexibility, Patience

Adjectives: {patient, tolerant, peaceful, mild, agreeable, lenient, gentle} versus {ill-tempered, quarrelsome, stubborn, choleric}

**Conscientiousness (C):**

Facets: Organization, Diligence, Perfectionism, Prudence

Adjectives: {organized, disciplined, diligent, careful, thorough, precise} versus {sloppy, negligent, reckless, lazy, irresponsible, absent-minded}

**Openness to Experience (O):**

Facets: Aesthetic Appreciation, Inquisitiveness, Creativity, Unconventionality

Adjectives: {intellectual, creative, unconventional, innovative, ironic} versus {shallow, unimaginative, conventional}

The HEXACO Model also has a 25th facet: Altruism. This additional facet represents a blend of various factors: Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, and Agreeableness. It is not included in this document because the moral alignment of each character is included separately.

Some of the HEXACO categories contain personality-descriptive adjectives that don’t quite group together so neatly. For example, the Emotionality factor has the adjectives brave and stable. This means that a character who has low Emotionality in one respect (e.g. Armageddon is very brave) also simultaneously can have high Emotionality in another respect (e.g. Armageddon is not emotionally stable). Similarly, if a character is both very self-confident but not very talkative, where do they rank on Extraversion?

To deal with this issue, I initially considered splitting some of the six HEXACO factors. For example, I would split Extraversion into Confidence and Sociability, and split Emotionality into Vulnerability and Stability. I decided against that because I thought that the HEXACO model was more defined and concrete. Although I could define my own personality factors and give them their own facets and adjectives, I preferred to use externally defined categories recognisable universally and with a scientific backing. Besides, the HEXACO categories are broad by design: if you make them more specific, they cease to be overarching personality factors and become specific traits.

Instead, I used an averages system. For example, the Sword of Semidon scores high on Extraversion. This is because he scores Extremely High on Social Self-Esteem and Social Boldness, but Low on Sociability and Liveliness. The ‘average’ of all these levels would be High. Looking at the adjectives for Extraversion instead of the facets and rating each of them, the ‘average’ would also be High. To use another example, Armageddon scores a ‘Low’ on Emotionality. This is because he scores Extremely High on Bravery, Toughness, Independence, and Self-Assurance, but also Very Low on Stability.

Characters’ personalities are judged on the HEXACO Model of Personality but also on my own metric, ‘Merit’. The facets for Merit would be Affinity, Competence, Talent, and Skill, but Merit isn’t a personality factor as such and it’s more specific than the six HEXACO factors. It doesn’t correspond to physical ability but rather mental, and it doesn’t include emotional intelligence or wisdom. It’s also not about being ‘book-smart’ but rather possessing ability in any of the things that are relevant to the narrative: statesmanship, generalship, politics, medicine/surgery, engineering, etc. It’s a *practical* kind of ability.

It's also worth noting that having ‘Average’ or ‘Low’ Merit does not mean a character is stupid or untalented. Elphensbane, for example, possesses a Low Merit score- he’s not unintelligent or incompetent at all, it’s just that he lacks any natural flair/affinity for the kind of skills that are useful in this narrative (e.g. governing, generalship, etc). Conversely, the Juggernaught has a Merit score of Extremely High. This doesn’t mean he’s a genius or can calculate Pi to fifty decimal places, but rather that he’s an extremely skilled general and wartime ruler. Oceanfire has a High Merit score: as a scholar, she’d undoubtedly be more book-smart/educated than many other characters, but the Merit score is a measure of her affinity for engineering and skill at that practical field.

### Psychopathology

#### Definition and Diagnosis

In modern medical parlance, a pathology is anything abnormal with the body. It could be a disease, congenital defect, condition: any deviation from standard, healthy physiology. The term psychopathology applies to abnormalities in the mind. These include mental illnesses, personality disorders, etc. However, are no two discrete categories of ‘normal’/’abnormal’, but rather a massive spectrum of psychopathology, with every individual standing at a different place. The lines at which we define mild/moderate/severe psychopathology are simply superimposed on this spectrum.

A recent theory, now widely supported, by Benjamin Lahey et al proposes that there is a general ‘psychopathology factor’ (a ‘p factor’) that all individuals possess to a different magnitude. Higher p factors are correlated with higher predisposition to mental illness, greater number of psychiatric diagnoses, and a greater incidence of developmental issues. The p factor for an individual is generally stable throughout life (although pivotal, traumatic events can change this) and ‘exists of a continuum of severity and chronicity.’ In the context of this series, the character who would have the lowest p factor is the Hammer of Ilyzor, whilst conversely the Revenant would have the highest p factor.

The p factor is a single, dimensional factor which influences whether psychopathological symptoms in general are present or absent. However, even with this new and logical conception of psychopathological propensity, actually defining the presence of psychopathology can be difficult. Often, it can be arbitrary: one can meet all the personality requirements for psychopathy, for example, but not to the extent required for a psychopathy diagnosis to be made. The line at which modern psychiatry denotes ‘psychopathology’ is arbitrary, and because psychopathology exists as a spectrum, those who fall just short of that arbitrary line can still be significantly deviant from the normal psyche.

This fact, when applied to the characters of this series, means that characters who wouldn’t meet formal diagnostic criteria for (e.g.) psychopathy can still display psychopathic traits to an abnormal extent. Remember that psychopathy is by definition a *personality trait*, so an individual can display that personality trait to an extent where the individual is noticeably malign but not to the extent where a modern clinician would display psychopathy.

A beneficial way of demonstrating this is by the presence of ‘callous-unemotional traits’ (CU). CU is a grouping of traits in modern psychiatry defined by persistent disregard for others, lack of empathy, and deficient experience of emotion. Whilst all psychopaths display CU, not all people who display CU are psychopaths. In this series, several characters display CU to different extents whilst not meeting modern diagnostic standards for psychopathy.

When determining the presence of psychopathology, clinicians often use ‘the four Ds’. Wikipedia describes these as follows:

**Deviance**: this term describes the idea that specific thoughts, behaviours and emotions are considered deviant when they are unacceptable or not common in society. Clinicians must, however, remember that minority groups are not always deemed deviant just because they may not have anything in common with other groups. Therefore, we define an individual's actions as deviant or abnormal when their behaviour is deemed unacceptable by the culture they belong to. However, many disorders have a relation between patterns of deviance and therefore need to be evaluated in a differential diagnostic model.

**Distress**: this term accounts for negative feelings by the individual with the disorder. They may feel deeply troubled and affected by their illness. Behaviours and feelings that cause distress to the individual or to others around him or her are considered abnormal, if the condition is upsetting to the person experiencing it. Distress is related to dysfunction by being a useful asset in accurately perceiving dysfunction in an individual's life. These two are not always related because an individual can be highly dysfunctional and at the same time experiencing minimal stress. The important characteristic of distress is not dysfunction, but rather the limit to which an individual is stressed by an issue.

**Dysfunction**: this term involves maladaptive behaviour that impairs the individual's ability to perform normal daily functions, such as getting ready for work in the morning, or driving a car. This maladaptive behaviour has to be a problem large enough to be considered a diagnosis. It's highly noted to look for dysfunction across an individual's life experience because there is a chance the dysfunction may appear in clear observable view and in places where it is less likely to appear. Such maladaptive behaviours prevent the individual from living a normal, healthy lifestyle. However, dysfunctional behaviour is not always caused by a disorder; it may be voluntary, such as engaging in a hunger strike.

**Danger:** this term involves dangerous or violent behaviour directed at the individual, or others in the environment. The two important characteristics of danger is, danger to self and danger to others. When diagnosing, there is a large vulnerability of danger in which there is some danger in each diagnosis and within these diagnoses there is a continuum of severity. An example of dangerous behaviour that may suggest a psychological disorder is engaging in suicidal activity. Behaviours and feelings that are potentially harmful to an individual or the individuals around them are seen as abnormal.

When dealing with psychopathology, there are more specialised and useful sources than Wikipedia, however. Two sources used often by clinicians are the DMS-5 and the ICD-11.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (i.e. the DSM-5) is a taxonomic tool for mental disorders, seeking to classify and group them, and a diagnostic tool, which gives various criteria for diagnosing mental disorders that clinicians can refer to. It is published by the American Psychiatric Association and is enormously influential, easily one of the most important publications on diagnosing mental disorders in circulation. It is referenced a few times as appropriate in this document.

The International Classification of Diseases, Eleventh Edition (i.e. the ICD-11) is published by the World Health Organisation and is also a taxonomic and diagnostic tool, though its scope exceeds that of the DSM-5 as it encompasses all diseases. It has many chapters on mental pathologies, however, and is also influential in psychiatry. Generally, this document references the DSM-5 more frequently and with higher priority than the ICD-11, but the ICD-11 is worth mentioning as a widely influential and beneficial psychiatric tool.

#### The Dark Triad & Tetrad

The dark triad is a psychological construct of three personality traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. It is named as such because of the malevolence of these three ‘dark’ traits.

These exist as traits, which individuals can possess to different extents, and as clinical psychopathologies which can be diagnosed in individuals who possess these traits to significant enough extents.

For example, a person can have a narcissistic temperament whilst not meeting the criteria for a formal diagnosis of narcissism. These traits exist as a spectrum, along which different individuals place differently. The term ‘dark factor’ (or ‘d-factor’) can be used to describe an individual’s predisposition to the dark triad and the dark triad’s prevalence in their personality.

The higher one’s d-factor, the greater the likelihood of the individual committing crimes, being diagnosed with dark triad disorders, causing distress to others, and creating severe problems for organisations. In terms of the HEXACO Model of Personality, high dark factor individuals correlate strongly with low honesty-humility and agreeableness. Some of the other dark triad traits are also correlated with low emotionality and conscientiousness. These individuals are also generally less satisfied with their lives, and ‘less likely to believe [that] they and others are good.’

The dark triad is a fairly recent invention in the field of psychology, proposed in 2002, but already researchers are proposing alterations. Several of these have suggested an expansion of the dark triad to include a fourth trait: sadism, the enjoyment of cruelty to others. Although sadism correlates with dark triad traits, it is not covered by any of them, and studies of high d-factor individuals have shown that only those who exhibit sadistic traits enjoy cruelty, with other high d-factor individuals deriving no pleasure from it.

Although high d-factor individuals correlate with harmful behaviour against living creatures, brutal and destructive amoral dispositions, and criminal recidivism, sadism predicts these traits more strongly than psychopathy. These are a proportion of the proposed evidence for expanding the dark triad, but more exists.

It is my opinion that this evidence is sufficient to transmute the construct of the dark triad to the dark tetrad, and this document uses the concept of the dark tetrad.

#### Psychopathy, or Anti-Social Personality Disorder

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD or APD) is one of the traits of the dark tetrad, and is a personality disorder ‘characterised by a long-term pattern of disregard of, or violation of, the rights of others’. It is colloquially known as psychopathy or sociopathy: the two are synonymous and in this document both refer to ASPD.

The difference between psychopathy and ASPD is a little blurry. The DSM-5 and ICD-11 both state that their use of the term ASPD can refer to or include psychopathy. In psychiatry, psychopathy is a subset of ASPD, and an individual can be said to have ‘ASPD with psychopathic features’, i.e. lack of anxiety and bold interpersonal style. However, ASPD and psychopathy are so minutely and unclearly different that even the DSM-5 acknowledges their interchangeability, and with the sanction of the American Psychiatric Association I use the two terms synonymously in this document.

Anti-social behaviour, the namesake of ASPD, is *not* a lack of desire to socialise, which is the inaccurate colloquial definition of anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour is actually behaviour that harms or disrupts other people and society as a whole. It is behaviour which ignores the feelings of others and violates their basic rights. Its antonym is prosocial behaviour, which ‘benefits other people or society as a whole’.

ASPD is, in essence, a pervasive and persistent pattern of anti-social behaviour. It involves impaired empathy, compassion, and remorse, impulsivity, recklessness, deception, CU, manipulation, and aggression. Individuals with ASPD often have a history of rule-breaking which typically involves deviation from the law and social norms.

Psychopaths often exhibit bold, disinhibited, and egotistical traits, often having extremely low/entirely absent nervousness and fear. This, coupled with superficial charm and inflated self-worth, means that psychopaths are often highly confident and socially dominant. They are impulsive, irresponsible, and have difficulty sustaining relationships and ties to people. They may drift from person to person, holding a financially parasitic lifestyle without real, long-term goals.

Not all individuals with ASPD exhibit the same symptoms, however. The aforementioned symptoms are typical of the disorder, but different psychopaths display a different selection of these symptoms. Many of these symptoms frequently occur together, however, and in 2001 a pair of researchers named Cooke and Michie identified three of these clusters. They proposed that psychopaths exhibit one of three interpersonal styles (i.e. primarily display one of three clusters of psychopathic traits). They are as follows:

**Arrogant and Deceitful Interpersonal Style**: impression management or superficial charm, inflated and grandiose sense of self-worth, pathological lying/deceit, and manipulation for personal gain.

**Deficient Affective Experience**: lack of remorse or guilt, shallow affect (coldness and unemotionality), callousness and lack of empathy, and failure to accept responsibility for own actions.

**Impulsive and Irresponsible Lifestyle**: impulsivity, sensation-seeking and risk-taking, irresponsible and unreliable behaviour, financially parasitic lifestyle and lack of realistic, long-term goals.

This is not to say that someone who displays a deficient affective experience won’t also score highly on pathological deceit or impulsivity, for example. It means that they score *most* highly, on average, on the deficient affective experience cluster of traits, to the point where their behaviour is best categorised as that category.

In the modern world, many of these traits are beneficial for success in many professional settings: examples include lack of nervousness, conscience, and an external façade of superficial charm. Indeed, the majority of psychopaths in the modern day are outside of prisons/asylums and occupy senior corporate and political positions.

Individuals with ASPD may achieve their objectives through a façade of superficial charm, or through violence/intimidation, or a mixture of both. They are often aggressive, violent, and with short tempers, reacting with violence with provocation or even mere frustration. Manipulation and deception are also essential in psychopathic realisation of objectives.

### Main Characters

#### Archangel

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Armageddon

Name:

Social Class: Slave

Moral Alignment: Violent Good, Malign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Arzachel

Name: Jan Arzachel

Social Class: Professional -> Imperial Court

Moral Alignment: Neutral Good, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Blackfish

Name: Assur Laqi

Social Class: Mighty Lord

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Brimstone Leopard

Name: Aval Kusaila

Social Class: Mighty Lord

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Malign -> Neutral Good, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Narrative Beginning

Kusaila starts the narrative as the Mighty Lord of the South. Due to the harshness of the Southern rainforests and the difficulty of survival there, the nature of Kusaila’s rule is notably different to that of other mighty lords. The loyalty commanded by Kusaila is much greater, and his rule is more absolute. Unlike in other domains, where the askary lords generally act against the mighty lord and seek to enhance their own power at his cost, the brutality of the rainforest requires cooperation, and the askary lords generally accept the will of Kusaila for the sake of collective survival. The price for the loyalty and absolutism of the Mighty Lord of the South is competence. In desperate times, the leader must truly be the most suited to lead, and Kusaila is indeed so.

Kusaila is tall, lean, muscular (with exceptional functional strength), and dark-skinned. He is an exceptional fighter, renowned as the swiftest and most agile fighter in the Empire. He is further known for his lightning-fast reflexes and climbing abilities, often traversing the rainforest entirely through the treetops.

Kusaila is notoriously stoic and laconic, saying little but to great effect. He has a personal dislike for the nuances and complexities of politics, particularly the imperial court, as well as excessive speech. He uses words almost entirely to simply issue commands or to make his will known. Kusaila is a man of deeds, not words. Ruthlessly pragmatic and efficient, he acts quickly and, when needed, brutally.

Kusaila does feel a sense of duty towards his people and his ultimate goal is their protection and prosperity. He believes that the best way to bring about the prosperity of the South is to secure its independence from Semidon. He views imperial government as merely a drain on the resources of the rainforest and a burden on its people. Though he begrudgingly respects previous Shurhaths like Ezana, he has a great contempt for what he views as a weak and decadent court and emperor. Thus, his ultimate goal is a war of secession, and total independence.

Kusaila does not glorify war but respects warriors and strength. The hardiness of his own people automatically earns his respect for them, but he has respect to any man in the Empire with martial skill, strength, or courage. He and the Sword of Semidon, though they have not met, both know of each other’s existence and regard each other with great interest and respect. Both are skilled, strong, and courageous.

Kusaila does not fear death and is willing to suffer it if it should guarantee the power of his levies. He also firmly believes, however, that his people will do best under his own leadership, and as such prioritises his life above those of others. Desensitised to violence and loss by the callousness of the rainforest, he does not value human life very highly, and though he cares about the lives of his levies and unfailingly honours them after death, the death of outsiders scarcely affects him.

##### Throughout the Narrative

#### The Broken Champion -> The Emerald Champion

Name: Santai Hazin

Social Class: Mighty Lord

Moral Alignment: Neutral Good, Benign

##### Personality

NB: When not inhibited by depression

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Cataclysm

Name: Istana Kusaila

Social Class: Mighty Lord Officer

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Malign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Chainbreaker

Name:

Social Class: Slave -> Jagal

Moral Alignment: Violent Good, Benevolent

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Philosophy

Chainbreaker wants to carve out from this world an entirely new one: a word of freedom, equality, and justice. The ultimate, most fundamental tenet in Chainbreaker’s philosophy, the one so core to his beliefs that it’s more of a gut feeling than a viewpoint, is that nobody deserves to be in chains.

All men, women, and children are existentially equal: there is no intrinsic difference between people written in the stars, no difference in theirs souls, no difference in the matter and spirit that comprises them. Therefore, they should be *treated* equally as well. Not only should there be no slavery, but there should be no social classes at all. Because all people are inherently equal, nobody should be consigned to greatness or squalor at birth.

In this new society, there would be no slavery but also no commonry, gentry, soldiery, aristocracy, or monarchy. All people would live in equality, sharing out the resources of the world according to everyone’s needs, not their birth. There would be no asthanes because every man would be a soldier, no aristocrats because every man would work for his own gain. Not a single person would leech off of the labour of others, and everyone would produce *something* of value.

To reach this utopian vision, the old society of bondage and hierarchy must be swept away entirely. It cannot be reformed or moulded, cannot even be worked with. It must be entirely burnt away, and the aristocracy- the men who

#### Crossbow

Name:

Social Class: Fisher -> Jagal

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Dawn Star

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord Daughter

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Egoistic, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Desert Ripper

Name:

Social Class: Mighty Lord

Moral Alignment: Violent Evil, Malign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Elphensbane

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord

Moral Alignment: Neutral Good, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Elphensbane is one of the most likeable and moral characters in the narrative. His

#### Firewalker

Name:

Social Class : Farmer -> Jagal -> Asthan

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Neutral, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Grizzly Falcon

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord

Moral Alignment: Neutral Good, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Hammer of Ilyzor

Name: Batay Sugata

Social Class: Semadai

Moral Alignment: Just Good, Benevolent

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Hydra of Semidon

Name: Scython Inikvar Sakai Ezana Axum

Social Class: Shurhath Scion -> Shurhath

Moral Alignment: Triple Neutral -> Violent Egoistic, Sociopathic

##### Personality: Narrative Beginning

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Personality: Narrative End

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Jackdaw

Name:

Social Class: Imperial Court [jester]

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Neutral, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Jasmine

Name: Jasmine

Social Class: Imperial Slave [concubine]

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Juggernaught

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord -> Mighty Lord

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Neutral, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The Juggernaught’s personality aligns with that of the oldest Shurhaths more than any other character. The first few Shurhaths were warlords who reached national supremacy by subjugating all of their rivals. To achieve such a feat requires a certain kind of personality, one that the Juggernaught possesses almost exactly.

Such a personality has virtues, faults, and all kinds of traits in between. On the one hand, the Juggernaught is honest, dignified, loyal, self-assured, disciplined, diligent, and thorough. On the other, he’s ruthless, blunt, cold, stubborn, ill-tempered, and- a fundamental quality of all Shurhaths- willing to perpetrate abundant violence and brutality to achieve his goals. He is inexorable, relentless, reserved, and introverted, and he’s one of the greatest generals and warlords in the continent.

The overarching aim which he has is to maximise order. His conception of order and chaos is informed by Ethigean theonomy, and although the Juggernaught has no time for or devotion to religion, the chaos/order duality resonates strongly with his personality. He despises recklessness, negligence, or irresponsibility in people, and he takes care to keep his home and affairs as organised as possible.

##### Philosophy

The Juggernaught’s overarching mission is to be a bringer of law and order, and it is around this concept that his philosophy revolves. He has some education in Ethigean theonomy, and the duality of chaos and order resonates strongly in him. He sees chaos all around him in Ethagis: pointless feuds and wars between selfish lords, idiots at court doing nothing, decentralisation and disorder. All of it he holds in contempt, thinking both that something needs to be done and that nobody seems to have the strength to do it.

Ultimately, the Juggernaught seeks power because he has a vision: the extinction of chaos. He envisions an empire wherein the nobility defer unquestioningly to the Shurhath, who roams the realm and keeps order just as the Shurhaths of old did. In a continent dominated by order, there would be no dissent or disunity amongst the nobility. They would all defer unfailingly to the Shurhath, who would prevent them from feuds, infighting, and tyranny. United, they could mobilise effectively and invade other countries, taking land and plunder in order to further increase the prosperity of the realm. The commonry would benefit from the increased prosperity and the lack of aristocratic tyranny.

He reveres the idea of *law*- not the actual legal process but the symbol of it. He sees it as an equaliser, something borne by both the commonry and the nobility. The law is a tool that can be used to keep the nobility pacified and constricted, but it must be properly enforced. The man responsible for doing so in the realm is the Shurhath, but none of the Shurhaths or claimants to the throne seem to be willing or able to do this. Hence, the Juggernaught sees himself as a necessary force, the rightful Shurhath and the only one who can do it properly.

In this political philosophy, the yoke of the law would not apply to the Shurhath: his will *is* the law. The law is a tool at the Shurhath’s disposal to force loyalty and obedience, which would centralise the realm and give it order. A Shurhath cannot do this properly if he is himself bound by the law and unable to act according to his- and the realm’s- needs. The Shurhath being above the law is a necessary exception which gives him the power to force the nobility to stand below it.

In order to bring about a realm of order, united by allegiance and deference to the Shurhath- which the Juggernaught sees only himself as capable of being- a temporary period of chaos is necessary. Seizing the throne would require warfare and bloodshed. The Juggernaught is not sensitive to brutality and cruelty: he doesn’t enjoy it, but he views it as necessary to cow enemies into submission. He shares a belief with the Shurhaths of old that an emperor’s nobility need to fear the emperor more than the enemy.

The Juggernaught has a strong understanding of administration and governance, demonstrated by his astute and innovative stewardship over his own domain. As part of his philosophy of hyper-ordered, law-based, and centralised government, he has many ideas on how to change the socio-political structure of the realm. The Juggernaught plans to change the feudal nature of national government to bureaucratic. If Shurhath, he would divide the Empire into various administrative units called ‘provinces’. Provinces would vary in size, but the principle would be to ensure that each individual province is relatively weak. Thus, whereas Nagal- a relatively underdeveloped region- could be split into two provinces that would each be quite large, the Delta would be split into three much smaller provinces.

Some provinces would be administered by the central government directly; the Crownlands and Delta would have to be as these contain the nation’s most developed regions. If the central government had the administrative capacity, parts of the Springlands would be overseen directly as well. Each province would be governed by three officials of equal seniority. A Provincial Commander would be responsible for mobilising and organising military levies; a Provincial Secretary would oversee provincial administration; and a Provincial Censor to oversee the other two, maintain intelligence networks, and conduct censuses. *None* of these positions would be hereditary, but rather filled by bureaucratic officials who could be hired or fired at will. Their remits would also very slightly overlap, putting them in perpetual conflict and thus preventing a united front against the Shurhath.

#### Kingsparrow

Name:

Social Class: Asthan

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Kriru Zaran

Name: Kriru Zaran [no sobriquet]

Social Class: Nazul Lord -> Mighty Lord Officer -> Imperial Officer [lieutenant to Soul Eater]

-> Servant to the Revenant

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Sociopathic

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Lazaria

Name:

Social Class: Slave

Moral Alignment: Neutral Good, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Lord Morningstar

Name: Atheas Hazael

Social Class: Askary Lord -> Shurhath

Moral Alignment: Neutral Egoistic, Neutral -> Violent Egoistic, Sociopathic

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Early Life

Hazael was born the son of Lord Gabbar, head of a once-powerful dynasty in the Autumnlands which has now been reduced to middling/moderate power. After his father died, he became the new Lord Gabbar.

##### Narrative Beginning

Hazael Gabbar, referred to by his sobriquet Lord Morningstar throughout the narrative, is one of the primary characters of the narrative and eventually becomes the main antagonist.

Hazael begins the narrative as an askary lord in the Autumnlands (the northernmost part of the empire) of middling power. The Gabbar dynasty is a cadet branch of the presently ruling dynasty, the Axum dynasty, giving Hazael a claim to the throne. Though the Gabbars were initially powerful lords, undoubtedly the ‘number 2’ power in the Autumnlands, paranoia has caused the Axum Shurhaths to weaken them, confiscating land and wealth whenever the slightest pretence arises. The weakening of the dynasty is due to fears that the Gabbars may one day claim the throne and, in fairness, those fears are right.

Hazael is an extremely ambitious, charismatic ruler who seeks power, prestige, and glory. Although as a lord he isn’t actually very powerful, his sheer force of personality earns him respect throughout the Autumnlands. He exudes an aura of respect and impressiveness that makes him a natural leader. Hazael isn’t charismatic in the sense of being funny, witty, or charming- there’s just something magnetic about his personality, something that makes people want to follow him. His [asthanes](#_Eskhagan), few though they are, are highly loyal to him because of this. Though his actual material power prevents these traits from shining, he is extraordinarily intelligent and a brilliant general. Nobody really knows this, though- everybody sort of assumes he’s a competent leader, but because he doesn’t actually wield much power his virtues don’t shine. Regardless, he has the *potential* to be great.

Hazael does care about the men sworn to him and wants to ensure their wellbeing. He thus has a genuinely warm relationship with his asthanes, contributing towards their loyalty to him. Although the warmth of this relationship is clouded by the fact that Hazael mainly sees his men as tools to advance his own purposes, he is still actually concerned over them. He is not desensitised to violence, with his only combat experience being repulsing bandits or robbers, and- though he tries to hide it- is fairly disturbed by gore and violence.

##### Throughout the Narrative

As soon as war breaks out in the realm, Hazael immediately begins scheming to become ruler of the Autumnlands, and begins building up a power base. As various bands of soldiers take advantage of the chaos and begin marauding round the realm looking for pillage, Hazael gains a reputation as a ‘people’s champion’ by protecting innocent villages. By giving inspiring speeches, he recruits many of the fighting men there to his own banner. He eventually stages a coup and becomes the Mighty Lord of the Autumnlands.

Hazael’s potential for greatness begins to shine as he becomes a real player in the war, staging campaign after campaign and winning battles against great odds. He becomes famed and feared for his excellent tactics, analogous to figures in our world like Julius Caesar or Napoleon. He severely punishes rape/murder committed by his own soldiers and makes a point of defending even highly remote villages from bandits and marauding soldiers, reinforcing his reputation as a people’s champion. He becomes known as Lord Morningstar, after a former Shurhath who lived centuries ago, renowned for his care of the commonry. His military doctrine focusses on extensive training and discipline, establishing a Roman-like ‘legion’ system. He is personally involved in the battles he fights (although admittedly not at the vanguard) and sustains an injury to his right eye, henceforth wearing an eye patch. Gaining momentum, he emerges as a genuine threat to the throne and more and more people flock to his banner as they think he’s genuinely going to rule. Lords across the realm eagerly join his forces, expecting a reward once Hazael becomes Shurhath.

The issue is that these grand campaigns and battles have a severe psychological toll on Hazael that nobody seems to notice, and that he doesn’t tell anyone so as not to undermine trust in him. The constant murder of conscripts and the torture of soldiers for information begins to cause serious feelings of guilt and self-loathing. As an involuntary defence mechanism, he becomes more withdrawn and detached, distancing himself from feelings of empathy and compassion. In many ways, Hazael’s emotional and mental deterioration mirrors that of [Lacaideon](#_The_Reefshark_->), but without a figure like Batay to help him, this deterioration simply continues, and takes a different turn.

He begins to become cold and angry, viewing his soldiers and pawns and enemy soldiers as mere obstacles. His drive for power intensifies into desperate megalomania. Though his soldiers don’t really see it, he begins to become more ruthless- for example, at one point he orders the execution of several prisoners in order to prove a point. Although he is not overtly malevolent at this stage, his decline continues unchecked- but largely unnoticed. It is in fact not even clear to the viewer, evident only with the benefit of hindsight. Episodes of ruthlessness are paved over with excuses that needs must, and both his men and the viewer forgive them.

After [Soul Eater’s](#_Soul_Eater) failed assault on the mountain of the [semadai](#_Semadai), Lord Morningstar senses weakness and makes his move on Semidon. Thousands die in the bloody assault, but Lord Morningstar heroically ascends the palace steps, bursts into the throne room, and violently executes Soul Eater with several strikes. Lord Morningstar becomes the new Shurhath of Ethagis- which begins his arc as the primary antagonist of the narrative.

Lord Morningstar finds that the life of a ruler- acting as administrator, steward, and legislator- is boring, however. Months of violent campaigning has left him almost addicted to the stimulation of combat, and without another outlet for his ruthlessness he begins fantasising about extreme tyranny, for example having thousands kowtow to him. Growing bored and irritable, and realising his position is still too precarious for absolutism, he decides to vent his energies into another campaign, this time going after [Sharkjaw](#_Sharkjaw). Sharkjaw is crucified, but his slaves are almost entirely just absorbed into the imperial court and remain in servitude.

Henceforth forced into being a peacetime ruler, Hazael becomes increasingly arbitrary and cruel. The imperial court gains an atmosphere of fearfulness and stress, and in the absence of a soldiering lifestyle to keep him fit, Hazael becomes gaunt and grey. As a person, he becomes increasingly bitter, hateful, cold, and- above all- paranoid. He sees usurpers and traitors at every turn and his ruthlessness begins to spill into execution of defiant courtiers. Paranoid over [Ironhand’s](#_The_Reefshark_->) growing strength in the Delta, he sends spies to watch him. When the [Black Phoenix](#_The_Black_Phoenix) sneaks away and helps Ironhand, giving the latter his characteristic prosthesis, Lord Morningstar becomes enraged, accusing Arzachel of working with a potential threat. In a move of arbitrary cruelty, he orders Arzachel to be executed. Arzachel’s popularity amongst the court makes this a highly disliked move, and whispers of discontent turn into open discussions over overthrowing the Shurhath for the first time.

As Hazael grows more arrogant in his rule, more convinced that any threats to his rule have been purged, he begins to unleash his brutality on the nobility. Noblemen are imprisoned, tortured, and executed on his orders every weak. Mad with paranoia, he murders everyone who he thinks is against him. Soon half the empire is against him. He gains a reputation among the commonry for being uncaring and brutal, giving them common ground with the nobility for hating Lord Morningstar. Many of the realm’s mighty and askary lords turn to Ironhand, upon whom is thrusted the responsibility for uniting these forces. Ironhand, driven by a moral sense of duty, accepts, and subsequently leads an assault on Semidon. Ironhand personally fights Hazael to the death, killing him with a punch from his iron prosthesis. He subsequently assumes the throne.

#### The Meteor

Name:

Social Class: Shurhath [foreign country]

Moral Alignment: Violent Neutral, Malign

##### Personality

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Oceanfire

Name:

Social Class: Alfazel [allaxionomer]

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Panthercaul

Name: Nebir Kusaila

Social Class: Mighty Lord Scion -> Mighty Lord

Moral Alignment: Violent Good, Neutral

##### Personality: Narrative Beginning

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Personality: Narrative End

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Purgatory

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord Officer -> Mighty Lord Officer -> Imperial Officer

Moral Alignment: Violent Evil, Sociopathic

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Red Mantis -> The Revenant

Name:

Social Class: Imperial Court -> Vagrant

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Malign -> Violent Evil, Sociopathic

##### Personality: The Red Mantis

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Personality: The Revenant

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Reefshark -> Indigo -> Ironhand

Name: Neverre Lacaideon

Social Class: Nazul Lord -> Semadai -> Shurhath

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Neutral, Neutral -> Violent Neutral, Sociopathic -> Neutral Good, Benevolent

##### Personality: Narrative Beginning

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Personality: Narrative End

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Early Life

Born the son of an asthan, Lacaideon was raised as a warrior as the levy of [Mighty Lord Assur](#_The_Blackfish). Unlike most asthanes, he had an unusual affinity for naval combat and was soon deployed in naval combat as an on-ship warrior. His skill in combat and personal likeability soon endeared him to Assur, who gradually increased his responsibilities over time. He gained wealth and prestige due to favour from Assur. Eventually, he was given captaincy of a ship and several jagals under his command, and made a nazul lord. This was more of an honorary attainment though: he ‘rules’ only over two small hamlets and several dozen farmers. Regardless, the appointment still moved him up the [Feyriatal](#_Feyriatal) social hierarchy, bestowing all the privileges and prestige of a lordship.

##### Narrative Beginning

Neverre Lacaideon, referred to by various sobriquets throughout the narrative, is one of the primary characters of the narrative and eventually becomes the main protagonist.

Lacaideon begins the narrative as the Reefshark, a nazul lord in the court of Mighty Lord Assur. Although Lacaideon has the social status and wealth of a lord, in practice he is effectively an asthan. He rules only over a few dozen farmers and his day-to-day life is occupied with his duties as a military leader under Assur’s service. Assur has given Lacaideon his own ship, over which he is captain, and command over his other sailors and ships. With these forces, Lacaideon is deployed in anti-piracy operations in the eastern seas of the continent and the River Antavar.

Lacaideon is an extremely adept fighter and is generally considered to be the most coordinated fighter on the continent, able to wield a cutlass in each hand and coordinate each cutlass’ movements independently. He has achieved this after a lifetime of combat experience and diligent training. In previous years, he fought partly as an infantryman but mainly as a sailor, and is able to competently pilot and manage a ship (although in his current role he delegates these responsibilities to focus on combat).

Lacaideon is extremely charismatic, gregarious, confident, and quick-witted. He is loved by his troops for his sense of humour, general joviality and energy, and likeability. Additionally, he is naturally intelligent and physically handsome. Lacaideon’s magnetically likeable personality, as well as the pleasure he derives from his employment, keep him generally happy and content with his position in life.

A lifetime of sailing and combat experience has left him fairly desensitised to violence, and is not morally troubled by killing or mutilation. The nature of his job means that Lacaideon often kills and wounds people. He usually accepts surrenders- if the surrendering party has done an especially large deal of harm to Lacaideon, his men, or Assur, he will kill them anyway. He is not above torture and will employ it for interrogations, but minimises its use. He personally disapproves of it and is disturbed when seeing its use.

The Reefshark is loyal to Assur and the two enjoy a good professional relationship and a fairly warm personal relationship, with conversations between the two often being amicable and humorous. Lacaideon is given a degree of autonomy in the way he conducts his anti-piracy operations, which is justified by his success.

##### Throughout the Narrative

At the beginning of the war, Lacaideon is immediately made admiral of all Assur’s naval forces- previously he had commanded around a dozen ships, most of which were smaller, riverine ships. The jump in responsibilities and burdens is a source of stress for Lacaideon, and he feels out of his depth and insecure in his role. Though desensitised to violence through his anti-piracy experiences, the sheer volume of killing and torture- as well as the fact that much of it is directed towards innocent conscripts- begins to get to Lacaideon.

Guilt, depression, and responsibility begin to erode his previous charisma and charm, turning him into a sombre and paranoid man. His relationship with Assur soon becomes resentful, with the latter forcing Lacaideon to keep fighting as Lacaideon is a competent commander. As his mental state begins to deteriorate from stress and guilt, he becomes cold and distant as an automatic defence mechanism.

As a way of coping with the mass-murder and torture he is forced to inflict as an admiral, he becomes disturbingly desensitised to violence and gore. His men begin to fear rather love him, and Lacaideon becomes cold and unnerving. He speaks only when necessary, and ceases to make jokes or light-hearted conversation. His men comment on how even his walk changes, moving from a confident stride to an unnerving, zombie-like shamble. He begins to eat less, and the combination of expressionlessness and gauntness deprives him of the handsomeness he once had. Many people comment on the eerie hollowness behind his eyes.

But although maintaining an outward façade of utter imperturbability, Lacaideon feels deeply internally conflicted. His psychological state is complex at this time: the worst thing he feels is emptiness, a real lack of any kind of emotion (these symptoms are consistent with those of depression). When killing in battle or torturing for information, this emptiness prevails and he is able to dissociate from himself and experience no emotion. Occasionally, however, he experiences severe episodes of guilt and self-loathing, longing for his former life back and idolising his old self.

Lacaideon is in the middle of an immense identity crisis. When inflicting violence, he often dissociates from reality and often feels as if he’s watching someone else act. He loses an idea of who he is, feeling like a sword or a spear in the hands of other men. He feels as if he’s somehow drowning, losing a sense of who he is and what he’s living for.

His increased brutality and emotionlessness make him a better soldier, however, and his capacity to inflict violence inspires fear and breaks enemy morale. Assur gains dominance over the eastern seas and the River Antavar, and soon his position is strengthened to the point where he feels powerful enough to attack Semidon. Just as the battle reaches its climax, however, and the Reefshark is leading ships into the interior of the city past its main defences, he experiences a traumatic episode of guilt and panics mid-battle, becoming unable to lead forces. The various sailors’ crews are disorganised and unable to coordinate properly, resulting in Semidon’s defenders rallying and attacking Lacaideon’s ship. In the middle of an episode, he is unable to defend himself properly and is wounded, falling into the River Antavar. Due to rising tides, the tidal pulse is stronger than the river flow, taking Lacaideon upstream. He is found by [Batay](#_The_Hammer_of), a member of the semadai.

Batay takes him to the home of the semadai where he begins to heal Lacaideon’s wounds. It becomes apparent that Batay’s motives are purely altruistic. He recognised the Reefshark and chose to personally treat him because he knows how influential the Reefshark is and believes he can help the greatest number of people if he can help people in power. Batay resolves to make Lacaideon a better, happier person for the benefit of those who he knows Lacaideon has power over. He also personally feels sorry for Lacaideon and wants to help him for his own sake. He decides to personally act as Lacaideon’s doctor, therapist, and mentor.

When Lacaideon regains consciousness, he considers leaving the mountain but realises he has nowhere he actually wants to go to. In a harrowing moment, he realises he would rather be dead, and decides not to fight to survive through his wounds, resigning himself to death. Batay begins to talk with him extensively, and Lacaideon decides to open up to Batay. He does this as he has decided to die and believes his time is limited anyway- and because he instinctively trusts and likes Batay. He explains his mental issues and feelings to Batay, who begins talking to him in ways that we would today recognise to be cognitive behavioural therapy. As a response to Lacaideon’s deep identity crisis, Batay advises that he adopt a new name and start afresh. Not knowing what to call himself, Batay suggests simply adopting the name ‘Indigo’, after the colour of Lacaideon’s armour. Lacaideon accepts.

Indigo extensively talks with Batay, and begins to heal mentally as well as physically. Batay’s delivery of what is effectively therapy begins to have a positive impact on Indigo over the following months. He begins to show emotion for the first time in a long time- albeit negative emotions like guilt, hatred, and anger. Batay takes this as a positive sign though, noting that showing negative emotion is better than emptiness. He also sees minor signs of genuine emotional recovery- for example, Indigo stopping to smell some flowers or appreciate the beauty of the mountain views. When Indigo recovers physically enough to viably leave the mountain, Batay sees him leaving and changes his mind: Indigo realises from their conversation that, even though he is still miserable, he is happier than he’s been for months. He decides to stay.

Indigo eventually recovers physically enough to resume combat training, and proposes sparring with Batay. He finds, to his surprise, that Batay is an extraordinary fighter, and he changes Indigo’s views on combat, reminding him that training, technique, and self-discipline make a good fighter, not wits and cutlasses. Batay continues to act as Indigo’s mentor, both for combat and emotional wellbeing, changing the latter’s worldviews and beliefs. Indigo begins to genuinely look up to Batay, and over the following months begins to adopt aspects of the latter’s moral code. Batay’s teachings and influence begins to restore Indigo’s senses of compassion and empathy, and Indigo begins to genuinely care about doing the right thing. Over time, Indigo begins to recover his previous fighting abilities as his wounds heal and his training gains pace. He also makes significant progress in terms of his mental health.

After nine months, Indigo finally reaches a state of mental stability. Although he is still a very solemn, sombre person, he is no longer violent, and is highly emotionally mature. He enjoys solitude and is no longer a charming extrovert, but is still a civil, pleasant person to be around. He has a strong moral compass and is deeply personally loyal to Batay, revering him. At the end of the nine months, Indigo finally makes a joke again, which Batay takes as a sign of Indigo’s mental healing.

At this time, the semadai are engaged in war with [Soul Eater](#_Soul_Eater), who stages a vast attack on their mountain home. The [Revenant](#_The_Red_Mantis) bears a personal grudge against Batay and has joined the attack for the purposes of revenge. Whilst Indigo is distracted, the Revenant fights and kills Batay, and escapes before Indigo can kill him. Soul Eater’s attack on the mountain is unsuccessful, largely a result of his personal hatred rather than strategic thinking, and [Lord Morningstar](#_Lord_Morningstar) redoubles his attacks on the throne, eventually seizing it.

Indigo is utterly enraged by the Revenant’s murder of Batay and vows revenge. He goes to the Delta and rallies the inhabitants against the Revenant, who associate the Revenant with Soul Eater and the latter’s soldiers raping and pillaging there. The [Black Phoenix](#_The_Black_Phoenix), who personally despises the Revenant, is inspired by Indigo and agrees to help. He manages to amass around a hundred sailors and a small detachment of ships. He cruises up and down the River Antavar, trying to find the Revenant- who deliberately tracks Indigo down as he wants to see the latter’s misery.

The Revenant is travelling with his own band of ruthless outlaws, who maraud the realm raping and pillaging. Indigo and the Revenant have a climactic battle. Although Indigo stabs the latter several times, the former doesn’t die, and to kill him Indigo holds his head in a fire until the Revenant is painfully killed. The heat from the fire causes Indigo’s right hand to burn away, and the Black Phoenix replaces it with an iron hand. Indigo, believing his period of identity crisis and personal change is over, changes his sobriquet to Ironhand, believing that his killing of the Revenant has marked a change in his development. It has.

By this point, Ironhand becomes the main protagonist of the narrative, focussed on as a foil to Lord Morningstar, who becomes the main antagonist. Lord Morningstar’s descent into tyranny, meanwhile, is earning him many enemies amongst the nobility. Ironhand, imbued with a strong moral compass from Batay- who he still deeply mourns- also considers rebellion against Lord Morningstar, who is becoming rapidly more violent and arbitrary. Ironhand eventually begins to meet with the mighty lords of the realm and unites them all through the common purpose of overthrowing Lord Morningstar, convincing them to unite. The mighty lords cannot decide who amongst them will assume the throne- Ironhand is chosen as a compromise that is acceptable to all. He is also chosen due to his sheer force of personality, respected by all the mighty lords as a solemn, intimidating person and terrifyingly adept fighter. He is also begrudgingly accepted as a genuinely competent ruler and general. He is chosen to lead the military campaigns against Lord Morningstar.

Ironhand is a talented general whose emotional development under Batay has made him responsible enough for the duty. He often chooses to speak to enemy soldiers before fighting them, in several instances convincing conscripts to lay down their weapons and flee or to switch sides. He executes soldiers who commit rape or murder and insists on minimising casualties in warfare by accepting surrenders and trying to negotiate with enemy contingents. These actions win him the loyalty of more and more people, who enlarge his forces to the point where he feels comfortable attacking Semidon.

In a climactic final battle, Ironhand and his men storm the gates of Semidon, and Ironhand and Lord Morningstar personally fight to the death. Lord Morningstar at one point feigns surrender and, as Ironhand deliberates what to do, tries to slice off his right hand. Due to it being a metal prosthesis, this fails, and Ironhand kills Lord Morningstar by punching him in the temple with that same hand. Ironhand assumes the throne and ushers in a period of benevolent rule, ending the narrative there.

##### Epilogue

Ironhand’s actions drive the epilogue of the narrative, which is detailed [here](#_Epilogue).

#### Sharkjaw

Name: Peskhagen Usur Kacharias

Social Class: Nazul Lord [slavemonger]

Moral Alignment: Violent Evil, Sociopathic

##### Appearance

Sharkjaw is a tall, broad male with unnaturally pallid skin due to aplastic anaemia. Due to his anaemia, he is highly lethargic and static, often remaining in the exact same pose with the exact expression for periods of time that unnerve people who see him. He also avoids physical exertion and unnecessary movement/muscle contraction.

Though he has the physique to be proficient in physical violence, these factors mean that he does not himself engage in violence, and achieves his aims by means of his levies/servants/slaves doing violence on his behalf. His physique is still intimidating due to its size and unnatural pallor, however, and he often uses physical techniques (such as proximity) to intimidate others.

His eyes have unnaturally large irises due to a minor genetic mutation, which are jet black. From a distance and in low light, it can appear as if he lacks sclerae and has black voids for eyes. His smile is unusually wide and he can produce a shark-like grin which chills and disorients people who see it. His sobriquet comes from the unique shark aspect of his grin, and how it has an unnerving, predatory appearance.

Although not a warrior, Sharkjaw has the wealth to purchase a suit of armour, which he has invested a lot of wealth into as armour serves as a status symbol and a symbol of nobility. As a merchant by birth who purchased his lordship from the Shurhath, he wants to emphasise his noble position by dressing martially, thus emulating the archetypal lord (who is a warrior and a general). He has a very dark blue-black coat of armour with silver ornamentation, with iridescent black opal accompanying the silver in certain parts for decorative purposes.

##### Background

Sharkjaw is a merchant by birth, born a commoner to a wealthy slavemongering family who achieved considerable wealth by the trade. Sharkjaw himself became a slavemonger, murdering his father to inherit his trade, and due to his vast competence he reached new heights of wealth and influence. Though he soon wielded great socioeconomic influence, accumulating land and power, under the system of Feyriatal he was still a merchant and thus a commoner. Hence, legally and politically he was still highly impotent, a fact which did not accurately reflect the real magnitude of his influence yet still considerably hindered him.

He thus directly purchased from the Shurhath the title of nazul lord and a formal declaration of direct vassalage to the monarchy. Overnight, his legal and political status changed completely, although the nobility still disdains him to this day as a commoner who weaselled his way into their ranks. Nonetheless, they are still respectful to Sharkjaw simply because of the power and land he has accumulated.

Though politico-legally he has the status of a nazul lord, unable to ascend the ranks of Feyriatal due to his common birth, the actual extent of his domains makes him equivalent to a higher-level askary lord in power. Due to his wealth and his market share of the Ethigean slave trade, he wields arguably as much influence as a mighty lord.

Along with the mighty lords and a handful of askary lords, he exerts a high level of influence within the realm that gives him a hand in determining its fate. Though he does not wish to be Shurhath and stays out of imperial politics, he is undoubtedly a player in the politics of the empire as a whole, though his influence is subtle and rarely comprehended/appreciated by other political players.

Sharkjaw plays a kind of masterminding role in the narrative, having gradually sown the seeds of a great continent-wide war before the start of the narrative. Such a war greatly multiplies the supply and demand of slaves, thus multiplying Sharkjaw’s own power, wealth, and influence. Hence, he pulls various strings before and during the narrative to hasten the onset/prolong the duration of war. He uses his wealth, slaves, influence, and connections to subtly do this, pulling the strings behind the scenes and acting as a pervasive but unseen force.

He does not want his puppeteer role to be recognised and thus acts covertly, discreetly shifting around money and resources as befits him. Before the start of the narrative he continually acts to weaken the Dragonfly and decentralise the realm, thus ensuring that upon his death his son’s succession would be contested. During the Ethigean war, he works to keep Ethagis in a constant state of instability and chaos, weakening the powerful and supporting the weak, maintaining a constant equilibrium between the different claimants to the throne.

##### Personality

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Sharkjaw is wholly malevolent and is a clinical psychopath and Machiavellian. He is devoid of empathy, remorse, or conscience, which is coupled with a pathological lack of fear, anxiety, or emotionality. He is fundamentally cold and calculating, acting as a being of pure logic without emotion or morality.

He is extremely proficient at achieving his aims, which are the accumulation of wealth, land, and power. At every instant, he is calculating the optimum decision to make, incorporating them into his long-term plan. In these multiple calculations, morality is entirely absent as a factor. Everyone who knows Sharkjaw would call him immoral, but in reality he is amoral. Functionally, the two concepts of immorality and amorality are the same, but they are slightly different.

Immorality is the deliberate violation of moral rules with the full comprehension of what those moral rules are, whereas amorality is when the individual exists entirely out of the concept of morality. Sharkjaw is amoral because he does not *understand* morality: having never experienced empathy or compassion, he is simply not neurologically equipped to experience morality. He does not have the capacity for morality, and whilst he understands the concept, it is alien to his own experience.

Hence, morality does not factor into any of Sharkjaw’s decisions. He exists as a being of pure, cold logic, making wholly rational decisions untampered by concern for human rights or feelings. To achieve his aims, manipulation, deception, intimidation, and compulsion are acceptable if they are effective. Sharkjaw exists as a testament to the fact that pure logic, when untampered by emotion, does not create a good person.

It does create a competent person, and Sharkjaw is extremely skilled at what he does. In psychology, there are two types of empathy: affective empathy, wherein a person emotionally feels what another is feeling, and cognitive empathy, wherein a person rationally understands what another is feeling. Sharkjaw is extremely deficient in the former and extremely proficient in the latter (this is highly typical of a psychopathic psyche).

Sharkjaw is immensely proficient in determining how a person is feeling, how emotionally vulnerable they are, and how to manipulate these two variables. Sharkjaw has a powerful ability to make others he speaks to vulnerable and uncomfortable: indeed, his personality has a great and subtle force that compels others to his will. His total self-confidence, emotional invulnerability, ability to control a situation and exert dominance, and his various unnerving mannerisms allow him to exert considerable influence on others.

These mannerisms include a habit of never breaking eye contact; remaining unnaturally stationary and maintaining the exact same pose and expression for prolonged periods of time; and a tendency to grin at people and to maintain the shark-like grin for unnatural periods of time. People who come into contact with him feel uncomfortable and vulnerable, as if in the presence of a kind of predator. The only person in the narrative who does not experience this effect is Purgatory, as she possesses a d-factor as high as Sharkjaw and the same suppression of anxiety/vulnerability.

##### Psychology

Sharkjaw displays two of the four traits of the dark tetrad, psychopathy and Machiavellianism, though he exhibits Machiavellian traits to a far greater extent.

In terms of psychopathy, Sharkjaw displays a specific interpersonal style of psychopathy: deficient affective, although he also displays pathological levels of dishonesty and deceit, and is extremely manipulative for personal gain. Characteristics of deficient affective psychopathy include a lack of empathy, remorse, and conscience, as well as a cold affect of callousness and unemotionality.

Sharkjaw does not utilise an external façade of superficial charm to manipulate others, and operates through intimidation and violence, although he never carries out the latter by his own hand. Unlike many psychopaths, Sharkjaw does *not* exhibit impulsivity or irresponsibility. He is in fact highly conscientious, and acts purely rationally in his decisions. He has definite, long-term goals and concrete mechanics for realising them.

The DSM-5 lists seven traits for ASPD, of which a psychopathic individual would exhibit three. The traits are as follows:

1. Failure to conform to social norms and laws, indicated by repeatedly doing illegal activities.
2. Deceitfulness, indicated by continuously lying, using aliases, or conning others for personal gain and pleasure.
3. Exhibiting impulsivity or failing to plan ahead.
4. Irritability and aggressiveness, indicated by repeatedly getting into fights or physically assaulting others.
5. Reckless behaviors that disregard the safety of others.
6. Irresponsibility, indicated by repeatedly failing to consistently work or honor financial obligations.
7. Lack of remorse after hurting or mistreating another person.

Of these, Sharkjaw exhibits certain 1), 2), 5), and 7). In terms of criterion 1), Sharkjaw continually violates social norms of morality and standard behaviour, often described as immoral and uncomfortable to be around. He breaks various laws, for example enslaving Ethigeans in peacetime. In terms of criterion 5), whilst Sharkjaw would not endanger himself and highly regards his own safety, he sees others as means to an end and will not hesitate to endanger their safety in order to save money, time, or effort.

Whilst Sharkjaw exhibits certain psychopathic traits to a high extent, he also exhibits other psychopathic traits to a low extent. Thus, whilst he definitely meets criteria for a psychopathic diagnosis, he isn’t at the extreme of the spectrum of psychopathic behaviour, because he only displays 4/7 psychopathic criteria.

Sharkjaw much more fully displays Machiavellianism. Psychopathy and Machiavellianism of course overlap in many areas: both involve impaired empathy, high callousness, and high manipulativeness. The two traits are different in their essence, however. Machiavellianism involves three characteristics:

**Antagonism**: manipulativeness, cynicism, selfishness, callousness, and arrogance.

**Planfulness**: deliberation and orderliness.

**Agency**: achievement-striving, assertiveness, self-confidence, emotional invulnerability, activity and competence.

Sharkjaw displays every single one of these traits to their full extent and is a textbook Machiavellian. On the spectrum of Machiavellian psyche, Sharkjaw is at the extreme. His motives are wealth and power and he achieves these motives by whatever means appear most effective to him: morality is not a concern to him. Sharkjaw does not violate morality and the rights of others because he gains an inherent pleasure from doing so, he simply lacks any inhibition for doing so in order to achieve his goals.

##### Philosophy

##### Death

#### Shadowbound

Name:

Social Class: Jagal [assassin]

Moral Alignment: Violent Neutral, Malign

##### Personality

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Philosophy

Shadowbound does not possess a personal philosophy or any ideals at all. He is not motivated by any overarching, guiding mission and does not have a long-term purpose of existence. In his repudiation of any form of ideals or philosophy Shadowbound sacrifices some of his humanity, and- philosophically- has regressed to the status of an animal. He hunts because it is simply all he knows to do. He sees himself (and acts) as a predator hunting prey, who does so because- like a predatory animal in the wild- that is the sole function of his existence. Shadowbound is an assassin because that is his ecological niche.

Shadowbound is not a sadist: he does not take any pleasure in cruelty, and the actual acts of inflicting pain or death do not give him any satisfaction. It is the *significance* of those acts- i.e. a hunt successfully completed- that he enjoys. In a wider sense, Shadowbound’s primary source of pleasure (and the reason he deems life worth living) is the thrill of the hunt. This pleasure has an existential nature: he believes that as an organism he is *designed* to hunt, that humans are natural predators and to act on these aims is to achieve true happiness.

It is to achieve the existential joy of carrying out one’s function. Note that Shadowbound does not see himself as having a *purpose*, as this is a distinctly human concept. Animals do not have a ‘purpose’, they simply fulfil their evolutionary function of acquiring calories and reproducing. Shadowbound lacks the ideals or personal philosophy to have a purpose in life. He is guided by his own function: although he does not need to be an assassin to acquire calories, humans are still predators by nature, and Shadowbound lives to fulfil his evolutionary function of predation. Shadowbound believes that the best way to achieve happiness is to dedicate his life to this primal function.

This is a misguided view on happiness, of course. Whilst the thrill of the hunt is significant (as is the satisfaction of feeling like one is fulfilling one’s function), it is temporary. When Shadowbound is not on a mission, he feels empty. It’s not that he feels depressed or miserable, he simply doesn’t feel anything at all. The immense concentrations of adrenaline he feels whilst on a hunt makes non-adrenergic life seem completely grey and bland by comparison. There’s also the fact that Shadowbound does not live for another purpose other than to hunt, and so when he isn’t hunting his life is devoid of any meaning or sources of other contentment.

The fact that Shadowbound bases his reason for existence on the predation of others precludes him from being a moral person, but Shadowbound does not consider himself immoral but *amoral*. Rather than recognising himself as violating morality, he believes himself to exist out of its bounds altogether. A predatory animal is not moral or immoral, it simply *is*. Although some animals can experience empathy and do demonstrate altruism, none of them are sophisticated enough to recognise the concept of ‘morality’ in the way humans do. Shadowbound’s conscience operates in the exact same way.

His behaviour does to an extent reflect this. Like a predatory animal, he hunts others, but the acts of inflicting injury or death are not intrinsically pleasurable to him. He does not inflict pain or fear without cause and does not enjoy the fear of others. He does not condemn or approve of all the injustices in the world, he simply acknowledges their existence. The existence of things like slavery or oppression simply does not hold any emotional valence to him. If he was contracted to or against a slaver, he would do it without a second thought.

It’s not that Shadowbound is motivated by money; he actually doesn’t care much for wealth or possessions. It’s just that he needs contracts to give him purpose. Without a contract- without a specific prey to hunt, without a *target*- Shadowbound is a predator without a victim, and thus a man without purpose. The more expensive the contract, the more priority it has in Shadowbound’s mind. The money isn’t really relevant to him, he just uses it as a mechanism to determine which contracts have highest priority.

##### Character Progression

Shadowbound’s psychology and philosophy don’t fundamentally change throughout the narrative, although he does become somewhat of a more sympathetic character due to his dynamic with Shuriken. He initially only accepts Shuriken’s company due to the advantage she can offer him, but even this reason is dubious at best. Shadowbound doesn’t require external help to fulfil his aims, and although Shuriken’s knowledge could help him make assassinations *sooner*, Shadowbound enjoys the process of assassination itself. In summary, there is no logical reason why Shadowbound would ‘take on’ Shuriken.

Shadowbound never discusses it explicitly, but it’s likely that on a subconscious level, Shadowbound isn’t really fulfilled and wants something more out of life. Although Shadowbound has allowed himself to regress philosophically to the status of an animal, he cannot escape his ultimate humanity. He can deny it- refusing to accept on a conscious level his need for companionship- but he cannot escape that need.

Shadowbound and Shuriken eventually develop something almost like a father-daughter dynamic. Shadowbound lacks the emotional warmth or even the basic humanity for this dynamic to be a *human* father-daughter dynamic. However, the dynamic does resemble a father-daughter dynamic between a predatory animal and their cub. The relationship between them is, fundamentally, one of tutelage rather than affection. However Shadowbound does subconsciously begin to verge on this. Actual affection is somewhat out of his wheelhouse, but he does start to care for Shuriken’s wellbeing.

Eventually, these feelings become conscious, and he finally acknowledges his inescapable desire for companionship. Although he doesn’t *want* to have this desire, it is encoded into his DNA, and though he struggles for some time to come to terms with this desire, he eventually accepts it. He begins, for the first time, to seriously consider who he is and why he lives. For a brief stretch of time, he stops hunting, and tries to reconcile his human need for companionship with his previous, predatory self-conception of himself.

Finally, he decides that he doesn’t need any one side of him to override the other. He determines that those two sides of him- companionable and predatory- can co-exist. Like a predator with a cub, he determines that accepting Shuriken as his companion does not suppress his identity, but rather passes it on. Although his nature precludes him from being warm or loving, he is still able to admit to himself that he at least wants her to be free from injury or death, and that he enjoys having her around.

#### Shuriken

Name:

Social Class: Slave -> Jagal [assassin]

Moral Alignment: Violent Neutral, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Soul Eater

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord -> Mighty Lord -> Shurhath

Moral Alignment: Violent Evil, Sociopathic

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Srigo

Name: Srigo [no sobriquet]

Social Class: Farmer

Moral Alignment: Double Neutral, Benign

Srigo is a conscript farmer sixteen years of age- a year above the minimum conscription age. He is selected to be Firewalker’s retinue at random by a sergeant. Unlike his liege, Srigo has absolutely no desire for glory nor any obsession with valour/fame. He does not view war in any positive light and has no natural affinity for it. He is gentle, genuinely good-natured, humble, and timid. Initially mistrustful of Firewalker, he appreciates the latter training him in combat, and Firewalker eventually becomes a sort of father figure to him. As he is increasingly exposed to warfare and is trained by Firewalker in the basic techniques of fighting and survival, he becomes less frightened and more self-confident. Eventually, due to his experience, he becomes an informal leader of his squad. As a contrast to his initial fear of any conflict or risk of injury, his last words are exhorting his men to follow him on a charge. He charges into enemy infantry and kills a few before dying by being stabbed in the thorax.

##### Personality: Narrative Beginning

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Personality: Narrative End

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Sword of Semidon

Name: Cyzinian Rath

Social Class: Askary Lord

Moral Alignment: Lawful Neutral, Malign -> Just Good, Benign

##### Appearance

Cyzinian is an extremely tall and muscular man, and is correctly considered by his contemporaries to be the strongest man in Ethagis- and one of the greatest fighters living. His figure is looming, imposing, and intimidating, and he is the tallest character in the narrative. His skin colour is a Type IV on the Fitzpatrick scale and he keeps himself clean-shaven. Cyzinian has a highly prominent brow ridge, giving him the expression of an eternal, stoic frown, a very strong jaw, and short black hair.

Cyzinian’s status as a favoured askary lord gives him access to great wealth, a sizeable amount of which he has spent on his suit of armour. It is one of the heaviest sets of armour in all of Ethagis, a thick green suit of lamellar armour with white decorations. The helmet is horned with white ivory, engraved and filled in with black opal. Cyzinian’s signature weapon is a greatsword, a normally two-handed behemoth of a weapon which he has the strength to swing with only a single hand.

Cyzinian is one of the few aristocrats who keeps the Old Ways, a set of old traditions amongst noblemen, and the scope of these traditions include Cyzinian’s appearance. He is rarely seen without his armour: he identifies himself as a martial man and wearing his armour reinforces this idea to others. He takes great pride in his suit and believes that all noblemen, as warriors and generals, should be seen by others in their armour, as a means of communicating their martial prowess and role.

As a man who keeps the Old Ways, he also engages in the ritualistic tattooing of his back with intimidating images. This tradition, called Ulaki, originated centuries ago as a form of permanent war paint to intimidate enemies, and soon became a symbol of status and fearsomeness. Cyzinian is extremely proud of his tattoos and displays them when appropriate.

##### Background

Cyzinian was born to Lord Rath, a powerful askary lord in the Springlands. The Rath dynasty is a house of great age and prestige, its ancestors respected warriors who at times rose to great renown. They favoured Lord Sunfire’s rise to power and have since been favoured by the ruling Axum dynasty, receiving various honours and titles. The Dragonfly accepted Cyzinian as his personal bodyguard as a result of Lord Rath’s favour with the Shurhath.

Lord Rath was one of the few men in the realm who still kept the Old Ways, a series of aristocratic traditions from many centuries ago. These traditions are both ideological and practical: ideologically, those who keep the Old Ways believe that aristocrats should be warriors and generals, leading martially, with dignity and valour.

They are ultra-conservatives who prize honour, dynastic reputation, loyalty/obedience to one’s liege, and rigid social hierarchy. They tend to disdain politics, religion, and espionage, and admire military glory and prowess. Practically, noblemen who keep the Old Ways train militarily every day and engage in the ritualistic tattooing of their back with intimidating images. This tattooing tradition is called Ulaki and was popular centuries ago, though in the modern day it is almost extinct. Only a handful of dynasties still engage in it, including the Rath dynasty.

Cyzinian’s father, a stoic and unaffectionate man, instilled in his son his own reverence for the Old Ways, and forced him to train militarily and physically every day from the day he turned five. He then commanded Cyzinian to go to Semidon to serve as the bodyguard of the ruling Shurhath, a great honour and extremely powerful position.

Soon after Cyzinian took up this duty, Lord Rath died. Cyzinian briefly mourned him in his own way, and resolved to continue his duties with extra zeal. His mother had died when he was eleven, and none of his siblings survived until adulthood. He inherited his father’s estate and left its care to a steward he appointed. Cyzinian does still have living relatives- House Rath has a couple of cadet branches- but he scarcely knows any of them.

Cyzinian’s exemplary skill caused his favour with the Shurhath to increase yet more at court. Cyzinian became the Shurhath’s right-hand-man and confidante, and was bestowed land and wealth due to the Dragonfly’s gratitude. The Dragonfly’s son, Scython, began to look to Cyzinian as a role model. Cyzinian was often tasked with guarding Scython and the latter grew deeply attached to him, idolising him for his skill and power and beginning to see him as a father figure.

The Dragonfly was a negligent father, foregoing raising his son in favour of pursuing a life of courtly hedonism. Many of the duties of Scython’s upbringing were given to Cyzinian simply because the latter was one of the Dragonfly’s most trusted men. As a result, Scython began to attach himself to Cyzinian as a father rather than the Dragonfly. Scython became more and more alienated from his biological, absentee father, barely seeing him at all and eventually losing all of his filial affection for him. Nonetheless, the Dragonfly was still the Shurhath and Scython was still a child, and the latter still respected and feared him.

The relationship between Cyzinian and Scython is somewhat unipolar: Cyzinian is not particularly attached to Scython, though he does care for him in his own way. Cyzinian does want Scython to be Shurhath, and he greatly wants him to be a mighty and respected one. To an extent this is because Cyzinian is a prideful man who wants to serve under someone worthy, but there is a genuine consideration for Scython here. Really, Cyzinian just wants Scython to be like him: strong, decisive, and principled. It is clear that Cyzinian would not only enjoy this but also be *proud* of him. For Cyzinian to take genuine pride in the glory of someone else means that there must be some paternal feelings there.

But Cyzinian doesn’t really know that: he sees Scython as his liege, and serves him because of that. He’s not really aware of his own paternal feelings towards Scython, and believes that he serves Scython simply because that’s his role in society, and he cares for his safety simply because any good bodyguard has to. These are of course correct reasons, but they aren’t the whole story. The reality is that he does actually care for Scython as a person, not just as a Shurhath- but he doesn’t realise it.

There’s also the fact that Cyzinian was raised by rigid and cold parents and consequently has no natural warmth, tenderness, or paternal affection about him. It’s not that he lacks feelings towards Scython, but he lacks the emotional intelligence or personality to actually express these feelings. All he knows is to be a reliable, devoted lieutenant, and that is what he is. He does not know *how* to be Scython’s confidante, or father figure, or even his friend. All he knows is how to be a good levy, and that’s all he can do.

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Cyzinian is, ultimately, a man of principle. He lives his life unfalteringly by strict directives which he has set himself. Out of all virtues, he prizes dignity, diligence, and loyalty above all others and therefore has determined to rigorously uphold them. Succeeding in this endeavour, Cyzinian is universally respected and admired for his power, reliability, strong principles, and conscientiousness. However, Cyzinian’s own virtue- and the constant admiration of said virtue by others- have led to extreme feelings of superiority. He is prideful, assertive, and boastful, with unshakeable self-confidence. Highly opinionated, he frequently states his views on a matter to others: his stubbornness and conventionality generally always precludes him from changing his mind.

Cyzinian is not a naturally aggressive, cruel, or sadistic person. He does not need to be: nobody around him dares to ever challenge him on anything, and he is too convinced of his own supremacy to ever feel insecure. He is undisturbed by violence or abuse, however, and will commit them if ordered to. His immense strength and martial training cause him to be called upon for these duties often, and he completes them without complaint.

Cyzinian does not view himself as a politician; indeed, he holds politics in contempt, viewing it as a game played by sycophants and weaklings. He sees himself as a warrior and a general, and bases his identity around this conception. He takes great pride in his ancestry, coming from an extremely old lineage of great warriors, and feels a need to honour the reputation of his forefathers by being a great warrior himself. He trains both physically and martially from dawn til dusk whenever he can, and is revered as one of the strongest fighter in all of Ethagis.

The pride he takes in his own skill and the age/prestige of his house automatically precludes him from involvement in politics, which he views as inherently undignified and ‘beneath him’. He sees the courtiers at Semidon as weak, greedy, idiots who get nothing done. The inaction and passivity of the court frustrates him: Cyzinian is fundamentally a man of action. Proactivity and diligence are qualities he possesses and prides himself on, and thus he finds court life antithetical because it’s so full of arbitrary rituals, rules, and codes, and nothing gets done. Cyzinian is a straightforward, blunt person with no patience or respect for court rituals. He believes that a nobleman should exact respect by his dignity and skill, not by having arbitrary court privileges, such as the right to use a certain stable at court.

##### Philosophy

Cyzinian is not just a man of principle in terms of personal values; his principles extend into the realm of politics, and form an extremely extensive political philosophy. Cyzinian is all about hierarchy and tradition. He believes that the Ethigean social hierarchy- Feyriatal- has extreme and ultimate authority, and will uphold that authority at any occasion. Indeed, the only people Cyzinian respects are those who can match him in martial skill or those above him in the hierarchy. The other tenet of Cyzinian’s worldview is tradition.

His conservatism is so potent he doesn’t just want to maintain the status quo but return to what he believes to be the golden age of the past. He ardently maintains antiquated aristocratic customs like tattooing his body and believes that each stratum of society should act a certain, ideal way, as prescribed by the legends and folklore of ages past. According to these old class stereotypes, commoners should be brave and obedient, asthanes skilful and loyal, and noblemen dignified, valiant, prudent generals. He believes that the role of the commonry is to serve, and the role of the nobility is to protect and govern.

Cyzinian has an extremely powerful role at court: he is the personal bodyguard, lieutenant, right-hand-man, and confidante of the young Shurhath Scython. Cyzinian has immense influence and favour with the Shurhath, who constantly asks him for advice. In private moments between the lieutenant and the Shurhath, Scython monologues to Cyzinian, describing all his worries and anxieties and eagerly asking ‘Cyzy’ what he should do. But every time, Cyzinian refuses to give even an inch of advice, and every time he replies, ‘The decision is yours. Mightiest.’

This is *not* because Cyzinian has nothing to say, but because of his views on what a Shurhath should be like. He believes that a Shurhath should be headstrong, decisive, and independent, and he desperately wants Scython to be like this. Lacking any kind of emotional intelligence or parental instinct, however, he has no idea how to go about this, and determines that to create a decisive and independent Shurhath, Scython has to make his decisions by himself. He believes that advising or influencing Scython would undermine his independence and lead to a weak ruler.

Throughout the narrative, Scython becomes more and more corrupted by the influence of his malign courtiers. He descends from a malleable youth into a genuinely despicable person, and Cyzinian- though he refuses to admit it to himself- begins to resent him more and more. He becomes deeply conflicted: supporting a man like Scython contradicts all his values, but loyalty is so important to him that he feels obligated to do so. He’s been raised since birth to respect and uphold Feyriatal and be loyal to his liege, and the instinct for loyalty runs deep.

His unquestioning loyalty to Scython means that he will obey orders given to him that contradict his own principles. Almost all of his duties are martial in nature: bodyguard, lieutenant, general, and executioner, but Cyzinian does not enjoy or respect all of them. He views himself as a valiant warrior, and that things like torture or poison are ‘inglorious’. If commanded to, he still carries out these duties, but he sees them as cowardly and ‘beneath him’. Espionage, coups, informants, poison: he sees all of these as the tools of weak men, not to be used by real men/warriors. He does not believe that a real Shurhath should use any of these tools, nor should be tolerate any man who uses them.

Nor does he enjoy acting as Scython’s executioner: he believes any Shurhath should have the strength to kill any man he condemns. Asking another man to do one’s dirty work is antithetical to what Cyzinian believes in and who he is. But Cyzinian’s been raised since birth to respect Feyriatal, hierarchy, and structure above all else, and he prides himself in his own reliability and loyalty. His liege is Scython, and because of this fact, Cyzinian does not see it as his place to be disobedient or critical.

Eventually, however, as the narrative progresses, Scython becomes too despicable for Cyzinian to bear serving any longer. He becomes the exact antithesis of everything Cyzinian likes and respects. After days of agonising, he decides on a new directive. Not a principle that has been instilled in him by society or his aristocratic father, but something that he *himself* decides on. He comes to the conclusion that whilst loyalty is still integral, instead of him owing his loyalty to whoever happens to be born as his superior, he will give his loyalty to someone who deserves it.

He eventually finds this person in Ironhand, who encourages him to have a more flexible philosophy. Normally closed-minded and stubborn, Cyzinian’s great respect for Ironhand and Ironhand’s own great emotional intelligence causes him to actually listen to what Ironhand has to say. Cyzinian eventually comes to change his personal philosophy. Whilst he can’t relinquish his belief in the importance of hierarchy, he starts to let go of his dogmatic reverence to it and assign more importance to the content of someone’s character rather than their birth. Moreover, whereas he previously accepted slavery as a part of Feyriatal and didn’t think about it twice, he begins to reconsider the morality of slavery. Whilst he still cares about Feyriatal too much to fight against the institution of slavery, he frees all his slaves and believes that keeping someone in chains is to inimical to human dignity to be correct.

#### Thundermaw

Name:

Social Class: Jagal [arquebusier leader]

Moral Alignment: Violent Neutral, Malign

##### Personality

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

##### Philosophy

Thundermaw is one of the most philosophically engaged characters in the whole narrative, with a unique and comprehensive worldview betraying deep insight, originality, and cynicism. Indeed, one of Thundermaw’s purposes in the narrative is to provide a unique philosophy that variously complements and clashes with those of others, as well as entertaining and intriguing the reader.

Thundermaw’s philosophy is based on that of Nietzsche, but diverges in some areas and, most importantly, is adapted to Thundermaw’s culture and setting- just as Nietzsche’s philosophy was moulded around his own culture and setting. Many of Thundermaw’s beliefs are directly Nietzschean, but the terminology and flavour differ because Thundermaw’s context is so colossally different to Nietzsche’s context.

The central premise of his philosophy is that not all human beings are equal. Some humans are of a higher ‘quality’ than others. Quality isn’t dependent on someone’s social status/position, morality, appearance, or attractiveness, but rather on someone’s character. A central error that people make is to focus on quantity of people: in the context of the war in Ethagis, this would be population, manpower, number of sailors, etc. Thundermaw instead proposes that instead of humanity endeavouring to maximise the quantity of people, it should seek to maximise quality. As he points out, an army of Firewalkers could conquer the continent, and an army of Cyzinians could conquer the world. This idea will be returned to later.

Different scholars have divided the human psyche into different constituents throughout history. In our world, Sigmund Freund divided it into id, ego, and superego. Plato divided it into a rider and two horses, the Buddha into a rider and an elephant. Thundermaw divides it into the ‘natural’ aspect of the human psyche and the ‘transcendent’ aspect.

The natural is everything that comes to human beings naturally. For example, the desires for physical gratification, social status, power, and material goods/wealth. Bias, laziness, closed-mindedness, ignorance, greed, lust, gluttony, and envy are more examples. The natural aspect of the human psyche is not just emotional and subconscious, but logical and conscious as well. Indeed, often people devise elaborate ideologies to justify the simple ways they feel.

A prime example of this is the Desert Ripper’s ideology of might makes right, survival of the fittest, and that the natural order of the world is for the strong to use the weak. This ideology requires zero critical thinking or insight to achieve. It’s the natural product of a person striving for social status and power and whose mind simply fabricates an ideology to legitimise and rationalise this. The rational simply follows the emotional, all whilst the subject has the illusion that they have utilised their thinking skills to reach an objective, correct conclusion. This is self-deception, and is a classic part of the natural aspect of the psyche.

The transcendent is everything that does *not* come to human beings naturally, but rather as the result of conscious, deliberate cultivation and effort. It includes both personality and intellectual traits. For example, being incredibly hardworking is a product of the transcendent aspect because it requires someone to *transcend* the natural aspect of the psyche that encourages laziness. Other examples of transcendent personality traits include extreme self-control, open-mindedness, curiosity, etc.

The transcendent mindset is one that rejects automatic biases, self-deception, and hypocrisy. It overcomes these natural tendencies of the human psyche through great effort. It questions the world around them and refuses to take the easy path and adopt the worldview of the others around them and the worldview bestowed to them by society. It represents genuine intellect, insight, and being a genuine free-thinker. Most importantly, it is characterised by a commitment to self-improvement and being true to oneself.

The great majority of people are of a low ‘quality’. The more someone’s psyche is dominated by the natural aspect, the lower quality that person is. The more someone’s psyche is dominated by the transcendent, the higher quality that person is. Fundamentally, a low quality person is not *remarkable*. They think in unremarkable ways, and as long as they aren’t born into a position of disproportionate influence, they do unremarkable things. They simply fade into the mass of unremarkable human beings.

High quality people are dominated by the transcendent aspect of the human psyche. They are extraordinary and distinguished from the mass of people in some way. The higher quality a person is, the more remarkable as a human they are. Remarkability is *not* the same as charisma; there are some very loud, engaging people who may immediately capture your attention, but upon closer inspection aren’t interesting or distinct at all. At the same time, there are some very quiet, introverted people who, once their psyche is explored further, reveal themselves to have a huge depth of character.

The key thing in determining quality is someone’s willpower; their force of character and the bearing they have on the world. Of course, often things outside a person’s control- like the Feyriatal rank they were born into- affect how much a person can affect the world. But if everyone were born in a perfectly meritocratic world of equality, high quality people would dominate the world and play the biggest hand in shaping it.

Of course, people do not fit into two binary categories of high and low quality; it’s a continuum. In Gen Z slang, you could approximate it as the spectrum between being an NPC and a protagonist. Thundermaw divides human beings into sheep, wolves, and lions. He understands that scholars have been debating human nature and how to classify human beings for centuries, and that he isn’t gifted enough to settle this entire debate. Indeed, he doubts that any human could ever be gifted enough to create a definitive, wholly correct way to classify and judge human beings.

Nonetheless, he values his own classification because he approaches the matter in a different way than the scholars in the empire who have tried to do so. Whereas scholars construct Byzantine theories and elaborate, labyrinthine systems, Thundermaw (in all areas of his philosophy) emphasises clarity, practicality, and getting to the heart of the matter.

As he explains to various claimant Shurhaths, his system of classification- unlike those of countless scholars before him- isn’t a pretentious mess of ideas and links; it’s a simple, practical system. It gives someone as much insight into a person needed to know how to regard them and how to treat them. It is thus perfect for a Shurhath, who must concern himself with thousands of people and needs a quick, discerning way to understand each and thus to know how to deal with them.

‘Sheep’ make up the vast majority of the human populace. Their defining feature is that they are unremarkable, and of a low ‘essential quality’. They are not psychologically distinguished from others, and lack extraordinary attributes or thoughts. Sheep can be morally good or bad, high status or low status- these do not affect their psychological classification. For example, the Dragonfly- a Shurhath- would undoubtedly be a sheep. Sheep fade into the background and comprise the faceless majority of ordinary humans.

Although due to the structure of society, a sheep (e.g. the Dragonfly) may be made notable, this is only because of said structure. If that individual’s social position were different and they had to distinguish themselves based on their own personality, they would completely fail to do so. For example, if the Dragonfly were born as a peasant farmer instead of an imperial scion, he would be wholly condemned to obscurity and be utterly unrecorded in history. A ‘sheep’ is therefore someone who, if their place in history were not secured by dint of their societal position, is someone who would utterly fail to win one.

Sheep vary a lot in terms of personality: they are varying diligent or lazy, extroverted or introverted, patient or rude, etc. Some personality traits: e.g. laziness, greed, lustfulness, rudeness, etc come naturally to the human psyche. It takes zero effort or intellect to cultivate these traits. Simply by following base desires and primal instincts, a human being will be railroaded into these traits through no exertion of their mind. Therefore, no matter how extreme a person ranks in any of *these* traits (e.g. if someone were the laziest person on the planet), they would still be a sheep.

Personality traits which *do* require intellect to cultivate (e.g. drive, open-mindedness, intelligence, charisma, etc) are possessed by sheep to different extents, but never to extremes. If a sheep had an extreme of such a trait- e.g. if they were immensely driven- they would be extraordinary in some way and thus not be a sheep.

Sheep want the same things that all human beings want: status, power, wealth, gratification, etc, and generally think the same things that all human beings think. They have an inbuilt bias that they are somehow special, or ‘free thinkers’, and they often have their own philosophies and ideologies which they delusionally believe are unique, correct, and intellectual. These beliefs are self-deceptions- sheep often deceive themselves. In reality, their thoughts, modes of thought, and ideologies occur to all human beings. Not every sheep will arrive at the same ideology or psyche, but the ideologies and psyches they do eventually come to possess do not require unique insight or wisdom. Rather, they are railroaded into these psychological states simply by their experience of life and how their mind subconsciously reacts to it.

Examples of people Thundermaw would call sheep in the narrative include the Dragonfly, the Scorpion, Elphensbane, the Blackfish, and Panthercaul.

‘Wolves’ make up a much smaller tier of the human populace. They are more remarkable than sheep- enough to be extraordinary or notable in some way. They are of a higher quality. Rather than merely fading into the faceless majority, like sheep, by nature of their mind they distinguish themselves in some way. Even if placed in a societal position of obscurity, by merit of their mind they would win some kind of ascent out of it.

These are people who are able to get things done and make their mark on the world. They do not merely passively accept the reality in which they live in, but strive to change it somehow, even if in prosaic ways such as increasing their own wealth. Wolves are named as such because, due to their higher quality, they are superior to sheep and have a natural advantage over them; just as in nature, wherein wolves are superior to sheep.

However, wolves are distinct from sheep in their personality, not their ways of thinking. For example, Firewalker is distinct from others by his drive, conscientiousness, and ambition; aspects of his personality. But the basic ways in which he thinks, and the ideology he has, is the same as the sheep under his command. He, like everyone else, merely pursues social status, and doesn’t even conduct this pursuit in an imaginative way; he simply seeks to climb the social ladder like everyone else.

Wolves include characters like Purgatory, Sharkjaw, the Desert Ripper, etc. They’re all unique and extraordinary characters by dint of their personalities, but all of these characters broadly seek the same ends, display the same cognitive biases, and have worldviews that come from the natural aspect rather than the transcendent. Wolves are not always immoral; the Reefshark is a wolf, for example, as is Armageddon. They can also be morally ambiguous, for example Lord Morningstar.

‘Lions’ make up a miniscule proportion of the human populace. They are the rare individuals who are extraordinary in both their personality *and* mindset. Like wolves, they have a unique personality in some way, but unlike wolves this is a result of, or accompanied by, a unique mindset. Lions may still not be completely objective, or free of self-deceptions, biases, etc, but their worldview will be formed by the transcendent aspect rather than just the natural. They come to their worldview after genuine insight and introspection, not by just rationalising their sentiments. They have an *ideology*.

Lions, like wolves, are doers and make their mark on the world. The highest quality lions resemble forces of will more than humans; Cyzinian is a prime example of this. Indeed, Thundermaw would probably cite Cyzinian as the highest quality person in Ethagis (except Ironhand). This is because although he is not perfect- he unthinkingly displays the same prejudices and biases (e.g. sexism, racism) that society has given him- he is undeniably extremely remarkable. However, Ironhand would be the highest quality person in Ethagis because he is genuinely a free thinker, having his own ideology and completely disregarding the prejudices and biases of society. Other lions include the Juggernaught and Chainbreaker.

It is worth noting that morality and ethics do not have a bearing on how Thundermaw classifies a person. Indeed, Thundermaw sees morality as a wholly manmade construct that has no inherent meaning, Whilst of course he sees meaningless acts of cruelty or violence as pathetic, and their enactors as often undesirable to work with, he does not condemn them on moral grounds. Thundermaw sees morality as a shackle assigned by the sheep of society to higher quality individuals in order to compel them to obey the will of the majority.

Thundermaw thinks that judging people on morality is pointless. In nature, a predator taking down prey is not seen as evil and condemned, but merely viewed as the natural process of a superior organism defeating an inferior one. Nature does not have morality, and as a result the strongest individuals thrive. This should consequently be the case in human affairs; the problem is when the structures of human society give power (and thus strength) to undeserving individuals. The Dragonfly and Soul Eater, for example, are given huge strength by society despite the personal strength of their characters being pitiful.

Thundermaw can sort of be seen as a ‘radical meritocrat’, believing that society should be structured in a way that allows total equality of opportunity, allowing social status to be proportional to someone’s quality. He also believes that racism, sexism, and any other forms of discrimination are illogical prejudices. They are perpetuated in society not by rational affirmation but by the natural aspect of the human psyche unquestioningly assimilating what society has told it to believe. Scholars then devise ‘proofs’ of such prejudices unobjectively and with bias to just confirm with they already believe. Prejudice as a concept is low-quality thinking, as it shows an adherence to lazy cognitive shortcuts rather than genuine inquiry and investigation.

#### Typhoon

Name:

Social Class: Semadai

Moral Alignment: Neutral Good, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Valorous

Name: Uzara Kusaila

Social Class: Asthan

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Neutral, Neutral

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Winged Prophet

Name: Sandesta Nabi

Social Class: Tradesman [apothecary]

Moral Alignment: Lawful Good, Benign

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### The Wraithwreaker

Name:

Social Class: Imperial Officer

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Sociopathic

##### Personality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pathological** | **Extremely Low** | **Very Low** | **Low** | **Average** | **High** | **Very High** | **Extremely High** |
| **Honesty-Humility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Emotionality** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Extraversion** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Agreeableness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conscientiousness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Openness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Merit** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Secondary Characters

#### Abomination

Name:

Social Class: Vagrant [bandit]

Moral Alignment: Violent Evil, Sociopathic

Abomination, a carpenter before the outbreak of war, is a bandit who amasses great infamy and wealth during the continent-wide battle. Leading a large band of similar rapists and killers, he marauds the Delta after the collapse of authority/rule of law there, wreaking destruction and havoc. Due to the wealth he plunders, he is able to afford a thick iron suit of armour and a bulky helmet which covers his whole face. Eventually, he sides with the Revenant and willingly fights alongside him. He is killed by a Delta soldier during the Battle of Antavar. His appearance is said to be grotesque and frightening due to various festering and necrosing injuries, although due to his full suit of armour and masked helm only a few can verify the grisly rumours.

#### Bloodhound

Name:

Social Class: Jagal [mercenary]

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Malign

Bloodhound is a mercenary hired by the Juggernaught to act as one of his captains, and is a an extremely skilled fighter and leader. The regiment under Bloodhound does well in the campaign against Soul Eater, but is overwhelmed by superior numbers. Despite Bloodhound being useful, his personality is odious, and this coupled with the fact that he’s a mercenary means that the Juggernaught would definitely have preferred not to hire him. Without a large number of levies, however, he felt compelled to.

The Juggernaught is a pragmatic man but still has a philosophy and some basic principles, whereas Bloodhound is *too* pragmatic. He lacks a philosophy or ideals, and is devoid of moral scruples or restraint. When the Juggernaught launches his desert campaign against the Ripper and becomes militarily unsuccessful, Bloodhound promptly abandons him, taking his men with.

In the alternate timeline where Cyzinian becomes Shurhath, Bloodhound remains with the Juggernaught for a longer period of time as the latter doesn’t embark on an unsuccessful campaign. Bloodhound exerts a greater influence on the Juggernaught because of this and influence him to become more pragmatic, arguably to an excess.

#### The Darkstar

Name:

Social Class: Asthan

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Neutral

The Darkstar is an asthan in the Ethigean savannah who dispenses vigilante justice against bandits in the region after brigands killed his liege. He later agrees to be a levy of the Juggernaught, but parts ways with him after he attacks the desert. He wanders north and dispenses vigilante justice where he goes, gradually migrating east and eventually joining Ironhand in the fight against the Revenant. He dies in the Battle of Antavar.

#### The Dragonfly

Name: Kargan Axum

Social Class: Shurhath

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Neutral, Neutral

#### Galar

Name:

Social Class: Mighty Lord Officer -> Askary Lord

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Neutral

#### Harpax

Name:

Social Class: Professional [military engineer]

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Malign

#### Kalawi

The ‘Demon God’, most powerful and chaotic of the Ten Animal Deities, tempter of humanity and bestower of killer instinct. The embodiment and champion of confidence, pride, license, malice, sadism, destructiveness, impulsiveness, and malevolence.

When Kalawi appears to a character, time stands still and space becomes distorted and twisted, with the environment and its figures burning away until nothing remains but black. In pages where Kalawi is present, the entire page is black. The character he is speaking to is present as a tiny figure at the bottom of the page, and the top half is dominated by a colossal head- that of Kalawi. The words that Kalawi speaks are written in massive, capitalised block letters in between his head and the character.

Kalawi appears without warning: the reader turns the page and finds that the next double page is black. On the first page Kalawi appears, his face is contorted in an unusual expression which is not displayed again until the very end of his encounters: he appears to be grinning viciously, as if he were ambushing the reader and wanted to ‘jumpscare’ them. He disappears quickly as well: in the last page of his appearance, Kalawi contorts his face into the same expression as the beginning, and the next double page is the normal book hue.

In a TV adaptation of the series, if one were to hypothetically be created, the screen would appear the same as the pages do: all-black, with Kalawi taking up the top half, the character he speaks to at the bottom, and text in between them. Something similar to [this](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93q3irqZxxo&ab_channel=EluTran) music would play: not this theme exactly, but something with similar content that evokes similar emotions.

Ultimately, the emotion that Kalawi should evoke is fear. The more intense the fear evoked, the better: Kalawi is a malevolent god, and the closest thing that Ethigean religion has to Satan. The viewer should feel as if they are in the presence of a powerful and terrible deity, something much greater than themselves and more dark than they can comprehend. When Kalawi is present, the viewer needs to feel as if something demonic and terrible has come to visit, and that bad consequences are imminent. As if one wrong move from the character, one incorrect word, would bring about total oblivion.

When Indigo refuses Kalawi’s offer to embrace his inner urge for destruction and become a servant of Kalawi, the music suddenly and abruptly stops, leaving a complete and utter silence. The music does not return for the remainder of Indigo’s meeting with Kalawi. Infrasound frequencies would also play. Kalawi would not have a ‘voice’, and when his text appears on the screen, overlapping and discordant low, rumbling frequencies would play.

#### Lakare Vadyan

Name: Lakare Vadyan [no sobriquet]

Social Class: Professional [sergeant-doctor]

Moral Alignment: Neutral Good, Benign

The stern but moral sergeant-doctor who commands Arzachel when he is first summoned to wartime service under the Scorpion. He is firm and authoritarian, but is essential in instructing Arzachel how to perform surgery in battle, and helps toughen him up for dealing with the psychological stresses of war. His cold and tough nature leads Arzachel to believe that he dislikes him, or at least doesn’t care for him, but Lakare personally vouches for Arzachel to Lord Morningstar when the latter is accused of treason (providing medical services to enemies).

When Lord Morningstar loses a battle, enemy forces begin piercing the Scorpion’s ranks and getting through to the supply wagons, where the doctors are treating soldiers. Lakare urges Arzachel to flee, but the latter doesn’t want to abandon dying soldiers. Lakare runs away and is not seen or heard of again, although Arzachel asks about him at various times. Lord Morningstar, due to some impressive tactics, turns the battle around. In recognition of his courage, Arzachel is soon appointed to be a sergeant-doctor himself.

#### Leopardheart

Name: Sinire Kusaila

Social Class: Mighty Lord Family

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Benign

The wife of the Brimstone Leopard. She is extremely devoted to him; the marriage between her and Aval

#### The Scorpion

Name:

Social Class: Mighty Lord

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Malign

#### Tarantula

Name:

Social Class: Mighty Lord’s Officer

Moral Alignment: Violent Egoistic, Malign

#### Zenith

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord

Moral Alignment: Lawful Neutral, Neutral

Zenith is an askary lord serving as a colonel in Shurhath Dragonfly’s army. He is respected by Cyzinian and given a place in the Sword of Semidon’s war councils. Though he shares the same goals and general personality as Cyzinian, his philosophy is a little different. Both Cyzinian and Zenith prize Feyriatal and warrior culture/values, and both ultimately desire a society of order and hierarchy. However, although Cyzinian adheres rigidly to his principles and to the law, Zenith adheres to these to an excessive and impractical extent. Zenith has obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, and whilst Cyzinian respects his perfectionism and rigour (and, although he would never say it, appreciates him as a friend) he believes that Zenith does take things a bit too far.

In the alternate timeline where Cyzinian becomes Shurhath, he eventually appoints Zenith as his lieutenant, and Zenith’s uncompromising principles and inability to be pragmatic begin to negatively influence Cyzinian.

### Tertiary Characters

#### The Gobbler -> Vanguard

The Gobbler starts the narrative as a notoriously wealthy and decadent askary lord living a hedonistic lifestyle in the court of Semidon. Favoured by the Dragonfly for his loyalty, he is permitted to indulge his gluttony to an obscene extent. Held in secret contempt by the nation for his greed and uselessness, he is given the offensive sobriquet the Gobbler by the court, although nobody dares to call him this to his face. The Gobbler is aware that he has this pejorative sobriquet however and deeply resents it, and the insecurity it brings him makes him cruel and quarrelsome.

He lives a parasitic lifestyle throughout the narrative in the imperial court until Soul Eater seizes the city, whereupon he expels the Gobbler from the court. The Gobbler rides back to his dynastic estate in the Springlands only to find it razed by bandits. He inhabits the ruins of his keep and, forced to live on rations of wheat and barley he had hidden away, loses weight swiftly.

He grows to loathe himself for his previous greed, uselessness, and insecurity, and when he hears that the Revenant is raiding the Delta and Indigo is looking for troops to command, the Gobbler joins Indigo’s cause. Ultimately, he just wants to be *useful* for the first time in his life. He is mocked at first due to his reputation and because he is still overweight, but perseveres and loses more weight whilst on campaign. He trains vigorously and soon becomes muscular, and eventually fights bravely against the Revenant’s troops in the Battle of Antavar.

In the Fourth Battle of Semidon, he proves his valour by volunteering to fight in the vanguard, and as a recognition of this bravery and the Gobbler’s personal transformation, Ironhand gives him the new sobriquet of Vanguard.

#### Ilyzor

The Elephant God, most ordered and second most powerful of the Ten Animal Deities, protector of righteousness and bestower of wisdom. The embodiment and champion of justice, wisdom, prophecy, protection, gentility, and wrath.

When Ilyzor appears to a character, time stands still and space becomes distorted and twisted, with the environment and its figures fading away until nothing remains but bright white. In pages where Ilyzor is present, the entire page is a brilliant shade of white brighter than the normal book hue. The character he is speaking to is present as a tiny figure at the bottom of the page, and the top half is dominated by a colossal head- that of Ilyzor. The words that Ilyzor speaks are written in massive, capitalised block letters in between his head and the character.

Ilyzor appears gradually. The reader turns the page and finds that the next double page is a bright, crisp white. On the first page, a small black dot is visible at the top of the page, whilst the character Ilyzor addresses is waiting at the bottom. Over the course of the next four pages, Ilyzor gradually becomes increasingly visible. His expression is the same as it is throughout his appearance. Ilyzor leaves gradually as well: after a few pages where Ironhand is seen to climb up Ilyzor’s trunk to stand on his back, the next six pages show Ilyzor turning around and flying back ‘into’ the page, once again becoming a small black dot in the distance.

In a TV adaptation of the series, if one were to hypothetically be created, the screen would appear the same as the pages do: all bright white, with Ilyzor taking up the top half, the character he speaks to at the bottom, and text in between them. Something similar to [this](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CnQDDT2ryc&ab_channel=DNFMA1) (seizure warning!) music would play, and as the theme went on it would become more comforting, a hybrid between the original music and something like [this](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psNKPe4pOHI&ab_channel=qazw33).

It wouldn’t be those themes exactly, but something with similar content that evokes similar emotions. Ilyzor is a benevolent god, so the music should be gentle, but he is still a god. It has to be the kind of music that makes you stop whatever you’re doing and pay attention, transfixed by a mixture of warmth, tenderness, and awe. Both of the themes which I just hyperlinked are, to me, quite ‘emotional’: I don’t mean sentimental or sad, but they just evoke strong feelings. They make you feel like you’re in the presence of something greater than yourself, but that thing is fundamentally good.

The theme should start off like the first hyperlink I attached: gentle, but alien. As a commenter on that video so brilliantly puts it, it’s soothing and frightening at the same time. The viewer is, after all, seeing a god: the music *should* be alien and inspire feelings of awe as well as safety. As you ‘get used to’ the presence of Ilyzor and as he speaks to Ironhand, the theme should get a little more calming and soothing, as if you’re letting your guard down. By the end of the meeting, as Ilyzor flies away, I’m imagining a combination between the two hyperlinks I sent wherein the second hyperlink predominates.

Ilyzor would not have a ‘voice’, and when his text appears on the screen, overlapping and harmonic low, soothing frequencies would play.

#### The Monolith

Name:

Social Class: Askary Lord

Moral Alignment: Chaotic Good, Neutral

### Historical Characters

#### Lord Sunfire

Name: Ezana Axum

Social Class: Shurhath

Notability: First Shurhath of the Axum dynasty

## III. [2021-2023] [Old Story] Narrative

Part 1: White

Part 2: Magenta

Part 3: Red

Part 4: Gold

Part 5: Green

Part 6: Blue

Part 7: Midnight

Part 8: Purple

Part 9: Charcoal

**Part 10: Black**

#### Prologues and Epilogue

* Book 1’s prologue is a slave held in chains on a ship, which is pulling into Sharkjaw’s capital. The first line of the series is the slave’s thoughts: *I know that the gods exist, for they have abandoned me*
* He asks for water, and the slavers aboard the ship threaten and humiliate him. Cowed into silence, he meekly listens to them talk
* Their dialogue aboard the ship give some exposition about the world and reveal that the slave is the son of a scholar at court. They also reveal that they’re taking him to see their liege
* The court scholar published a political treatise which criticised the Dragonfly’s form of government. As a resulted, he was executed, and his children enslaved; this is his son, and the scholar’s daughter was separated from her brother a while back
* Sharkjaw wants to meet this slave personally as his father was an eminent scholar and Sharkjaw’s curious to see him and also wants to decide what to do with him personally
* In the meeting, Sharkjaw decides to make him an accountant for his trades. In order to make sure the slave focusses on the job only, Sharkjaw orders he be turned into a eunuch
* He then calmly explains that for every accounting mistake the slave makes, he will cut off a limb
* The slave angrily curses Sharkjaw and asks when he became so cruel and when he stopped caring about morality. He replies, ‘Well, to tell you the truth…I never really did.’ And has the slave taken away to be castrated
* Book 2’s prologue is set during peacetime. It shows Arzachel, a travelling physician. He’s respected but fairly obscure, roaming around the Autumnlands giving medical services to the gentry and nobility in exchange for a roof above his head and money
* He has just finished giving services to a nobleman before he leaves his tower and gets press-ganged by some of Lord Morningstar’s troops and conscripted as a doctor in the army
* Book 3’s prologue
* Book 4’s prologue shows Firewalker gaining his sobriquet on the battlefield by running through fire in order to kill an enemy sergeant
* This leads to him getting promoted to Jagal as a result by one of Cyzinian’s subordinates in the army- this happens in book 5, however
* Book 5’s prologue shows a village in Hazin’s lordship being raided by a massive Nagalen army, signifying the beginning of the Ripper’s full-scale invasion
* Book 6’s prologue shows Purgatory as a young woman being in danger, and then being rescued by a commoner
* Book 7’s prologue shows the Meteor many years ago (though the reader only finds out he’s the Meteor at the end of the chapter), campaigning in his home continent. He is sane at this point and very, very similar to Kusaila in personality but with a streak of narcissism that Kusaila lacks
* At this stage, his arrogance hasn’t manifested in anything malevolent, but it’s sort of festering near the surface and the reader gets the implication that it’ll become worse in the future
* He is waging an offensive war to expand the empire, but sees this merely as his duty. Like Kusaila, he does care about his people and soldiers, although he’s a more vicious and violent person than Kusaila ever was
* His advisors call him a descendent of a deity as per the doctrines of the state religion. He enjoys being called a descendant of a deity, but doesn’t *truly* believe it at this stage
* The Khagan’s forces win the battle and he walks across the battlefield, looking at all the dead bodies. The brutality of it all messes with him emotionally, a first hint of his eventual lost sanity
* Book 8’s prologue
* Book 9’s prologue shows Kingsparrow staggering into the ruins of Azariad, by now an abandoned city littered with corpses and debris
* He is deeply ill and about to succumb to death. He looks around the ruined city, reflecting on what it represented and what the Commonwealth could have been, and starts crying. He then dies
* **Book 10’s prologue**
* **Book 10’s epilogue takes place nearly two decades after Ironhand taking the throne, with the aging Shurhath having ruled the country very well during**
* **It is revealed through dialogue that Ironhand’s attempts to rebuild the country mostly come from raising taxes, especially on the nobility, and that this led to a rebellion. The rebellion was very thoroughly crushed and no others happen**
* **Ironhand is happy. The nation is happy too; it is peaceful, prosperous, and well governed. To help centralise the realm and enforce his decrees, Ironhand greatly expands the civil service, although he abolishes the secret police**
* **He decides to write a memoir about his life to distribute to his people, starting work on writing it promptly: Ironhand’s left hand injury has weakened his immune system and thus he is concerned about getting ill and dying prematurely**
* **There are several reasons for this. The first is ideological; he does not think it fair that millions of people should live under his rule but know nothing about him. He wants the average Ethigean to have the dignity of knowing about their ruler and being able to form a real opinion of him**
* **There are practical reasons as well. Ironhand is a good person and has done impressive things. An account of his life would boost the peoples’ opinion of him. Distributing a book about Ironhand to commoners would also boost literacy rates**
* **Ironhand writes his memoir: *The Deeds and Chronicle of Ironhand*. Ironhand is a talented writer, but his problem is logistical. He wants to produces enough copies of his memoir to make them cheap enough for a commoner to acquire; with current technology, this is impossible**
* **He issues a proclamation to the nation- anyone who can create a machine to mass-produce written material will receive great wealth and esteem. Inventors, engineers, and merchants approach court in multitudes for months**
* **Long after the proclamation, an inventor approaches the court with an invention of his own design; a crude version of the printing press. Ironhand is extremely pleased and works with the inventor to refine the machine, eventually using it to mass-produce *The Deeds and Chronicle***
* **By this time Ironhand is very ill. The memoir becomes widely read and appreciated, causing widespread reverence of Ironhand among the commonry. Ironhand passes away in his bed peacefully, and is given painkillers by his physician**
* **The painkillers, coupled with Ironhand’s transition into death, induce a vivid hallucination wherein Ilyzor visits Ironhand. Ilyzor tells him not to be afraid and that he is proud of him. He gently invites Ironhand to come with him, which he does so**
* **The last lines in the series are Ironhand asking ‘Where are we going?’ and Ilyzor replying, ‘To see Batay.’**

#### Strand 1: Lacaideon | Lacaideon-Assur-Batay-Grizzly Falcon-Revenant-Zaran-Morningstar-Typhoon-Cyzinian-Shuriken-Panthercaul-Elphensbane-Oceanfire-Crossbow

* Assur Laqi is a Mighty Lord who uses Lacaideon as a naval constable, leading soldiers on ships, typically in anti-piracy operations
* Assur and Lacaideon have a highly amicable relationship, with Assur seeming generally likeable, a firm but fair ruler
* When the Dragonfly dies, Assur immediately raises levies and prepares for war, moving slowly to Semidon by land and sending Lacaideon up the river with Assur’s fleet, putting him in charge of everything
* Assur gradually reveals the true extent of his megalomania and cruelty, commanding Lacaideon to commit increasingly brutal acts and more and more war crimes
* Lacaideon changes from a charismatic and confident leader to an increasingly reserved, cold, and emotionless shell, withdrawing from himself to deal with mounting guilt and stress
* As Assur launches his final assault on Semidon in a bloody attack with Lacaideon attacking from the river, and the attack is succeeding but with the brutality of the attack causing Lacaideon to enter a nervous breakdown
* Lacaideon is passively suicidal at this point and therefore refuses to wear metal armour, opting for a lighter armour that won’t really protect him
* An arrow sinks into Lacaideon’s thigh and he falls off his ship into the river, hitting his head on some debris on his way down and falling unconscious. Due to his refusal to wear armour, he doesn’t drown
* The Blackfish’s assault loses discipline and direction without Lacaideon at the helm. Although some troops have already landed at the beach, the offensive loses momentum and these forces are eroded by crown troops
* Assur fights on but is wounded and surrounded by his immediate guard, before bleeding out and dying- the assault, already losing traction, collapses in on itself
* Due to a tidal anomaly, the upstream river currents are strong enough to push Lacaideon upstream away from the Delta
* In times of war, many peasants take boats to the river and pile the bodies of fallen soldiers in there, hoping to sell their possessions- these people are known as ‘rivermen’ and it’s a surprisingly common occupation in wartime. The armour is particularly prized, but the rivermen often lack the knowledge to know how to remove it without damaging it
* A riverman mistakes Lacaideon’s body for a corpse and piles it into his boat. He sails to the semadai mountain, hoping to sell the armours and supplies there
* Once there, Batay comes down to greet the riverman and do business, but Lacaideon momentarily stirs before lapsing back into unconsciousness. Batay immediately takes him up the mountain and to a bed. He starts nursing Lacaideon back to health
* Lacaideon initially does not believe himself worthy of life and attempts escape in order to commit suicide, failing because of his physical weakness- Batay begins applying a course of what is effectively therapy and encourages Lacaideon to change his sobriquet as the symbol of assuming a new identity
* Lacaideon, once physically well enough, leaves and Batay tries to talk him out of it. In transitory anger (anger at himself redirected to Batay) Lacaideon kills some livestock and implores Batay to hate him, but Batay refuses as he recognises Lacaideon is compelled by his misery. The humanity displayed encourages Lacaideon to stay, if only for respect for Batay
* Gradually, he recovers mentally and physically, learning fighting techniques from Batay: Lacaideon soon becomes one of the most formidable fighters alive, combining his supreme powers of coordination with semadai techniques and martial knowledge
* Lacaideon continues his recovery and learns a lot from Batay
* Eventually, Lacaideon has a dream about Kalawi coming to see him, who states that he recognises great potential in him, to act as a powerful force to shape the world
* He urges him to, basically, indulge his personal enmity and lust for power and act as a force of destruction and license. Lacaideon, inspired and boldened by Batay’s example and having himself mentally recovered considerably, rejects Kalawi and affirms his own internal transformation and prioritisation of morality
* The vision of Kalawi, infuriated by being spurned, leaves
* In the books, whenever Kalawi appears to a character, the entire page is black. Kalawi’s head is on the top half of the page and what he says is written in white, capital letters beneath the image of his head
* After the Second Battle of Semidon, the Red Mantis is killed, and has a hallucination of Kalawi. Kalawi offers him resurrection and the ability to indulge his darkest desires- in exchange for his soul. The Red Mantis, already a horrible, selfish person, accepts, and as per Kalawi’s encouragement promises to be an embodiment of chaos and destruction
* The new incarnation of the Red Mantis is a shambling, zombified shell who wraps his body in rags and bandages to mask the necrosis of his tissue and its decay. He is unaffected by bodily wounds and immune to pain
* This new monster approaches Soul Eater, who gleefully accepts him into his army and secret police. After Purgatory dies, the Revenant becomes a huge influence on Soul eater and the de facto power behind the throne
* He eventually persuades him to invade the semadai home, manipulating Soul Eater in the same way that Purgatory did. The Revenant sees himself as the spawn of Kalawi, and the semadai worship Ilyzor- the primal enemy of Kalawi
* Lacaideon, meanwhile, is finally becoming happy again, and having a nice time basically just talking, studying, and training with Batay- Soul Eater eventually invades the mountain
* The invasion fails because mountains are hard to invade and semadai are hard to defeat, but the Revenant personally kills Batay in front of Lacaideon by playing dead
* Indigo holds Batay in his arms as he dies, and desperately tries to find and kill the Revenant. However, due to many of Soul Eater’s soldiers revering Revenant, a practice has spread wherein hundreds of soldiers dress the same way he does to honour him
* These soldiers, called ‘revenants’, swarm around the mountain attacking the semadai, and the Revenant simply blends in with them. Indigo, consumed by grief and fury, kills dozens of them single-handedly, but doesn’t actually find the Revenant, who sneaks back down the mountain to safety
* Lacaideon vows to eventually kill the Revenant, but refuses to join forces with another magnate to do this, distrusting most of them and recognising that the few trustworthy lords, like Elphensbane, are pre-occupied
* Instead, relying on his own abilities and the discontent of Assur’s nobility (who are leaderless and punitively taxed by The Hydra of Semidon and Soul Eater for their former disobedience), he seeks to form his own powerbase out of them
* Some of the semadai come with Lacaideon to aid him, providing him with a powerful and loyal military elite. Typhoon, a prominent member of the semadai, becomes an important advisor and confidante to Lacaideon
* Since the death of the Blackfish, the lords of the river delta have become independent, but the lack of a leader to coordinate their armies has left them vulnerable to pirates, marauders, and rivals. The entire delta is in a state of ruin and destruction
* Lacaideon convinces the river lords that their independence is detrimental: they reign independently, but over wasteland and without real wealth/power. He convinces them to pool their ships to create an anti-piracy force, and elect Lacaideon as the leader of the fleet
* The lords are initially unconvinced, but the Grizzly Falcon- who above all prioritises order and stability- speaks up in favour of Lacaideon, recognising that Lacaideon has the merit and motivation to actually do some good
* Lacaideon commences anti-piracy operations, often freeing the galley slaves there
* He also reclaims his old small lordship from a rival nazul lord who moved in to claim it
* After the Third Battle of Semidon, the Revenant flees Semidon with the remaining survivors, acting as their leader, intimidating Zaran into swearing loyalty and being his servant. Zaran becomes genuinely terrified of the Revenant, who promises to bring an apocalypse, turning all of Ethagis into a cesspool of anarchy and chaos
* The Revenant rallies his forces and recruits bandits in the Crownlands to his cause. They all dress as revenants, resembling a frightening hive mind
* Lord Morningstar takes notices and sends some troops to stop them, but doesn’t really grasp the magnitude of the threat and just sees it as a minor rebellion. He spends his attention and armies on the invasion of Sharkjaw instead
* The Crownlands aren’t the wealthiest region in Ethagis, though; the Delta is the most ‘civilised’, advanced region, and the Revenant wants to take that and burn it all down
* The Revenant moves his forces towards the Delta to do two things: spread absolute anarchy there and kill Lacaideon
* Lacaideon eventually convinces the various lords to pool their levies to create an army with which to attack raiders and bandits. They are anxious about having him lead it so he tells them to command their own forces, just attack the same enemy simultaneously
* The Revenant reaches the Delta and starts burning every village he sees and killing every person he sees, promising to end the world and bring total apocalypse. Unable to find Lacaideon, he also hopes to coax him into a battle
* Things escalate and the lords get scared, asking Lacaideon to lead their ground levies as the overarching commander of the forces, heading off a raid of the Revenant
* Now knowing where Lacaideon is, the Revenant musters all the forces he has and prepares for a final great battle, order vs chaos, good vs evil. Before the battle, he sacrifices his lieutenant, Zaran, to Kalawi, hoping for victory
* Indigo fights through the various ships of the Revenant’s fleet before reaching the flagship. It is filled with revenants who all attack him nearly at once. Indigo, fighting at the pinnacle of human performance, slaughters all of them. He calls out for the Revenant to come and face him
* The Revenant reveals himself; he’d been hiding on the flagship and whilst Indigo’s back is turned, he jumps out from behind cover and injects Indigo with a hypodermic needle containing a hallucinogen
* He decides to do this to toy with Indigo before his death as he’s a sadistic bastard
* Indigo, by force of will, does not pass out but the Revenant sets fire to the flagship, hoping that even though he can’t beat Indigo in a fight and the latter won’t let him leave, he can still kill Indigo by bringing down the whole ship
* Indigo has a drugged fight with the Revenant. In his imagination, he continually dismembers the Revenant and watches the demon regenerate himself every time. These are of course hallucinations, and in reality Indigo is just missing his uncoordinated slashes
* During the fight, the Revenant verbally torments Indigo. He says that Batay’s death was all Indigo’s fault, and also says that the Revenant is no longer just a single being but an *idea*, a representation of mankind’s desire for chaos
* Because of this, killing the Revenant will make no difference; all the other revenants will simply continue trying to end the world and bring global apocalypse anyway. The Revenant cannot be killed because what he *represents*- the primal desires for power and destruction- live in every human and that consequently there will always be human beings in the world that bring chaos and violence: ‘You cannot kill me in a way that matters’
* Indigo decides that to kill the Revenant, he will have to eliminate all traces of him so there’s nothing to regenerate, and resolves to burn him alive in a fire blazing nearby
* Indigo cuts off the Revenant’s arms and legs, actually doing so, and drags him into the fire by his hair, holding his head in the flames with his left hand despite the immense pain. The Revenant initially feels no pain himself but as the pain centres in his brain heat up he feels immense, all-consuming agony
* The Revenant dies, and as he does so Indigo hallucinates his body dissolving into a horde of black spiders, who fly in the sky and form Kalawi’s head in the air. The head screams, and Indigo passes out from the drug and the searing pain- his left hand has practically dissolved
* Indigo’s forces win the battle, in part due to Indigo killing so many revenants, and doctors cauterise and clean the wound. Lacaideon is eventually gifted a prosthetic iron hand by Typhoon
* Elated by Lacaideon’s victory and convinced of the benefits of his leadership, Lacaideon’s levies and lords proclaim him to be the new Mighty Lord to replace the Blackfish, and give him the sobriquet Ironhand
* **Lacaideon is a good leader and soon the river delta is nearly as wealthy and prosperous as it was during peacetime, before the war**
* **Lord Morningstar, growing increasingly tyrannical and avaricious, takes notice of this new wealth and ramps up taxes, trying to squeeze out all the tribute he can out of the place. The river delta lords are not happy**
* **As Lord Morningstar descends into unacceptable levels of tyranny, a few people begin to suggest that Lacaideon should do something to stop him, and soon these people begin to call on him to be the new Shurhath**
* **Many important characters of the narrative, recognising Lacaideon as the only feasible threat to Morningstar’s rule, pledge loyalty to him and urge him to send an army against Morningstar**
* **He eventually does so, facing Lord Morningstar in a climactic duel in the throne room**
* **The Grizzly Falcon, inspired by Lacaideon’s bravery, insists on fighting in the battle in the vanguard, and dies**
* **Lacaideon wins the duel as Morningstar manages to knock Lacaideon off balance and smashes his mace against Lacaideon’s left hand, forgetting that it is a prosthetic- Lacaideon does not feel any pain, and Morningstar loses focus for a crucial moment due to confusion, and Lacaideon kills him**
* **Lacaideon assumes the throne and is recognised as Shurhath across the continent**

#### Strand 2: The West | Hazin-Elphensbane-Kusaila-Oceanfire-Juggernaught-Dawn Star-Galar-Valorous-Ripper

* Hazin, the Mighty Lord of a large western domain, is suffering: he has what we would call depression, and although he is a good and competent ruler, he lacks the motivation to do anything and is deeply miserable/self-loathing
* His brother, Elphensbane , effectively runs the lordship in his absence, and sincerely pities his brother and wants him to get better. He is genuinely loyal to him and wants Hazin to start ruling again, but doesn’t know how
* In the desert, the Desert Ripper secretly longs for war, wanting to return to the raiding practices of the desert inhabitants of centuries past. The Shurhaths have forced them to live sedentary, non-raiding lifestyles, and the Ripper eagerly awaits the Dragonfly’s death so he can resume this practice
* Down south, the Juggernaught is a powerful askary lord who seeks power and the empire. Immensely driven and highly competent, he is a warlord with great force of will
* Valorous, one of the Brimstone Leopard’s sons, is working as an honoured retinue for the Juggernaught, and is genuinely respected by the latter due to his skill
* Valorous has been travelling around Ethagis doing various martial deeds for over a decade now, earning a continent-wide reputation and his sobriquet by working for different lords at different points and impressing them with his martial deeds and skill
* Oceanfire is an allaxionomer working for Hazin making chemical weapons, who throughout the narrative is vital in making chemical weapons like Greek fire to counter the desert raiders
* When war starts, Hazin is too demoralised and depressed to make any moves for the throne, and the lordship does nothing- the Ripper immediately starts raiding the surrounding lands including the periphery of Hazin’s lordship. Hazin does nothing
* The Juggernaught immediately makes his way to Semidon. He decides to go via the west as the Ripper does not seek the throne and is thus less likely to stop him, and Hazin is too weakened by misery to make his own move
* Valorous says he will support the Juggernaught and send him regiments in support if he pledges to let the South remain independent. He does so, and many Southern soldiers come north to back the Juggernaught
* The Juggernaught is soon stopped in making a move on Semidon by Soul Eater, and the two battle each other to prevent the other entering the capital
* The fight settles into a stalemate. Soul Eater and Purgatory try to outsmart the Juggernaught, but he’s a great general and can’t be outsmarted
* However, he has significantly fewer men and much less money than the duo. Hence, neither side gains much ground
* To get more men, the Juggernaught marries the daughter of a powerful askary lord in the region who has not yet committed any troops: the Dawn Star, who wants to be as powerful as possible
* The Dawn Star is manipulative and conniving, however, and conspires to improve her own powerbase within the Juggernaught’s ranks
* The Desert Ripper continues raiding Hazin’s domain, but local lords take care of it as it’s not that major and Hazin himself is unable to do anything
* The influx of troops from the Dawn Star’s dynasty allows the Juggernaught to start making progress
* Eventually, the Ripper’s brutality becomes more and more revealed as his power grows, with raids intensifying and the mass-enslavement and massacre of Ethigeans taking place as the Ripper becomes more and more feared and wealthy
* As the Juggernaught moves north, he becomes increasingly convinced that seizing the throne would be irrelevant as long as the Ripper holds power: the Ripper poses a greater threat than The Hydra of Semidon by far, and holding a throne means nothing if a brutal warlord is enslaving your own people
* The Juggernaught contracts Shadowbound and Shuriken to serve as his retinues and leads his soldiers into the desert to strike at the heart of the Ripper’s civilisation, but they are ill prepared for a desert campaign
* The Dawn Star has earned the hostility of Valorous, who recognises her to be a schemer. Seeking to weaken a newly-earned enemy, the Dawn Star begins undermining Valorous and making him look bad
* Valorous begins advising the Juggernaught to get out of there but the Dawn Star has undermined him- even though it is also in her best interest for the Juggernaught to leave and stay alive. She plays herself
* The Juggernaught’s nephew, Galar, seeks power and thus to have his uncle killed- he informs the Ripper of how weak the Juggernaught’s forces are with Shuriken’s help
* The Juggernaught then requests that Shadowbound and Shuriken kill the Ripper, as he suspects he will be unable to do it by military means
* The Ripper attacks the Juggernaught, spares Galar as per their deal, and kills both him and Valorous
* Shadowbound abandons the contract. Shuriken tries to kill the Ripper by herself but fails
* In the power vacuum, the Dawn Star brings the bulk of the Juggernaught’s remaining forces back to her father’s territory
* Galar succeeds the Juggernaught and goes back home with a few bands, seeking to build a new army
* Drunk on overconfidence, the Ripper becomes convinced of having great power and decides to be bolder, invading Hazin’s domain to the south and launching a full campaign. He’s been periodically raiding the land all this time, going deeper and deeper, but until now a full-on invasion was out of the question
* Elphensbane leads the domain’s men to fight back, but they’re demoralised. Hazin himself is still depressed and the men are uninspired, lacking a figurehead to rally around or a courageous leader
* Kusaila and many Southern soldiers come up from the South to avenge the Valorous, joining forces with Elphensbane. This improves his chances, but they still can’t actually *find* the Ripper
* When they do intercept him, Elphensbane’s demoralised army breaks and flees
* Kusaila, though he grown close to Elphensbane and wants to stay to avenge his son, eventually has to return back South to defend his country against the Meteor, a foreign invader
* Some of his Southern soldiers stay, however, and agree to serve Elphensbane, providing him with disciplined and skilled soldiers. A grateful Elphensbane promises that he will help Kusaila when he can
* Whilst these destructive raids have been going on, Hazin has become tortured with guilt over his inaction and weakness, and eventually this leads to a mounting sense of rage
* When the Ripper attacks Hazin’s capital in a brutal, destructive attack, the weight of his own people’s spilt blood drives Hazin to such immense rage that he runs out of his castle screaming with fury, like a berserker, and heroically rallies his about-to-flee troops
* The Ripper is repelled and Hazin finally feels in control of his life, and as all his subjects now actually respect him he grows confident- he dispels his depression and becomes extremely dynamic
* His full potential shines and his inner competence and justness show more and more, inspiring more fanatic loyalty amongst his people, encouraging Hazin to grow more confident and less depressed
* Hazin begins properly fighting back instead of just half-heartedly defending himself, and engages the Ripper in a series of large successful battles whilst some of his forces are distracted raiding the Marches (all the other land surrounding Nagal has been plundered already)
* Eventually, however, the Ripper deceives Hazin into making a poor move, and Hazin is captured, along with many of his soldiers. His soldiers are caged and forced to watch a shackled Hazin be humiliated and abused. The Ripper bullies Hazin, trying to get him to admit that he is, indeed, worthless
* Hazin appears to lose all his new-found confidence and is about to confess his own worthlessness, when suddenly he leaps into action and hits the Ripper in the face, stealing an axe from a guard and killing him, battling guards whilst freeing his captured subjects from their cages. Revealing his previous behaviour to an act, he triumphantly screams that he will never falter and his caged subjects are practically rapturous with joy and pride
* By moving so quickly and fighting with such fervour, Hazin actually manages to escape the guards and free many of his subjects by smashing their cages’ locks with an axe, sparking a full rebellion as the Ripper is briefly stunned by Hazin’s punch and unable to coordinate a resistance
* Hazin and his men heroically flee the Ripper’s castle, when at the last moment the Ripper, who has returned to consciousness, stabs Hazin through the back and massacres the vast majority of his men, with only Elphensbane and less than a dozen others escaping
* Elphensbane immediately plans revenge and tries to raise an army, soon finding volunteers from those in the realm who loved Hazin and fear the Ripper
* Elphensbane eventually succeeds in killing the Ripper and massacres all his supporters, allowing Lord Morningstar to send forces to the desert to easily subdue it
* A grateful Lord Morningstar affirms Elphensbane ’ succession to Mighty Lord (replacing his brother) and leaves
* Elphensbane’s Southern soldiers say that now the Ripper is dead, they wish to return home and defend their country. Elphensbane remembers his promise to help Kusaila and enthusiastically agrees, declaring that he will personally lead them back to the South
* Many of Elphensbane’s own troops volunteer to go with them and defend the South: these men have fought beside the Southerners for a long time now, and have grown very close to them. The skilled Southern troops have saved many of Elphensbane’s troops’ lives, and now they want to repay the favour
* Elphensbane arrives in the South just in time to save Kusaila from the Meteor. He drops off his volunteers and the Southern regiments, and returns back home to rebuild and to rule
* Elphensbane needs more men to replenish his depleted army, and so also marries the Dawn Star for the same reasons as the Juggernaught ages ago
* However, Oceanfire soon becomes aware of her scheming and alerts Elphensbane, who executes her for treason and keeps all of the Juggernaught’s old soldiers
* **Elphensbane , however, soon grows mistrustful of Lord Morningstar and supports the accession of Ironhand to the imperial throne, willingly renouncing all claims to the throne in favour of him- Oceanfire does the same**
* **Ironhand takes the throne and becomes Shurhath partially with the help of Elphensbane and his forces**

#### Strand 3: The Hydra & The Sword | Dragonfly-Scython-Cyzinian-Crossbow-Red Mantis-Jackdaw-The Wraithwreaker-Jasmine-Harpax-Firewalker

* At the start of the narrative, the realm is ruled by Dragonfly, an extremely mediocre ruler lost to decadence and incapable of enacting real change, not malevolent but too isolated and unconcerned for his subjects to reasonably be described as moral either
* The court is generally paralysed by arbitrary rituals and procedures, meaningless hedonism, factions and intrigue, and the lack of a real leader at the helm. Different political players, sometimes backed by factions, vie for influence over the Shurhath
* Due to the paralysis of the central government by politics and incompetence, the actual running of the empire has thus informally been devolved to noblemen across the realm
* Hence, the country is highly decentralised at the moment, to the point where many magnates are genuinely considering independence or taking over
* Things didn’t use to be so bad; the Dragonfly and court were always divided, incompetent, and decadent, but over the past six years or so things have gotten *particularly* terrible; twelve or so years ago few magnates were considering major change, now everyone is
* It is revealed far later in the story that this is a result of Sharkjaw hiring Shadowbound to repeatedly poison all the palace wines with small doses of lead, causing lead to gradually build up in the Dragonfly and his court (there are many hints to this throughout the series however, including in the prologue of Book I)
* Lead naturally tastes sweet so no suspicion was aroused, and it causes neurological and cognitive defects; irritability, aggression, memory loss, fatigue, and other behavioural/ intellectual problems
* The aim of this was to make the central government ineffective and weak to encourage decentralisation and eventually war; Sharkjaw wants a war to happen as he is a slavemonger and in wartime, Ethigeans can be legally enslaved and sold
* The vast majority of the court is affected by the poisoned wine; the major political players (Wraithwreaker, Red Mantis, Jackdaw, etc) however are not. This is because they drink little alcohol in order to keep a clear mind and sharp mind, which they deem necessary to navigate the complex politics of the court
* The Red Mantis is the Grand Lord Censor of the Realm and is arguably the most influential politician at court, with myriad plans and schemes that give him an almost puppeteer role
* He is also the courtier with the most retinues exempting the Shurhath and his lieutenant
* The Wraithwreaker is the Grand Seneschal of the Imperial Harem who administers the Shurhath’s concubines, with a whispered reputation for poisoning his enemies that earned him his sobriquet
* The Jackdaw is a court jester, and uses the unique nature of his position to exert influence over the Shurhath and escape the influence of others. Just as the Red Mantis, he has various alliances and schemes in place at court
* Concubines lack enough access to court wines to ingest enough lead to be cognitively impaired, and Cyzinian avoids drinking wine as he sees it as effeminate and un-soldierly. He also forbids his retinues from drinking any due to these reasons; although they do so occasionally when not being watched, they don’t ingest enough lead to be impaired
* The Dragonfly’s son, Scython, is a malleable and uninspiring- but still fairly sweet- youth who looks up to his bodyguard, Cyzinian, more than his actual father, who doesn’t really do much to raise him
* Cyzinian is extremely loyal and is an amazing bodyguard but lacks the emotional sensitivity or the desire to be a father figure, and who refuses on principle to play a part in raising/forming the young Scython
* This is because Cyzinian intensely disdains politics and court culture and doesn’t want Scython to be moulded by external influences, thus not providing one himself and hoping that the young man finds his own way
* This will prove to be a terrible strategy as everyone else in the court *will* manipulate and influence Scython when he takes the throne. Cyzinian realises this, but sees his principles as inviolable and will still refuse to give him guidance
* Harpax is a military engineer commissioned by the Dragonfly to make siege devices and other instruments for war, although he makes torture devices in his spare time because he’s a bit of a psychopath
* When the Dragonfly dies, Scython becomes Shurhath, and is suddenly influenced by various courtiers who hope to use him as a puppet: indeed, Scython is extremely malleable and unexperienced
* The nation inevitably erupts into war as the nobles of the realm sense weakness and move to claim the throne itself, although many are too busy attacking each other to invade Semidon
* Cyzinian, highly loyal to Scython, resolves to stay with him at all times to protect him, although the pusillanimous Scython refuses to leave Semidon: as Cyzinian is appointed general of all Scython’s forces, the imperial army stays in the capital
* Scython is not at all a competent person and Cyzinian soon assumes all Scython’s military powers, commanding the imperial forces: due to his disdain for politics, however, he refuses to use these forces for political purposes, instead allowing the court to assume all civil functions and continue to rule the crownlands
* Scython starts to become dependent, cowardly, and a little arrogant, being constantly manipulated and flattered by his courtiers
* Eventually, the Blackfish attacks Semidon, but Scython has a decently large army and Cyzinian is a good general and warrior, fighting in the battle himself and leading his forces to victory. The Blackfish dies in battle, leaving his domain (the Delta) in a state of anarchy
* Scython becomes increasingly influenced by the factions at court, who continually battle for power in a great political game of espionage and intrigue. Four main figures emerge as the key influences over the boy: his jester, Jackdaw, one of his concubines, Jasmine, The Wraithwreaker, and the Red Mantis
* The former two eventually form a vague alliance against the other two, who also form a vague alliance: the former two wish to manipulate Scython for personal gain, but ultimately want Scython to be weak/pliant, whereas the latter two also want to manipulate the boy and want him to be violent/cruel
* Cyzinian urges Scython to lead the imperial forces east to destroy Assur’s dynasty and occupy the realm, adding new land to imperial control and to seize the opportunity to expand crown power
* Scython, pressured by those around him into preserving his own life, refuses to leave the safety of Semidon, and Cyzinian reluctantly keeps the imperial army garrisoned in the crownlands, repelling invaders rather than seizing the offence
* Scython gradually becomes an arrogant, selfish, paranoid, and less empathic/benign person as a result of being essentially a pawn in all these games, with each faction constantly manipulating him by nurturing these attributes in him for their own gain
* Cyzinian notices this and starts to get uneasy
* Cyzinian becomes increasingly disillusioned with the young Shurhath and utterly unconvinced of any merit or virtue on the latter’s behalf, struggling with his two internal beliefs of unquestioning loyalty and wishing to serve someone who actually deserves his loyalty
* Firewalker proves himself a brave and skilled soldier and gradually rises through the ranks, gaining a command over more and more men, eventually reaching the formal rank of Jagal
* Cyzinian doesn’t do this himself; a lord in his army does so. However, he hears about it and approves of the decision. Cyzinian believes in strict hierarchy in society, but supports war as the sole mechanism of social mobility. He believes that courage and martial prowess *should* be rewarded with social status. Indeed, in an ideal society free from politics and court intrigue, social status would be determined by valour and martial skill
* Harpax, flooded with prisoners of war to abuse and discard, begins testing out various torture devices and invents new and unethical weapons of war, soon gaining favour with the increasingly malevolent Shurhath
* The Red Mantis and The Wraithwreaker eventually team up to take out their political opponents, targeting Jasmine over the more wily Jackdaw. They conspire to have her framed, and, having been disgraced and implicated in ‘treason’ (criticising Scython behind his back), Scython has her ruthlessly executed by giving her to Harpax
* By this point Scython is a cruel and fairly malevolent person, and turns on people very quickly at the behest of the courtiers which have influenced him
* This demonstration of Scython’s caprice and brutality, turning so quickly and cruelly on someone he used to deeply care about, is a massive red flag to Cyzinian, who values loyalty and steadfastness
* He doesn’t care about Jasmine as a person, seeing her as just another poisonous political player who tried to manipulate Scython, but rather what she represents: Scython continually claimed to love her and yet turned on her in an instant when he felt insulted
* He eventually decides that loyalty to Scython simply no longer complies with his own personal philosophy and leaves, killing Harpax out of hatred and contempt before doing so and taking a horse with him, killing the two guards of the castle doors who try and stop him
* For the first time in his life, Cyzinian is genuinely uncertain of who he is and what he should do, and simply heads out in one direction out of Semidon- north- back to his dynastic homeland in order to rest and find himself
* Scython is genuinely upset that Cyzinian left and initially questions his behaviour, thinking that he should make Cyzinian proud. The Red Mantis and Wraithwreaker change his perspective, however, manipulating him into thinking that Cyzinian was wrong to abandon him and that Scython should hate him
* As a political move, they also purge all of Cyzinian’s retinues, worrying that with Cyzinian no longer keeping them apolitical, they will become another faction at court
* This is a disastrous decision as Cyzinian and his retinues were the most competent, militarily capable people at court and now nobody suitable is left to lead the army
* The Red Mantis and The Wraithwreaker continue scheming against Jackdaw, unable to realise in their selfish pursuit for power that they’re highly vulnerable
* Eventually, in the Second Battle of Semidon, Soul Eater attacks Semidon and successfully storms it, having Scython, the Red Mantis, The Wraithwreaker, and the Jackdaw killed
* Firewalker fights nobly in the battle but is defeated by Thundermaw’s forces and is forced to fall back. Recognising that Scython is a lost cause, he moves north with his men to join Lord Morningstar, whom he believes to be another cause for him to fight for and fuel his ambition for power
* Lord Morningstar gladly receives a loyal and committed soldier and makes him an asthan, giving him a much greater command, including over Crossbow
* Cyzinian grows restless in his fief and decides to leave again, seeking a suitable liege to serve. He starts making his way to the Delta
* Crossbow and Firewalker soon begin an affair, although the former eventually comes to realise that the sheer force of Firewalker’s ambition blinds him to morality and she rejects him
* Cyzinian arrives in the Delta and is shocked by the anarchy and chaos in the region. He laments that Scython didn’t invade the lordship after the Blackfish was killed, as without a warlord to unify the territory it became easy prey for bandits
* Whilst travelling through the Delta, he sustains himself by hunting and robbery/homicide of the bandits there
* Meanwhile, Lord Morningstar, camping in the north of the delta, sends regular foraging parties down south to salvage whatever he can from the place. One of the foraging parties, including Crossbow, begins foraging in the woodland that Cyzinian has set up in
* Cyzinian chases them away, but Crossbow trips and falls. She expects Cyzinian to kill her but Cyzinian, admiring her precociousness, helps her and offers to escort her back to her camp
* On the way they stumble across one of the main bandits in the region, a secondary character who has been harassing Crossbow and her forces for some time. They kill him and continue back to camp
* As they arrive, Crossbow offers to introduce Cyzinian to Lord Morningstar, but Cyzinian doesn’t want to serve him as Crossbow has told him that Chainbreaker is one of his commanders. Cyzinian is very status-oriented and hates the idea of a slave commander, and besides suspects that Morningstar is too ambitious and conniving. Crossbow confirms these suspicions. They amicably part ways, and Cyzinian decides to march south to find a suitable liege
* He stumbles across a large force of bandits harassing some people, and saves them. They take him to his lord, the Grizzly Falcon, whose character Cyzinian comes to admire. Cyzinian swears loyalty to him
* However, the Grizzly Falcon is an aging lord with small forces, and isn’t as dynamic or powerful as Cyzinian would have liked. Frustrated by the lord’s weakness and inability to fight, Cyzinian leaves him, though as he still likes the guy he gives him a note of thanks and some plunder
* Cyzinian travels west, searching for someone powerful and impressive to be a lieutenant to- someone with a martial spirit. He decides to go to the Mighty Lordship of Nagal
* After the Ripper’s death, someone succeeded him, but this succession was disputed and the lordship has various rebels jockeying for power there. Cyzinian decides to offer his services to the Ripper’s successor, who gleefully accepts
* But whilst Cyzinian admires the lord’s strength, courage, and martial prowess, he despises his cruelty and unnecessary brutality. This is fairly new for Cyzinian, who didn’t care this much about cruelty before
* Cyzinian also never really cared about the condition of slaves before, but after seeing the Nagalens severely abuse them, he becomes angered. Eventually, after the lord starts torturing a slave for no real reason, Cyzinian challenges him to a duel in anger
* Not only does Cyzinian absolutely destroy the lord in the duel, but he also kills several of his retinues when they challenge him. He single-handedly cows the entire court into submission, and simply walks out
* Cyzinian has always envisioned himself as a ‘number 2’ kind of guy, a loyal lieutenant to a deserving lord. But he simply cannot find such a lord anywhere, which motivates him to stop travelling around seeking them and to just live how he wants to live
* He’s always liked the Springlands, so goes there and lives by his own principles, surviving by foraging, hunting, and killing groups of bandits
* **He eventually comes to hear of Ironhand, now the new Mighty Lord of the region. Stories and rumours begin to circulate around the realm about Ironhand, and Cyzinian goes to investigate him**
* **He is extremely impressed with Ironhand and sincerely vows his eternal service, soon being recognised by Ironhand as the outstanding right-hand-man he is and becoming a sort of personal lieutenant to him**
* **Cyzinian becomes the Labienus to Ironhand’s Julius Caesar and Ironhand splits his total forces into two bodies in order to fight Morningstar; one commanded by him, the other by Cyzinian. The two armies converge on Semidon in a pincer movement and seize the city, establishing Ironhand as Shurhath**

#### Strand 4: Soul Eater | Soul Eater-Purgatory-Juggernaught-Scython-Morningstar-Thundermaw-Revenant

* Soul Eater is an extremely malevolent and tyrannical Mighty Lord who rules his lordship cruelly, often influenced by his mother, Purgatory, who it is clear is the source of her son’s malice
* At the start of the war Soul Eater immediately tries to invade Semidon but is distracted by the Juggernaught, an askary lord from the south who has rapidly moved north in order to himself seize the capital
* The Juggernaught and Soul Eater attack each other
* The conflict becomes a stalemate
* Purgatory creates a secret police force for her realm, which she calls the Reaper Guard. The secret police are loyal to her personally rather than Soul Eater. They soon become feared throughout Soul Eater’s domain
* The leader of the Reaper Guard gains his own sobriquet, Tarantula, amongst the commoners who fear the secret police. Purgatory encourages this, seeking to turn Tarantula into a symbol of state fear and power
* The Juggernaught marries the daughter of a powerful askary lord to increase his manpower. This is successful, and he changes the balance of power
* The stalemate slowly starts to resolve in favour of the Juggernaught, who gradually moves north towards Semidon
* Thundermaw is introduced to the story here. Thundermaw has been a levy under Soul Eater before, conscripted into service to crush a rebellion, and fought well enough to be appointed a sergeant
* He has been re-conscripted in this war as a sergeant and is leading an ‘experimental’ unit of gunpowder-weapon users
* Purgatory expands the Reaper Guard- she does this throughout the series until her death
* Thundermaw is promoted to a jagal and has a personal meeting with Soul Eater where he impresses him with his philosophising and discussion of morality
* Soul Eater (mistakenly) sees a kindred spirit in Thundermaw (as he doesn’t understand his philosophy) and decides to give him jurisdiction over the prisoners of war that the army captures
* Soul Eater is a vicious bastard and therefore commands Thundermaw to condemn a certain number of prisoners to death. Thundermaw, fearing the consequences of disobedience, obeys, but he sees this state of forced compliance as degrading and thus resolves to do something about it when he can
* Thundermaw and his gunpowder unit is successful on the battlefield, leading credibility to the idea that gunpowder can be used in warfare. So far, most armies don’t use gunpowder on the field, but the war is a surge in use of these weapons
* Thundermaw gains a measure of fame for leading the famed gunpowder unit and indeed his sobriquet. He enjoys his dominance on the battlefield but loathes having to obey Soul Eater’s malicious command to execute a quota of prisoners and starts deliberately disobeying it, threatening his soldiers to ensure nobody tells
* After the Juggernaught decides to move his forces west into the desert, he is killed by the Ripper, and Soul Eater is no longer impeded. He musters his forces, gathers strength, and marches on the capital
* He successfully takes Semidon because Cyzinian is no longer there and the court are utterly incompetent
* His soldiers kill the Wraithwreaker in the castle and have killed Jackdaw, who is hiding in a crypt
* Soul Eater becomes the new Shurhath, sending his forces out to terrorise the country into submission
* The Red Mantis escapes to the forest near the castle, chased away by Soul Eater’s troops. Whilst escaping, he gets hit in the groin with a poisoned arrow and struggles into the forest, hiding in a small, muddy cave to evade soldiers
* The poison doesn’t kill him but severely affects his whole nervous system. It causes him to have severe hallucinations, and he sees a vision of Kalawi
* Kalawi tells him that he can bring him back to life, resurrecting him as a creature beyond any human. In this new form, he will be able to indulge his innermost, primal desires for power and destruction. In exchange for his rebirth, Kalawi demands his soul
* The Red Mantis accepts and falls into a deep sleep
* He wakes up with severe damage to his nervous system as a result of the poison. He has a total neuropathy, and feels no physical pain or sensation from anywhere in his body. His brain is also severely impacted, dulling his emotions and making him unable to feel fear. His personality changes greatly, and he acts inhumanly, more like a zombie/god
* He also had a severe whole-body dermatological reaction to the poison, with almost his entire epidermis necrosing and flaking away. To keep all his skin from sloughing off, he wraps himself in rags and bandages
* He feels *completely* different psychologically to before and feels like a supernatural demon, not a human. He sees himself as the spawn of Kalawi and decides to spend his second life indulging his darkest fantasies and spreading chaos. Indeed, he intends to subsume the entire world in chaos, bringing about a global apocalypse
* The Red Mantis always had these dark fantasies within him but never indulged them. He wasn’t physically powerful enough to exert power physically and contented his need for power with schemes and indirect measures. Moreover, the parts of his brain responsible for inhibiting his primal desires were still active. Now, they’ve been irreversibly damaged and his darkest instincts become completely un-restrained and go crazy
* He decides that the best way to sow chaos in the world is with Soul Eater as he would wholly support the Red Mantis’ desire to spread fear and violence across the country
* The Red Mantis staggers into the royal court. Soul Eater’s guards immediately attack him as he enters the throne room but due to his immunity from pain and fear he simply looks at them. This thoroughly creeps them out and immediately gets Soul Eater’s attention. His mother is also standing behind the throne and she notices too
* The Red Mantis talks for a bit, and the sheer inhuman-ness of him fascinates and unnerves the entire court. He refers to himself as the ‘Spawn of Kalawi’ without irony and he’s so messed up that some people almost believe it
* He says that he used to be known as the Red Mantis. This immediately puts everyone on alert as the Red Mantis was a member of an enemy Shurhath’s court. But the Red Mantis asserts that he is a completely different entity now and gives himself a new sobriquet
* He remembers that in his vision Kalawi said that he would be a revenant of who he once has, and so the Red Mantis calls himself the Revenant. He asks for a role in Soul Eater’s military
* Soul Eater is extremely enthusiastic at this idea. Being a sadistic, vicious bastard, he admires the Revenant and also recognises that having a fearsome soldier like him would spread terror and prestige for his dynasty
* Purgatory, being far more intelligent, is more wary. She knows that the Revenant wants to use Soul Eater as a vehicle to achieve his own ends and feels no loyalty towards him. But when the Revenant offers to join both Soul Eater’s army and Purgatory’s secret police, she sees too good an opportunity to pass up. She accepts
* The Revenant very quickly becomes a semi-revered figure in Soul Eater’s army, and a cult of personality develops among the soldiers around him. This is unsurprising; many of Soul Eater’s soldiers are bad, vicious people, and the Revenant genuinely seems like something beyond human
* A few soldiers who are most dedicated to him dress themselves in rags and bandages in order to mimic him one drunken night. The practice spreads
* This gets to Purgatory and Soul Eater’s attention. The latter doesn’t see the problem but Purgatory is concerned that the soldiers are more loyal to the Revenant than their Shurhath
* She decides to hold a meeting with him and subtly interrogate him. Unsatisfied with his loyalty, Purgatory resolves to have him killed
* However, before she can, Soul Eater accidentally kills his mother first. They have an argument and it escalates to the point where Purgatory severely insults him. In a fit of anger, he hits her and she bashes her head against a cupboard, dying
* Soul Eater becomes heavily influenced by the Revenant thereafter, as Purgatory is no longer there to distance him from the throne. The Revenant becomes the power behind the throne by manipulating Soul Eater. Many of Soul Eater’s soldiers start to worship him, owing their loyalty to him personally rather than Soul Eater
* Hundreds of ‘revenants’ start to pop up, ordinary soldiers who dress their body and face in rags and bandages in honour of the Revenant
* Meanwhile, in the immediate aftermath of the Second Battle of Semidon, there are lots of prisoners of war that have been captured. Thundermaw must condemn a certain proportion of them to death, and his refusal to do so finally draws the attention of Soul Eater
* Soul Eater orders him to come to the imperial court to be sentenced but Thundermaw refuses, suspecting he’ll be tortured for his disobedience. He instead remains in the Crownlands
* Soul Eater therefore declares Thundermaw to be an outlaw, but he and his troops mutiny and declare that they’ll fight any forces sent after them. Thundermaw mutinies partly out of necessity and partly because he genuinely feels contempt for Soul Eater and believes he’s superior to him and thus shouldn’t serve him
* Thundermaw’s men don’t love him, but they do hate Soul Eater, and agree to mutiny as well
* Soul Eater sends a detachment to put down the mutiny- they nearly succeed, but Chainbreaker’s forces arrive by coincidence during a hit-and-run raid. They repel Soul Eater’s army and take the mutineers prisoner, along with Thundermaw
* Thundermaw speaks with Chainbreaker personally and agrees to help drill his troops in exchange for freedom
* Purgatory decides that the Commonwealth needs to be decisively crushed now and berates Soul Eater for not doing this as soon as he became Shurhath. She ingeniously uses biological warfare, the Reaper Guard, and psychological warfare to siege out Azariad and destroy it
* Thundermaw is killed in the engagement, but thanks to his drilling Chainbreaker and a few regiments are able to escape the scene
* After the mother and son return to Semidon, Purgatory foils an assassination attempt by Shadowbound and Shuriken, killing the former and causing the distraught latter to flee
* Purgatory harbours a lot of underlying resentment for Chainbreaker’s escape and starts an argument with Soul Eater as a result. The argument escalates and ends in Soul Eater accidentally killing her. The Revenant becomes the real power behind the throne
* The Reaper Guard is assigned by the Revenant to protect Soul Eater in order to ward off future assassination attempts
* The Revenant sees himself as the Spawn of Kalawi, and as such wants to attack the semadai, a class of monks who devote themselves to service of Ilyzor. He convinces Soul Eater to attack their mountain
* The Revenant personally kills the Hammer of Ilyzor, devastating Indigo
* However, the attack goes very poorly- because attacking mountains defended by elite warriors obviously would. It bleeds away much of Soul Eater’s strength, causing Lord Morningstar to see an opportunity to attack
* Eventually, Lord Morningstar storms Semidon and successfully takes it, killing Soul Eater in the council room (a chamber behind the throne room)
* The Revenant leads several regiments away from Semidon once it becomes clear that the battle will be lost, and leads them east to the Delta

#### Strand 5: Lord Morningstar | Morningstar-Scorpion-Arzachel-Crossbow-Firewalker-Srigo-Chainbreaker-Shuriken-Shadowbound

* At the start of the narrative, much of the Autumnlands is ruled by a Mighty Lord called the Scorpion, a selfish and uninspiring ruler who covets the throne. He isn’t impotent like the Dragonfly is, but is generally incompetent and lacks any dynamism or force of character
* Crossbow is a fisher in a small village who strongly cares about protecting friends and family. She’s a brilliant archer but, as a woman, is encouraged to just focus on fishing
* Morningstar is everything that the Scorpion is not- an extremely charismatic and intelligent person and an outstanding general, though he is a minor lord and lacks much real power
* When war starts, the Scorpion announces his intention to seize the throne and begins mustering an army, marching against the other minor lords of the Autumnlands. He does this successfully because he is overwhelmingly more powerful than them, but it takes a while
* Morningstar soon distinguishes himself as a commander and begins building up his own powerbase, utilising his soldiers’ fanatic loyalty to him to do so
* Crossbow’s village is soon raided by a minor band deviating from their army, and she heroically organises a last stand defence after the village’s main fighters are dead. Inspired by her success, she seeks out her local lord and asks to enlist, dressing as a man. Lord Morningstar is the lord whose territory happens to include her village, and he accepts
* Lord Morningstar wins battle after battle, conquering rivals supposedly in the loyal service of the Scorpion, who is his liege. Crossbow comes to lead a battery of archers. She fights valiantly, but reviles the brutality of war. Nonetheless, she sees it as an unfortunate part of life and soldiers on
* She grows close to the archers under her command, and at the end of part 2 takes one of them to a battlefield doctor mid-battle; Arzachel. She helps Arzachel perform an amputation and comforts some of the soldiers
* She goes back to the front to keep fighting after Arzachel’s strict sergeant, Lakare, urges her to get back to doing her duties
* After some more battles, Morningstar eventually sends his forces against the Scorpion and kills him. The overwhelming majority of the Scorpion’s forces join his banner after he personally delivers speeches to them, exhorting them to join him and take glory
* Crossbow hears these and muses that maybe war is not an inevitable part of life, as she has always assumed, and is instead propagated merely by bad people looking for social advancement. Crossbow is clever, but lacks any kind of education, and doesn’t currently pursue these vague thoughts further
* The battle between Morningstar and the Scorpion is bloody and floods Arzachel’s medical tent with casualties. After the battle, Arzachel desperately needs some fresh air and ventures into the empty field, where he sees a dying soldier
* With great sadness, he sees that the soldier is a man of the Scorpion, and treating enemy soldiers is treason. After much deliberation, catalysed by the dying’s man agonised screaming, he decides to treat him anyway
* The dying man can’t be saved, but he has a meaningful, genuinely tender moment with Arzachel, and Arzachel is glad that he helped the dying man. The latter gives him a personal keepsake- an elephant figurine his wife gave him before he was conscripted- before he dies
* A personal enemy of Arzachel sees this and tells the doctor-general, who tells Lord Morningstar. He summons Arzachel for a military trial for treason. He asks Arzachel bluntly if he treated an enemy soldier. Arzachel, not wanting to lie, says yes
* Lord Morningstar is about to sentence him to death but Lakare breathlessly intervenes, claiming that he had a moment of sentimentality but is an extremely competent doctor and has saved many soldiers’ lives
* Lord Morningstar agrees to let him live, if he burns the elephant figurine as evidence that he won’t let sentimentality distract him again. Arzachel does so with extreme reluctance, and never really forgives him
* Lord Morningstar faces a rebellion from one of his generals, who attacks his loyal forces in an ambush. It seems like Morningstar is going to lose, and enemy forces break Morningstar’s lines and storm forwards, reaching the medical tents
* All the doctors flee, but Arzachel refuses to abandon dying soldiers. Lakare desperately urges him to run away but Arzachel will not. Lakare himself leaves and isn’t seen again
* Eventually, Morningstar (being a brilliant tactician) somehow manages to turn the battle around and defeat his rebellious general. He finds out that Arzachel was the only doctor that stayed and meets him in private
* He says that he’ll make him a sergeant-doctor as a reward for his valour. After a pause, he apologises for making Arzachel burn the elephant. He chooses the exact words to say to make Arzachel forgive him, and he does
* A discerning reader could tell that Morningstar is calculating exactly what to say to get forgiveness (and notice that Morningstar doesn’t tell Arzachel he can treat a dying enemy soldier again) and doesn’t actually mean it
* Crossbow also amasses social status, and her men (who still think she’s a man) give her the sobriquet Crossbow
* Lord Morningstar hears that a peasant in his ranks has gained a sobriquet, and, curious, chooses to meet her in person and see what she’s like
* He doesn’t recognise her from when she enlisted but this time detects that she’s a woman; Crossbow is older now and it’s harder to hide. However, as she’s a good soldier, he lets her stay. Crossbow implores him not to tell anyone as it’s not safe for all the soldiers- some of whom having raped women before when conquering cities- to find out. He accepts
* Crossbow is drawn to Morningstar’s charisma and likes him, but has the lingering impression that he lacks principles and simply wants glory. She is still loyal to him, but she returns to the idea that war doesn’t need to be inevitable and is instead a man-made ill
* Crossbow and Arzachel now have around the same seniority in the military and see each other more and more often. They eventually become real friends, and Arzachel teaches Crossbow how to read
* Before moving to Semidon, Morningstar decides to swell his ranks further with soldiers and plunder, going south-east to Assur’s old domain, which is now effectively leaderless and in anarchy
* Morningstar masterfully defeats the various warlords there, and alienates the nobility by siphoning their wealth and peasants, the latter of whom eagerly flock to his cause
* His relentless plundering of the whole region alienates Crossbow, however, who concludes that Lord Morningstar ultimately cares about only wealth and glory. She then has a sort of epiphany, realising that that’s all any of these lords care about
* All this war and suffering is essentially the result of a few powerful individuals seeking to gratify their desires
* She hates working under such lords but feels like there’s nothing else she can do and feels trapped in her role
* Firewalker defects to Lord Morningstar, who gladly receives him and makes him an asthan. Firewalker is given a retinue, Srigo, by random allocation
* Though he’s a nice, well-meaning person with a strong aversion to bloodshed and ‘glory’, Firewalker relates to the boy’s farm upbringing and feels slightly paternal towards him, training him to be better at fighting and slightly braver. Srigo in time comes to like him
* Crossbow is also technically under Firewalker’s command
* Crossbow and Firewalker meet and are attracted to each other, being involved for some time (Firewalker can tell she’s a woman and swears not to tell anyone else). Firewalker teaches Crossbow how to fight with a sword during this time
* Crossbow is initially drawn to Firewalker’s ambition but becomes repulsed by him when she realises he only has ambition and has never questioned the morality of what he’s doing or the dignity of laboriously climbing up a social hierarchy that’s stacked against him
* Crossbow and Firewalker, as part of Atheas’ army, part down a rebellion in the region
* Until his attack on Semidon, Morningstar pulls back to the north of the river delta, using the fresh water there to supply his troops. His soldiers occasionally go on foraging raids, further draining the place of resources
* Crossbow encounters Cyzinian in the forest, and work together to kill bandits in the region who have been harassing Lord Morningstar’s forces. Cyzinian comes to respect her courage and military skill, which challenges his view on women and by extension the entire belief system he has held until now
* Crossbow offers to introduce Cyzinian to Lord Morningstar, who would no doubt be overjoyed at his defection and immediately make him a lieutenant. Cyzinian asks what Morningstar’s character is like, and Crossbow tells him that the lord is highly charismatic, but conniving and megalomaniacal
* Cyzinian refuses to serve him partially based on these reasons, and Crossbow says that she too dislikes serving him, but doesn’t see a way out or an alternative lifestyle. She could theoretically escape from camp, but has no idea what she’d do and therefore remains in service
* Cyzinian calls her a coward and tells her that she could forage for food and rob bandits for sustenance, and could simply wander around until she finds a cause that fits her principles. Cyzinian is doing just this and offers to take her with him, but Crossbow decides she doesn’t want to just serve another lord and refuses
* Chainbreaker also joins Lord Morningstar with the provision that Lord Morningstar should kill Soul Eater and liberate slaves. Morningstar states he will still use slaves but gives Chainbreaker command of a small force to raid the Crownlands with, allowing him to liberate as many slaves as he wants there
* Shuriken and Shadowbound, who have been covertly fighting over Chainbreaker this whole time, eventually also become retinues of Lord Morningstar
* He sends them on a mission to kill Purgatory: he recognises that she is the power behind the throne and it would therefore damage Soul Eater a lot if she were killed, but Morningstar wants to kill Soul Eater himself because there’s a big stigma around lords using assassins to do dirty work and he wants the support of the realm
* Purgatory actually manages to kill Shadowbound, and Shuriken is hurt, just managing to escape back to Morningstar where Arzachel treats her and restores her back to health
* Nonetheless, Soul Eater eventually kills Purgatory anyway, and Morningstar seriously considers taking advantage of the weakness to attack Semidon now
* Crossbow defects and resolves to live only for herself, rejecting the social hierarchy of the realm and having to work for a lord who cares only about their own interests
* She also abandons her disguise as a man, feeling capable enough to defend herself and rejecting having to disguise herself and deny her true identity for the sake of her society
* She opts to keep her sobriquet (despite sobriquets being elements of a social system that she perceives as rewarding violence and domination) as it was awarded to her by her soldiers
* After saying an emotional goodbye to Arzachel in the dead of night, she walks away into the forest. Before she does, she gives a keepsake to Arzachel, a lucky charm of hers; a wooden baithook that she used for fishing
* Having gained enough strength, Lord Morningstar attacks Semidon and captures it in a glorious battle, killing Soul Eater himself. The empire celebrates. Srigo, mourning the death of Firewalker in the battle but relieved to be alive, is allowed to go back home, and farms again
* Morningstar, whilst on the throne, finds himself growing corrupted and restless
* Craving an outlet for his energy and ambition, and at the urging of Chainbreaker, he attacks Sharkjaw’s compound and kills Sharkjaw personally
* Among the slaves ‘liberated’ is the scholar’s son from the first prologue, who by now has lost his left arm due to making a mistake in accounting. He is ecstatic at being freed, before finding out that he’s ‘under new management’
* Without a military campaign to occupy his mind, Morningstar descends fully into megalomania, paranoia, and tyranny
* After a scholar publishes a political treatise about different forms of government- which Morningstar interprets as an expression of treason- Morningstar has him killed and all his sons sold into slavery
* He also reinstates Purgatory’s old secret police force, the Reaper Guard, which he abolished after capturing the throne
* **Morningstar becomes especially suspicious that Ironhand has been chosen as the Mighty Lord of the Delta without his knowledge or approval, and his courtiers try their hardest to mollify him and alleviate his concerns**
* **Rumours about Ironhand’s extreme skill, force of character, and personal morality penetrate the court and are widely circulated**
* **Arzachel decides to go and meet Ironhand, wondering if he might make a better ruler than Morningstar. He decides that not only would he make a better ruler than Morningstar, he would probably be the best ruler of all time**
* **Morningstar’s secret police, the Reaper Guard, find this out and tell Morningstar. He organises a trial of Arzachel in front of the entire court wherein he accuses Arzachel of treason**
* **Arzachel vociferously defends himself, arguing his loyalty is to Arzachel and he has no sentimentality about anything else. Morningstar likes Arzachel and so wants to believe him. To test his loyalty, he orders that Morningstar burns the wooden baithook that Crossbow gave him**
* **Arzachel refuses and Morningstar sentences him to death by execution. Before Arzachel is killed, he says a few last words to Morningstar. Arzachel’s execution alienates a lot of people in the court**
* **Repulsed by this breaking point and by the knowledge that Morningstar is only going to get worse, many figures defect to Ironhand, rallying around him and pinning their hopes on him to overthrow the tyrant Morningstar**
* **News of Ironhand’s deeds and character spreads throughout the realm, with many people displaced by war aiming for the Delta to start a new life under what they hear is a benevolent ruler there**
* **Ironhand receives many of these emigrating peasants personally, greeting them and accepting oaths of fealty. One of the people who arrives is Crossbow, who is leading just over a dozen armed commoners behind her**
* **Ironhand recognises her sobriquet although doesn’t know her personally, and asks about her life and what she’s been doing**
* **It comes out that after abandoning Lord Morningstar, Crossbow wandered the region killing/robbing bandits, taking bounties, and foraging for food in forests. She eventually amassed a small gaggle of peasants under his leadership who act as vigilantes, countering banditry and protecting locals**
* **They refused to bow to any lord and, like Crossbow, rejected all social hierarchy, declaring themselves to be living outside Feyriatal and despising the hereditary aristocracy**
* **However, they heard of Ironhand and how he genuinely cared for the welfare of the commonry. Rumours of his goodness came from almost every person they saved and bandit they killed. They decided to meet him**
* **Although Crossbow declares that she only come to see him out of curiosity, Ironhand convinces her and the vast majority of her troop to fight under his banner and formally pardons their vigilantism**
* **Crossbow and her troop are assigned to fight in Cyzinian’s army; Cyzinian recognises Crossbow and is genuinely happy to see not only that she’s alive and well, but that she followed her principles**
* **However, these principles directly violate his own; he does not believe women should fight in an army and- completely unlike Crossbow- strongly believes in the value of social hierarchy and order and cannot stand the idea of a commoner asserting equality with a lord**
* **Cyzinian refuses to let Crossbow and her band of vigilantes in his army, and is personally overruled by Ironhand. He reluctantly appoints Crossbow as the leader of an archer battery**
* **Over the course of his campaign against Lord Morningstar, Crossbow continually distinguishes herself. Cyzinian notices this prowess and begins to question his belief that women are by their nature unsuited for combat. The questioning of his beliefs on women leads itself into a wider rumination on whether his previous political beliefs are correct- this train of thought leads itself into him questioning his very personality, and whether he’s too rigid in his principles and not open to change. He dismisses these thoughts, however**
* **After losing a battle against Lord Morningstar due to his foot archers being poorly commanded, he decides that he should prioritise his judgement/good sense over his rigid beliefs and principles**
* **He visits Crossbow and promotes her to leader of all his foot archers. They have a conversation and, despite their political differences, mutually respect each other and recognise their personal similarities**
* **Cyzinian begins to more seriously question his political beliefs and personality as his decision to promote Crossbow pays off, with Crossbow leading forces towards victory**
* **Morningstar prepares for a great defence of Semidon against Ironhand’s forces, and drafts back many peasants into service, including Srigo. Srigo has combat experience and quickly becomes an unofficial leader of his squad**
* **Morningstar is eventually killed by Ironhand personally, who becomes Shurhath. Srigo dies in the battle**
* **Ironhand offers to make Crossbow an asthan after the battle but she refuses, sticking to her desire to stay apart from the social hierarchy and reject it**
* **However, she promises that whilst Ironhand is Shurhath she and her troop won’t revert back to vigilantism and will instead settle down in the Delta, living within the law**
* **Once Ironhand dies and Typhoon inherits the throne, Crossbow and most of her troop leave the Delta and once again take up a nomadic life of vigilantism, growing her band until it becomes widely known and many of her vigilantes get their own sobriquets from society**

#### Strand 6: The South | Brimstone Leopard-Archangel-Cataclysm-Elphensbane-Meteor-Panthercaul

* Kusaila is the absolutist and respected ruler of the South, willingly obeyed by his noblemen and people
* The South has a hardy people, necessarily skilled to cope with the hardships of rainforest life, and a more meritocratic form of government as the rainforest does not forgive incompetence
* Unlike in other realms, in the South the increased political power of the people means that they have the right to call a Great Assembly, a meeting of all noblemen in the realm representing their levies in order to discuss whether a ruling Mighty Lord is suitable for the role and as a general deliberative body
* The South’s trust in Kusaila is such that this has never been called. Kusaila is a good ruler, but restricted by heavy taxes: the South is so far from Semidon that the Shurhaths there have grown anxious about its autonomy, levying heavy taxes on it to try and prevent their independence
* When the Dragonfly dies, Kusaila immediately declares the South to be an independent country that will attack any invaders. The crown denies their secession and formally declares war, but because they have closer problems, they don’t send any troops for now
* Kusaila is hailed by his men as Mansa of the South. He militarises the kingdom and begins sending men to the frontiers
* He also sends several regiments to back the Juggernaught, who promises to respect Southern independence if he should become Shurhath
* Soul Eater contracts Shadowbound to kill the Monolith, a powerful and highly competent askary lord near his domain, fearing an attack. Shadowbound carries this out
* Soul Eater’s soldiers move into the Monolith’s lordship, now disorganised and vulnerable, and commit many atrocities there, including mass-enslavement and putting villages to the torch
* A sergeant in the Monolith’s army- and a blacksmith by trade- who is a local community leader leads his villagers away from Soul Eater’s troops and down south. He is a highly religious man, and as a consequence of his religion and the fact that he is leading civilians to ‘salvation’ in the form of safety, gives rise to his name of Archangel
* Archangel is a complex character. He grew up with anger issues and turned to religion in adolescence to help manage it. His nature is one of great anger and violence but he’s worked hard on himself for a decade using religion and is now a virtuous paragon of the community
* He takes as many people as will follow him down towards the south, away from the ravaging armies. He travels from village to village, picking up followers along the way. He almost resembles a Moses-like figure at this stage
* Eventually, he reaches the rainforest. It’s the only political/geographical region of the country that isn’t currently wracked by war, and thus he feels comfortable ‘settling down’ here. He immediately sets up foraging parties and starts travelling further south; large rivers are down south and he can fish there
* Archangel knows he’s illegally trespassing in another country; Kusaila’s kingdom. He regrets this, but there’s nothing he can do about it. He needs a safe haven for his people to live in, and everywhere else nearby is wrapped up in war
* Kusaila sends a messenger warning Archangel to leave the rainforest or face war. Reluctantly, Archangel chooses war. Kusaila obliges
* Neither Archangel or Kusaila are bad people, so they don’t commit any atrocities, but war is still war and it’s harsh. Archangel’s internal anger starts to come out, but with the encouragement of his wife he keeps it at bay
* Archangel personally struggles to keep his rage in check, and desperately clings to religion as a refuge against it
* However, Kusaila and his men know the rainforest far, far better than Archangel’s forces and are more trained in warfare
* They start gradually pushing Archangel’s forces back, leading to Archangel becoming more desperate and angry. Restraining his anger and hatred takes an immense amount of effort and it exhausts him; his wife becomes the only thing keeping him virtuous, but he is still virtuous
* Meanwhile, a few reports of a plague surface in the south. No pandemic breaks out and it doesn’t really affect anything yet, but both sides note it as something to worry about in the future
* The tide of battle starts to inexorably turn against Archangel. Kusaila continually launches hit and run attacks against him and his camp
* In one of these attacks, Archangel’s wife coincidentally- accidentally- gets struck by a stray arrow and dies
* Archangel, exhausted by the effort of maintaining his religiosity and benevolence, allows himself to fall from grace after the death of his wife. He begins killing prisoners of war, stealing villagers’ harvests and allowing them to starve, and personally abandons religion
* He orders to men to collect the bodies of people killed by the plague- which is still not at epidemic levels and is very manageable- and launch them by catapult into towns and cities
* The plague spreads like wildfire after this as it was previously just seen in random, scattered villages. It spreads out of control and infects Archangel’s camp as well
* This greatly weakens Archangel’s army. Kusaila senses this weakness and launches a decisive attack, surrounding Archangel’s war camp. Kusaila personally confronts Archangel, who is hateful and exhausted
* Kusaila moves to kill him but Archangel kills himself first, telling Kusaila how weary of life he is and how he just wants to die
* Archangel’s forces surrender. Many Southerners advocate the extermination of all of them owing to how brutal Archangel become, but Kusaila refuses. He says that Archangel’s policies weren’t his soldiers’ fault, and that all of them were ultimately just refugees looking for safety
* Out of mercy, he allows the Springlanders to leave the South safely, though he doesn’t show much concern on how they are to feed themselves. Many of them turn to piracy for sustenance and survival. Several noblemen condemn Kusaila for his mercy, arguing that, deprived of means of sustenance, they will simply come back a year later either as raiders or pirates
* Kusaila learns of the Valorous’ murder by the Desert Ripper, who also slew many of his Southern regiments. He is enraged and aggrieved, and wants revenge. With the South secured, he leaves Cataclysm in charge and rides north-west with several brigades of volunteer soldiers for vengeance, who seek to avenge their beloved ruler and countrymen
* Kusaila and his soldiers arrive at Hazin’s domain, hoping to join their ranks and help them kill the Desert Ripper. He sees that Hazin is depressed and listless, however, and therefore works with Elphensbane
* Kusaila and his men patrol the frontier with Elphensbane, but the Ripper strikes quickly and sporadically and it is difficult to actually get his forces there in time
* Moreover, Elphensbane’s troops are demoralised and becoming more so, lacking a good leader. Kusaila and Elphensbane bond personally, however, and become good friends
* Kusaila and Elphensbane eventually intercept the Desert Ripper and a massive battle takes place, but the Ripper’s troops are powerful and- more importantly- confident. Elphensbane’s troops are demoralised and break, and the elite Southern regiments can’t stand up to the Ripper’s cavalry so outnumbered
* Kusaila actually skirmishes with the Ripper but sees his men in danger and breaks off conflict to protect them, later leading their orderly retreat
* Kusaila receives news that the South’s tranquillity has ended: a foreign invader has landed with legions of disciplined, well-commanded soldiers- the Meteor. The South needs their leader there
* Kusaila has to choose between vengeance and duty- he chooses the latter. He knows that many of his men want to stay fighting with Elphensbane, having lost friends/loved ones to the Ripper’s slaughter back when the Valorous invaded Nagal
* Kusaila allows his men to make their own choice between vengeance and duty. Some return with him to protect the South, others stay in the west to help Elphensbane kill the Ripper
* Elphensbane is grateful for the extra manpower and promises to help the South when he can: Kusaila trusts in his intentions, but doubts that Elphensbane will ever actually defeat the Ripper on his own and therefore be able to send men to the South. He believes that he is truly on his own
* Nonetheless, the two men part ways amicably, and Kusaila goes back to the South
* Kusaila finds that the plague has taken a real toll on the South, especially on its towns and cities
* Moreover, the Khagan is a formidable general and soldier and wages a destructive and brutal war against Kusaila, burning down large parts of the rainforest to make it easier for his troops to move around in it
* The Meteor, always a bad person, has gone legitimately insane from his war campaigns on his home continent. He mirrors Kusaila’s personality very closely aside from his morality and insanity though
* The religion he and his people follow preaches that the Khagan is a descendant of a deity; the Red Titan, god of bloodshed. The scriptures of the religion also hint at human sacrifice, but so far no ruler in centuries has chosen to actually do this
* The Meteor was always sort of convinced that he actually is the son of a god and that his divine destiny was to conquer the world (he’s a bit of a narcissist, though not clinically so), but with his insanity he becomes *way* more convinced of that
* He becomes a religious fundamentalist and starts actually doing human sacrifices, and sees Kusaila as an Antichrist-like figure made to oppose him
* He believes that expanding the empire- and conquering the South, which has been an ancestral enemy- is his divine destiny and that he *has* to conquer the South, and feels deep fear at the idea of failing to do this and missing his destiny
* Meanwhile in the Empire of Ethagis, pirates and slavers have exhausted the plunder of the eastern coast by now, and sensing weakness from the South begin to raid the coasts and incur into territory
* Sharkjaw covertly supports or encourages many of these ships, also eager to exact slaves from the South
* Kusaila, growingly desperate, splits his attention between two fronts: the south, attacked by the Meteor- and the east, attacked by a horde of pirates and slavers
* This coupled with the plague means that he lacks the capacity to face the Meteor in open battles, and relies on guerrilla tactics (although he doesn’t wage guerrilla warfare). Unlike when fighting Archangel, when his army launched hit-and-run attacks but was still a single, centralised unit, he scatters his army into small units and has them operate fairly independently
* Because he can’t openly stop the Meteor’s army, the Meteor sends ships to occupy the major Southern rivers and sails them to the capital
* The prolonged brutality and chaos of warfare starts affecting Kusaila psychologically, and he expresses his anxieties to his wife. He fears slipping into the insanity that the Meteor is in
* Although this is never made explicit in the series, Kusaila and the Meteor are intended to be alternate versions of each other. Kusaila represents what the Meteor was when he first took power. The Meteor represents what Kusaila would be if he lost his sanity
* A large cell of Southerners led by Cataclysm attempts to defend the capital but fails, and they are all killed, with Cataclysm taken as prisoner
* He occupies the capital and begins ruling the nation from there, launching brutal decrees intended to subjugate the population. He intends to incorporate the region in the empire he is forming
* The only upside is that many of his troops catch the plague due to their time in the capital- this later becomes absolutely pivotal, but currently seems like cold comfort
* The Meteor is a brutal ruler. He places every single Southerner in a state of de facto slavery, moving them away from families to work on cocoa plantations that his legions set up in the South. He also sacrifices several of them
* He humiliates Cataclysm for a while, forcing him to follow the Meteor around and witness his countrymen being sacrificed. Cataclysm holds onto his sanity, however, and treats the Meteor with contempt
* Soul Eater has seized the throne by this point, and has subsumed much of Scython’s old army, swelling his ranks
* He *despises* the South, seeing them as backwards traitors, but his mother had previously advised him not to send troops against them. Purgatory wanted to let the two armies fight it out, before attacking and dominating the weakened victor
* Soul Eater thus held off, but he later killed his mother by accident, striking her and causing her to hit her head on a cupboard
* Without her prudent influence, he now decides to send soldiers in the South to kill the traitors
* His cowardly and lazy lieutenant, Kriru Zaran, doesn’t want to go on campaign again, however, so he convinces Soul Eater to stay in Semidon in order to consolidate his rule. Hence, the regiments he sends South aren’t commanded by him, but they are still explicitly told to punish the Southerners for their treason by slaughtering them
* However, the number of men he can send down there is reduced due to his idiotic decision to attack the semadai mountain, allowing Kusaila to just about hold on to life
* So Kusaila now has to deal with the Meteor in the south; the horde of pirates, slavers, and Sharkjaw’s men in the east; and Soul Eater’s soldiers in the north
* The South is in chaos by this point. It feels like the end of the empire to these people
* The Meteor grows bored of Cataclysm and strangles him, sending his head to Kusaila
* By this point Kusaila is scraping the *very* bottom of the barrel for recruitment, even recruiting women- which has never been done before- and taxing everyone to breaking point
* A discontented people call a Great Assembly to question Kusaila’s right to rule, and hold him for trial to defend himself or be replaced. Kusaila is not himself an eloquent speaker but is saved by the many testimonies of his colonels and captains, who respect his skill
* His right to rule is re-affirmed, and the South acknowledges the necessity of conscripting women and levying crazy taxes, pledging to win this war by any means necessary
* With these new resources, Kusaila harnesses all his skill as a general and leader, and leads a series of masterful victories against all odds
* During this part, Kusaila’s wife dies of illness. A theme during this entire part is Kusaila’s sanity being at risk. Although he doesn’t lose it, he fears that he will in the future and he has recurrent nightmares where Kalawi talks to him about insanity
* The death of his wife really affects him, and the reader is left wondering whether Kusaila will fall into the same mental state as the Meteor
* But now Kusaila simply lacks the resources to deal with the Meteor. Constant war and plague (though by now it has burnt itself out) has diminished the manpower and wealth of his realm too much. It genuinely looks like the Meteor is going to win
* The Meteor and his legions find Kusaila’s war camp and surround it, attacking it and cornering Kusaila
* Mid-battle, Elphensbane and many regiments under his command, newly energised and confident from their victory over the Ripper, surge into the battle and repel the invaders, though they aren’t killed
* Elphensbane explains that although he has to go home and rebuild his damaged realm and thus can’t stay in person, many of the regiments under his command wanted to volunteer to help Kusaila
* Kusaila’s Southern troops had been incredibly useful fighting against the Ripper, and had saved the lives of many of Elphensbane’s own. These latter soldiers, who considered the Southerners their comrades and saviours, wanted to repay the favour by helping the South
* Elphensbane, also out of gratitude to Kusaila (and because they’re friends) wanted to lead the volunteers into the realm personally as an honour to Kusaila (and a chance to meet him again)
* The new influx of manpower begins to turn the tide, and Kusaila once again digs in his heels and starts seriously challenging the Meteor
* Kusaila continues to have nightmares wherein Kalawi talks to him about his declining sanity, but Kusaila ultimately stays sane. He uses his love and sense of duty to his people to keep him sane
* In his war against the Meteor, Kusaila is helped by two factors. One is that the Meteor’s policies are so brutal that many Southerners are driven to rebel, forming disparate pockets of resistance and, in rarer cases, joining ‘guerrilla’ cells
* The second is that the plague in the capital has burned itself out but still wrought a considerable toll on the legions in part 6
* The conflict intensifies and Kusaila feels able to attack the capital. He does so in a climactic final battle with the Meteor and they fight personally. Kusaila is mortally wounded in the fight but manages to himself mortally wound the Meteor
* Kusaila dies first and Panthercaul, his son, who has come of age during the series, finishes the Meteor off
* Kusaila’s forces triumph over the foreign soldiers through sheer force of will and Elphensbane’s troops, but the campaign against the Meteor has depleted most of the South’s manpower now. They have won, but are now defenceless yet again
* Panthercaul becomes the new Mansa, but Lord Morningstar soon sends a letter to the South. He wants them to acknowledge his authority as Shurhath and become his levies once more, threatening war if not and heavy taxes if they do submit
* This is a bold move on his behalf, but in reality he wants a war, having grown bored and restless as a result of peace
* Panthercaul and the South are simply too demoralised and weak to actually fight though. The South is a devastated realm without manpower or wealth. Panthercaul submits, and is no longer Mansa, demoted to Mighty Lord of the South
* His people are disappointed, but recognise that war would have been futile. His authority is unchallenged, and indeed the whole ordeal causes Panthercaul to win the South’s sympathy
* An air of depression, failure, and looming apocalypse looms over the South, and Panthercaul becomes personally depressed, meekly paying heavy tributes to the crown
* **Eventually, time passes and Panthercaul- and the nation- recovers slightly**
* **Lord Morningstar becomes so tyrannical that Panthercaul’s depression gives way to anger, and Panthercaul approaches Ironhand to see what can be done**
* **He tells Ironhand that if the South is granted independence, he will lend his forces to Ironhand’s banner. Ironhand accepts and seizes the throne, respecting his bargain and allowing the South to be an independent country**

#### Strand 7: Chainbreaker | Chainbreaker-Sharkjaw-Armageddon-Lazaria-Kingsparrow-Winged Prophet

* Sharkjaw is an extremely wealthy slave-trader who wields a lot of influence in Ethagis as a result of his supply of money and slaves. Though not actually a lord, he has the power and land to make him a Mighty Lord in practice
* Before the events of part 1, in order to increase enslavement and need for slave labour, Sharkjaw deliberately engineers a colossal war during the reign of the Dragonfly and his predecessor by sowing weakness in the court, increasing decentralisation, and indirectly encouraging various mighty lords to covet the throne (although this ‘puppeteer’ role is only revealed slowly throughout the series and Sharkjaw is not a point-of-view character)
* Chainbreaker is a galley slave working for Sharkjaw. Captured by pirates years before, they sold him to Sharkjaw (although many seasons later it is revealed that Sharkjaw has been hiring pirates for years to capture people and ‘sell’ them to Sharkjaw)
* Armageddon is a galley slave working on the same oar of the same boat as Chainbreaker, a Hysparlen prisoner-of-war captured near the Autumnlands
* When war breaks out, piracy explodes, causing chaos and disorder in Sharkjaw’s territories, and the ship Chainbreaker is slave on gets raided by pirates
* Pirates slaughter many of the crew (who are slavers) but Chainbreaker heroically fends many of them off along with the crew
* When the pirates are repelled, Chainbreaker executes the remaining crewmen and proclaims himself and the other galley slaves as free men
* Armageddon, a friend of Chainbreaker and his fellow galley slave, swears allegiance to Chainbreaker, followed by the other galley slaves
* They land on the mainland and Chainbreaker organises a general rebellion
* Eventually, Armageddon proclaims Chainbreaker to be the Grand Marshal (i.e. the head of state) of a new, rebel nation: the Commonwealth of Free Men. Chainbreaker accepts
* With thousands of slaves as his soldiers, he marauds the countryside liberating slaves and indiscriminately killing slavers with his growing horde of ex-slaves
* Whilst attacking various slave-farms, he liberates Lazaria, a steward (also a slave), who soon becomes his advisor and lover, being the measured/political counterpart to Armageddon’s chaotic/warrior personality, kind of like a id/superego division
* Lazaria is the sister of the slave in the first prologue of the series
* Deciding that Soul Eater is even more ruthless than Sharkjaw, he focusses his efforts there, liberating all the slaves he can from a cruel and malevolent lord
* Soul Eater is tied up fighting the Juggernaught so has a limited ability to respond- as a result, Purgatory suggests that rather than trying to actually defeat Chainbreaker militarily to end the slave revolts they can break slaves’ hope and faith in Chainbreaker
* Purgatory deliberately yields a large town, Azariad, to Chainbreaker, forcing him to actually rule it which is way harder than conquering it, and for a while it seems that Chainbreaker won’t be able to actually rule effectively and provide a good life for the slaves he liberates
* When Chainbreaker invades, an apothecary by the name of Nabi starts having powerful, vivid dreams about Qarthal, the Ethigean harpy eagle deity associated with death, telling her of Azariad facing an impeding deluge. Nabi, terrified and deeply religious, going around telling everyone, dressing in eagle feathers and rags that look like wings
* Qarthal, of course, isn’t really appearing to her. The vivid dreams she has are induced by some of the ingredients she works with. As she is already religious, and fearful of the instability of the city, the actual content of the dreams- Qarthal and impending apocalypse- are merely taken from her subconscious
* The nobility/soldiery/gentry all despise Chainbreaker as he’s a slave who’s seized control of the city and by extension them, and conspire against him. Chainbreaker struggles
* Nabi’s dreams shift to Qarthal telling her to be persistent and defend the city by whatever means she can
* She takes up arms and begins preaching to the ex-slave hordes that Chainbreaker uses as his army, telling them that they are Qarthal’s chosen and must save the city from the forces of death and chaos. The soldiers are moved by her passion and faith and like/respect her, and she boosts morale a lot
* Chainbreaker also hears about the ‘winged prophet’ proclaiming universal death and raising morale, and summons her. He is very interested by her and has her doing tours of duty preaching and raising soldier morale
* He also orders a suit of armour to be forged for her with ornate wings and an eagle helmet, to make her look like a true prophet of Qarthal. Everyone loves this and Nabi becomes a national hero/icon
* He also wins the loyalty of Kingsparrow, an old asthan with military experience who can no longer fight but acted as a quartermaster for the city. He was held prisoner when Chainbreaker first moved into the city but was inspired by Chainbreaker’s virtuous and measured conduct to be loyal to him
* Kingsparrow impresses on Chainbreaker the importance of logistics, training, discipline, and strategy, and the latter establishes a rigid command hierarchy and training soldiers properly
* Chainbreaker gradually gains the political expertise necessary to run the place, and Azariad becomes less chaotic and starts actually being governable
* Purgatory sees that the Commonwealth is thriving and seeks to undermine Chainbreaker in other ways. She considers assassinating him but doesn’t want to martyr him and instead wants to ruin his image and integrity
* Purgatory decides to try another way to undermine Chainbreaker; poison. But she doesn’t want to kill him; that would be worse than useless. Chainbreaker would be martyred and someone else would just take his place
* It would be far better if she could cripple Chainbreaker mentally, allowing him to ruin the Commonwealth through bad governance and loss of sanity. She knows that lead poisoning does this and has some members of the Reaper Guard poison his wine over time with lead
* However, Chainbreaker decides to be teetotal so doesn’t drink it. He suspects the presence of espionage at his court and through some very intelligent detective work figures out what’s going on. He catches the Reaper Guard agents and executes them
* He institutes several counter-espionage measures to prevent Reaper Guard agents infiltrating his court again
* Purgatory decides to take a different approach; rather than attack Chainbreaker physically, she decides to do so psychologically
* She indirectly manipulates Lazaria into committing treason, which is a death sentence in the Commonwealth, and ensures that everyone in Azariad knows about it
* She hopes and expects that Chainbreaker will spare Lazaria’s life out of love, which would be hypocritical and dispel his image as a devoted hero loyal only to the Commonwealth
* Chainbreaker’s belief in his cause is so strong, however, that he actually executes Lazaria despite the fact that he loves her. He cares about the Commonwealth- and everything it represents- so much that he prioritises it over his wife
* This makes the Commonwealth fanatically loyal to him, essentially preventing the country from going into civil war (which has been a constant worry of Chainbreaker’s) as nobody will fight against him
* Armageddon has been persistently telling Chainbreaker to butcher everyone above the Feyriatal level of Jagal who lives in the city. Lazaria has been preventing him from doing it, saying it’s reckless and immoral
* Lazaria is no longer there to moderate Armageddon’s influence. Chainbreaker orders that all asthans, members of the gentry, and members of the nobility still in the city are to be systemically slaughtered
* This is terrible for Purgatory as she’s been using these members of society to organise terrorist operations and act as a fifth column; she used one of them as an intermediary to get Lazaria to commit treason
* Purgatory ingeniously creates a situation wherein Chainbreaker has to either let the Commonwealth be destroyed or jump from a ledge and break his legs; ‘cripples’ are heavily stigmatised in Ethagis and ‘broken’ leaders are seen as unfit to rule
* Chainbreaker jumps and lands on one leg so he just shatters one; however, it is so irreparably damaged by this that it is amputated and replaced with an ivory prosthetic
* Many people are disheartened by this and begin to think Chainbreaker is no longer capable of leading because Ethigean society is heavily prejudiced against disabled people
* Nabi continues to have faith in Chainbreaker as Qarthal’s chosen and a force of freedom and good, a perfect balance between order and chaos. She preaches more passionately than ever about how great Chainbreaker is and how he is chosen. This helps people put faith in Chainbreaker again
* It also makes her more popular and exalted than ever and as she is rotated around Chainbreaker’s army, many leaders begin to use her as a military advisor, which is good as she has good ideas on how to defend the city
* Chainbreaker conducts one final successful raid, coincidentally liberating Thundermaw in the process, but Purgatory in response sieges Azariad and overruns the city. Thundermaw is killed, but thanks to his drilling Chainbreaker and several regiments can escape
* Kingsparrow escapes with Chainbreaker but Armageddon is nowhere to be seen. He eventually crawls out of the battlefield from underneath a corpse and escapes, seeking to track down Chainbreaker
* Chainbreaker eventually comes to the difficult decision that to succeed in his quest of liberation, he cannot use slaves as his force. Reluctantly, he uses all the wealth he has to contract Shadowbound to kill Sharkjaw, but the latter pays off Shadowbound, who keeps Chainbreaker’s money as well
* Now destitute, he comes to the harrowing belief that vanquishing slavery altogether is impossible and he can only reduce its presence in Ethagis. He believes that to do this, he must join forces with a nobleman and use their discipline and training in order to defeat a greater evil (whichever side has more slaves)
* Seeing Lord Morningstar as the most promising lord, he reluctantly offers himself and whichever ex-slaves will follow him (few do), soon becoming a senior commander in the army and liberating as many slaves as Lord Morningstar will permit him to
* Armageddon has tracked Chainbreaker to his approximate location but hasn’t met with him yet. Before he does, he hears that Chainbreaker has decided to work for Atheas
* Armageddon is absolutely disgusted by what he perceives as Chainbreaker abandoning his morals, and furious that he would subordinate himself to Lord Morningstar, a slaver. Enraged, he becomes an implacable enemy to Chainbreaker
* Lord Morningstar puts Chainbreaker in charge of an army as a general and makes Arzachel his doctor-general, rightly believing that the skilful physician will be able to deal with Chainbreaker’s messed up legs
* Chainbreaker also begins to learn how to fight again. He also meets Shuriken and Shadowbound, who agree to protect him and later to assassinate Purgatory. They fail, and Shadowbound is killed in the attempt. Shortly after, Purgatory is killed on accident by her own son
* Chainbreaker launches various hit-and-run raids on the Crownlands, but is repeatedly foiled by Armageddon, who wants to kill Chainbreaker out of personal enmity
* Chainbreaker eventually fights Armageddon directly and manages to win because Armageddon has been wounded in the posterior thigh. Armageddon wants Chainbreaker to kill him, but Chainbreaker, who was formerly very good friends with Armageddon, refuses
* This angers Armageddon even more, and he threatens to do increasingly horrific things to Chainbreaker if left alive, but Chainbreaker still refuses to harm him
* Armageddon breaks down and, weeping, heartbrokenly asks Chainbreaker why he would abandon his morals. Chainbreaker explains that he does not believe an empire-wide revolution would actually do the most good for slaves, and he has come to realise this because he has matured and Armageddon has not. He tells Armageddon that if he really feels differently, he should prove him wrong by inciting slave revolts in a different country
* Armageddon stands down, is healed by Arzachel and travels to the Empire of Hysparleon to lead revolts there
* Chainbreaker continues his attacks on the Crownlands and eventually aids Lord Morningstar in the final assault
* Once Lord Morningstar seizes power, Chainbreaker relentlessly advocates for attacking Sharkjaw
* Eventually, as Morningstar becomes increasingly tyrannical and his courtiers become afraid of this, they support Chainbreaker’s idea as it gives an outlet for his energy, and they recommend the same thing. Lord Morningstar accepts
* Chainbreaker is killed in the assault on Sharkjaw’s castle by the latter’s elite troops, although as he is dying he is able to deduce that Lord Morningstar will win the attack and dies satisfied
* Kingsparrow is injured in the battle and the wound becomes infected but is loyal to Chainbreaker, not Lord Morningstar, and after the former’s death walks out of court

#### Strand 8: The Assassins | Shadowbound-Shuriken-Juggernaught-Chainbreaker-Morningstar

* At the start of the narrative, Shadowbound is an assassin for hire who has recently been commissioned by The Wraithwreaker to kill a political rival and who lives and trains in the wilderness. He is *extremely* good at what he does and is infamous throughout the realm
* Unknown to the viewer until far later in the series (although hinted at throughout, as early as the prologue), Shadowbound has been poisoning almost the entire imperial court with lead over the past twelve years or so, commissioned to do this by Sharkjaw
* When war breaks out, Shadowbound gets various offers from all kinds of lords and courtiers to carry out assassinations, and carries these out
* Soul Eater contracts him to kill the Monolith, a renowned askary lord in the Springlands who poses a threat to Soul Eater. Shadowbound carries out the assassination, allowing Soul Eater to invade and plunder the whole domain. Its people, led by Archangel, move south
* Shadowbound continues to get offers and assassinates a bunch of random lords throughout Ethagis, and a few low profile courtiers in Ethagis. Due to the massive ballooning of demand, he increases his prices, and hence the prices he charges for assassinating important political players are too high
* In Part 2, Shuriken enters the narrative, introduced as a Hysparlen bed-slave who was captured off the Ethigean coast many years ago
* Though not yet broken by slavery, she is filled with hate. Embracing hatred fully is the only way she’s managed to stay sane
* Shuriken is owned by one of the Scorpion’s colonels, an immoral but competent man who is an excellent general
* Lord Morningstar contracts Shadowbound to assassinate him so that the Scorpion can be defeated in open battle. Shadowbound kills him whilst he is raping Shuriken
* Shuriken implores Shadowbound to take her with him on his travels and to deliver her from slavery. She knows that Shadowbound is a paid killer who assassinates Ethigeans and, as Shuriken is so motivated by hatred, wants to kill Ethigeans too
* Shadowbound refuses, so Shuriken tries to convince him to take her on as a kind of apprentice by saying that as a bed-slave, she has an intimate knowledge of the nobility’s movements, routines, and weaknesses
* Shadowbound doesn’t need her help though, and tells her to be quiet and stay out of his way or be killed
* Shuriken then tries to prove her worth to Shadowbound by constructing an elaborate trap for him, going through the compound and blocking off various exits to funnel him into the fortress’ dungeon, where she has prepared a snare for him
* Shadowbound gets caught and is impressed by Shuriken’s abilities, but still sees her as an inconvenience. He stabs her in the heart and leaves
* Shadowbound embarks on another mission in the Autumnlands to assassinate another lord. He is about to kill the target when he inexplicably sees Shuriken pointing a nocked and taut bow at him
* She explains that she had anticipated Shadowbound acting unfavourably to her attempt to impress him and tied a dead piglet from the pigsty under her clothes so she could ‘bleed out’ and play dead
* She then followed Shadowbound around for nearly a week, foraging in the forest for a wretched diet of roots and berries, to find him and coerce him into letting her join him
* Shadowbound is more impressed now and asks why it’s so important to her that he join him
* Shuriken explains that she’s been staying sane in slavery by cultivating hatred. She utterly, *utterly* loathes slavery and the slaveholding classes (mainly aristocracy) in Ethagis and has some hatred for all Ethigeans. She simply wants to be with Shadowbound and be an assassin in order to vent this hatred
* Shadowbound hears this and, whilst Shuriken is distracted monologuing, quickly disarms her and starts strangling her to death. To his shock, Shuriken does not resist at all. Shadowbound likes to imagine himself as a predator hunting down prey. He enjoys the ‘chase’ and the stakes of it, and killing a target despite them struggling for life is empowering to him
* But since Shuriken is simply accepting death, there’s no satisfaction in it, and it also deeply confuses him; *why* is this person not doing what all his previous targets have done and cling onto life?
* He actually stops strangling her and asks her, and she explains that she’d rather die now quickly than be forced to fend for herself and probably just be re-enslaved. Curious, Shadowbound asks her just who she is, and finds out that she’s the daughter of an important Hysparlen warlord
* He decides to acquiesce to making her his companion, whilst secretly planning to sell her into slavery to Sharkjaw at some point as she’d be able to make a lot of money
* They kill the assassination target together and start to travel together
* Shadowbound and Shuriken actually start liking each other and grow closer. Shadowbound unconsciously delays seeing Sharkjaw and selling his companion into slavery
* Shuriken isn’t an *evil* person and as the story is told from her PoV, the reader tends to root for her. However, as a result of her hate, she does some extremely violent and sadistic things. She often goes out of her way to torture slavers, and the descriptions of this are intended to be brutal enough to make the reader uncomfortable
* Shadowbound is then contracted by the Juggernaught to act as a kind of retinue, appearing publicly in his court along with Shuriken as a status/intimidation symbol
* Shuriken still despises Ethigeans and aristocrats, and the Juggernaught keeps slaves. Whilst outwardly being a loyal retinue, she secretly searches for ways to undermine the Juggernaught and his court
* She discovers that Galar is seeking to betray the Juggernaught by colluding with the Desert Ripper. Although Galar will likely find a way to do this anyway, she facilitates it by offering to carry his message to the Ripper personally. She drops it by his war camp, pleased that the lords of Ethagis will all kill each other
* Having amassed significant wealth from plundering a captured supply train from Soul Eater (whose forces are temporarily distracted by Chainbreaker’s attack), he contracts Shadowbound to kill the Ripper
* Shuriken did not plan for this and regrets helping Galar now as she sees the Ripper as more evil than the Juggernaught. She previously lumped all Ethigean lords together as equally evil but has now become more discerning and thinks more deeply about this kind of thing. She doesn’t tell Shadowbound about her activities or how she feels, however
* Shadowbound prepares to do this but as he enters the Ripper’s homeland to make the kill he hears that the Ripper has engaged the Juggernaught in battle earlier than expected (due to the interference of Galar, who informs the Ripper of the Juggernaught’s weakness), and because there is no reward for him he doesn’t make the kill, angering Shuriken as the Ripper is an enthusiastic slaver
* Shuriken resolves to simply kill the Ripper herself, sneaking out into the night without Shadowbound. Shuriken infiltrates his war camp. She kills quite a few of his senior raiders- this has real consequences in that it helps Hazin win battles against the Ripper later- but the Ripper is just too well-guarded and prepared
* Shuriken realises she’s not yet skilled enough as an assassin to kill the Ripper, and still relies on Shadowbound. This absolutely infuriates her, and she gets so angry she nearly yells in rage (which would draw everyone’s attention)
* She clasps a hand to her mouth and lets out a small murmur, which draws the Ripper’s attention but she gets away. With great reluctance, she returns to Shadowbound
* Shadowbound and Shuriken continue travelling together, and develop a real father-daughter dynamic. Shadowbound consciously and deliberately delays selling Shuriken to Sharkjaw
* He hasn’t ever really cared for anyone before and is confused by these feelings, but decides that instead of changing his worldview, he resolves to impart his beliefs to Shuriken and train her to become a properly good assassin
* Eventually, Shuriken becomes sufficiently well trained to assassinate difficult targets on her own
* Meanwhile, a desperate Chainbreaker has contracted Shadowbound to kill Sharkjaw, believing that he cannot destroy slavery by conventional means. Shadowbound travels there to kill Sharkjaw, though unbeknownst to Shuriken the plan is to sell her first
* Shadowbound approaches Sharkjaw in the dead of night whilst Shuriken is at the other end of the compound, but despite himself finds he cannot bring himself to sell Shuriken to him. He resolves to simply kill Sharkjaw instead and fulfil the contract
* But Sharkjaw, as a result of his highly extensive intelligence networks (which reach to even Azariad), has found out that Shadowbound is plotting to kill him. He is thus wearing full armour so that Shadowbound can’t kill him from afar, and once he suspects that Shadowbound is nearby he starts talking loudly about how he can beat Chainbreaker’s offer
* Shadowbound decides to listen to Sharkjaw’s offer, and just as Shuriken arrives, he tells her not to kill him
* Sharkjaw simply offers Shadowbound more money than Chainbreaker did, outbidding the latter in order to save his life. He then contracts Shadowbound to kill Chainbreaker, offering him even more money. Shadowbound accepts
* Shuriken, a former slave, is absolutely disgusted by this. She angrily confronts Shadowbound, who accidentally lets slip that his original plan was to sell Shuriken into slavery
* Shuriken has come to genuinely trust Shadowbound and is shattered by this betrayal. She stabs Shadowbound in the belly and prepares to finish him off, but Shadowbound reminds her that after he came to know Shuriken as a person, he couldn’t go through with it and that now he truly cares for her
* Shuriken doesn’t know what to do and decides to let the gods decide, leaving him to bleed out without finishing him off. Now a highly skilled assassin herself, she abandons Shadowbound and resolves to preserve the life of Chainbreaker, whom she greatly admires
* Chainbreaker is now in the service of Lord Morningstar, and she appears to him in the night and asks to help him. Chainbreaker accepts. As Shuriken leaves, she finds Shadowbound lying in wait near Chainbreaker’s chambers, ready to assassinate him
* She holds him at knifepoint and deflects his attempt to disarm her, stabbing him again in the same spot in the belly, opening the wound. She confronts him again, furious at his betrayal. Shadowbound, for the first time ever, shows real vulnerability and explains that throughout his life, he never had any loved ones to care about and this hardened his heart. When he first saw Shuriken, he saw an opportunity. But as he came to know her, he realised that he cared about her too much to betray her. He says that he feels revulsion for his former self and, for Shuriken’s forgiveness, is willing to abandon his contract and spare Chainbreaker’s life, even pledging to help him
* Shuriken accepts this and embraces him. They both approach Chainbreaker together and pledge their services. Chainbreaker informs Lord Morningstar and tells the duo to listen to his orders
* Lord Morningstar has heard of the infamous assassin duo- as by now have most people- and ecstatically accepts their services. However, as Lord Morningstar himself uses slaves, Shuriken refuses to assassinate whoever he wants, and will only kill slave-owner targets
* Lord Morningstar asks the duo to assassinate Soul Eater’s mother, Purgatory, as a preliminary to Morningstar attacking Semidon (Morningstar wants Soul Eater himself to be alive so he can kill him personally, believing that this is an integral propaganda victory)
* Purgatory is infinitely more competent than Soul Eater and everyone knows that with her dead, Soul Eater won’t be competent enough to organise a proper defence of Semidon
* Shuriken knows of Purgatory’s extreme cruelty and agrees, secretly resolving to kill Soul Eater too
* Purgatory actually finds out about the attack due to her own personal powers of deduction (Purgatory is outstandingly intelligent and cunning) and kills Shadowbound, whilst a distraught Shuriken flees back to Morningstar’s court before she can kill Soul Eater (Purgatory is later killed by her own son out of anger at her holding so much power and presuming to give him orders)
* Shuriken returns after Purgatory’s death to kill Soul Eater, but he’s too well guarded by secret police at this point
* As Lord Morningstar becomes increasingly tyrannical, Shuriken seriously considers killing him. He’s not too paranoid at this point and thus not so strongly guarded, so she *could* kill him
* After he announces his intention to attack Sharkjaw, she holds off however
* Shuriken is delighted after Morningstar kills Sharkjaw but deeply disappointed when he assumes ownership of most of his slaves instead of freeing them
* With Chainbreaker’s death, Shuriken has nothing tying her to Lord Morningstar and abandons him. She actually contemplates killing him due to him not freeing many of Sharkjaw’s slaves but he’s too well defended and she can’t
* She acts as a vigilante of sorts, assassinating slaveholders throughout the region. She runs into Crossbow and her band of vigilantes on the way and they have a brief meeting
* **Shuriken eventually hears about Ironhand and decides to meet him out of curiosity**
* **Ironhand is so unique and likeable, however, and inspires such loyalty and devotion in people, that Shuriken actually decides to be his retinue after the meeting**
* **Ironhand uses Shuriken her to gather intelligence, e.g., where the castle’s weak points are and what Morningstar’s defences lack**
* **He uses this knowledge to successfully capture Semidon**

### Epilogue

The epilogue of the narrative depicts the peacetime rule of the 38th Shurhath, Neverre Lacaideon; more commonly known by his sobriquet, Ironhand. The epilogue both conveys an understanding of the general nature of his day-to-day rule as well as pivotal events.

Ironhand is shown to be an outstanding ruler, bringing about an age of innovation, prosperity, and growth by the benevolence and competence of his government. He also rules more absolutely than the vast majority of other Shurhaths, enacting large-scale institutional and legislative reforms unopposed despite the occasional detriment of these reforms to the nobility.

The placidity of the nobility is generally achieved by the overwhelming fear of large-scale war and tyranny, which occupied and plagued the nobility and people for the years of the narrative. They reluctantly accept that not only is Ironhand a better ruler than any others living, but that the very fact that he is securely in the position of Shurhath and prevents disloyalty keeps the peace. And the nobility, many of whom suffer PTSD from warfare, are very anxious to ensure this. Those who are more bold or martial are also kept in line by fear caused by the ruthless destruction of a rebellious house (this is explained later).

Ironhand’s reforms genuinely change society, with the commonry and gentry being the main beneficiaries of this. The very character of Ironhand- just, understanding, and wise- endears him to the population and makes him both respected and revered. Ironhand is not infallible as a ruler but he becomes so in the eyes of the people.

The governing and personal philosophy of Ironhand is heavily influenced by the principles of Ethigean religion. Ironhand’s ultimate goal is to minimise chaos in society and the court, imposing justice and self-discipline whenever he can. The excesses and decadence of the court is curbed in full, with a life of discipline, austerity, and hard work becoming the requirement and the norm.

Ironhand himself practises a rigorous routine of study in the learned arts, meditation and mindfulness exercises, administrative and legislative work, and physical training. Ironhand lives a long life free of chronic illness partially because of his health and activity (and, of course, partially due to luck). By this example, he normalises (to an extent) these habits in his courtiers- and dismisses those who fail to meet his moral and lifestyle standards.

Ironhand’s policies are the result of genuine wisdom, insight, and experience, and as a result tend to lead to wealth and prosperity. Owing to the austerity of the court, a larger proportion of collected wealth than ever before is available for the realm. This is spent on vast programmes of building ships for trade, mines for resource extraction, patronising scholars, issuing low-interest loans to merchants, etc. The city of Semidon is heavily invested in, with many new and pleasant streets being built, as well as large and beautiful buildings being constructed and made available to the public. Famine and poverty are curbed by ambitious grain-distribution initiatives, and infrastructure across the realm is heavily built up.

These decisions are still highly expensive, however, and the realm is physically destroyed by warfare and suffers from a loss of manpower. To finance these moves, Ironhand raises levels of taxation to unprecedented levels at the early stages of his rule, and begins building up his retinues (full-time, professional soldiers loyal solely to him) to several thousand strong in anticipation of dissent. Though he expects it from the nobility, the first major rebellion actually comes from the commonry.

The people of Semidon have a better idea of Ironhand and his austerity, and don’t rebel there due to respect for his character and trust in his rule. But major dissent foments in other regions of the Crownlands, and in the large city of Kaval open rebellion occurs, with the commonry arming themselves and proclaiming defiance. Expecting an army, they fortify the city.

Ironhand arrives at the city completely alone, unarmoured, and unarmed, his only companion being his riding horse- not even his warhorse. He politely requests either admission into the city or a face-to-face meeting with the architects of this rebellion. Confused by Ironhand’s humility and curious to meet him, a crowd of people spills out of the city, led by the few who have managed to assert leadership in the time of chaos.

One of them threatens to kill him with his pitchfork, to which Ironhand dismounts and responds that he does not fear death and will not try to stop him. The candour and innocence exhibited genuinely disarms the mob and their anger begins to dissipate. Ironhand gives an impassioned speech on how he understands their concerns. How he hates, just as they do, that all the rulers they have known are greedy or cruel and use their money for their own luxuries. But he promises that he is not like that. He tells them of the austerity of his court, of his personal rigorousness. He sincerely vows that their wealth will be spent on the betterment of the realm. That their taxes have a genuine moral and economic purpose. He asserts his confidence in their faculties of morality and reason and asks them, gently, to trust him.

After a brief, shocked silence, the main leader of the opposition apologises and states that he had heard rumours of the good character of the new Shurhath, but not believed them until now. He implores forgiveness. Ironhand responds, ‘There’s nothing to forgive.’ At this, he drops his weapon and kneels, saying, ‘Mightiest, all my wealth is yours.’ This triggers a wave of similar actions from the people of the mob, ending in kneeling or in some cases prostration. Ironhand bids them all to rise and, after a heartfelt expression of gratitude for their faith, returns to Semidon.

The story of this episode spreads quickly throughout the realm. Ethigeans praise and respect Ironhand for it and gain faith in his abilities, begrudgingly allowing the taxation in acknowledgement that it is necessity to benefit society. But there are those who see Ironhand’s kindness as weakness. An askary lord in the Springlands, posthumously given the sobriquet ‘the Regretful’ later, refuses to pay and mobilises his forces. Though no mighty lords do the same, many others in the Springlands, and a few in other realms, join him.

Ironhand writes to him, urging him to see reason and understand that the taxation is to benefit the realm as a whole. No response. He then sends an emissary, bearing an order that the Regretful is to be summoned to Semidon to be held accountable for his treason. The nobleman responds this time: with the emissary’s head. Ironhand famously declares: ‘There are those who are deaf to reason and speak only the language of violence, and if violence is the only language he understands, then I shall speak loudly.’

Ironhand *fully* mobilises the realm. He calls on every single levy for military service and demand they do the same with their levies. Reluctant vassals and visited by his small army of elite retinues and by the semadai, who intimidate them into submission. Tens of thousands of people are marched to the Springlands. As the colossal force descends onto the rebels, many surrender. Ironhand grants all of these except one- the Regretful.

Ironhand surrounds the Regretful’s castle and has all the fieldmasters of the realm construct siege engines. He demands the peaceable departure of the Regretful and his family out of the castle. He states that the Regretful will be painlessly executed and his family will be unharmed, though married off to other houses dispersed around the realm. His house will be erased from existence.

Naturally, the Regretful refuses, and settles in for a siege. But Ironhand decides not to siege him out, but to wreck the castle. He has as many catapults and trebuchets constructed as possible. Months later, he gives the Regretful a final chance to accept his offer, rebuking him for condemning everyone in the castle to a long siege and imminent death. He is refused, and the castle is utterly destroyed. Inside the rubble, the corpses of the Regretful and his family are identified. All cadet branches of the noble house are declared to be new, and the original house of the Regretful is terminated wholly from existence. The land is gifted to Ironhand’s loyal followers.

The nobility do not rebel again.

At a later point, around the mid-late stage of his reign, Shurhath Lacaideon seeks to have his autobiography distributed throughout the Empire. The motives for this are personal and political: he believes that the Ethigean people should be closer to their ruler and have greater knowledge of him, and he also wishes to legitimise his seizure of the throne and cultivate a cult of personality.

Lacaideon’s views are shaped by his experience in war, and during campaigns throughout the narrative he often expresses his disgust that the vast majority of soldiers are fighting for an emperor they have never met and don’t even know anything about. He questions the ethicality of forcing thousands to risk death and mutilation for a figure totally alien to them. He also questions the loyalty of these soldiers to their Shurhath as a result of their lack of knowledge/feeling regarding him. Lacaideon, having become Shurhath and stabilised his rule amongst the nobility, wishes to distribute his autobiography widely throughout the populace to solve both these problems. His belief is that by distributing what can effectively be a piece of propaganda, he can justify his own actions, vilify his enemies, and lionise his own character. By doing so, he can make the people feel a greater connection to their ruler and thus be more likely to reliably fight for him.

He also has a personal desire to acquaint his subjects with their own ruler due to his own principles, and resolves not to lie or to gloss over unfortunate truths in his portrayal over himself, valuing the autobiography’s honesty over its value as propaganda. He correctly predicts that, in either case, both the sheer unprecedentedness of a Shurhath writing something to be sent to the populace and the prestige behind Lacaideon’s name and title would make such an autobiography extraordinarily popular.

Lacaideon recognises immediately that mass-production of a handwritten book would be impossible due to the expense, manpower, and logistical capacity needed. He makes a nationwide call to all inventors and engineers of Ethagis to devise some way of mass-producing this book using machinery. He eventually patronises an engineer who invents the printing press of the same design as the one invented in our world by Johannes Gutenberg in ~1440. The printing press is used for the mass-production of *The Deeds and Chronicle of Ironhand*, which is sold to various [classes of society](#_Feyriatal) at different prices.

Lacaideon intends to have the book ‘on the mantle of every family in the Empire’ and makes substantial progress, with even wealthy merchants, craftsmen, and tradesmen in possession of the book. Due to high population of the Empire and remoteness of the countryside- as well as the lack of literacy of most of the population-, most farmers don’t have the book by the end of Lacaideon’s reign, but the book is popular enough in the realm that everyone has heard of it and can quote the more famous sections of it.

The influence of the book on Ethigean society and language, in terms relatable to us, lies between *Hamlet* and the *Bible*, being closer to the former. Several idioms regarding the book become present in the Khosgan language. The phrase ‘it’s not exactly the Deeds and Chronicle’ is used to dismiss poor works of writing or prose- this is a reference to the quality of the book and the regard it is held in in society. Another phrase, ‘no need to give us the whole Deeds and Chronicle’ is used in response to an unnecessarily long description or story of something- this is a reference to the fact that *The Deeds and Chronicle of Ironhand* is the longest book that the vast majority of people have read.

The publication and distribution of the book lead in part to Lacaideon embarking on a campaign to increase literacy in the realm. Though Lacaideon is a sufficiently competent and well-meaning ruler for such a plan to have likely been carried out anyway, the book causes the Shurhath to prioritise this campaign and invest ample time and resources into it. The literacy rate in the Empire prior to Lacaideon’s reign was 4.5%- by the end it is 9.5%.

Lacaideon doesn’t marry at any point and has no children, legitimate or otherwise. Mistrustful of the court and nobility, he decides that the only members of society well-meaning and competent enough to properly rule the country are the semadai. He never formally appoints a successor, but makes it widely known that the next Shurhath should be one of them. Lacaideon eventually dies of old age. The war has left those lords who survive with a powerful aversion to another long, brutal conflict. As such, the vacancy of the throne- for the first time in Ethigean history- does not lead to a massive, continent-wide war. With the mighty lords of the realm licking their wounds from the last colossal war, they seek a compromise, and with no one lord willing to countenance their rival taking the throne, Lacaideon’s wishes are honoured.

The semadai choose a Shurhath amongst themselves, a virtuous man who genuinely reveres Ironhand: Typhoon. He begins a new theonomic school of thought called Lacaideonism, positing that Ironhand is the Fourth Prophet of the Way, the one who finally brought the principles of the Way into politics and rulership. Lacaideonism does not become ubiquitous amongst the semadai, but it does become a competitive school of thought and the basis of many debates. Amongst the commonry, Lacaideonism is considerably more popular.

The newly elected Shurhath is a virtuous man and a good ruler- but not quite as much so as Ironhand. The semadai, formerly isolated from the capital, begin to trickle into Semidon as courtiers and advisors. Upon the death of the 39th Shurhath, the semadai in the capital act quickly and choose a 40th Shurhath from their own ranks. The tradition is cemented. And this 40th Shurhath is slightly less virtuous and competent than the 39th, and more and more semadai enter the capital.

They begin to act as a political faction due to their influence on the Shurhath. And over the following century, as one goes from the 40th to the 46th Shurhath, power begins to exert its influence, and power corrupts.

Ironhand correctly estimated that the semadai would make better rulers than any nobleman because of their unique self-discipline, lifestyle, religious principles, and education. And during his time, the semadai were indeed self-disciplined and virtuous. But they were never incorruptible, because men rarely scarcely are. Batay *was* genuinely incorruptible, and because Ironhand’s experience of the semadai as an institution is mainly just his personal experience of Batay, Ironhand erroneously believes that all of the semadai are genuinely incorruptible. This is not the case.

For deprived of their regular study and training and exposed to the wealth, decadence, and political games of court life, the whole nature of the semadai begins to change. It begins to mutate into just another political faction, to turn its back on truly practising the Way in more than just name. And by the mid-10th century, the nobility of the realm are no longer quite so scared of war. They have not experienced it personally and seen its horrors, but hear about it through a lens of glory and fame. They begin to plot, to seek power, and to grow unruly.

Eventually, the game of politics ensnares and engrosses the semadai fully, and the decadence of the court life makes them soft and ineffectual. They lack the discipline nor the ability to restrain the nobility. And thus, when the 46th Shurhath dies in 954, the semadai bring forth a new 47th one, but other noblemen claim themselves to be the new Shurhath instead. And, around a century after the death of Ironhand, history repeats itself, and another colossal, nationwide war once again plunges Ethagis into chaos.

## IV. [2021-2023] [Old Story Spinoff] The Sword of Ethagis

This is not a part of the narrative of this project, and has been added in purely as interesting ‘extra’ content.

Alternate Timeline Premise: Cyzinian inherits the throne from the Dragonfly after his death

### Books

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Book No. | Scope | Colour | Cover Character | Points-of-View |
| I | Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 | White & Magenta | The Sword of Semidon, Shurhath Armour | *Recurring:*  The Reefshark; Court of Semidon  (II)  *Appearance:*  The Red Mantis; The Juggernaught; Jackdaw |
| II | Parts 4, 5 | Red & Gold | The Juggernaught, Shurhath Armour | *Recurring:*  The Juggernaught; Jackdaw; Zenith; Soul Eater; Court of Semidon; Commonwealth  (VI)  *Appearance:*  Tarantula; The Desert Ripper; Thundermaw |
| III | Parts 6, 7 | Green & Blue | War Machine | *Recurring:*  Firewalker; The Juggernaught; Jackdaw; Crossbow; Court of Semidon  (V)  *Appearance:*  Lacaideon |
| IV | Parts 7, 8 | Midnight & Purple | The Hammer of Ilyzor |  |
| V | Parts 9, 10 | Charcoal & Black | Sharkjaw |  |
| VI | Parts 11, 12 | Ultramarine & Coral | Armageddon |  |

### Narrative

Part 1: White

Part 2: Magenta

Part 3: Red

Part 4: Gold

Part 5: Green

Part 6: Blue

Part 7: Midnight

Part 8: Purple

Part 9: Charcoal

**Part 10: Black**

Part 11: Ultramarine

Part 12: Coral

#### Strand 1: Cyzinian

* Scython dies of illness a few months before the Dragonfly’s own death; due to the short amount of time and the Shurhath’s senility, the Dragonfly doesn’t produce another heir
* During this time, Cyzinian informs Zenith and his other retinues that, as the Dragonfly’s lieutenant, he is the legitimate successor to the Shurhath and plans to take charge after his death and assume the throne, by force if necessary
* He doesn’t make any plans or schemes for this, however. His retinues train physically and militarily every day- which proves very important later- but this is because Cyzinian has made them do this every day for years
* Other political players launch into action after Scython’s death and begin plotting. The Red Mantis does the most here; he gains the support of most of the Dragonfly’s retinues, including his elite bodyguard unit. He does this via monetary bribes and promises of more power in the future
* He also bribes many key players in the civil service and tries to infiltrate it with his loyalists. He uses espionage and intelligence networks to plan a decisive coup for when the Dragonfly does, amassing support amongst key players and factions
* Other major courtiers do this as well, including the Wraithwreaker. These politicians buy off different parts of the Dragonfly’s retinues and carve out different power bases, although the Red Mantis’ is the biggest and it looks like he’ll be Shurhath
* Jackdaw for his part stays out of the scramble for influence, anticipating that he’d lose and that it’d be best not to antagonise one of the rival political players who would win
* The Dragonfly dies, and is surrounded by the most important courtiers; these include Cyzinian, Cyzinian’s lieutenant Zenith, the Wraithwreaker, the Red Mantis, Jackdaw, and some others
* He hasn’t bothered to name a successor- he simply doesn’t care enough to do so. The chaos that failing to name a successor would cause isn’t his problem (as he’s dead), and he has no descendants to survive him. The chaos engendered from failing to name a successor is meaningless to him as neither he nor his dynasty will experience it
* When the Shurhath expires, Cyzinian draws his sword and kneels with the blade-tip resting on the ground. Then, he stands up and tells Zenith to summon *all* of his retinues to the throne room. Zenith looks at Cyzinian in shock, who merely replies ‘The time has come.’ He then starts walking inexorably to the throne room
* This is absolutely nuts to the other politicians present, who suspected that Cyzinian would interfere in the succession somehow but not so soon and so strongly
* Meanwhile, Zenith is striding out of the Dragonfly’s bedchambers and finding his men, telling them to spread the message that all of Cyzinian’s retinues are to come immediately to the throne room. They do so, and tell all the retinues that *they* meet to spread the same message
* The Red Mantis slinks away to his bedchambers; his plans are already set in motion as one of the other men who saw the Dragonfly die is working for him and will get all the pieces of the plan ready. Now, he wants to feign neutrality, and so he and his retinues will lie in wait, far away from the action
* The Wraithwreaker and some other courtiers ask him what the time has come *for*. He ignores them. They ask with accelerating desperation and anxiety. He ignores them. One of them tries to block his way- he effortlessly bats him aside. They keep following him
* Jackdaw silently follows Cyzinian, waiting to see what will happen
* Cyzinian strides into the throne room and walks in a straight line and an unchanging pace towards the throne. Five of the Dragonfly’s personal bodyguards (now working for the Red Mantis) march into the room from the other end and stand between Cyzinian and the throne
* They explain that a council of the most important courtiers will be assembled to discuss the succession. Cyzinian keeps moving, and neither blinks nor change his pace. First they explain more about what will happen. Then they exhort him to stop. Then they command him to stop; Cyzinian keeps moving
* They ask him whether he will choose law/stability or violence. He draws his sword and replies ‘I choose violence.’ He halves the soldier in front of him, then moves to engage the rest
* Wraithwreaker runs out of the throne room when the fighting starts. Cyzinian kills three soldiers, the other two are killed at the same time by Cyzinian’s retinues, several of which are in the throne room by now
* Cyzinian walks up to the throne and sits in it imperially. Just then, the Wraithwreaker walks in, at the head of a column of the Dragonfly’s retinues working for both him and the Red Mantis
* He arrogantly and passive-aggressively explains that Cyzinian’s actions will be discussed in the council meeting for the succession issue, and advises that Cyzinian stop talking and get off the throne
* The Wraithwreaker strides up the throne steps and stands above Cyzinian whilst he sits, lecturing him; Cyzinian interrupts him by punching him hard in the face
* The power of the blow lifts him off his feet and he lands hard, shattering his skull. Cyzinian’s retinues understand what’s happening and immediately attack the Dragonfly’s retinues; the former have been training every day for years and the latter barely train at all. Cyzinian’s retinues massacre them
* More of Cyzinian’s retinues file into the throne room, arranging themselves automatically into columns based on their unit. Cyzinian immediately starts giving the following orders, assigning different duties to different units:
* Round up *everyone* who isn’t either a retinue of Cyzinian, slave, or menial workerand place them in cells. Afterwards, Cyzinian will decide what to do with them. If anyone resists, kill them if they are ‘expendable’ and ‘subdue’ them if not. Block all the exits and prevent anyone leaving; if anyone expendable tries to leave anyway, kill them. If they are not expendable, maim them to prevent them leaving
* Kill all retinues of the Dragonfly on sight (their loyalty is dubious). Move the bodies of fallen soldiers in the throne room to the sides of the room. Bring all the senior officers of the civil service to the throne room (Cyzinian will brief them directly)
* All retinues are to travel in groups, with the smallest group size being three. Courtiers are to be escorted to either the throne room or prison cells in columns, with minimum three retinues supervising them; one at the back, one on the left, one of the right
* Anyone trying to escape custody is to be killed immediately, unless they are indispensable, in which case they are to be maimed
* Individuals which are not expendable are held to be anyone occupying the most senior military or civil positions or anyone with a sobriquet; these individuals are to be investigated and judged by Cyzinian individually
* The palace becomes a maelstrom of bloodshed and chaos. Civil service officers are practically dragged into the throne room, where they are greeted by the sight of dead soldiers lining the edges of the room
* Cyzinian lays out plans for major changes both within the court and outside and demands that all of them kneel and swear allegiance. A couple refuse and are killed immediately
* After Cyzinian has the entire court secured, another colossal wave of changes occurs. Entire factions of court are expelled, with certain members of each being killed
* The number of personnel dedicated not to military/government functions (e.g. cooks, stable-grooms, jesters, musicians, etc) is vastly cut down. The only part of the court which isn’t involved in the military/government that *isn’t* nearly decimated is the concubinage
* He multiplies the number of retinues serving under him and establishes elaborate timetables for all of them to both patrol/guard the castle, build further fortifications, and train
* He also establishes elaborate timetables for structuring both his own personal routine, the routines of his retinues, and indeed the routine of the entire court. Everything is run like clockwork with maximal orderliness
* Finally, he has all the wine in the palace thrown out, seeing wine as an effeminate drink that clouds the mind of his retinues. The wine is tainted with lead due to Shadowbound’s interference, but because he has it thrown out, nobody drinks it
* Cyzinian becomes Shurhath without any real opposition in the Crownlands, but the various magnates of the realm declare themselves Shurhath anyway (the same which do so in the standard timeline)
* Although Cyzinian is acknowledged as a formidable man and capable general, everyone has been preparing for war anyway, and the realm is so decentralised that this is the golden opportunity to start a war before Cyzinian inevitably gets the court in order and starts centralising the country
* A massive, multifaceted free-for-all war breaks out just as it does in the standard timeline, but as Cyzinian now has full imperial authority he immediately overhauls the court and the governance of the Crownlands
* He cuts the excess and decadence to almost zero, spending only as much on ostentation as is necessary to maintain respect for the throne. He exiles Jackdaw and the Red Mantis and many, *many* others, seeing them as useless leeches, executing the Wraithwreaker as he’s always hated him personally
* The Court of Semidon changes from a political free-for-all full of intrigue, schemes, and espionage to a harsh military fortress. Cyzinian’s retinues, previously an apolitical guardsman faction, now run the court like clockwork
* The only faction overtly present in the court is Cyzinian’s retinues, but through the civil service and espionage networks exiled politicians like the Red Mantis maintain links to the court, exerting what influence they can indirectly
* Jackdaw goes to Lord Morningstar’s court and is accepted there, with Morningstar becoming personally fond of him and making him an advisor to him
* The Red Mantis goes to Sharkjaw’s court and becomes useful there, with Sharkjaw also eventually coming to value his advice and eventually making him a personal advisor as well
* When the Red Mantis arrives in Sharkjaw’s domain and becomes accepted as a courtier, however, he pools his resources (he stole much of the treasury’s contents as he left) with Sharkjaw to contract Shadowbound, assigning him to murder Cyzinian
* The motivation is that with Cyzinian gone, the Red Mantis will be able to mount a coup in the chaos as he still has strong connections in the palace via senior civil service officials
* In the chaos of Cyzinian’s death, he could sweep in with his own retinues- and Sharkjaw’s troops- and seize power as Shurhath, massacring Cyzinian’s loyalists, who would probably rally around Zenith as a successor to the murdered emperor
* In return for his financial and military backing of the coup, Sharkjaw then has an ally in the crown (and can fill the court with his own loyalists, giving him constant intelligence and influence there). Both the Red Mantis and Sharkjaw benefit
* Shadowbound, having staked out Cyzinian’s fortress-castle sufficiently, makes his move and infiltrates. He has an extensive plan to kill Cyzinian and despite the high security of Cyzinian’s court actually manages to get to him, reaching the Shurhath’s bedchambers
* What Shadowbound doesn’t account for is the fact that Cyzinian likes to wear armour at all times, even in his bedchambers. It fulfils his self-image of himself, as a warrior through and through who acts martially in all aspects of his life
* Shadowbound manages to enter Cyzinian’s bedchambers because he’s a master assassin but couldn’t have anticipated that Cyzinian would be eccentric enough to wear armour in his bedchambers
* He can’t just throw a knife into Cyzinian from behind but rather has to manoeuvre himself- making zero noise- so that he gets a clean shot on Cyzinian’s face (the only unprotected region of his body) without being seen
* Just as he does this, the ‘Mouser-General’ runs in, chasing a mouse. Cyzinian no longer refers to it as the ‘Mouser-General’ as the Dragonfly’s son has long since been dead, but the cheetah is excellent at killing vermin so he gives it free rein of the castle
* The cheetah walks in, distracting Cyzinian, who watches him. Shadowbound successfully gets out of its way, but the cheetah notices him and its gaze lingers on him for a few seconds in confusion, long enough for Cyzinian to notice the prolonged gaze and then Shadowbound
* Shadowbound throws but, thrown off his focus, misses, and Cyzinian bellows and summons all his nearby guards into the room. He manages to keep Shadowbound at bay long enough for his guards to swarm in and rush the assassin, killing him
* Cyzinian further increases security from that point on and ensures that he’s almost never alone: the only time he’s alone for a prolonged period of time in this narrative is when he soliloquises
* The extra precautions he takes make him pretty much assassin-proof, and this- plus the fact that he killed Shadowbound- deters anyone from trying to assassinate him again
* The Blackfish attacks Semidon at the same day as in the standard timeline, during the tidal anomaly wherein the flow direction of the River Antavar is reversed, and is soundly defeated just as in the standard timeline
* However, because Cyzinian stripped away all courtly excess upon taking power, the treasury is wealthier, and he’s deployed his troops a different way
* Hence, the Reefshark never gets hit in the thigh with a stray arrow. Instead, he survives until the end of the battle and surrenders after the Blackfish’s death, becoming a prisoner of Cyzinian
* Cyzinian immediately seizes the initiative and, leaving a modest garrison in the Crownlands, moves a massive pillaging force into the Delta, gathering all the plunder he can and forcing vassalisation on the lords there
* Cyzinian adds the entire Delta to the Crownlands, greatly increasing its area and wealth. The Delta is the most developed region in the whole continent and Cyzinian jumps at the opportunity to take it
* He’s not really concerned about his personal wealth but more the power of his *dynasty*. He’s been raised to prize his dynasty above all, and intends to have a son succeed him as Shurhath, who will one day need the wealth and power of the Delta
* Meanwhile, Zenith- as Cyzinian’s lieutenant- oversees the important prisoners whilst he and Cyzinian are on campaign, and tries to get information from them. When he sees the Reefshark- still a broken, traumatised shell- he actually feels sorry for him despite his usual cold exterior
* He brings him some nicer food and starts talking to (at) him, talking about the need for maximum order, stability, organisation, and efficiency. The Reefshark, so wrecked by the chaos of his life as of late, soaks it up
* Because Cyzinian *immediately* takes the Delta, it never falls into anarchy and chaos like in the standard timeline and Cyzinian has his new vassals coordinate in ridding the area of bandits. Banditry and chaos are still prevalent, but not as much as in the standard timeline
* Cyzinian then brings his soldiers back to the Crownlands, which hasn’t been invaded by any rivals because they’re too busy fighting each other, and rebuilds his strength, spending the time and plunder building a better-trained, better-equipped army
* Cyzinian reviews his options: what poses the most immediate threat to his rule? Lord Morningstar is extremely talented, but he’s still in the Autumnlands re-building his strength
* The Juggernaught is also extremely talented, and inching closer to the Crownlands, but Soul Eater is even closer
* Some of Cyzinian’s advisors suggest letting the Juggernaught and Soul Eater just fight it out, but although this may be the right move it doesn’t really fit with Cyzinian’s personality. Cyzinian is a man of action and the idea of just waiting when his army is ready to go is anathema to his character. Even if it isn’t the optimum move, he feels compelled by his own pride/restlessness to do *something*
* He launches a massive pre-emptive invasion of Soul Eater’s domain, blindsiding him and making strong progress
* The Juggernaught, seeing the damage being done to Soul Eater, seizes the opportunity and abandons his plan to invade Nagal, instead flanking Soul Eater from the south and opening up a new front for him
* Firewalker distinguishes himself during the campaign and Cyzinian’s levy appoints him as a jagal
* Soul Eater is unable to withstand the dual invasion from both sides and is crushed between the two pincers of Cyzinian and the Juggernaught. Soul Eater and Purgatory surrender in the battle and Cyzinian executes them later by throwing them to the dogs
* Soul Eater pleads for mercy before death, earning Cyzinian’s contempt. Purgatory, pathologically unable to feel fear (a symbol of her inhumanity) simply rages at Cyzinian and curses both him and her son. Cyzinian admires his bravery but is disappointed by her inability to take responsibility for her own actions, and also kills her with contempt
* The Reaper Guard leave Aedemon. Most of them survive, but they wonder what they should do now. They feel that they should act against Cyzinian in some way; a little bit out of a sense of loyalty to Purgatory, but mainly they just need ideas for what to actually do with themselves
* They decide to offer their services to the Juggernaught as he’s relatively nearby and is an enemy of Cyzinian
* The Reefshark starts to adopt Zenith’s ideology of order as a coping mechanism for his trauma. Unlike Batay, Zenith isn’t a warm or wise person, so instead of recovering emotionally, Lacaideon remains cold, detached, and solemn. He manages to reach sanity again, however, by absorbing Zenith’s need and idolisation for order
* Zenith’s eventually agrees to release him in exchange for becoming Cyzinian’s retinue. Cyzinian is dubious about this, but trusts Zenith
* Zenith wants to train the Reefshark a little bit before sending him to campaign as he’s been wasting away in a cell for so long. The Reefshark still remembers much of his fighting skills though, and is still sharp
* Zenith drills him relentlessly in fighting discipline and techniques, making him a much better fighter. Lacaideon isn’t *as* good a fighter as in the original timeline because Batay is more skilled than Zenith and Lacaideon was happier, but he’s still one of the best in the world
* He requests to abandon his old sobriquet, the Reefshark. Zenith accepts, and he just becomes known as Lacaideon
* Lacaideon is emotionally stable however. His fighting style is one of military precision and robotic, calculated movements, rather than the fluid, artful movement style he’s trained in in the original timeline
* Soul Eater’s domain- Aedemon- soon collapses. Kriru Zaran was also captured by Cyzinian (surrendering out of cowardice) and is executed, so the domain just falls into anarchy, exactly how the Delta falls into anarchy in the original timeline
* Cyzinian knows the Juggernaught is nearby however, and wants to engage him now whilst he’s enriched from plunder and the Juggernaught’s army is smaller
* The Juggernaught’s smarter than that though. He pulls back, and Cyzinian doesn’t want to endanger himself by venturing too far from Semidon; Lord Morningstar is lurking nearby
* Cyzinian decides that his next priority is to deal with this threat. Lord Morningstar is an excellent general and as long as he’s lurking in the Autumnlands, Cyzinian can’t afford to make a mistake else Atheas will pounce
* Atheas, for his part, is planning to cut through the Delta and march to the Springlands, another highly wealthy region, where he can seize plunder, conscripts, and generally boost his army’s strength
* He doesn’t count on Cyzinian’s sheer energy and drive, however, as he marches a huge army towards Silphax. Atheas puts up a very clever defence but loses the capital as Cyzinian’s army is too much bigger, although the battle does weaken it
* Thematically, Atheas is a kind of foil to Cyzinian, being all about flexible pragmatism as opposed to Cyzinian’s rigid dogmatism. This is a prevalent theme in this part of the series and the reader’s attention is drawn to it
* Atheas launches a campaign using guerrilla tactics with success. To draw Atheas into a decisive, pitched battle, Cyzinian starts burning villages and towns to the ground; Atheas’ own troops are from these places and start strongly pressuring Atheas to act
* Atheas is stuck between a rock and a hard place; he’d probably lose in a decisive battle, but he’s losing the loyalty and confidence of his troops
* His advisor, Jackdaw, proposes a very interesting idea, however; an alliance with the Juggernaught. Both of them are weaker than Cyzinian alone but could destroy him together, and both very much want to do so
* Atheas sends an emissary and the Juggernaught accepts
* Cyzinian now faces an alliance between Atheas and the Juggernaught; both of whom are better generals than him and who together have an army to match his
* Cyzinian starts losing ground. Lacaideon proves himself to be an excellent warrior, and Cyzinian gladly makes him an esteemed retinue- although he’s too busy to want to meet him in person
* Firewalker does very well and gets Cyzinian’s attention, who personally makes him an asthan. He also gives him his own retinue; in this timeline, it’s *also* Srigo, who was captured as a prisoner-of-war in the Autumnlands campaign and was offered freedom in exchange for service
* Firewalker and Srigo’s relationship progresses in much the same way in this timeline as well, with both eventually becoming fond of each other
* He loses a massive battle against the alliance. In this battle, Lacaideon gets hit with a poisoned arrow by one of the Juggernaught’s troops. The Reaper Guard, ‘defecting’ from Soul Eater, took their knowledge of his army’s arrow poisons with them, and told the Juggernaught
* So the poison that strikes Lacaideon in this timeline is the same poison that strikes the Red Mantis in the original timeline. Lacaideon struggles off the battlefield, wounded, and drags himself into a cave
* The poison is a hallucinogenic, and Lacaideon sees a vision of Ilyzor. Ilyzor tells him that he has great potential, and that he should stick to his ideology (that he took from Zenith) of prioritising order and seeking to make the world a more ordered and stable place by any means necessary. Lacaideon, frightened and awed by seeing a god, accepts
* The poison is also one that targets the nervous system, so like the Revenant, Lacaideon suffers from total neuropathy and cannot feel pain. The poison also greatly affects his brain and damages it, but in different ways
* Lacaideon becomes pathologically unable to feel fear and displays the same emotional deficit as the Revenant does in the original timeline. But instead of being zombified and uninhibited, Lacaideon becomes mechanical and uninhibited- and uninhibited in a different way
* He doesn’t use his lack of inhibition to unleash his darkest desires but rather to contemplate how he might pursue order and stability at *all* costs, no matter how bloody the means are. He becomes a strict utilitarian, calculating the most efficient way to achieve order without guilt, restraint, or reluctance
* Lacaideon isn’t a bad person, so his goal- order- isn’t malevolent. In fact, it’s just the ideology that he absorbed from Zenith. The poison doesn’t make Lacaideon malevolent or self-interested at all; in fact, it cripples his own ability to *feel* self-interest or ego
* It sort of roboticises him, making him act like an automaton simply calculating how to achieve stability without human warmth, compassion, or ego
* Meanwhile, Cyzinian is saved by the fact that just after the large battle, the Ripper captures Qahira, and the Juggernaught feels compelled by his principles to intervene. This divides the alliance between him and Atheas and leads to Atheas’ death after a failed coup
* This is a *perfect* result for Cyzinian, who can now rest and rebuild his army after its battering in the campaign
* Meanwhile, Lacaideon makes his way back to Semidon. Cyzinian is very glad to see him alive and well and the court hails him as a hero- but immediately notices how strange and inhuman he has become
* They also notice his lack of pain and are disturbed by it; he asks for a doctor’s bag and then pulls the arrow out unflinchingly and stitches up the wound without reacting at all
* In honour of his self-sacrifice on the battlefield, taking an arrow and then dragging himself, Cyzinian airs the idea of Lacaideon choosing a new sobriquet, but Lacaideon has no interest in social status or pride anymore and doesn’t care
* Cyzinian gives Lacaideon a senior position in the army, in charge of training soldiers. He quite likes him as he’s loyal, direct, and efficient, and even invites him for a drink with him in the evening
* Lacaideon doesn’t drink, however, nor does he even emote or make conversation. He just sits there and looks at Cyzinian whilst the latter talks. Cyzinian doesn’t have anything against Lacaideon but for the first time feels a little uneasy around him- indeed, for the first time feels a little uneasy around *anyone*. Cyzinian dismisses him, and whilst he does so stutters for the first and only time in the series
* Cyzinian’s army comes to greatly respect Lacaideon due to his extreme efficiency, competence, and incorruptibility. He even eats the same food as them, which is a huge symbolic gesture of solidarity and care for them; he doesn’t even intend this, he just thinks it’s a healthier diet than the abundant meat and alcohol that military commanders normally eat
* As a result, many soldiers become loyal to Lacaideon, more so than Cyzinian. Lacaideon is loyal to Cyzinian, however, because Cyzinian is a force for order and stability in the world, so this isn’t a political issue. Cyzinian actually becomes aware of this and decides it’s not a problem
* The soldiers notice how mechanical and brutally efficient Lacaideon is, however, and give him their own sobriquet on account of this: *War Machine*. The sobriquet is a mark of respect, but acknowledges Lacaideon’s calculating and dispassionate nature
* It also acknowledges his supreme fighting ability and his unrelenting, ultra-precise fighting style
* Cyzinian sends out some detachments to harangue the Commonwealth of Free Men and prevent them raiding the Crownlands- for both practical and ideological reasons-, but urgently needs to let his military recover and recoup, so reluctantly holds off on a full invasion
* Cyzinian’s military has had some time to recover, and Cyzinian assesses his options. The Juggernaught is occupied in the West for now, and he’s inclined to just let the Ripper bleed away his forces
* With the Juggernaught occupied, Cyzinian thinks about what his next greatest threat is. He *really* dislikes that there’s a foreign ruler invading Ethagis, so attacking the Meteor would be his top priority; but then the Meteor is attacking the South, whom Cyzinian also really dislikes for seceding
* So Cyzinian decides to just let them fight it out, and then resolves to attack the winner
* Meanwhile, the Crownlands are being raided by the Commonwealth to secure food for the cities. In fact, the Commonwealth has simply grown too big for Cyzinian to be comfortable with
* Cyzinian doesn’t *like* slavery, but he sees slavery and hierarchy as necessary parts of life, and rebelling against hierarchy to be immoral. The idea of a rebellious, egalitarian state next to his own domain is anathema to him. He launches a campaign against the Commonwealth
* Cyzinian has far more resources than the Commonwealth and the latter generally avoids pitched battles, sticking to ‘guerrilla’ tactics and hit and run attacks. Regardless, Cyzinian quickly gets close to Azariad and places the city under siege
* During the campaign, Firewalker does very well and Cyzinian makes him a lord and retinue of his. Firewalker is absolutely elated but realises that now he’s a personal retinue, defecting to another lord (e.g. the Juggernaught) if Cyzinian loses won’t be an option as he’s too close to Cyzinian. Firewalker resolves to follow Cyzinian to the end
* Srigo for his part is actually pretty uncomfortable with what they’re doing and privately sympathises with the Commonwealth. He tries voicing these concerns to Firewalker but the reception is bad, and Firewalker warns him never to mention these sympathies to anyone else or he’d probably be executed for treason
* War Machine has mixed feelings. Cyzinian is better for order and stability beyond a doubt, and Lacaideon can’t feel guilt, but slavery is a chaotic and unstable force in itself, and the Commonwealth is fighting against it
* War Machine tells Cyzinian that he’ll only fight if the imperial army takes no more slaves. Cyzinian ordinarily wouldn’t accept but War Machine is an incredibly valuable soldier, and executing him for treason could even provoke a mutiny. Torturing or intimidating him into submission would be useless as well as he feels no pain nor fear
* Besides, Cyzinian can’t really bring himself to hate or resent War Machine because Lacaideon doesn’t even act human and Cyzinian is honestly just weirded out by the guy and wants him to go away. Cyzinian accepts
* The siege of Azariad becomes desperate for the Commonwealth, but just as Cyzinian is about to shatter them, the Juggernaught invades the Crownlands
* Cyzinian recognises that the Juggernaught poses far more of a threat to him than Chainbreaker, and with great reluctance breaks off the siege and moves north
* The Juggernaught is a better general than Cyzinian and now has an army large enough to rival the imperial one; they’re around the same size
* In a move that deeply shocks everyone, War Machine refuses to fight. He has calculated that both Cyzinian and the Juggernaught will bring a similar level of order to Ethagis- or indeed that the Juggernaught would do *more* to the end than Cyzinian
* Hence, fighting in a war and endangering soldiers’ lives in battles- an inherently chaotic act- would simply be adding to the chaos of the world for no reason. Hence, logically, he should not fight
* War Machine therefore abstains from fighting: this is an act of treason and is punishable by death. War Machine therefore leaves the Crownlands. But many soldiers are loyal to him, more so than to Cyzinian
* War Machine may seem a surprising figure to inspire loyalty; he has zero warmth and doesn’t care about his troops, seeing them as numbers in utilitarian calculations for restoring the most order
* But in reality, this logical approach means War Machine never acts aggressively, arbitrarily, or inconsistently. He continually thinks about the lives of his soldiers- which they interpret as paternalist compassion even though it’s a consequence of excessive calculation- and has a pathologically low ego- which his soldiers interpret as humility
* He’s also trained many of them personally, establishing a kind of father figure status amongst them, is a skilful commander, and an absolutely phenomenal fighter. Martial prowess is one of the best determinants of social status in Ethagis, so War Machine is viewed with awe
* So when War Machine defects and leaves the Crownlands, several regiments defect too and rally to War Machine’s personal banner, leaving the Crownlands with him
* War Machine ultimately wants to dispel chaos from the realm in any way he can. The two main sources of chaos, as he sees it, are the Commonwealth (as long as it exists, it will always be at war with Ethagis, which will cause chaos), and the Meteor
* Either way, he needs more men. Aedemon is the perfect place for this; it’s been anarchy ever since Soul Eater died and thus easy prey for bandits and Commonwealth raids. It’s complete chaos there (just like the Delta is in the standard timeline) so War Machine figures that he can convince the desperate people there to join him
* Lacaideon therefore goes to Aedemon
* Cyzinian is absolutely *furious* about this but there’s nothing he can really do. His immediate priority has to be stopping the Juggernaught rather than pursuing War Machine
* The Juggernaught starts moving inexorably east, winning battles against Cyzinian and pushing him back. Zenith is killed in one battle and Firewalker is promoted to be Cyzinian’s new lieutenant
* Firewalker’s first act as lieutenant is to make Srigo an asthan
* The Juggernaught eventually prepares for an invasion of Semidon. Cyzinian and Firewalker fall back to the capital and fortify the castle as much as possible
* The Second Battle of Semidon takes place. Cyzinian fights on the front line and is killed; before his army dissolves into complete leaderless anarchy, Firewalker- his lieutenant- takes over as Shurhath
* Firewalker dies in the throne room to the Juggernaught’s elite troops, mainly just happy that for a few hours he was able to have ascended from complete obscurity as a commoner to the highest title in the empire
* The Juggernaught doesn’t really understand War Machine’s motivations. The Reaper Guard are constantly sent to spy on him, but they’re selfish and power-hungry people so they can’t comprehend War Machine’s ego-less commitment to order
* They therefore completely misinterpret Lacaideon’s motivations and tell the Juggernaught that he’s just another political player making an independent bid for power. The Juggernaught therefore pronounces him an outlaw and offers a bounty for his death
* War Machine escapes with several regiments of Cyzinian’s forces who are loyal to him due to his skilful command, humility, and principles. War Machine still ultimately wants to promote order in the world, and this aim is what motivates him
* The Juggernaught, like Cyzinian, is also a force for order in the world so Lacaideon *would* work for him. However, Lacaideon was such a high ranking retinue of Cyzinian that the Juggernaught has issued a warrant for Lacaideon’s execution, and has vowed to kill him on sight if he catches him
* This is unfortunate for him, as War Machine would actually join him if he could as the Juggernaught is so ideologically committed to order
* Some of the various regiments still alive after Firewalker’s death flee to join War Machine once they hear of their Shurhaths’ demises. Others simply surrender
* Srigo, distraught at the death of his friend Firewalker, is unable to forgive the Juggernaught for this and resolves to join War Machine instead, joining the fleeing regiments

#### Strand 2: The Juggernaught

* The West- Juggernaught, Ripper, Hazin, etc- it all unfolds the exact same way as in the original timeline (including marrying the Dawn Star) until the key divergence in part 4 when Cyzinian invades Aedemon and the Juggernaught does the same instead of invade Nagal
* The Juggernaught still wants to stop the Ripper early before he gets too powerful, but this is too good an opportunity to pass up. The Juggernaught marches south and enters Soul Eater’s domain from its southernmost point
* He seizes as much plunder, wheat, and slaves as he can, and many of Soul Eater’s old soldiers flock to his banner. He doesn’t actually attack Soul Eater’s capital, however, as he doesn’t have the manpower
* He captures Thundermaw as a prisoner-of-war, and is eventually granted freedom in exchange for becoming a levy of the Juggernaught
* Just as in the standard timeline, Galar seeks to betray the Juggernaught by informing hie enemy about the weakness of his forces
* This time though, Shuriken isn’t here to convey that message, as Shadowbound never lived long enough to liberate her, and the messenger happens to get caught. Galar is found out and publicly executed for treason
* Purgatory is faced with a war on two fronts, and focusses on the Juggernaught as he’s weaker. The Juggernaught is still successful- and indeed becomes enriched by the plunder- but is humbled by the attack
* Cyzinian soon captures the capital, Naraka, and kills both Soul Eater and his mother, enriching himself with the spoils that he captures. He still considerably outnumbers the Juggernaught and the latter doesn’t want to risk a decisive battle with him
* The Juggernaught still wants to attack Nagal but has been humbled by the Aedemon campaign. He spends his time rebuilding strength
* He is also approached by Tarantula, leader of the Reaper Guard, who offer their services. The Juggernaught doesn’t really like the idea of a secret police, but he reasons with himself that if it helps establish Shurhath authority, it’s acceptable. Hence, he accepts
* The Juggernaught rests and restores his strength. The Ripper continues raids, but the Juggernaught doesn’t attack him for the moment, seeking to gain strength first
* Nonetheless, the Ripper holds off from launching a full-scale invasion; he lacks the confidence boost as in the original timeline from defeating the Juggernaught. Besides, he fears that if he does, the Juggernaught will counterattack
* Eventually, Atheas sends an emissary offering a temporary alliance- more of a truce- to coordinate attacking Cyzinian. The Juggernaught doesn’t trust Atheas, but Tarantula advises him to do it and he goes ahead
* They launch a joint invasion of the Crownlands
* The campaign goes well. Both of them are better generals than Cyzinian and their combined forces are more than a match for him. They advance towards Semidon
* The Valorous hears that his homeland, the South, has been invaded by the Meteor and wants to go and help. The Juggernaught, out of compassion to his lieutenant and friend, allows this, and the Valorous leaves
* Thundermaw and his gunpowder unit do well and he is appointed a jagal. The Juggernaught appoints him in person and finds out about his views. He isn’t sure of what to make of them, but finds them and him interesting
* In time, Thundermaw becomes a kind of advisor to the Juggernaught
* The Juggernaught comes to realise that Atheas has no real principles and solely wants power for its own sake. He trusts Atheas even less, and has the Reaper Guard watch him. Both are aware that as soon as is convenient, one will betray the other. They cooperate uneasily for now
* When the Juggernaught leaves the West and moves into the Crownlands, the Ripper seizes his chance and launches a full-scale invasion
* The Ripper tears through Hazin’s forces and, without Southern soldiers there to back Elphensbane, he advances rapidly. He moves so rapidly that, when he besieges Qahira, there is no time for Hazin to be roused into action. The Ripper invades the city, kills Hazin, and Elphensbane retreats
* The Juggernaught hears of this whilst his own campaign is going well. The Juggernaught, like Cyzinian, is a principled order who is motivated not mainly by power but by *ideology*, by the desire to shape the world in a certain way
* The Ripper- and everything he does and stand for- is complete anathema to the Juggernaught. The Juggernaught prizes order above everything else, and the Ripper is a far bigger threat to that than Cyzinian. Cyzinian is an opponent of the Juggernaught, but the latter doesn’t see him as a threat to the world order in the way he sees the Ripper
* The Juggernaught decides to take his army west to face the Ripper. Atheas *hates* this, and sees it as absolutely crazy. Atheas ultimately does just want power and is now so close. He doesn’t really care about the Ripper, seeing it as a secondary priority to deal with later
* Atheas decides to launch a coup against the Juggernaught, intending to steal his levies. This nearly succeeds, but due to the intelligence and actions of the Reaper Guard the coup fails, and the Juggernaught counters with his own coup
* The Juggernaught kills Atheas and subsumes almost all of his army, including Arzachel and Crossbow. Before Jackdaw can be executed, however, he uses his intel and schemes to be able to escape prison. The Juggernaught tries to find him and fails
* He moves west to take care of the Ripper. He hears about Crossbow, the commoner who received a sobriquet from her own men. He wants to meet her out of interest and to see if she should get a promotion
* He sees through her disguise as a man and finds out that she’s a woman. In the standard timeline, Atheas finds this out but doesn’t really care as she’s a good soldier. However, the Juggernaught is far more principled and doesn’t want a woman to serve in his army
* He dismisses her from service. Crossbow in this timeline goes through the same mental journey as in the original timeline, and by now- just as in the original timeline- thinks that all this war is totally unnecessary and exists just to gratify men’s need for glory
* Thus being dismissed, she therefore goes to find Chainbreaker and his Commonwealth, in order to fight for a cause she actually believes in
* The Juggernaught, meanwhile, arrives in the south west to find Elphensbane. Elphensbane has just lost his family, his army (and thus thousands of his people) and his home; he’s shattered, and in no way to resist the sheer force of will that is the Juggernaught. He becomes subordinate and submissive to him, and accepts him as Shurhath
* This is reinforced when the Juggernaught sees Jackdaw, who’s currently a courtier for Elphensbane, and immediately has him executed in front of everyone
* But the Juggernaught by now has a large army and ample wealth from plunder. Just as important, the Ripper is no longer fighting in the desert but the savannah to the south, where the Juggernaught can better supply his men
* The Ripper tries to have the Juggernaught assassinated through Bloodhound, who is promised a huge reward, but Thundermaw foils the attempt and the Juggernaught has Bloodhound killed
* The Juggernaught wins the campaign and kills the Ripper personally, winning the loyalty of many savannahmen serving under him. Even Elphensbane, who fears the Juggernaught, respects him for avenging his brother
* But the Juggernaught doesn’t think that this is *enough*. What he fears is that killing the Ripper will just stave off raids for a decade or so. Eventually, some other warlord will rise to power and do the exact same thing
* He sees that the entire *culture* of the Nagalens is centred on raiding others, refusing to live off of agriculture, and encouraging the rise of belligerent warlords. Every freeborn high-ranking adult male is encouraged to do this
* He comes to the conclusion that the only way to ensure that some other warlord doesn’t arise in a few years’ time is to invade the desert and purge- if not every male- every aristocratic high-ranking male who could replace the Ripper
* *Nobody* thinks this is a good idea, and most people don’t think it’s ethical. Even those who agree that it may prevent another warlord from arising and that in the long-term this would be helpful, it shouldn’t be a priority
* The only person the Juggernaught consults who supports this on ethical grounds is Thundermaw. They talk more, and the Juggernaught makes Thundermaw his new lieutenant. His army enters Nagal
* The campaign is brutal and destructive. The Juggernaught storms Nagalen cities and then Efitra and massacres many male Nagalens, sacking and plundering the city whilst he’s there
* Many of his followers become disgusted and hateful at the Juggernaught’s brutality, including Elphensbane. Elphensbane is still emotionally unstable and traumatised at the death of his brother, but his hate for the Juggernaught at this campaign starts to fester and make him want to stop accepting his submission to him. For now, though he does nothing
* The Juggernaught eventually has a deep reflection on the ethicality of what’s he doing and soliloquises about him. He concludes that although having principles is good, he can’t be so rigid in them, and that the ends can’t always justify the means
* He calls off the genocide and decides that, now duly enriched by plunder, he can go and campaign against Cyzinian. He leaves a resentful Elphensbane as Mighty Lord and for now leaves Nagal in anarchy without a Mighty Lord; he plans to sort it out later
* The Juggernaught marches towards the Crownlands. On the eve of him entering it and starting the campaign, he has a dream where the goddess Namur-the leopard god of opportunism, independence, solitude, intelligence, intuition, loneliness, and ruthlessness- comes to visit him
* He is frightened by this, but Namur tells him to stay calm, strong, and don’t be too rigid in his principles. If he does all this, it is his destiny to win. He is comforted, but Namur also advises pragmatism and flexibility, leaving the Juggernaught confused as to how he should act and what his moral code should be
* The Juggernaught wakes up and, thinking deeply about his dream, invades the Crownlands, starting the war
* He starts a great campaign against Cyzinian. His army matches Cyzinian’s in size, and the Juggernaught is a far better general; he pushes Cyzinian towards Semidon, and makes his way towards there
* The Juggernaught eventually reaches Semidon and in a climactic battle kills both Cyzinian and his lieutenant Firewalker, assuming the imperial throne as Shurhath
* He doesn’t eliminate all of Cyzinian’s army, however. War Machine, a senior retinue of Cyzinian, leads several regiments towards the south
* The Juggernaught, surprising many, actually buries Cyzinian in the imperial tomb, a sign of great respect. He never explicitly says why, but it’s because throughout the series both Cyzinian and the Juggernaught respected each other and saw a lot of the other in themselves
* The symmetry between them is an important theme throughout the series, as is the similarity between their ideologies
* The Juggernaught intends to have War Machine killed as he was such a senior figure in Cyzinian’s regime- but the Reaper Guard, using gathered intel, informs him that War Machine intends to attack the Meteor in the south
* This is actually useful for the Juggernaught; the Meteor is a threat anyway and letting two enemies fight it out is a good option. Besides, the Juggernaught isn’t quite strong enough to go straight into another campaign anyway
* He wants to spend some time rebuilding his army and consolidating his rule. He sends his army to the Crownlands to secure it against raids; especially the Commonwealth’s raids- but doesn’t contemplate an offensive campaign against the Commonwealth for now
* He deploys the Reaper Guard to spy on the Commonwealth and have Lazaria assassinated, aiming to damage Chainbreaker psychologically and cause a mentally unstable Chainbreaker to drive his own country into the ground
* They succeed in killing Lazaria, but it just makes Chainbreaker more determined and ruthless. He suspects Sharkjaw of orchestrating the assassination and decides that the Commonwealth is finally strong enough to have him killed
* Chainbreaker prepares for an invasion of Sharkjaw’s domain. The Commonwealth is ecstatic; they’ve been aiming to have him killed from the first, and now it’s finally happening
* The Juggernaught also launches many new policies in Ethagis, all designed to centralise the nation, give the Shurhath more power at the expense of everyone else, and keep everyone- commoners and nobles- in line
* This is because he is motivated by ideology- he believes in a world where the Shurhath rules absolutely, and the nation is run as efficiently as possible, leading to maximum order and stability
* He understands that he can’t unleash a bunch of reforms all at once, and he has to move gradually. But his vision of what Ethagis should be is so far from the current political situation that even his ‘gradual’ changes are deeply troubling to people
* He imposes heavy taxes on the nobility, gentry, and soldiery and wheat tithes on the commonry to feed his retinues, which he expands into a (albeit very small) standing army. He also demands that all noblemen in possession of saltpetre give 95% of it to him
* A forced labour system is created wherein commoners are systematically conscripted for fixed periods of time to build fortifications in the Crownlands
* He also groups peasants into ‘households’ of ten people, wherein if one peasant commits a crime, all of them get punished in the same way
* His long-term plan is to abolish Feyriatal entirely and replace the hereditary fiefdoms with bureaucratic administrative divisions run by officials hired and fired by the crown
* These policies alienate pretty much everyone, prompting the Alliance to form between Elphensbane and Panthercaul. The rest of the population feels alienated, but are kept in line through Juggernaught’s powerful personality, military, and secret police
* The Reaper Guard is greatly expanded during this period
* **After the Alliance defeats the Meteor, he prepares to move his army south in order to crush the remaining Alliance forces- but then Tarantula informs him of Sharkjaw’s betrayal of his country to the Meteor and the Alliance’s war on him**
* **Recognising that he would have to attack Sharkjaw anyway as treason is too much to overlook, he lets the Alliance and Sharkjaw fight it out**
* After the death of both Sharkjaw and Chainbreaker, the Juggernaught hears that the Commonwealth’s leadership is divided between Kingsparrow and Armageddon and that factions are developing
* He prepares a campaign against the Commonwealth, hoping to take advantage of the weakness, but before he can, he hears that the Alliance has invaded the Crownlands, newly bolstered by the defection of much of the Delta
* The Juggernaught is outnumbered but because he’s such a good general he’d probably win anyway if not for the constant defection of his troops to Elphensbane’s banner
* Nonetheless, in the Third Battle of Semidon, he puts up an impressive fight and nearly pushes them back, but is slain on the front lines of the field. Thundermaw is killed too. The Reaper Guard flee Semidon
* Arzachel is treating soldiers in the medical tents behind the lines and his comrades all flee when they hear that enemy troops have broken through and are coming. Arzachel refuses to abandon dying soldiers and is killed
* Elphensbane becomes Shurhath. He considers marrying the Dawn Star for access to her troops but decides against it, as he doubts he can trust her. He orders her back home

#### Strand 3: The Alliance

* Events in the South unfold exactly the same way in this timeline as in the standard timeline
* The two timelines diverge in part 4, wherein instead of Valorous invading Nagal and getting killed, he instead stays alive. This means that Kusaila never goes west, never meets Elphensbane, and the savannahmen and Southerners never meet and form loyalties to each other
* Kusaila spends part 5 at home in the South rebuilding his forces. The Meteor invades
* Kusaila is in a better position in this timeline as he spends part 5 rebuilding his army instead of fighting in the savannah, but he’s still just come from a big war with Archangel. Part 6 unfolds in this timeline in much the same way as in the original timeline, and ends with the Meteor capturing Kahina and Cataclysm
* In the west, Jackdaw escapes the Juggernaught and joins with Elphensbane, offering his services and advice. Elphensbane accepts
* Part 7 unfolds in a similar way as well; this time Kusaila doesn’t have to deal with Soul Eater’s troops as well so he can be a little bit more aggressive in his campaign against the Meteor; but he just sends for reinforcements from home whilst Kusaila bears the brunt of this aggressiveness in the form of increased casualties
* He still has to conscript women into the army to compensate for his losses, a Great Assembly is still called, and Kusaila is still defended by his troops and given full autonomy to pursue the war however necessary; just as in the original timeline
* Just as in the standard timeline, Kusaila’s wife dies and he risks losing his sanity but holds on until the end
* Just as in the standard timeline, the Meteor and his legions surround Kusaila’s war camp and attack it. But unlike in that timeline, Elphensbane and Kusaila have never met each other, and so Elphensbane doesn’t defend him
* The Meteor kills Kusaila and Valorous. Panthercaul flees into the jungle. The Meteor consolidates control over the South and brutally subjugates all the Southerners there, putting down the many rebellions that arise against him. Some Southerners flee north to the Springlands
* But the Meteor finds out that the reinforcements he called from back home led to problems. When the Khagan left his country, he left those regiments at home to prevent a military coup and the loss of his own power
* But when those regiments were recalled, his political rivals were able to use their own military forces to seize power, and have now declared that the Meteor is to be killed on sight if he ever returns home
* The Meteor is *stuck* in Ethagis; he can no longer turn back or he’ll be killed. He has all his ships burned so that his legions can’t turn back either. He then resolves that the only way to go is forward, and that he must invade the Springlands to seize more plunder and food to feed his legions
* Meanwhile in the savannah, after the Juggernaught leaves the savannah, Elphensbane stays behind, feeling humiliated and exploited
* He is disgusted by the Juggernaught’s brutality in slaughtering the Nagalens and angry at the exploitative levels of tribute he is forced to pay in tax. He also fears and hates the Juggernaught’s secret police force, the Reaper Guard
* He considers the idea of leading a rebellion against him, but dismisses it. He isn’t really in the emotional state to do so, doubts that he would win, and doubts that many would even join him. The fear he feels towards the Juggernaught is counterbalanced by hatred, but despite this he doesn’t see rebellion as a viable option
* Whilst contemplating how viable it would be to attack the Juggernaught’s military, he reflects on how effective his gunpowder regiments proved to be. He talks to Oceanfire about it, who says that she can have plenty of gunpowder (technically blackpowder) made in order to equip a bit of Elphensbane’s own fairly exhausted army with firearms
* The catch is that they have barely any saltpetre, as the savannah happens to not have much of it. *However*, the mountains where the semadai live have a good amount of it, so Elphensbane could trade with them
* He could send an envoy to conduct these trades, but he’s not sure that the semadai would do it (as they don’t *really* need anything Elphensbane has) so he decides that to secure a trade, he’ll have to endear himself to them
* The semadai greatly value humility, so he decides to visit the semadai in person to discuss trading. There he meets the Hammer of Ilyzor, Batay; the two immediately like each other and after some discussions, Batay agrees to a trade
* Elphensbane gets to work re-equipping regiments of his army with firearms and keeps going back to the semadai and Batay to trade for more saltpetre
* As Elphensbane and Batay talk more and more, they become closer and closer. Batay starts giving Elphensbane ‘therapy’ just as he does with Lacaideon in the standard timeline. Elphensbane gradually recovers his emotional stability as a result of this, and becomes deeply attached to Batay- just as Lacaideon does in the standard timeline
* Batay also does some fighting training with Elphensbane, saying that it’s good for him psychologically and has the added benefits of being useful and helping Elphensbane get social status
* Batay believes in tailoring teaching to the individual. He sees that Elphensbane is pretty hopeless at fighting *but* is good at throwing spears. He goes over this again and again until Elphensbane can throw a spear lightning-fast and with crazy accuracy
* Meanwhile, Elphensbane is getting access to plenty of saltpetre to help strengthen his army. The nation feels more confident as a result of the sight of new, well-equipped troops, and a sense of optimism very gradually replaces the sense of doom and destruction that prevailed after the Juggernaught left
* It sort of becomes a personal symbol for Elphensbane which symbolises moving on, re-inventing himself, and gaining emotional stability and a sense of control again. Elphensbane works through and starts to overcome his trauma with Batay, and the saltpetre symbolically stands for that
* The Meteor becomes even more unhinged, maddened by the loss of his home and power base and being marooned in a foreign land
* He invades the Springlands, forcing the disunited lords there to be his vassals. He heads north to Sharkjaw’s domain, preparing to plunder it; but Sharkjaw has a plan
* Sharkjaw approaches the Meteor and offers a secret alliance. He would claim that his allegiance is to Shurhath and Ethagis but in reality give the Meteor tribute and backing in exchange for being left alone and being allowed to enslave Ethigeans in the Springlands. The Meteor accepts
* The Meteor isn’t meeting a powerful resistance for now; the Springlanders were disunited when he invaded and he was able to subjugate them individually. They all resent him, but lack a unifying figure to rally around
* Panthercaul starts assembling a new army by going village to village, town to town, and covertly recruiting the population there. He’s not yet strong enough to openly attack the Meteor in the Springlands, however
* But suddenly, War Machine turns up to the Springlands with several regiments of battle-hardened soldiers, who are extremely highly trained because they’ve been fighting many campaigns by now
* He gains the loyalty of many Springlander commoners and lords, who see in him a desperately needed force for order and a defence against the ravages of the Meteor. People start to flock to him, and he builds a power base from them
* Srigo is an asthan in War Machine’s army but because he was Firewalker’s retinue he’s pretty well known and many of the troops like him. War Machine therefore appoints him to train and drill his troops- the same appointment that Cyzinian originally gave Lacaideon
* War Machine wages war against the Meteor and visits all the nearby lords to try and recruit them, willingly or forcibly, to the cause. He also visits Sharkjaw, who promises his allegiance to the Alliance- this is a lie- in exchange for being able to enslave any legionnaires of the Meteor captured by the Alliance
* War Machine meets with Sharkjaw face to face to arrange this. They immediately both recognise each other as a real force to be contented with and a potential opponent unlike any other. Lacaideon also concludes that Sharkjaw would probably be playing both sides and proclaim loyalty to both the Alliance and the Meteor in exchange for concessions from both
* The Red Mantis sees his chance for power and tries to inform the Alliance that Sharkjaw is betraying them, in the hopes that they’ll kill Sharkjaw and he can take his place. Sharkjaw, being highly intelligent, catches the Red Mantis before he can do this, however
* He isn’t angry, as he’d do the same thing in that position, but executes the Red Mantis regardless
* War Machine efficiently and ruthlessly prosecutes the war. He starts winning, but with complete disregard for loss of life and casualties. He executes frightening utilitarian calculations, treating his soldiers’ lives as if they were numbers
* Most importantly, he does not support Southern independence, and plans to re-annex the South after the Meteor is defeated. For this reason, Southerners won’t join him, and flock to Panthercaul instead
* Panthercaul notices that the war is being won and that soon, War Machine will turn on him. He starts searching for more allies
* Meanwhile in the savannah, the Juggernaught hears about Elphensbane’s acquisition of saltpetre through the Reaper Guard, who are spying on Elphensbane and his court. He orders a huge percentage of it to be paid to him as tribute; he both needs and wants to make sure that Elphensbane, a levy of not-guaranteed loyalty- doesn’t have it
* This really, *really* angers Elphensbane, partly because it’s very damaging to him militarily but mainly because it symbolises the Juggernaught dominating him just as in the Ripper campaign and confiscating the symbolic affirmation of Elphensbane’s changes
* Elphensbane decides, there and then, that he’s going to overthrow the Juggernaught at some point- the saltpetre is a minor thing, but it’s the last straw
* The question is how he’ll do this. Elphensbane is mentally stable now, but not nearly strong enough militarily to face the Juggernaught. He needs time to rebuild his army and, more importantly, he *needs* allies
* Elphensbane and Panthercaul both need more manpower. Elphensbane wants manpower to help him take on the Juggernaught, and Panthercaul wants manpower to help him secure Southern independence from both War Machine and the Juggernaught
* They hear about each other’s needs, and meet in secret. They agree that Elphensbane will support Panthercaul against the Meteor and War Machine in exchange for Panthercaul supporting Elphensbane against the Juggernaught- Elphensbane will become Shurhath, and as Shurhath formally recognise Southern independence
* **Both Elphensbane and Panthercaul need more manpower to achieve their aims, however. Particularly, they need skilled, heavily armed soldiers as all of their best troops have died in campaigns already**
* **They need an elite group of soldiers to replace their own military elites. Elphensbane has the idea of recruiting the semadai to the Alliance; they’re heavily trained and well-armed. Panthercaul also thinks it’s a good cause, but doubts that the apolitical semadai will join**
* **Elphensbane visits the semadai and moots the idea. Most of the semadai don’t even want to hear it, but Batay knows and likes Elphensbane personally and forces the semadai to hear him out**
* **The semadai have no interest in getting involved with politics and backing one random warlord claiming to be Shurhath over another, but Elphensbane doesn’t frame the Alliance like that. He frames it as a moral crusade against the evil, mass-slaving foreign invader that is the Meteor**
* **Moreover, the Juggernaught has been heavily restricting and spying on the semadai, and Elphensbane pledges that as Shurhath, he will leave them alone**
* **Guided by Batay, the semadai accept and join the Alliance too, greatly strengthening it. Batay travels with Elphensbane and continues to personally help him and heal him with trauma**
* **Just as War Machine is waging the final battle against the Meteor, the Alliance *also* joins the field and the battle. It seems as if a three-way fight will take place, but because the Alliance and War Machine have a common enemy they decide to put their differences aside and truce**
* **The Meteor is cornered by War Machine but Panthercaul rushes to the scene, desperate to kill the Meteor himself as vengeance for his father**
* **Panthercaul launches a javelin at the Meteor from far away, getting both his and War Machine’s attention. War Machine doesn’t attack Panthercaul yet, however**
* **As he’s dying, the Meteor reveals that Sharkjaw has been helping him the entire time. The Meteor has no incentive to reveal this, and Sharkjaw thus predicted that he never would, but the Meteor is unhinged and just gushes because of it. He also says that in case the Meteor lost, Sharkjaw had plans set in place to turn the Alliance against each other to split it up and cause another war**
* **Panthercaul kills him afterwards and has a tense standoff with War Machine. Both sides surround their leaders, preparing for another battle**
* **But the Alliance and War Machine decide that Sharkjaw needs to be dealt with first. The Alliance wants to kill Sharkjaw mostly for moral reasons but also in response to him planning to break the Alliance**
* **War Machine wants to kill Sharkjaw simply because he’s a force for chaos in the world and will never stop plotting to undermine order**
* **So the Alliance and War Machine both agree to put their issues aside and attack Sharkjaw together. They do so- the campaign is filled with tension as everyone thinks that as soon as Sharkjaw is dead, the Alliance and War Machine will turn on each other**
* **These two armies could defeat Sharkjaw alone, but by sheer coincidence an army from Chainbreaker’s Commonwealth *also* starts campaigning against Sharkjaw**
* **Pretty much everyone in Ethagis who isn’t a commoner either despises or distrusts the Commonwealth as everyone who isn’t a commoner benefits from hierarchy and slavery**
* **So the Alliance formally engaging in diplomatic relations would be political suicide. Elphensbane would face a rebellion for it; but he’s actually sympathetic towards them and agrees with their ideals with them**
* **He thinks slavery is deplorable too, and believes that hierarchy should at least be based on merit. So whilst many people argue that the Alliance should declare war on the Commonwealth, Elphensbane defends them, arguing that Sharkjaw is the greatest threat and should be dealt with first**
* **War Machine actually agrees so leaves the Commonwealth alone too for now, although he makes clear that eventually he’ll deal with it**
* **Secretly, in the dead of night with only Panthercaul and Batay knowing, Elphensbane goes to meet Chainbreaker, seeking to coordinate their militaries**
* **To both of their surprise, they actually get on pretty well and become friendly. Kingsparrow also meets Elphensbane and they also get along and like each other. As Kingsparrow also comes from a privileged background, they have much more in common and can relate to each other**
* **Sharkjaw is defeated pretty easily; he can’t withstand the pressure from all these armies. War Machine is the one who first reaches Sharkjaw. The latter starts talking to Lacaideon, but War Machine takes absolutely zero notice and immediately cuts off Sharkjaw’s legs**
* **Sharkjaw screams in pain- this is the only time in both timelines we ever see him lose composure. War Machine drags Sharkjaw out of his keep to present him, mutilated and writhing, to his soldiers. They see that the battle is lost and then surrender- War Machine then cuts off Sharkjaw’s head**
* **Chainbreaker dies heroically in battle before this happens. This has the potential to trigger a succession crisis in the Commonwealth, so Kingsparrow and Armageddon keep the peace by becoming joint sovereigns**
* Elphensbane and Panthercaul make plans to attack the Juggernaught. The semadai initially refuse, citing their political neutrality, but soon change their minds due to the Juggernaught’s harsh policies
* They still need more allies, however. The Juggernaught doesn’t have much manpower left at this point but neither do they
* War Machine refuses to help them. Lacaideon ultimately cares about order, and the Juggernaught’s draconian policies may be draconian, but are the best at establishing societal order. Lacaideon would actually be fighting for him if he wouldn’t be killed on sight
* So War Machine and his loyal troops stay in the Springlands. Lacaideon rewards his soldiers with land and lets them retire, bringing their military service to an end. He focusses on restoring order in the Springlands, redividing up land, establishing law and order, and restoring trade and agriculture
* So War Machine is no longer part of the Alliance. The Alliance needs to find more members
* However, it finds strong potential support in the Delta region. The lords in the Delta have been part of the Crownlands for some time now and by this point they’re incredibly sick of it
* They resent the high taxes, draconian policies, and constant secret police surveillance of the Shurhaths- both of them- and when the Alliance covertly reaches out to them, they respond. Elphensbane meets the Grizzly Falcon here and, in a political move to help bring the Delta fully onside, makes him his lieutenant. The move works- the Delta is in
* The Alliance launches their war against the Juggernaught using the Delta as a springboard. The Juggernaught is a better general than anyone there but their forces outnumber his and a lot of his troops desert because they also hate his policies
* The Alliance attacks Semidon. It’s not at all a given conclusion that they’ll win- indeed, the battle is incredibly close. Eventually, however, the Alliance is victorious. The Juggernaught is killed on the front lines
* Elphensbane becomes Shurhath. He immediately grants Panthercaul independence, who gladly goes back home to rule after saying an emotional goodbye, and restores the semadai’s former position of privileged autonomy. He also launches a nationwide hunt for the Reaper Guard, who have fled Semidon
* There is only more issue to deal with: the Commonwealth
* Elphensbane doesn’t actually *want* to attack the Commonwealth. He likes Kingsparrow as a person and he sympathises with their cause
* The problem is that he essentially has to. *Every* lord under him bar maybe a couple see the Commonwealth as an existential threat and their loyalty to Elphensbane hinges on him dealing with them
* More practically, the Commonwealth needs ample farmland to feed its cities, which will also put it in conflict with the rest of the nation
* Elphensbane has an idea, though. Before he declares war, he meets with Kingsparrow in secret, aware that Kingsparrow leads a faction in the Commonwealth
* He tells him that his hand will be forced to attack the Commonwealth- *but* if the Commonwealth agrees to just up and leave, Elphensbane will ensure they have safe passage to go to Amphiction and establish a nation there
* Kingsparrow agrees. His faction has an exodus from Azariad and moves north. The Shurhath’s army (tensely) guard them
* Once Kingsparrow’s train leaves, the military immediately turns around and marches towards the Commonwealth- now led by Armageddon and his faction- which has declared war on Elphensbane
* The war is a foregone conclusion; the Shurhath just has so much more manpower. Elphensbane tears through the Commonwealth. Armageddon can’t even properly wage a guerrilla war because the manpower difference is just too massive
* Elphensbane surrounds Azariad and prepares for a siege, but to his shock Armageddon opens the gate
* Nobody in the Commonwealth wants to relieve the trauma of the last siege, and more importantly they know they’d eventually break. They feel like they may as well open the gates and have a big battle now rather than wait until the city is decimated and then have a big battle
* Armageddon and Shuriken are both killed, dying in a blaze of glory
* Whilst all this is happening, War Machine receives the Reaper Guard, who have switched their allegiance from the now slain Juggernaught to him
* They don’t particularly love War Machine, he’s just the most powerful lord available aside from Elphensbane, who is currently trying to have them all killed
* War Machine acknowledges that the Reaper Guard are forces of chaos rather than order, but if they can help him do more good in the long-term than the short-term chaos they cause, Lacaideon calculates that they are net beneficial
* The Reaper Guard spies on Semidon for War Machine and report that it’s *incredibly* ripe for a coup. Elphensbane isn’t even there, he’s on campaign in the Commonwealth. He’s left a skeleton crew in Semidon as he’s not expecting an attack
* His most loyal men are also on campaign with him- the men he’s left in Semidon are mostly from the Delta, and Lacaideon is from the Delta too
* This is a huge mistake from Elphensbane, and one that is made explicit later. He should have left his most loyal men back in Semidon where they were needed. He could have taken any men with him on campaign and they would’ve been loyal to him anyway because they all hate the Commonwealth
* War Machine wants to be Shurhath because he knows he can promote order and stability better than Elphensbane can and that Elphensbane may not even do this. In order to fulfil his aims, Lacaideon believes, he has to do it himself
* He needs troops however; but he’s retired all his soldiers. He decides he has to ask his regiments to fight for him again- he delivers a speech to them asking for their allegiance yet again, and makes clear that refusal to do so will *not* be punished and is totally acceptable
* His men are so loyal to him that most of them accept. War Machine has the Reaper Guard bribe some key courtiers and assassinate some others. He then takes his army and, using a bribed soldier to open the gates, just strolls into Semidon and occupies the court
* Elphensbane hears about this whilst closing in on Azariad and is agonising over whether to turn back to Semidon immediately (what he wants to do) or whether to continue the campaign (what his army wants to do)
* When Azariad opens its gates, however, the decision is made for him. Elphensbane ends the Commonwealth
* He turns back home and uses his army to surround Semidon, demanding that War Machine and his troops leave. He’s worried because although he greatly outnumbers War Machine, he doubts that the Delta’s loyalty to him will hold and the Southerners/semadai have gone south. If the Delta soldiers defect from him to War Machine, the latter will outnumber him
* War Machine refuses to leave the capital and prepares for battle. The Delta soldiers grumble and most prepare to defect
* But then Elphensbane has a really, *really* good idea. He knows that War Machine prioritises order above everything and calculates every action to promote order as much as possible
* A battle of Semidon would be a highly chaotic and messy affair. War Machine would almost definitely win but as long as it’s not a 100% chance, he would want to pursue another option which doesn’t generate so much chaos
* Elphensbane challenges War Machine to a duel. Winner becomes Shurhath. All of War Machine’s advisors think this is stupid but Elphensbane’s belief was right, and Lacaideon calculates that it would be more conducive to order for two people to fight than two armies. War Machine accepts
* War Machine is widely acknowledged to be the greatest fighter in Ethagis at this point- not *quite* as good as Ironhand in the standard timeline but still absolutely phenomenal. Elphensbane can throw spears well and that’s it
* So everyone thinks Elphensbane is going to die, honestly including him. He enters the duel armed only with a spear. The two enter the area, with the nation watching
* Before the fight, Batay comes to comfort Elphensbane and has a brief conversation with War Machine. He feels deeply sorry for him afterwards and laments that Lacaideon didn’t become something different, and someone happier
* War Machine is in full armour, has two swords, and a spear. As soon as he sees Elphensbane, he calculates that Elphensbane will not risk a close combat fight (knowing he’d lose for certain) and will instead try and all-or-nothing spear throw
* Elphensbane and War Machine have a tense standoff, both waiting for each other to throw. Suddenly, Elphensbane launches into action and throws his spear
* Because of all his training with Batay, he throws it at such immense speed that before War Machine can even throw his, the spear lands straight in Lacaideon’s chest
* Lacaideon falls to the ground, expressionless. Elphensbane walks up, tries not to throw up from nerves, and pulls his spear from the chest. He becomes the undisputed Shurhath
* He pardons all the soldiers working for War Machine, except the Reaper Guard. The Springlanders go back home. Srigo is allowed to keep training troops. The last thing he does is send men to block off all the exits to the castle, giving orders to apprehend any members of the Reaper Guard sneaking out
* The plan is successful and the Reaper Guard are caught and executed. Elphensbane does his best to rebuild the realm and restore prosperity

#### Strand 4: The Commonwealth of Free Men

* Events in both timeline regarding the Commonwealth unfold in the exact same way in both timeline until the crucial divergence when Cyzinian invades Aedemon and kills Soul Eater and his mother
* This makes all the difference; with them gone, the primary obstacle to the Commonwealth’s survival is gone. Aedemon collapses into anarchy and chaos
* The Commonwealth starts to stabilise more, taking advantage of the power vacuum and the distraction of Cyzinian and the Juggernaught with other campaigns
* With Purgatory dead and the Reaper Guard now dispersed, nobody in this timeline poisons Chainbreaker’s wine, turns Lazaria against him, or causes him to shatter his leg
* Chainbreaker is free to expand the Commonwealth, securing much needed farmland to feed his people. Much of his success turns on a simple strategy; he goes to a massive slave plantation, incites the slaves there to revolt and kill the plantation owners, and add the territory to the Commonwealth. By doing this, he secures swathes of territory with very minimal casualties
* The campaign is a success and Chainbreaker procures much needed food for Azariad’s survival- but when he gets back, he finds Azariad in chaos
* The non-commoners of Azariad have always despised Chainbreaker and resented everything he stood for. As soon as he left and they got their chance, they launched a coordinated revolt
* Chainbreaker desperately tries to restore order; Kingsparrow, and Lazaria haven’t been able to quell the revolt but with the competence of Chainbreaker on the scene, he succeeds
* Armageddon urges Chainbreaker to kill every single non-commoner in the whole city, but Lazaria persuades him to just exile them. Kingsparrow thinks this is a bad move as they’ll just become implacable enemies of the state and try and undermine him whenever possible
* But Lazaria is his wife and he loves her. She implores him *not* to massacre them and just to exile them. Chainbreaker accepts, and Azariad can finally be a stable city
* Meanwhile, a hateful ex-slave enters the Commonwealth; this is Shuriken. Cyzinian’s campaign against Atheas left her owner dead, and in the chaos and confusion she slipped out to find the Commonwealth. She practically begs to join the army, and is accepted
* Chainbreaker focuses on expansion, seeking to add more cities to the Commonwealth. Rather than engaging in long sieges and campaigns of attrition, his strategy is just to incite the slaves in these settlements to revolt
* It works every time because even if the revolts fail, all it takes is for a group of slaves to open the gates and then Chainbreaker’s army can come in. Shuriken in particular is *very* eager to storm cities and kill people. Her comrades notice her deep hatred and need for violence- it earns her respect, but kind of freaks her out
* The Commonwealth actually starts to become fairly big, and with the new cities added to it, much more food is needed. Chainbreaker starts raiding the Crownlands for food
* Cyzinian notices this and sends his own army regiments to conduct his own raids, but his army needs to rebuild his strength so he can’t launch a full invasion of the Commonwealth- although he’d like to
* Crossbow, dismissed from the Juggernaught’s army on account of being a woman, decides to fight for the Commonwealth, a cause she really believes in. She is accepted into the army in a fairly senior position
* Cyzinian launches a full invasion of the Commonwealth now that his army is strong enough. His army defeats the Commonwealth easily in a pitched battle, and the latter sticks to guerrilla tactics
* Shuriken rescues her unit from annihilation thanks to suicidal bravery and becomes promoted to a captain. Due to her intense hatred for the Empire of Ethagis and her suicidal charges against Cyzinian’s troops, her own men often joke that she’s Cyzinian’s personal nemesis. This leads to her getting the sobriquet Nemesis
* She meets Crossbow and they become acquainted. They like each other, but Crossbow is disturbed by Nemesis’ vitriolic hatred and violence. Nemesis, for her part, thinks that Crossbow is soft and weak
* Nonetheless, they decide to look out for each other, reflecting on the shared difficulties they face as women in a patriarchal world
* War Machine, fighting as a levy for Cyzinian, gains notice as he refuses to capture new slaves and compels his own levies to take no new slaves either. Chainbreaker gains notice of this
* Although most of his council are pleased about this, Chainbreaker is concerned as it means War Machine is a highly unique individual motivated by his own ideology. This determination and adherence to principle makes him dangerous. Chainbreaker wants to create some kind of unit or train an individual to spy on him
* Nemesis volunteers to do this, but has zero training in that sort of thing. The idea is scrapped for now
* Meanwhile, Cyzinian’s overwhelming military superiority- in both numbers and equipment- drive the Commonwealth’s forces back into Azariad and place the city under siege
* The siege is *deeply* taxing. Chainbreaker has to prevent the walls being mined from beneath, deal with difficult moral decisions, keep order, maintain food supplies and morale, prevent rebellion, prevent espionage, and somehow repel the attackers
* We see him struggle with complex moral decisions like what to do with criminals, the punishment for deserters, dealing with hungry mutineers, etc
* It seems as if the Commonwealth is going to capitulate as Azariad loses the ability to withstand the stresses of the siege: but at the last moment, the Juggernaught invades the Crownlands. Cyzinian has to turn his army round and face him, saving the Commonwealth
* Now unthreatened by the Empire of Ethagis, the Commonwealth undergoes a period of rapid expansion
* All the previously conquered cities are retaken and with Cyzinian and the Juggernaught fighting, Chainbreaker annexes swathes of farmland in Aedemon and the Crownlands, exiling all the non-commoners there and taking much-needed food and horses
* He also decides that a siege cannot be repeated. The main reason why Cyzinian’s army was able to tear through Chainbreaker’s is because he has asthanes: elite, heavy infantry units
* Chainbreaker has up until now refused to train light heavy infantry because it would introduce hierarchy into the nation, something which Chainbreaker has always made a top priority *not* to do (except military hierarchies)
* But he acknowledges that it has to be done and has Kingsparrow train some units. Armageddon is furious at this and sees it as a betrayal of Commonwealth principles. However, he and Chainbreaker reconcile and Armageddon swallows his pride and remains loyal
* An interesting development occurs: the Darkstar visits the Commonwealth and decides to offer his services to Chainbreaker. He’s been keeping an eye on the Commonwealth this whole time; he’s supported its ideals, but doubted that it would work. But due to its vast expansion, to the point where it resembles a Mighty Lordship in size, he’s become confident that it’s now actually worth helping
* Chainbreaker is ecstatic at this and asks him to train a unit of espionage agents- essentially spies, a sort of counter to the Reaper Guard of the Juggernaught which by now is an open secret within the Commonwealth
* Nemesis pleads to lead the unit and Chainbreaker accepts. They call it the Aegis Guard, and begin training for it
* Another very important development occurs as well. In the war between Cyzinian and the Juggernaught, War Machine refused to fight for ideological reasons and defected, taking a lot of soldiers with him
* But in his crusade to combat chaos and bring order, he needed more men. He chose to go to Aedemon. In the standard timeline, the Blackfish dies and the Delta is left leaderless. It collapses into anarchy. In this timeline, Soul Eater dies and Aedemon is left leaderless. It collapses into anarchy
* In *both* timelines, Lacaideon is able to gain the allegiance of people in this region by presenting himself as a force for order, stability, and unity
* This pitch does succeed in the standard timeline, but the various lords of the Delta only concede their liberty to him after a long process and after the Revenant attacks them
* In *this* timeline, though, Lacaideon already has an army, which he just uses to pressure the various lords of Aedemon into joining him. They all accept, and pretty soon Lacaideon has a big army
* He prepares an invasion of the Commonwealth, seeking to eliminate it so that the Empire of Ethagis can live in peace
* But then he hears that the Meteor has invaded the Springlands. He calculates that the Meteor is a greater force of chaos than the Commonwealth because at least the latter is governed by rules and laws
* So suddenly, inexplicably, he takes his army and goes south to the Springlands. This is not normal human behaviour at all- to switch goals so suddenly- but Lacaideon isn’t really human and just obeys the calculations he does in his head
* Chainbreaker breathes a sign of relief. Meanwhile, the Darkstar is training the Aegis Guard well, although it isn’t yet finished. The Juggernaught isn’t strong enough to invade the Commonwealth yet. Things seem to be going well
* Tragedy strikes when the Reaper Guard assassinates Lazaria. It really affects Chainbreaker mentally and he becomes strongly hit with grief
* The only consolation is that now the Darkstar has now finished training the Aegis Guard, and they can now intercept the Reaper Guard; two Reaper Guard operatives are found in Azariad. Nemesis *brutally* tortures one in front of the other to death and mutilates the second, sending him back to the Juggernaught. The Shurhath decides that further forays into the Commonwealth aren’t worth it, and stops Reaper Guard activities there
* Surprisingly, though, the Commonwealth think that Sharkjaw ordered the assassination, not the Juggernaught
* The Commonwealth has been meaning to go to war with the Juggernaught for a while now because they *hate* him, but he’s a powerful lord and more importantly he’s far away, and Chainbreaker didn’t want to risk leaving Azariad up until now
* But the Commonwealth is more secure now than it has ever been and probably ever will be. Now is probably the only chance to strike, and with the provocation of Lazaria’s death, Chainbreaker thinks the time is finally right to. The Commonwealth is ecstatic at this
* He leaves Armageddon in charge of the Commonwealth for now and has the Aegis Guard (led by Nemesis) defend it. He knows that Armageddon is a poor steward, but just needs someone aggressive at the helm to deter a military attack
* **Chainbreaker and his army (which includes Kingsparrow and Crossbow) reach Sharkjaw’s domain, only to find to their shock that both War Machine and the Alliance are attacking it too**
* **The Alliance + War Machine come *close* to declaring war against the Commonwealth, but eventually cooler heads prevail and Sharkjaw is prioritised as the greatest threat**
* **Sharkjaw doesn’t even *try* to engage the Commonwealth-Alliance-War Machine coalition in a pitched battle and instead just settles down for a siege of his capital**
* **Elphensbane is personally very mistrustful of War Machine, and wants to meet with Chainbreaker in top secret to coordinate their military strategy independently of War Machine. Chainbreaker is *also* very mistrustful of War Machine so accepts**
* **Elphensbane and Chainbreaker come from polar opposite backgrounds but despite this actually find some common ground in their first meeting and don’t hate each other. They’re both shocked to find that they actually find each other likeable**
* **They have more meetings, and Elphensbane eventually becomes introduced to Kingsparrow. They get on *incredibly* well and really relate to each other. Batay also meets the two and they like him**
* **Their cooperation eventually results in the siege being broken and a climactic battle taking place. Chainbreaker is killed by several elite heavy infantry troops as he insisted on fighting in the front lines. War Machine maims Sharkjaw and displays his body on the field to stop the fighting. He then executes him**
* All three factions are left wondering what the hell happens now now that they lack a common enemy
* War Machine, for his part, calculates that his forces aren’t strong enough to besiege Azariad yet. He decides to wait for the Alliance and the Juggernaught to fight things out before making his next move, and disbands most of his army
* He gives his soldiers parcels of land and allows them to retire, although he takes control of the Springlands as its Mighty Lord; the first person to unite the Springlands in a long time
* There’s not much anyone can really do about this, so nobody sends an army to stop him
* Loads of people in the Alliance really hate the Commonwealth and want to destroy it- and their army is right there, ready to be attacked. Elphensbane can no longer deny the lords serving under him the ability to do this without losing their loyalty
* But he’s always been sympathetic to their cause and by now has just forged a friendship with Kingsparrow. He can’t bring himself to turn on a friend like that
* He decides instead to plan an attack on the Commonwealth army nearby, but secretly forewarn Kingsparrow and give him time to evacuate his forces. His idea works; his vassal lords remain loyal because he plans an invasion, and his conscience is clear because Kingsparrow escapes
* Elphensbane tells his lords that after the death of the Juggernaught, he’ll attack the Commonwealth- but the Juggernaught takes priority. They accept, and he goes to the Crownlands
* Kingsparrow returns to Azariad to deliver news of Chainbreaker’s heroic death. The nation mourns and martyrises their former Grand Marshal. But now there’s an important matter: who succeeds Chainbreaker?
* Chainbreaker himself never made this clear, and both Kingsparrow and Armageddon are seen as equally important and respected figures in the Commonwealth. Neither is obviously more qualified or supported than the other
* In the interest of avoiding conflict, they decide to both be Grand Marshal, leading the nation as co-sovereigns
* This kind of plan has no chance of working though. Kingsparrow and Armageddon are just too different and their ways of ruling are directly opposed to each other
* Kingsparrow is a pragmatist and argues for centralising the country, introducing hierarchy, infringing on personal liberties for the sake of natural security, establishing financial institutions, civil society, and trying to make peace with Ethagis for now
* Armageddon is a dogmatist and argues for perpetual war with Ethagis, total and radical equality, maximum liberty and meritocracy, and no institutions
* The debate really comes down to ‘do we compromise the founding principles of the Commonwealth for the sake of survival’ or not. Kingsparrow and Armageddon each stand for one answer to this question
* People in the Commonwealth start to choose between the two approaches. Generally, people who are most hateful towards society- mostly ex-slaves- back Armageddon’s approach of permanent war against the Empire. Those who used to be embedded in society- mostly well-off commoners- back Kingsparrow’s approach of pragmatism
* Factions quickly form around the two figures and the nation becomes divided. Crossbow cleaves to Kingsparrow, Nemesis and the Aegis Guard to Armageddon. The two factions, known as Kingsparrows and Armageddites, engage in politics, seeking to undermine each other and strengthen their own group identity
* Elphensbane soon becomes Shurhath and his lords all demand an immediate attack on the Commonwealth. He cannot refuse to do this or else lose their loyalty- the Commonwealth is the antithesis of everything they stand for and they have aimed for its destruction since the beginning
* Elphensbane doesn’t want to do this- he actually sympathises with the Commonwealth and personally hates slavery. He also doesn’t want another war if he can avoid it
* He therefore resolves to approach Kingsparrow a choice; leave Ethagis and go north, and I guarantee you safe passage. Stay, and I will have no choice but to eliminate you
* This offer divides the Commonwealth. The Kingsparrows support leaving to Amphiction and starting a new society in the desert there where no hostile empires surround them and where they have a chance of actually thriving
* The Armageddites view the offer as a humiliation: how can they abandon everything they’ve been trying to do? What about all the slaves still in Ethagis? What about all the soldiers who have fought and died against the Empire?
* The issue eventually causes a full schism in the Commonwealth. Kingsparrow and his faction accept Elphensbane’s offer. A column of Commonwealthers, including Crossbow, marches towards Amphiction, guarded by Elphensbane’s troops
* The Aegis Guard debates leaving, but when Nemesis aggressively insists on war on the Empire or death, she convinces the rest of the Guard to become Armageddites
* Imperial troops surround them, eyeing them aggressively as the column marches in between two lines of the lords and their soldiers. But the column leaves Ethigean territory without incident
* Armageddon becomes the sole ruler of the Commonwealth and he declares war on the Empire of Ethagis before Elphensbane can declare war on them
* Armageddon mobilises the entire Commonwealth for war, and makes Nemesis his lieutenant. He is determined to avoid another brutal and depressing siege like the one Cyzinian inflicted on him
* He decides to organise a giant pitched battle between the Commonwealth and Empire. The Empire has more troops, better quality troops, and better equipped troops than the Commonwealth, and much better tacticians
* The Commonwealth would therefore almost definitely lose. But Armageddon doesn’t care; he would rather die standing than live kneeling, going out in a blaze of glory rather than struggling through a long, messy campaign
* Armageddon isn’t a military tactician or strategist anyway. A prolonged campaign, and/or a campaign of attrition, is something he has no idea how to prosecute. He doesn’t *understand* strategy- he understands big battles
* A massive pitched battle takes place. Armageddon is killed in the fighting. The Aegis Guard prepare to escape and try and start the Commonwealth elsewhere. However, Nemesis refuses to flee. The rest of the Guard is inspired by her example and also fights til the end
* The Commonwealth is shredded during the battle. Most of the Armageddites are annihilated. The rest refuse to be re-enslaved and opt to be executed instead
* The Commonwealth is no more.

#### Rejected Strand: Cyzinian

Old, now rejected plot consisting of one strand, replaced by Strands 1-4

* Scython dies young due to illness and the Dragonfly towards the end of his life tries to have more kids but the few sons he has die very young
* On his deathbed, in the absence of a viable heir by blood, he names Cyzinian as his heir as Cyzinian is his lieutenant
* Cyzinian becomes Shurhath- Cyzinian is widely known to be very competent but all the lords in the realm have been preparing for war anyway and Sharkjaw catalyses it, and as a result war occurs anyway
* Cyzinian jumps into action: he keeps his levies garrisoned in the Crownlands for now but has them training intensively and enforces discipline
* He massively cuts back spending of the court, including dismissing the jester, Jackdaw, and replaces many of the retinues with steadfast and disciplined soldiers. The courtiers who thrived under the Dragonfly strongly oppose this, but Cyzinian effectively militarises the palace and makes it very hard to reach him
* The Red Mantis and Wraithwreaker realise that Cyzinian can’t be manipulated and conspire to have him killed: security is too tight to reach him by a regular assassin so they attempt to hire Shadowbound
* Jackdaw, still secretly lurking in the court, becomes aware of these plans and alerts Cyzinian in exchange for being a courtier again. Cyzinian has the two courtiers executed and purges many others. He keeps true to his word and reinstates Jackdaw in a spymaster role
* The Blackfish attacks Semidon during the tidal anomaly when the River Antavar flows upstream, but makes more preparations than in the normal timeline because he recognises how deadly Cyzinian is as Shurhath, for example he insists that his officers wear armour
* The invasion fails, and the Blackfish is killed. The Reefshark, just as in the normal timeline, has a nervous breakdown and an arrow in his thigh sends him overboard, only this time due to the armour he sinks and drowns, smiling before death
* Cyzinian seizes the opportunity and raids the delta, commanding every lord to submit to him and contribute almost all their levies or die. The deal is unfair and so most choose to die. The Crownlands is expanded greatly
* Cyzinian’s next target is the Autumnlands, as he recognises that Lord Morningstar poses the most immediate threat as the other lords of the realm are distracted by fighting others and/or much further from the capital
* At this time, Lord Morningstar has just conquered the whole Autumnlands when suddenly almost all of Cyzinian’s forces are thrust against him
* Lord Morningstar is an excellent commander, even better than Cyzinian, and drags what many predict as a massacre on for quite a while, but eventually Cyzinian’s superior manpower just overwhelms him. Cyzinian kills Lord Morningstar
* Cyzinian has eliminated all immediate threats, but because he is fundamentally a general and not a statesman, he has no interest or affinity for ruling, and wants to continue waging war and sating his ego
* The next obvious target is Soul Eater, as his lordship is adjacent to the Crownlands. H considers allying with the Juggernaught to do this, but his pride makes him very averse to this idea, and he doesn’t
* He crashes his forces down onto Soul Eater’s domain, and because Chainbreaker is also fighting him and the Juggernaught weakened him, he makes rapid progress. Purgatory is too distracted to try and undermine Chainbreaker and the latter is never kidnapped and maimed
* Chainbreaker’s forces are never crushed by Soul Eater’s and he continues his quest of liberation of all slaves
* Cyzinian is very contemptuous of this goal and because Chainbreaker is raiding his newly captured lands, he focusses all his attention on destroying him
* Cyzinian’s forces are by now *severely* depleted so he can’t win a battle decisive enough to kill Chainbreaker, but his forces are still heavily experienced and destroy Chainbreaker’s. Chainbreaker comes to the same realisation he does in the normal timeline that he can only win with a lord’s support and turns to the only other good one he can find: Elphensbane
* Meanwhile, Cyzinian, conscious that his army is way too weak from campaigning to do anything, reluctantly pulls back to the Crownlands to recover, giving Elphensbane some breathing room
* Elphensbane is a good person and dislikes slavery, but is at war and hesitates to abolish it for now, although he tells Chainbreaker to free whoever he can as he attacks the Desert Ripper
* He succeeds and kills the Ripper and his close followers, but there’s no Lord Morningstar to swoop in and destroy the rest of the raiders, and Elphensbane lacks the manpower to, retreating back home
* Raids continue, although for now they don’t dare to invade Elphensbane’s domains and just attack elsewhere- i.e. Cyzinian’s domains
* After enduring this reluctantly for some months, Cyzinian decides to do something about it, and gathers all his levies for an invasion of the desert, moving west
* As he moves west, Panthercaul becomes lord of the South, but because Cyzinian is distracted he doesn’t declare fealty for now
* Meanwhile in the desert, Cyzinian kills some raiders but becomes unsatisfied with this. The raiders, remembering how Elphensbane defeated them in a decisive battle, avoid this and employ hit-and-run tactics
* To lure them into conflict, Cyzinian starts burning villages and killing villagers
* He begins ramping this up. Frustrated at the continuous destruction wrought by the raiders killing civilians, he correctly states that every time raiders are defeated, a generation later their descendants just start pillaging everything again
* Cyzinian decides to turn the villager-slaughter into a decisive campaign, deciding to rid the realm of raiders once and for all
* His advisors all rightfully tell him that this is brutal and messed up, but Cyzinian hasn’t gone through a character arc in this timeline and is a fairly brutal person
* Nonetheless, reluctantly hearing their unanimous advice not to destroy thousands of innocents, he agrees to send the raiders a letter giving them one chance to submit and lay down arms or he will ‘sunder every man woman and child of your kin’. Incredulous, they refuse
* Cyzinian then goes and actually starts to do it. It is immensely brutal and many of his officers and soldiers just defect and start marauding the realm in order to get home
* There are enough evil and ambitious people in his army, however, and the mass-extermination takes place before Cyzinian, genuinely becoming wracked with guilt as the Reefshark was in Part 2, calls it off and goes home, a broken man
* Weakened both personally and militarily, many of the other lords in the realm who haven’t yet been crushed rebel, including a disgusted Elphensbane
* He eventually attacks Semidon and succeeds because most of Cyzinian’s forces have been lost to campaigning or defection at this point
* He executes Cyzinian and becomes Shurhath
* Panthercaul refuses to submit as the South has now partially recovered from the Meteor’s destruction and he feels more confident. Elphensbane, way too exhausted by constant warfare and bloodshed to fight a near-suicidal campaign in the rainforest, allows the South to be independent
* Chainbreaker urges Elphensbane to attack Sharkjaw, correctly saying that as long as Sharkjaw lives he will undermine peace. Elphensbane attacks Sharkjaw and succeeds, although Chainbreaker, insisting on fighting in the vanguard, dies in the attempt
* Elphensbane tries to rebuild and bring a broken and sundered realm back from total anarchy

## V. [2021-2023] [Old Story Spinoff] The Scourge of God

This is not a part of the narrative of this project, and has been added in purely as interesting ‘extra’ content.

Alternate Timeline Premise: A bubonic plague epidemic reaches Ethagis a few months before the death of the Dragonfly

### Narrative

Part 1: White

Part 2: Magenta

Part 3: Red

Part 4: Gold

Part 5: Green

Part 6: Blue

Part 7: Midnight

Part 8: Purple

Part 9: Charcoal

**Part 10: Black**

Part 11: Ultramarine

Part 12: Coral

#### Prelude: The Coming of Plague

* The bubonic plague epidemic originates in the continent of Amphiction, with fleas carrying *Yersinia pestis* reaching Ethagis via one of Sharkjaw’s slave ships
* A galley ship marauding the northern waters carries a cargo of captured fishermen, sailors, and merchants back to Kacharias
* Sharkjaw is in the capital overseeing his ships and conducting business. He comes face to face with a slave cargo and one of the slaves spits in his face
* He orders that the slave have his tongue cut out and be sent to the mines to work. The next day, however, he wakes up with an inexplicable fever. News of plague is not well known in Ethagis at this time, so he dismisses it. Meanwhile, the Scourge of God (as it will later be called) spreads throughout his domain
* He dies of bubonic plague within a week, and by the end of his lifespan finally grasps the severity of the plague, as do many others. Awareness of the plague spreads throughout the realm. His domain is carved up between various lords and merchants who take advantage of the regional power vacuum
* Chainbreaker, still a peasant at this time rather than a slave, has his village fall under the territory of a different lord than Sharkjaw. Hence, when he commits treason by trying to ‘unionise’ the peasants in his village, the punishment is different
* Instead of being enslaved, Chainbreaker’s right hand gets cut off. Unable to farm, he is cut off from a source of sustenance, and his village proves unable- or unwilling- to provide for him. In desperation, he offers himself to a nearby monastery as a source of menial labour
* Whilst here, he learns to read and studies religious texts, eventually gaining a profound appreciation of religious values and scholarship
* From *Yersinia’s* induction into Ethagis via slave commerce, the pathogen spreads exponentially in various directions. Transmission often occurs along commercial arteries like roads/rivers and from there into towns and eventually countryside
* The plague spreads through different regions at different rates. The Delta, a highly population-dense and mercantile area, rapidly becomes infested. The Blackfish and most of his court die of plague
* The Reefshark, away on an anti-piracy mission at the time, returns to the capital after the death of practically all his superiors, and is appointed Mighty Lord of the Delta by the court in lieu of any other suitable candidates
* From the Delta, plague spreads quickly up the River Antavar to Semidon. The imperial castle closes its gates but plague still manages to penetrate the court, leading to a wave of deaths that include Wraithwreaker, Scython, and the Red Mantis
* The plague spreads across the rest of Ethagis rapidly and has a huge mortality rate. Shadowbound catches plague on an assassination mission and later dies. Many people believe that the world is ending, including the semadai
* Ethigean religion teaches that the universe is set in an infinite cosmic cycle of expanding and shrinking, eventually dwindling to a singularity in the centre of the planet. The plague is seen by many religious people as a portent of the premature shrinking of the universe, with most seeing this as either a sign of some kind of divine misfavour or a scholarly miscalculation of the world’s age
* Ultimately, though, there are a thousand different viewpoints on what’s going on, with different demographics/social groups tending to favour different explanations. Consensuses are rare and a generalised atmosphere of chaos and fear grips the country
* Ethigean art, literature, and culture in general reacts strongly to the plague and for now is dominated by it. Normal cultural life is almost entirely frozen by the plague and Ethigean culture quickly adapts to the colossally altered socioeconomic environment
* There are also many names for the plague itself; the Black Death, the Red Death, the Great Plague, the Wrath of God, the Scourge of God, the Pestilence, the Curse, the Wrath, the Scourge, Armageddon, etc
* Religious developments also occur, with a growing number of people (mostly commoners) worshipping ‘the Arachnid God’. In Ethigean culture, the spider is seen as a symbol for plague and spider-worshippers believe that Ethigean religion mistakenly failed to recognise the spider as a god and that there are therefore Eleven Animal Deities
* There are of course many, many other cultural, religious, and social consequences of the plague, as well as a myriad of economic and political changes
* Politically, however, the eventual death of the Dragonfly is still met by many others declaring themselves Shurhaths and a continent-wide war breaking out. In real European history, bubonic plague epidemics have failed to suffice to stop wars and stem elites’ jockeying for power, and the same principle holds here
* Nonetheless, many peasants refuse to work or farm, and normal life is irrevocably disrupted. Many soldiers mutiny, desert, or refuse to work. Elites use a combination of coercion and bribery to induce military service, and soldiers’ pay is increased
* Various noblemen and landowners devise different means of preventing plague from spreading to their lands. Brutal quarantines and lockdowns are enforced. Few are successful, however. The savannah and Marches regions are furthest from the plague epicentre and so have slightly more time to prepare, but this does little
* Various disparate peasant rebellions and uprisings spring up across the empire in response to desperate material conditions, conscription and being forced to fight in what many perceive as the end of the world, and for religious reasons; many believe that the plague is a sign of divine dislike for the aristocracy
* These are all disconnected and often very different in nature, with some seeking to establish commonwealths and others being glorified hordes of bandits. Most are a mixture of both extremes
* Politics in these rebellions is complex and dangerous; people jockey for power in each rebellion and certain rebel groups fight each other for land and wealth. Slave rebellions also rise up and follow similar dynamics, though are often more ideologically motivated and more vitriolic
* Slave rebellions are particularly common in Kacharias and Springlands; Armageddon comes to lead one. The South is a comparatively quiescent region, with zero slave rebellions and very limited peasant uprisings
* All of these changes are displayed to the reader throughout the novel, presented in various characters’ viewpoints
* With the death of the Dragonfly, Cyzinian as a lieutenant becomes Shurhath. The South secedes from the Empire of Ethagis

#### Strand 1: The Empire

* Cyzinian becomes Shurhath upon the death of the Dragonfly. His seizure of power is much less brutal than in *The Sword of Ethagis* and occurs without incident
* This is because most of his political opponents have died from plague and the Red Mantis/Wraithwreaker aren’t alive to organise a counter-coup
* As such, whilst he still turns the court into a hyper-militarised and regimented fortress, his treatment of most courtiers is less harsh, and many- including Jackdaw- are allowed to join the civil service instead of being exiled
* War still breaks out after the Dragonfly’s death; plague has not been sufficient in our own history to stop politics, and the same holds true in this timeline. Firewalker joins the imperial army just as in all other timelines
* In this timeline, the Blackfish is dead and the Reefshark is Mighty Lord of the Delta. Lacaideon declares loyalty to Cyzinian, eliminating any threat to Cyzinian from the east
* Cyzinian has no immediate threats. Lord Morningstar is consolidating control of the Autumnlands; the Juggernaught and Monolith are destroying Soul Eater and will likely turn on each other next; the Delta is loyal
* Cyzinian’s nature prevents him from sitting idly and biding his time, however- he wants action. He decides to target the Desert Ripper
* The Ripper, just as in all timelines, is currently raiding the surrounding territories and has declared independence from the Empire of Ethagis. Cyzinian wants to eliminate him as he’s a threat to Ethagis and because Cyzinian personally dislikes him for daring to defy imperial (and by extension his own) authority
* Cyzinian leaves a small force to garrison Semidon, mostly consisting of Deltamen, and sends a large army west to invade Nagal, bringing thousands of men to the desert to raze Efitra
* Due to the plague going on, many soldiers think for religious reasons that the world is ending. Almost all want to stop fighting and see their families, deeply anxious that the plague may have killed them
* This issue is common to every army in Ethagis at the moment: the plague has made soldiers much, much more reluctant to fight. Campaigning across the country carries the risk of contracting it, and brings commoners away from their families, whom the troops constantly worry have died of plague
* Mutinies haven’t occurred yet in any army, but across the continent commanders realise that the threat of mutiny is real. They therefore incentivise soldiers to stay loyal by a combination of coercion (threat of brutal punishment) and bribery (increased pay)
* So far, this proves sufficient to keep soldiers on the field. The imperial army remains loyal, in no small part due to the sheer force of Cyzinian’s personality and the fear of defying him
* Firewalker, as in all timelines, shows himself to be deeply driven, courageous, and extroverted. This gains the respect and loyalty of those around him and he soon becomes a sergeant. His men are deeply loyal
* Cyzinian is about as good a commander as the Ripper, but in the desert the latter undeniably has the advantage. The Ripper is much more familiar with the logistics of desert warfare and the tactics involved
* But Cyzinian has a much bigger army and no scruples, and goes straight to Efitra to torch the whole city. This provokes the Ripper into an all-out decisive battle, which Cyzinian wins through overwhelming numbers and disregard for casualties
* Cyzinian and the imperial army seize as much as plunder as they can carry, and Cyzinian orders prisoners to be killed or enslaved. On the way back, he notices a bubo under his arm
* Cyzinian realises he has plague on the journey and orders that he be isolated when he returns to Semidon. This measure prevents anyone else at court from catching plague
* Cyzinian spares no effort at all to have him cured, bringing in several doctors and spending a lot of money. These efforts fail and when he accepts that he’s going to die, he kills himself in a ritualised suicide rather than slowly degenerate into madness and weakness
* Zenith is Cyzinian’s lieutenant and so has the best claim to become new Shurhath. But the remainder of the Court has grown resentful of Cyzinian’s militaristic rule, iron discipline, and complete marginalisation of the rest of the Court from political power
* Before Zenith can be coronated, the Court organises a coup, with each faction of the Court/civil service agreeing to raise some retinues in order to carry the coup out
* The civil service is the only arm of the imperial court which hasn’t been completely wiped out by Cyzinian and replaced by his own retinues (i.e. loyalists). Hence, the various factions of court are drawn from here
* The civil service is an umbrella term for the Ministries, themselves umbrella terms which each are responsible for one aspect of the nation’s administration and bureaucracy. There are four major factions at court; three of these are the factions of specific Ministries, one of these is the eunuch faction
* Zenith and the rest of Cyzinian’s retinues are wiped out in a sudden attack, eliminating them from Court. The various soldiers raised by each faction are given uniforms specific to that faction and the senior soldiers are given courtly roles
* The Court is now without a Shurhath, and because each faction now has their own retinues, no faction can appoint one of their own as Shurhath at the risk of provoking military revolt from all the other factions
* The Court settles into an uneasy Shurhath-less peace, and agrees several ‘ground rules’, including no political violence or assassinations. For now, everyone adheres to this. Decisions are to be made by votes, and officials are to be voted in and out of the major roles in the government
* Nobody is appointed Shurhath, but rather one person from each faction is called up to command a proportion of the imperial army, with the Court having overall control over these commanders and the whole army
* The Court, rather than any one Shurhath, assumes responsibility and authority over paying soldiers. As the plague continues and discontent amongst the soldiers increases, the Court agrees in advance to give regular pay rises to troops in the future to assure their loyalty
* This is a compromise measure- giving one faction control over the entire imperial army would give them too much power and the other factions would turn on them as a result
* Factionalism and antagonism between the factions slowly intensifies. Jackdaw isn’t part of any faction and plays a neutral role, mediating between the factions and building up his own power, starting to pull more and more of the strings
* Rhetoric of violence starts to increase. Then factions begin to increase the size of their retinues. Gridlock in making decisions turns to each faction considering violence to pursue their goals and using intimidation. Factions scheme to undermine each other and their power bases, and two factions unite in a coalition
* A political assassination occurs, and the Court goes into lockdown, with retinues of each faction facing off against each other. Eventually, each faction refuses to vote for pay rises for the imperial army, in the hope of provoking a revolt against the commander of the rival faction
* Discontent in the imperial army rises *greatly*. A general atmosphere of insurrection prevails. Firewalker, sensing an opportunity for social advancement, foments this. He encourages mutiny and gains social status for doing so
* Other figures in the imperial army do the same, giving Firewalker some potential political rivals. Playing the game of politics, he wins some over and antagonises others
* Meanwhile at court, each faction also vetoes anything that the other factions want to do for the imperial army, meaning that the army doesn’t go on any campaigns and just sits in one place idly
* This is the tipping point for the imperial army. Sitting ducks for plague, and doing nothing whilst other lords pillage their families’ villages, the army revolts. The court-appointed commanders of the imperial army are all massacred in a fateful evening
* Firewalker is appointed *by the army* to be Shurhath, and is given the sobriquet Imperator by his own troops. This has never happened before, and is hugely unexpected
* He has some political rivals given senior positions of command, and makes one of them his lieutenant. Other rivals he marginalises by giving them irrelevant positions
* The Court hears about this and they all blame each other. Retinues are mobilised and the (now three) factions are about to enter open war inside the palace with each other when Imperator turns up at the gate with the whole imperial army and all their siege equipment
* Imperator is fundamentally a man of ambition, and it’s literally his fantasy to be crowned as Shurhath in Semidon, so naturally this is the first thing he does. The Court doesn’t want to open the gates to him but they don’t really have a choice as he has siege equipment and a huge army
* Imperator’s troops force the Court to kneel before Imperator as he rides to the throne on horseback, before taking a seat on the imperial throne. He glories in it for a while, enjoying the social status
* But it sort of becomes clear that whilst Imperator is an excellent soldier, he knows absolutely nothing about rulership or politics. He appoints a few of his most loyal men- and those whose loyalty he wants to win- in senior positions but doesn’t really change the Court at all beyond this
* Imperator swiftly goes back out on campaign. His closest rival is Lord Morningstar, so he goes to the Autumnlands to start campaigning
* As soon as Imperator and the imperial army leave, the Court immediately starts talking about what to do about the situation. They despise him for being a commoner and an outsider
* Faced with a common enemy, they put their differences aside and agree to take unified action. They still refuse to elect a Shurhath from their number as this would disturb the balance of power
* So instead, they decide to invite someone outside the Court to be Shurhath. They need someone suitably aristocratic and who probably won’t be a threat to their autonomy, and someone geographically nearby so they can get to Semidon before Imperator hears about it
* Since Cyzinian’s death, his dynastic homeland became inherited by a distinct relative, a second cousin by the name of Arsenico Rath
* Arsenico has the exact same philosophy, beliefs, and worldview as Cyzinian does, and also follows Ulaki. But there’s a key difference; Cyzinian can walk the walk and Arsenico can’t
* Arsenico just isn’t very competent. He only became the dynasty’s patriarch because everyone else suitable died of plague. He’s strong from frequent exercise, but is a foot shorter than Cyzinian and lacks his talent
* Arsenico hears from the Court that he’s been invited to be Shurhath and immediately accepts. He dies on the way by falling off his horse and breaking his neck
* News reaches Imperator that the Court appointed a new Shurhath and he’s furious at the betrayal. He turns around his army and marches towards the capital
* The Court, hearing the news that Arsenico died, is terrified as they know Imperator’s gonna come back to Semidon and kill them all in revenge. They could simply elevate another Shurhath, but nobody suitable is near enough to the Crownlands to get there before Imperator
* The only option is to have one of the courtiers made Shurhath but this causes a huge controversy as it would shift the balance of power. Panic and militarisation occur in Court
* Amidst all of this, someone has an idea: Lord Morningstar. His troops are much more disciplined and better-trained than Imperator’s and they march at a breakneck pace back to Semidon
* Lord Morningstar surrounds the city and asks to parley with the Court. The Court freaks out a bit and seriously debates what to do, especially as they have no army. They eventually decide to send a representative to talk to him
* The question is who, as nobody trusts any of the factions not to scheme with Atheas and make secret treaties. Jackdaw, as the most powerful unaligned person at Court, is therefore chosen to meet Atheas
* Jackdaw rides out of the city gates to meet Atheas. Atheas proposes that he be appointed Shurhath in exchange for leaving the Court intact and with a lot of power. It’s not really a fair choice, as Atheas has an army around Semidon and the Court has nothing
* Jackdaw tells the Court the situation and they agree. Atheas becomes Shurhath and immediately makes some political allies, tries to pit the factions against each other, and sends his army to the Autumnlands to campaign against Imperator
* Imperator is a great soldier but he just lacks the generalship knowledge to be a good general. He’s not a tactician and has zero training in it. He gets beaten easily by Atheas, who himself is the greatest general in the country
* Imperator falls back to Silphax and settles in for a siege. He has no experience in this kind of thing and is dealing with having his food and water supplies cut off, siege equipment built by Atheas’ men outside the walls, and the city walls being mined under
* He exhorts his men to stay determined and disciplined like he is, but most people aren’t as conscientious as Imperator and his army gets fed up and wants peace. On an offer from Atheas, they turn on Imperator and execute him in exchange for being spared and assimilated into Atheas’ army
* Atheas returns back to Semidon, exultant about his victory. He has his troops banquet in the palace dining halls, but notices the tension between his men and the Court’s retinues. He decides to replace many of the Commanderies’ men with his own loyalists, in violation of his promises
* This leads to tensions in the Court, which he resolves by putting more of his loyalists in senior positions and using his loyalists in the Commanderies to move the Court’s retinues out of the way, and getting his own troops to patrol the palace
* A Conspiracy forms within the court to have him assassinated, and they do so before he can leave the palace to campaign against the Juggernaught. His army get extremely angry at the Court for doing this and turn on them, essentially besieging them within the palace keep
* The Court pools their retinues together to form a single small army, the Stalwart Guard. The Stalwart Guard leads a sally against the imperial army and establishes a stalemate
* This is settled by the Court offering to increase army wages in exchange for the ringleaders of the siege being executed. The imperial army accepts
* The Mighty Lord of the Marches, Imazien, decides to declare independence. He’s facing huge pressure from northern tribes attempting to forcibly migrate into Ethagis, and the central government is in chaos. He doesn’t see the point of paying taxes to a government that seems to be disintegrating
* A couple of askary lords near the Marches choose to join him, meaning that Imazien’s polity can now be called an empire. Imazien styles himself as the Emperor of the Marches, but not as Shurhath
* The Court hate this, but have problems closer to home. The experience of having a common enemy has united the factions of the Court a little, and they all feel like they need some defence against the army and Shurhaths
* Hence, they decide to keep the Stalwart Guard. It is reduced in size so that the important courtiers still have retinues, but the remaining troops are extremely well-equipped and drilled. The Stalwart Guard becomes a sort of elite bodyguard force, loyal to the Court rather than any Shurhath
* This raises an important point though; who *will* be Shurhath? Nobody at Court wants another faction to gain the throne. They decide to invite the Reefshark to the throne
* To everyone’s shock, the Reefshark politely declines; he just doesn’t want to be Shurhath. Being Mighty Lord is enough power for him, and by being Mighty Lord of the Delta he’s a big fish in a small pond. He has all the social status he could want. Why become Shurhath and have to navigate court politics, be away from his homeland and people, and bear the responsibility for the whole realm?
* But there has to *be* a Shurhath, otherwise the army won’t have a commander at the helm, and the Court are furious about the Empire of the Marches and want to lead a campaign against it
* They invite an Autumnlander to be Shurhath; the same guy who owns Shuriken. He’s a competent general and starts conducting the campaign, capturing lots of slaves
* He’s also a little concerned about the Stalwart Guard, which the Court has enlisted to ‘bodyguard’ him but which everyone knows is to ensure he stays loyal. So the Shurhath decides to increase the Guard’s pay/privileges to make him loyal to *him*
* The Shurhath makes some decent progress against Imazien, but the huge influx of slaves he captures provokes Shuriken into vast anger, and eventually she kills him. His guards capture her and prepare to torture her, but she reveals she has the plague, so nobody is willing to go near her
* Shuriken staggers out into the wilderness and eventually dies of plague by herself
* Meanwhile, more askary lords in the north-west of the continent join the Empire of the Marches, believing it to be more stable and effective than the actual central government
* The Court appoints a new Shurhath, a member of the Red Mantis’ dynasty- they do this because the Juggernaught is now starting to approach Semidon, and the Court therefore needs to quickly get a Shurhath from nearby
* The new Shurhath *also* gets nervous about the Stalwart Guard and increases their pay/privileges in order to secure their loyalty. The Stalwart Guardsmen become very wealthy and important indeed, reaching the status of noblemen
* The Shurhath’s a bad commander though, and in an important battle he is killed on the field- as is Valorous, which provokes Kusaila in the South
* The Court is now desperate as they (correctly) predict that if the Juggernaught captures Semidon, he’ll have the whole court killed. They beg the Reefshark to be Shurhath and organise a naval defence of the city, and tell him (wrongly) that the Juggernaught will have him killed as well for his loyalty to the central government
* Lacaideon accepts and does so.

## VI. [Old Version: 2023] Mightiest: The Game

* Shadowbound is a video game set in the universe of Mightiest and in the country of the Empire of Ethagis
* I conceptualised this game first in 2023, when the game was based off the 2021-2023 write of Mightiest
* After rewriting Mightiest’s story/worldbuilding in 2024, I rewrote the game
* This version of the game is the first version I made in 2023, with the original formatting that I wrote all this information out in

### Story and Missions

#### Background

* Set in a modified Empire of Ethagis wherein the continent of Ethagis is a neighbour-less island, wherein the Shurhath ‘the Hydra of Semidon’ has ascended to the throne
* In this modified version of Ethagis, the 10 gods are real, there is an afterlife and various karmic planes of existence, and the technological state of the empire is different, with blackpowder-based technologies being more predominant and advanced here
* The geography of this modified Empire of Ethagis is equal to the original Ethagis but smaller, so as to make it navigable to a player. There are various other small geographic/lore alterations made for translating the world of Ethagis into a video game setting
* Four months before the start of the game- a month before the Dragonfly died- Sharkjaw sought to make himself immune to aging and thus (unless actually killed) immortal
* He made a deal with Kalawi to commit a ritual drawing on the power of all 9 gods to unite the mortal and shadow planes in exchange for the Mask of Immortality, a mask made in Kalawi’s image that prevents aging
* All the demons on the shadow plane- former humans who at various points in history sold their soul to Kalawi- were thus thrust into the mortal world at random points, wherein they began to wreak indiscriminate havoc and destruction
* The demon invasion of Ethagis has paralysed all other activities and processes, as humanity reels from the attack and struggles to fight back
* The elephant god Ilyzor occasionally turns humans into angels, beings with great supernatural power and the psychological toolkit to be hyper-efficient demon-fighting machines. They are loyal to Ilyzor rather than humanity itself
* As everyone is preoccupied with repelling the invasion, normal political processes have been suspended, and thus when the Dragonfly died, nobody had the resources to actually wage war on the throne to seize it
* Most people have no true idea how the invasion began, although rumours circulate widely; the imperial court uses their network of spies and agents to gain as much info as possible, and they are thus the most well-informed
* Destroying the mask will separate the mortal and shadow planes once again, ending the demon invasion, although this isn’t currently known to people
* The player plays as one of these imperial agents, referred to only by the sobriquet Shadowbound
* Shadowbound is acknowledged in the court to be the most competent- and thus dangerous- of these espionage agents, and has been in imperial service committing espionage and assassination duties for many years now
* Although his existence is not known outside the most elite imperial circles, within these circles and amongst his fellow agents he is greatly respected and feared, and holds formal authority
* Unbeknownst to him, the Shurhath- a weak, jealous, and generally odious manchild (and, arguably, an actual child as he’s a teenager)- is deeply envious of Shadowbound’s prowess and respect, and is paranoid that even he could be a target of his own agent
* In reality, Shadowbound has no intention to turn on his liege, but the Shurhath’s imperial court control and manipulate him by fuelling his paranoia, and they therefore convince him that Shadowbound is a political threat
* The Shurhath is also extremely personally insecure and deeply envies Shadowbound as he’s everything that the Shurhath feels he’s not; talented, in control of himself, and genuinely respected. This deep envy develops into deep hatred
* The game begins as Shadowbound returns from a mission that the Shurhath has sent him on back to the Forbidden Palace

#### Prologue

* Shadowbound rides up on horseback on a Palace battlement to a covert back door to the interior of the Forbidden Palace and is greeted by a retinue of guards, one of whom takes Shadowbound’s horse to the stables
* The player’s interaction with the guards establishes that they are playing as a respected, skilled character with authority
* The guards travel through some secret passages and corridors with the player whilst providing exposition about the world. They essentially convey to the player that there is a demon invasion, that things are bad, what’s going on in Ethagis as a result, and that nobody knows where it came from
* The guards walk the player into a large room, which acts as the headquarters for the Shurhath’s espionage network. The cutscene ends and the player can control Shadowbound
* Until the player enters the room that the Shurhath is in, they can walk around and talk/eavesdrop on various NPCs, who will provide some exposition about the world and its characters whilst the player learns the controls
* All these places will be revisited in Mission VII, and indeed the secret passages that the player uses now can be used to great effect in that mission
* In this period of gameplay, the player learns about who they are, what their missions have been, and that the imperial spy network is searching for Shuriken. The player also hears rumours (that’s all they are at this stage) that something called the ‘Mask of Immortality’ exists, a wearable mask that supposedly protects the wearer from aging
* The player meets and bows to the Shurhath, who greets him with thinly veiled hatred and invites him to walk with him. This interaction is designed to make the player feel dislike and contempt for the Shurhath
* The player walks in with the Shurhath a cutscene to an empty courtyard at the back of the Palace, a small cultivated forest near the river
* Once there, the Shurhath walks the player to a clearing and draws his attention to the horizon. When the player looks, the Shurhath stabs him twice in the back, puncturing his lungs. Shadowbound whips back around in shock, and the Shurhath slashes him in the left eye
* Shadowbound, now surrounded by the Shurhath’s retinues, collapses. Zenith spits on him and the retinue/Shurhath walk away as the Shurhath mocks him for twitching on the ground
* As the player’s vision dulls, time seems to stand still, and a grinning hyena slowly approaches the player, walking in a straight line
* Once he gets close, the body of the hyena explodes, and the player’s view turns entirely black, with only the grinning white face of Kalawi occupying it
* Kalawi mocks Shadowbound for his predicament and explains that the player is going to die, and that even immediate medical attention from the finest team in Ethagis couldn’t save him
* However, Kalawi- being a god- can save him. Not only this, but he can give him supernatural powers beyond what Shadowbound could dream of, and great superhuman abilities
* In exchange, however, he wants Shadowbound’s soul. It is ambiguous what will happen to Shadowbound in the afterlife as a result of this, with Kalawi only saying that he will ‘pass into unending shadow’
* The player understands only that Shadowbound will go to a kind of hell as a result of this, and is essentially selling his soul in exchange
* The player is then given the choice to accept or reject this offer
* If they reject, Kalawi pauses for a moment, surprised and angry, before simply saying ‘Then die.’ The game will automatically close, and reopening the save file will return the player to their meeting with Kalawi, who will mock them for crawling back to him before re-offering the choice
* The player can actually reject the offer multiple times in a row, prompting unique dialogue from Kalawi; if they do this 5 times in a row, Kalawi will stop re-offering and will delete the save file entirely, forcing the player to restart the game
* The game begins when the player accepts Kalawi’s offer

#### Missions

Mission I- escape Semidon

Mission II- city navigation, Blackfish

Mission III-noncity navigation, Desert Ripper

Mission IV-castle, Soul Eater & Purgatory, location changes based on time

Mission V-Lord Morningstar, infiltration as doctor, noncity

Mission VI-Juggernaught, city, whodunnit

Mission VII-castle, Shurhath

Mission VIII-semadai, Hammer, heist (finding vault and vault key)

Mission IX-Azariad, Chainbreaker, finding notes

Mission X-port city, Sharkjaw, interrogation

Mission XI-errand for Kalawi, infiltration, elimination of Archangels/angel base, noncity

Mission XII-temple, Shuriken, rescue

Mission XIII-Mask

**ACT I**

Prologue

Objective: Report to the Shurhath

Mission I

Objective: Escape Semidon, board a large enough ship to the Delta

Optional Target & Boss: Zenith

* The player resurrects in the courtyard and must move through the Forbidden Palace to the river, where Shadowbound can sneak onto a ship moving to the Delta
* The Shurhath is currently too densely surrounded by soldiers to feasibly attack, and Kalawi warns Shadowbound in the prologue that he won’t be strong enough
* In any case, the door from the courtyard to the main part of the Palace is locked and the wall cannot be surmounted with Phase I
* Shadowbound therefore moves through the part of the Forbidden Palace that is open to him; namely the defensive battlements separating the majority of the castle from the river and its naval harbour
* He reaches the harbour and after he sees a large enough ship, it’s marked in the HUD as a new objective. The player sneaks onto the crows’ nest and the mission ends as the ship starts to sail downriver
* Zenith, the lord who spits on the player in the prologue, is an optional target and potential boss battle. He can be punished lethally or non-lethally
* The non-lethal elimination involves knocking him out and dumping him in a pool of sewage where the Forbidden Palace’s cisterns drain into
* Doing this shows a scripted sequence wherein Zenith wakes up in the cesspool, has a panic attack, and faints

**ACT II**

Mission II

Objective: Eliminate the Blackfish

Optional Boss: Striga

* Shadowbound arrives at the capital of the Mighty Lordship of the Delta (in European feudal terms, this would be the Duchy of the Delta)
* His mission is to travel through the capital, reach the Blackfish’s citadel, enter it, and eliminate the Blackfish. This can be done either lethally or non-lethally
* The player can overhear some NPC conversations about a character called the Reefshark and how, although once a charming and self-confident warrior, his mental state has deteriorated due to being forced to perpetrate atrocities by the Blackfish in the course of repelling the invasion
* The Reefshark himself (who becomes Ironhand in Act III) cannot be found by the player in the level
* In a dark, abandoned area of the capital inhabited only by Kalawi-worshippers, a striga can be found. The player can engage it as an optional boss fight

Mission III

Objective: Eliminate the Desert Ripper

Optional Boss: Angel

* Shadowbound’s next target is a mighty lord by the name of the Desert Ripper
* The Desert Ripper is not currently in his capital, Efitra, but rather a mining complex wherein slaves mine copper and tin for the purposes of making bronze
* On top is a massive metallurgy complex with housing for the mine owners and slaves, vast furnaces and sprawling workshops, etc. Though much of the architecture is grand and indeed beautiful, it is heavily implied to have been entirely built by slave labour
* The Desert Ripper is here to check on the status of the mines as they’re his main source of bronze, which is vital in manufacturing arms and armour
* Just as with the Blackfish- and indeed with all mission targets- the Desert Ripper can be eliminated lethally or non-lethally
* An optional boss fight is an angel, who can be found in the Desert Ripper’s chambers reading about the mines’ weekly outputs. The angel is there to ensure that the mines are continuing to be productive and supplying anti-invasion soldiers with dearly needed bronze

Mission IV

Objective: Eliminate Soul Eater & Purgatory

Optional Boss: Fiend

* Soul Eater and Purgatory live in a vast castle built on a cliff, making it assailable to armies from only one direction
* However, the cliff itself has caverns in it that can be used for an assassin to stealthily reach the castle, and the player starts the level at the mouth of these
* In the cavern on the way to the castle, the player can go out of their way to find a sleeping fiend, who can be killed easily whilst in this state or bypassed entirely
* Once the player reaches the castle, they have two elimination objectives, being both Soul Eater and his mother Purgatory
* Finding the targets is a core part of this mission’s challenge: depending on the time, their locations will differ
* For this, the mission is divided into three time periods: premidnight, midnight, and postmidnight. The time period the player is currently experiencing can be determined from the Moon’s position, NPC dialogue, or bells tolling the hour
* The time periods of the level move with real-life time, although once the period reaches postmidnight it won’t change afterwards
* The targets can either be eliminated lethally by the player or both can be eliminated at once through non-lethal means
* Returning from the castle through the caverns, the fiend will be awake and pacing round one of the larger underground chambers. It can be engaged as an optional boss battle or bypassed entirely. This is the first fiend that the player encounters in the game

Mission V

Objective: Lord Morningstar

Optional Boss: Three Elephants

* Lord Morningstar is currently visiting a forest village which he uses as a military base. It mainly serves to house wounded soldiers, but Lord Morningstar uses it as a covert place to meet with his spies and hear their reports
* The doctors in Lord Morningstar’s army that he has recruited to treat the soldiers wear full-body suits and a plague doctor-esque mask to protect from infection
* Shadowbound therefore disguises himself as one of these doctors and is treated by the NPCs there as such; he will be allowed to freely move through certain areas (though will be attacked if trespassing)
* NPCs will treat him as a doctor and therefore sometimes ask him to treat patients, which can be refused or actually attempted
* Lord Morningstar himself will be in a dinner meeting with spies: for lethal eliminations, he can be killed during the dinner, outside of it, or the wine bottle at dinner can be poisoned with a poison stolen from one of the spies
* As with all targets, he can also be eliminated non-lethally
* For an optional boss fight, there are three elephants grazing in a forest grove who can be engaged all at once

Mission VI

Objective: The Juggernaught

Optional Boss: Archangel

* The final major loyal levy the Shurhath has at his disposal is the Juggernaught, who can be found in his capital strengthening its defences
* A difficulty in eliminating him lethally though is that the Juggernaught does not wear any unique armour to distinguish him from other lords- however, all lords have slight variations in their armour, e.g. colour, ornamentation, etc
* The player must therefore find clues throughout the mission on what kind of armour the Juggernaught wears, what his habits are, how he talks to his levies, etc; the ‘answer’ is randomised so the Juggernaught will be in a different location with different armour, habits, and mannerisms each time
* He can be eliminated either lethally or non-lethally, although both require the player to first discern the target’s identity
* As an optional boss fight, there is an archangel in the capital which can be found organising defences on one of the streets; this is the only archangel found in Act II

Mission VII

Objective: Shurhath of Ethagis

Optional Boss: The Sword of Semidon

* With the Shurhath’s major pillars of support eliminated, the time has at last come to strike at him directly
* The player returns to the Forbidden Palace to do so, and can eliminate him lethally or non-lethally
* An optional boss is the Shurhath’s lieutenant, the Sword of Semidon; he’s just a human but has soldiers and other defences around him to make him more formidable
* The player can actually return to the part of the Palace that they explored in Mission I; the ongoing invasion and mounting paranoia has spurred the Shurhath to cease any commercial activity there and instead pack it with defences
* The Shurhath has a note on his person regarding the Mask and confirming its existence and powers, written to him by the Red Mantis. After the mission, Shadowbound resolves the find the Mask and thus escape being dragged away to hell

Succession

* The Hydra of Semidon’s successor will vary depending on who the player kills during this mission, and the player therefore effectively chooses who the Shurhath will be until the Horde’s formation and attack on Semidon
* Assuming he is not killed, the Sword of Semidon will become the new Shurhath
* If he is killed, the new Shurhath will be the Red Mantis. If even the Red Mantis is killed, the Wraithwreaker will become the new Shurhath; as he doesn’t appear in the mission, the player cannot kill him

**ACT III**

Kalawi’s Visit

* At the start of the act, Kalawi visits Shadowbound and speaks to him
* He comments on the player’s actions so far, with the tone and content of his monologue varying greatly based on the player’s Depravity rating
* In High Depravity, he will be arrogantly pleased at the player’s viciousness and violence, condescending to them as his servant and encouraging them to slip further into destruction
* In Low Depravity, he will be bitter, frustrated, and a little confused at the player’s restraint. He is less condescending towards them, however, and will talk to them about free will, asking curiously what the player will do next. He still encourages them to commit violence and destruction, and taunts them, saying that they will not be able to maintain their restraint in the face of real danger
* He will also comment on whoever is now Shurhath: this depends entirely on the
* Kalawi then remarks that he knows the player is searching for the Mask of Immortality and says that he views the player’s pursuit of immortality as a violation of their deal
* He then cryptically says that the player’s punishment for this will become clear in time
* The punishment, unbeknownst to the player at this stage, is the fact that once all the world’s demons have united into the Horde, Kalawi will command them to refuse to allow Shadowbound to join their ranks, and for all demons to continue attacking him on sight
* He continues by talking about how the stakes are getting higher and more than merely who sits on the throne is starting to hang in the balance
* He alludes to the fact that the demons of the world will be uniting into one army in order to comprehensively destroy humanity (the Horde), and that humanity will rally behind a ‘champion’ to meet the challenge (Ironhand)
* These allusions are not concrete enough for the player to understand what he means at this stage, but as more information about the world’s overarching story reaches the player over the next few missions, the player will know what Kalawi meant
* With some final closing remarks, Kalawi warns the player that things are soon going to reach a climax, and that the player will face the consequences of their actions. He then disappears

Mission VIII

Objective: Find out from the semadai where the Mask could be

Optional Boss: The Hammer of Ilyzor

* Although Shadowbound knows that the Mask exists and many of its rumours are true, he has no idea where it can be acquired, and lacks any leads
* However, he reasons that the semadai, being a religious sect well informed on religious matters and entrusted with many secrets, would be the most likely group to know something more about it. He therefore decides to pay them a visit
* Shadowbound enters the semadai mountain at night. The semadai store their secrets in a vault, for which three keys (all of which found in the level) are required to open
* One of the keys is held on the person of the Hammer of Ilyzor, who can be eliminated both lethally or non-lethally. Alternatively, he can be fought head-on as an optional boss fight
* The contents of the vault reveal that the semadai know everything about what the Mask does, and confirm that it’s linked to the demon invasion and somehow a cause of it
* They also reveal that whilst the semadai don’t know where the Mask is, they know that Chainbreaker is also looking for the Mask
* Shadowbound resolves to eliminate Chainbreaker and determine what he knows

Mission IX

Objective: Eliminate Chainbreaker and find a lead

Optional Boss: Armageddon

* Shadowbound enters Azariad and moves through it to Chainbreaker’s base
* There is a key on Chainbreaker’s person which is used as a master key- this unlocks a chest in Chainbreaker’s chamber which contains his diary
* In his diary, Chainbreaker confirms that as part of the extensive spying he and his forces have done on Sharkjaw, they know that he- at least at one point- actually had the Mask in his possession
* Chainbreaker wants to acquire the Mask and destroy it, believing that in this way he can end the demon invasion, but he laments that he has no way of reaching Sharkjaw
* This information can be acquired in other ways; it can be found in a ledger of state secrets that Kingsparrow has hidden away in a secret unlocked chest, or it can be determined piecemeal through bits of lore (e.g. notes) scattered throughout the level
* Shadowbound, after acquiring this info and eliminating Chainbreaker- who is competing with Shadowbound to acquire the Mask- leaves to find Sharkjaw
* In this level, Armageddon can be fought as a boss; he is just a human, but is surrounded by other soldiers and defences, and is thus still a formidable battle

Mission X

Objective: Eliminate Sharkjaw and find a lead

Optional Boss: Three Fiends

* Sharkjaw’s capital is a port city where slave ships dock and leave, and slavers conduct their business and bring in profits
* Shadowbound enters Sharkjaw’s capital and makes his way to his stronghold
* In Sharkjaw’s base, there is a dungeon in the basement where Sharkjaw tortures and interrogates people; Shadowbound must bring him here to interrogate him for information
* There are various implements of torture in the dungeon, and the player must decide what the best combination of implements is in order to break Sharkjaw, who initially refuses to talk
* When he does talk, he reveals the full back-story of the Mask, including that it was he who actually started the whole demon invasion in order to get it. Though he initially had it in his possession, eventually it was stolen, and he believes that the infamous assassin Shuriken stole it as she’s the only person with the skill to
* After the player has all the information they need, they must eliminate Sharkjaw as he is competing with the player in trying to acquire the Mask. As with all targets, however, this can be done lethally or non-lethally
* The non-lethal way to eliminate Sharkjaw is to cut out his tongue and throw him onto one of his own slave ships, which will then leave harbour and carry Sharkjaw away into brutal slavery in the mines
* Shadowbound then leaves Sharkjaw’s capital
* There is an optional boss fight of three fiends, who are prowling around in the caverns underneath Sharkjaw’s dungeons
* Though Shadowbound attempts to locate Shuriken, ultimately he has no idea where she could be. He tries relentlessly to do this for a month, and still doesn’t get a single lead from any sources
* In desperation, he turns to Kalawi, asking him to reveal Shuriken’s location
* Kalawi is slightly amused; in trying to become immortal, Shadowbound is indirectly violating their agreement, and thus Kalawi has hitherto refused to help Shadowbound in any way
* However, Kalawi reasons, there is something else that Shadowbound could offer him. Between Semidon and the Delta is a massive stronghold where archangels and angels are starting to gather and train to repel the demon invasion
* Kalawi says that if Shadowbound eliminates every soldier in that stronghold by poisoning the water supply (there are poisons stashed within the stronghold), he’ll tell the latter where Shuriken can be found
* With no other alternatives, Shadowbound is forced to accept

Mission XI

Objective: Eliminate the Angel stronghold, learn Shuriken’s location from Kalawi

Optional Boss: Three Archangels

* In the mountains near the Delta is an ancient mausoleum, constructed centuries ago before Semidon was the imperial capital by the wealthy Shurhath of a past dynasty
* It housed the bodies of his dynastic ancestors and around the mausoleum he built estates for his family and supporters, creating a small but opulent ‘village’ around the great mausoleum
* With the extinction of his dynasty, the mausoleum and its surroundings were abandoned, and became ruined with time, largely forgotten about thereafter
* Recently, however, many angels and archangels have gathered there, training synchronously for a great battle that is approaching between humanity and demonkind
* The mausoleum has been turned into a barracks/stronghold and its mountainous position, combined with the sheer numbers of angels there, have rendered it unassailable by demonic forces
* However, Kalawi believes that there is still one of his servants that can destroy the angelic presence there: you
* Due to the difficulty of entering the stronghold, Kalawi has told Shadowbound about a disguise that they can utilise; various human asthans and lords enter the angel stronghold to train with them or deliver supplies
* One of these is an asthan called Firewalker, who in this modified version of Ethagis is obscured head to toe in armour to hide burns sustained during combat. The player finds him walking by himself to the stronghold
* They can simply leave him be, knock him out, or kill him. If unconscious or dead, the player can don his armour so as to infiltrate the stronghold without being attacked on sight (although using demonic powers, entering forbidden areas, or responding to angels in certain ways will cause NPCs to turn hostile)
* Wearing Firewalker’s armour does not change gameplay mechanics as it is light armour which doesn’t impede mobility
* The archangels and angels can be eliminated lethally or non-lethally; lethal elimination can be done directly, with the player eliminating every angel personally, or it can be done impersonally
* Inside the stronghold is an alchemy laboratory containing several blue-ringed octopus corpses. They’re experimenting with the tetrodotoxin in the husks for making poisons
* The player can take all the husks and use them to contaminate the stronghold’s water supply. This completes the mission, although the stronghold’s occupants will only die off screen
* The player can eliminate the stronghold’s occupants non-lethally, sending them all into a coma instead of actually killing them
* There’s a human hiding in the estates near the mountain, a ‘squatter’ who’s been living in the mountain for years now. He’s an alchemist and the angelic presence in the mausoleum is worrying him greatly
* He believes that if the angels spot him, they’ll mistake him for a spy and torture him. Hence, he wants to eliminate the angels there, but do it non-lethally so as not to anger Ilyzor
* He knows how to make an elixir that induces unconsciousness, but needs mercury to do it. The player can enter the stronghold laboratory, steals mercury, and give it to the alchemist for him to make the elixir
* The player then contaminates the water supply with it; this will complete the mission, but the stronghold’s occupants will fall into a coma off-screen
* Kalawi will still consider the deal to have been honoured if the player takes a non-lethal approach, and will in fact prefer it as he believes that a permanent coma will cause the angels to suffer more than merely killing them
* In exchange, he tells Shadowbound that Shuriken is in the Great Temple in Semidon, a massive cathedral and the largest in the Empire. Shadowbound leaves
* Throughout the mission, the player can overhear from angel NPC’s conversations that they know not only that the player exists (various NPCs in previous levels discuss an ‘archdemon’ or ‘King of Demons’, but that that player was the imperial spy Shadowbound
* They are explicitly training to kill him and prioritise his elimination over that of any other demon
* If the player desires a boss fight, there are three archangels in the stronghold which can be fought all at once; engaging one will cause the other two to be summoned if they are alive and conscious

Mission XII

Objective: Rescue Shuriken and interrogate her to learn the Mask’s location

Optional Bosses: Abomination, Shuriken [High Depravity]

* Shuriken is being held captive by demons in the largest temple in Ethagis, who have entered a non-aggression pact with each other and seem to be working together in anticipation with a vast battle with Ironhand’s forces
* This new combination of demon forces into a vast swarm is referred to as the Horde, and is referenced by the angels in the previous mission
* The Horde’s overwhelming forces managed to sweep through Semidon and the Forbidden Castle, destroying the entire imperial circle and leaving the empire without a Shurhath
* Shadowbound enters the temple through the city streets surrounding it and the estates there- or alternatively through the smuggling tunnels underneath the streets
* Once in the temple, he must free Shuriken from her capture by the demon forces and take her to a hideout nearby (the point at which Shadowbound begins the mission)
* The temple itself is a large compound with various other prisoners that can be freed and spoken to- there’s also an optional boss fight with the demon Abomination
* Once Shuriken is taken to Shadowbound’s hideout, she is still bound in chains and unconscious, and Shadowbound wakes her up, asking about what happened and where the Mask is
* In Low Depravity, Shuriken simply tells Shadowbound all the information he asks, citing that she could never feasibly fight him. The player can then choose to free her from her bonds or not
* In High Depravity, Shuriken is a demon by this point, having been mortally wounded at some point before her capture and having sold her soul to Kalawi. She therefore feels able to fight Shadowbound and will turn on him, breaking free of her bonds and fighting the player until she is defeated
* When the player defeats her, she will divulge the information Shadowbound needs. Afterwards, the player can spare or execute her
* Shuriken confirms that there is an upcoming climactic battle between Ironhand’s forces and the Horde, and that the Horde stole the Mask from her and placed it in a temple across the River Antavar, rumoured to have been built centuries ago during a war in reverence to Kalawi
* The dark reputation around it led to it being abandoned, and it’s where the Horde took the Mask after capturing it from Shuriken
* The Mask Temple is on the south side of the widest point of the river Antavar, opposite an abandoned and decaying town
* The Temple itself was built in a unique way due to its demonic nature, and requires a key to its front door to open. Though the Horde initially had this, an angelic raid on Semidon managed to seize it, and the key is now on Ironhand’s person

Mission XIII

Objective: Obtain the Mask of Immortality

Optional Boss: Ironhand

* The environment of the mission has three approximate parts: Ironhand’s war camp, the River Antavar, and the Mask Temple
* Ironhand is aware of the Mask’s resistance and is launching an all-out, climactic final battle against the Horde in order to reach the Mask Temple and destroy the Mask once and for all
* He has made the abandoned town into a vast war camp, where reinforcements are coming in, soldiers are being treated, and supply wagons are coming through; it is here that Shadowbound begins the level
* Essentially, Shadowbound moves through the war camp, then moves from warship to warship on the river, then enters the Mask Temple and either takes/destroys the Mask
* The events of the level differ significantly depending on the player’s Depravity rating, and just as with Mission VII, there are distinct Low Depravity and High Depravity variants

Low Depravity

* Ironhand’s forces are pushing the Horde back and although the war camp is chaotic, reinforcements and supplies are still coming in
* On the river, Ironhand’s navy is slowly sinking the warships that the Horde has stolen, and although many soldiers are dying, morale is still holding
* If the Horde in the battle see the player, they will decide amongst themselves to refrain from attacking them as the battle is desperate and they need Shadowbound’s help to attack Ironhand’s forces
* Ironhand is fighting personally, backed by two angels and various human soldiers. As the player arrives, Kalawi’s head appears in the sky and he begins to speak to Ironhand
* Kalawi’s appearance has a Terror value of VIII and everyone on the ship that Ironhand’s currently on flees save the angels. Ironhand is unnerved and both he and the angels are distracted, facing the demonic face of Kalawi (an opportune moment for the player to take the key)
* Alternatively, the player can fight Ironhand head-on in an optional boss battle
* Regardless, in order to break Ironhand’s forces, Kalawi will redeploy three fiends from the Mask Temple to the battle, making the player’s navigation of the temple significantly easier

High Depravity

* The battlefield and Ironhand’s camp are complete chaos. In the field, Ironhand’s forces struggle against the Horde, and soldiers surrounded by their dying comrades are losing hope
* The camp is disorganised, and there are no reinforcements or supplies left to come in. There are so many dying soldiers that bodies are piling up in the streets
* If the Horde in the battle see the player, they will decide amongst themselves to submit to their authority for the battle; Shadowbound is the most violent of all the demons and they revere him as a king
* Although until this point Kalawi had commanded them to target Shadowbound, as the battle is so important they decide to suspend their obedience of this command for the time being and follow the player into battle
* Ironhand is fighting personally, backed by four angels and many human soldiers. The player can steal the key stealthily, although this is difficult, or engage in a head-on battle for an optional boss fight
* The shoreline before the Mask Temple is a messy graveyard of ships and bodies, leading to the steps that approach the ancient temple
* When unlocked the player enters; the enemy presence in the temple differs depending on Depravity level
* In Low Depravity, there will be a few abominations in the temple and hyenas will prowl around and attack the player on sight
* In High Depravity, there are many abominations in the temple, as well as hyenas who will attack the player on sight. The final chamber of the temple has three fiends in it
* The final chamber leads to small room at the very apex of the temple, looking over the battle and Ironhand’s camp; it contains the Mask
* The player can then decide whether to take the Mask and be immortal or destroy the Mask and end the demon invasion

### Endings

Low Depravity, Destroy Mask

* The demon invasion is ended, and Ironhand becomes Shurhath (if he is killed by the player in Mission XIII, Elphensbane will become Shurhath. If Elphensbane is also killed, an unnamed archangel will take the throne)
  + Ironhand is unambiguously the ideal Shurhath, combining exceptional talent with great humanity and kindness. His skill and prestige are such that he establishes the greatest degree of centralisation and absolutism in centuries, and passes important reforms for social change and national prosperity
  + Elphensbane is still a good Shurhath, being skilled and benevolent. His rule is still a good age, though he lacks the adeptness and force of character to precipitate major sociopolitical changes
  + An archangel makes a skilled ruler but lacks the emotional capacities of empathy or love. As such, they bring stability, prosperity, and highly efficient rule, but care about the good of the people only insofar as to avoid unrest
* Though the invasion was brutal, the realm is not too demoralised and devastated to make rebuilding impossible, and society recovers and prospers, eventually reaching new heights of prosperity under its new Shurhath
* Ilyzor and the other gods force Kalawi to relinquish Shadowbound’s soul, and as a result of the player’s morality Ilyzor rewards the player’s soul with peaceful oblivion after death
* The passage of Shadowbound into oblivion is shown in a short cut-scene wherein Ilyzor speaks directly to the player, before Shadowbound is shown walking slowly into nothingness and then the screen fading

Low Depravity, Take Mask

* Ironhand becomes the new Shurhath; if he is killed by the player in Mission XIII, the new Shurhath will be Elphensbane, and if he is killed the new Shurhath will be a random archangel
* The Shurhath’s forces decisively defeat the Horde at the Battle of Antavar and maraud the realm rooting out any other demon forces in a decade-long war
* All this time, the Shurhath deploys angels, assassins, and regiments of soldiers across the Empire to hunt Shadowbound down and retake the mask
* As the Shurhath makes accelerating progress in rooting out the demonic presence in Ethagis, he is able to divert more and more forces in pursuit of Shadowbound
* Eventually, Shadowbound is found and killed in a climactic battle with over a dozen archangels, angels, and human soldiers. The Mask is destroyed immediately after, and the demon presence in Ethagis is finally eliminated entirely
* The prolonged war has taken a toll on Ethagis, and times are hard; but the realm still has hope, and is not so devastated by warfare that it cannot be rebuilt and eventually prosper
* The other gods (with the exception of Ilyzor, who refuses to intervene on behalf of a demon) force Kalawi to relinquish Shadowbound’s soul, and instead of passing into ‘unending shadow’, Shadowbound is reincarnated as a hyena
* The size and strength of the hyena depends on the number of people Shadowbound killed; e.g. in a zero-kills playthrough, the hyena will be powerful and dominant, whereas in a playthrough stopping just short of High Depravity the hyena will be sickly and weak

High Depravity, Destroy Mask

* Ironhand and Elphensbane are both killed in the Battle of Antavar, although the battle was technically won by humanity due to Shadowbound destroying the Mask and sending all the demons back to the shadow plane
* The Horde is considerably more powerful in High Depravity playthroughs than Low Depravity, so were able to overwhelm Elphensbane’s ship entirely, slaughtering everyone, and kill Ironhand by a javelin in the eye
* The new Shurhath thus becomes an unnamed archangel (archangels lack personalities or differences in skillsets to distinguish one from the other)
* The realm is devastated, demoralised, and near collapse from the shock of the Horde’s rampages. Archangels don’t care for people in an empathetic way, and thus the common people lack an advocate in the imperial circle
* However, the new Shurhath manages to hold the realm together and prevent anarchy, being brutally utilitarian and pragmatic to maximise efficiency and stability
* The Shurhath lacks the manpower to spare to actually hunt down Shadowbound, and he dies of old age, eventually passing into ‘unending shadow’ upon death

High Depravity, Take Mask

* The Horde wins the Battle of Antavar and slaughters every human and angel they can, including Ironhand, Elphensbane, and all the archangels present there
* A different archangel becomes Shurhath but is later killed by the Horde, who pillage and destroy Ethagis with growing impunity as humanity’s defenders become increasingly overwhelmed
* The Empire falls into complete chaos and anarchy as archangel after archangel fill the imperial throne and archangel after archangel die in battle
* Shadowbound is hunted every single day by demons that Kalawi sends after him to retake the Mask, fending them off each time in bloody battles
* Eventually, he is assassinated by a human- Darkstar- who destroys the Mask and brings the invasion to an end. Shadowbound, upon death, passes into ‘unending shadow’
* By this time, civilisation has been almost entirely wiped out of Ethagis, and what remains of humanity is a shadow of its former self

### Masks

Tempest

+ Move faster and jump higher

- Take more damage

Juggernaught

+ Deal more damage and take less

- You move slower and jump lower

Nightmare

+ All player actions gain +2 Terror rating. NPCs with a Courage level of 3 below the Terror value of your actions silently suffer a heart attack and become unconscious

- You are louder and more visible to enemies

Phantom

+ You are much quieter and less visible to enemies, and performing stealth knockouts/ assassinations provides a few seconds of invisibility if carried out unseen

- Mana does not regenerate

Warlock

+ Mana amount is greatly increased

- Using a non-magic item drains health

Abadon

+ Eat Tier 1 & Tier 2 unaware enemies alive, insta-killing them and restoring Health and Mana

- You cannot restore Health or Mana in any other way (except through Ravenous and Profane)

Mammon

+ Amount of money found is greatly increased

- Mana amount is decreased

Starbound

+ When outdoors, health and damage are increased and the player is harder to see

- When indoors, health and damage are decreased and the player is easier to see

Parasite

+ Unaware animal and human enemies can be snuck up to from behind and turned berserk, attacking other NPCs indiscriminately. You can also wield two items/powers at once

- You do not have a sword

Arachnid

+ Crawl up and walk on walls. Phase can be used on walls. Tarantula costs less Mana

- Take more damage and deal slightly less. Terror rating of player actions reduced by 1

Inferno

+ The player can shoot blue fire out of their eyes, acting like a projectile that burns NPCs alive (loud). Fire can spread to other NPCs if they approach the target and will spread as regular fire does. This costs the same amount of Mana as Phase

- Player takes damage whilst in water, and will faintly glow, being easily seen in darkness (though no visibility change in light)

Chaos

+ Chosen at random, half of the items and powers that the player possesses will be more effective for a certain mission (e.g. higher damage, duration, range, etc)

- Chosen at random, half of the items and powers that the player possesses will be less effective for a certain mission (e.g. lower damage, duration, range, etc)

[New Game + and Sandbox Modes only] Immortality

+ When the player is close to death, the finishing blow simply summons the player to nearby high ground, leaving a swarm of spiders in their stead that attacks enemies. This will only work if the last bit of player health is removed by an enemy attack, and will not work if the entire health bar is drained in one enemy attack

- NPCs cannot be eliminated non-lethally

### Powers

Phase

Short range teleportation, can move the player through human NPCs

I- Power is as described above

II- Increases the range of Phase

III- Time is stopped when you stand still using Phase / Using Phase directly in front of an enemy has a Terror rating of III

Dark Reach

One or two handed telekinesis, can move objects and NPCs around from a distance or tear them in half. NPCs can be slammed into surfaces to kill them, or brought within the player’s reach

I- Power is as described above, can lift up and throw human NPCs, crows, chimps, and hyenas

II- Increases range, allows for lifting & throwing of demons, arachnodemons, striga, and horses

III- Increases range, allows for lifting & throwing of all enemies except fiends and elephants / Throwing NPCs into surfaces will knock them out instead of killing them

Liquid Shadow

Assume a liquid form which can stealthily move through areas at great speed, squeeze through vents and under doors, and lethally/non-lethally suffocate an NPC

I- Power is as described above

II- Increases speed of movement

III- Increases speed of movement and decrease visibility / Whilst in Liquid Shadow form, suffocate as many NPCs as desired before form duration ends

Iceblast

Cast a blast of ice that can freeze shut doors, freeze objects, NPCs, and fuels

I- Power is as described above, can be used to freeze human NPCs, crows, chimps, and hyenas

II- Increases range, can be used to freeze demons, arachnodemons, striga, and horses

III- Can be used to freeze all NPCs except fiends, elephants, and archangels / Freezes enemies adjacent to you when used

Vortex

Opens a small portal that sucks objects and NPCs into it, depositing them out of a second portal that the player can place on any surface, including walls and ceilings

I- Power is as described above, can be used to transport human NPCs, crows, chimps, and hyenas

II- Increases range, can be used to transport demons, arachnodemons, striga, and horses

III- Can be used to transport all NPCs except fiends, elephants, and archangels / Range increases massively

Tarantula

Shoot invisible webs and threads that entrap NPCs or objects that come into contact with them, immobilising and silencing them. You can enter these webs and use them as platforms

I- Power is as described as above, two webs can be cast at once. Ensnared enemies can be human NPCs, crows, chimps, and hyenas

II- Three webs can be cast at once, ensnared enemies can be demons, arachnodemons, striga, and horses

III- Up to five webs can be cast at once / ensnared enemies can be any NPC except fiends and elephants. Archangels will be immobilised but can still fight

Scourge

Cause an NPC to explode in a burst of spiders, which will then eat nearby NPCs alive

I- Power is as described above, can be used on human NPCs, crows, chimps, and hyenas

II- More spiders are produced, can be used on demons, arachnodemons, striga, and horses

III- Even more spiders are produced / can be used on all NPCs except fiends, elephants, and archangels

Splendour

Assume the form of a large demonic hyena for a short time, terrifying all but the bravest enemies (Terror level V) and allowing for devastating claw and jaw attacks. Health is much higher and the player is impervious to some attacks, but whilst in this form nothing on the weapon wheel can be equipped. Entering Splendour emits a loud roar

I- Power is as described above

II- Splendour lasts longer

III- Splendour lasts even longer / Splendour form deals more damage

### Abilities

Zephyr

I- Increases jump height and distance

II- Increases movement speed

III- Increases movement speed further / significantly reduces fall damage and muffles the sound

Ravenous

I- Consume animal corpses to restore some Mana

II- Consume human corpses’ hearts to restore Mana

III- Consumption restores a greater amount of Mana / consumption restores some Health as well

Dark Servant

I- Increases maximum Mana slightly

II- Increases rate of Mana regeneration slightly

III- Increases maximum Mana moderately / increases rate of Mana regeneration moderately

Reflexes

I- Cut through incoming projectiles with your sword

II- Deflect incoming projectiles back at the sender with your sword

III- Time slows when an enemy first spots you, allowing you to react quickly / time slows when an enemy is about to kill you, allowing you to react quickly

Shadow Kill

I- Unaware enemies turn to ash as they die

II- All enemies turn to ash as they die

III- Enemies killed in combat turn into a hyena as they die / enemies killed in combat turn into a tormented spirit which terrifies less brave enemies nearby (Terror level III)

Bloodlust

I- Build up adrenalinę with each kill which can be used for brutal insta-kills

II- Build up adrenaline at a faster rate, and maintain full adrenaline for longer

III- Build up adrenaline even faster / outside of combat maintain some adrenaline

Profane

I- Urinate on shrines of gods that aren’t Kalawi to restore Mana

II- Urinating on shrines restores Mana and Health

III- Urinating on shrines greatly restores Mana and restores Health / Urinating on shrines greatly restores Health and restores Mana

Soul Gaze

X- Eye of Kalawi sees humans and animals through walls as well as supernatural forces (this has a cooldown)

XX- Eye of Kalawi can see into people’s souls, revealing intel about the mission

Winged Nadir

X- Sprout a pair of bat wings when jumping off a high-altitude surface that allows the character to glide down to the ground slowly over a large distance (this has a cooldown)

XX- When gliding, lose altitude much more slowly

Shadow Spear

X- Throw your sword like a spear over a distance, which is difficult to block and deals high damage. Your weapon immediately returns to your hand after impact, but in the interim you are unarmed

XX- Spear travels further, faster, and does more damage

### Charms

Phase | Using Phase just behind an unaware enemy without being detected costs no Mana

Dark Reach | Wrestling with Dark Reach becomes considerably easier

Liquid Shadow | Taking fire damage will not immediately end Liquid Shadow

Iceblast | Freeze elephants and fiends temporarily. Duration varies depending on their state of alertness

Vortex | NPCs being sucked into or travelling through a vortex are silenced

Tarantula | Webs can temporarily immobilise elephants and fiends

Scourge | Explode elephants into very large amounts of spiders

Splendour | Using Splendour does not make any noise

Soul Gaze | See resources through walls as well as humans & animals

Winged Nadir | Dive bomb onto enemies from above and takedown/assassinate them

Shadow Spear | A spear that strikes an enemy deals splash damage

Amateur Craftsmanship | Enemy bombs sometimes malfunction

Arquebusier | Bullets inflict more damage

Barbed Bolts | Dartbow bolts deal more damage

Black Widow | Shoot webs using the Tarantula power faster

Bull | Running into weaker enemies knocks them down

Cast Away | Throw objects much further

Cat | Fall damage reduced

Counterbalance | Teleportation of enemies to your location sometimes staggers them

Crocodile | Attacking an enemy from stealth deals slightly more damage

Cursed Hour | For an hour past midnight in-game, damage, Health, and Mana are increased

Dark Eye | Range of seeing NPCs with the Eye of Kalawi is increased

Deathly Fog | Arsenic clouds from arsenic bombs linger for longer

Desperation | Attack damage is increased when Health is low

Dominant | Staring at chimpanzees unnerves them

Eagle Eye | Magnification of vision when peering through keyholes

Elephant | Choking out enemies takes less time

Embers | Fires caused by the Inferno Mask last longer

Falling Star | Drop-assassinations restore a small amount of Mana

Faltering Aim | Enemies are more likely to miss with hand cannons, cannons, and longbows

Fearsome | Killing enemies sometimes has an increased Terror value by 1

Fireflesh | Take less fire damage

Forceful | Knock back enemies slightly when striking them with the sword

Gift of Power | Enemies turned berserk with the Parasite Mask deal more damage

Gods’ Armour | When damaged, lose Mana before Health

Harpy | Drop-assassinations restore a small amount of health

Hokode | Climbing speed increased

Heart of Darkness | Maximum Mana increased

Hippopotamus | Damage output increased

Iron Bolts | Dartbow bolts are much less likely to break on impact

Ironsides | Maximum Health increased

Karma | Killing slavers increases Mana

Kinfolk | Nearby hyenas will come to your aid in combat

Lasting Swarm | Spider swarms generated by Scourge last longer before dispersing

Leopard | When following enemies in stealth mode, move faster

Lightning Arm | Shadow Spear can be thrown further

Lion | Knocking enemies off balance in combat is easier

Long Claws | Dark Reach range is slightly increased

Midnight Iris | See better in darkness

Mobility | Having weapons drawn doesn’t slow movement speed

Needle Flesh | Enemies dealing damage to you take a small amount of recoil damage

Obscuration | Smoke from smoke bombs lasts longer

Octopus | Become far less visible in water

Oozing Shadow | Move faster in Liquid Shadow form

Pest Control | Killing spiders and crows increases adrenaline

Quicklime Affinity | Quicklime clouds last for longer

Resourceful | Find more ammunition

Rhinoceros | Take less damage from explosions

Rooted | Become more difficult to knock down

Scarecrow | Crows will attack you only when in slightly larger numbers

Shadowborn | Mana regenerates slightly faster

Shark | Movement speed in water is increased

Shivering Silhouette | Enemy accuracy with projectiles is decreased (doesn’t apply to Angels)

Silent Worship | Muffles your swords when near a Shrine of Kalawi

Skybound | Altitude descent from Winged Nadir is slowed

Swordsman | Advantage in sword combat

Torn Reality | Vortex lingers for longer

Unburdened | Increases movement speed when carrying bodies

Unstoppable Force | In Splendour form, wrestling with elephants and fiends is easier

Vengeance | Getting damaged increases adrenaline

Voracious | Consuming corpses and hearts restores more Mana

Whirlwind | Swing speed for the sword is increased

Wrath | Adrenaline charges faster

Yeti | Picking up and throwing frozen enemies with Dark Reach is faster

Zebra | Horses take longer to detect your presence

### NPCs

#### Demons

Demons are humanoid entities that have been chosen by the hyena god Kalawi to serve him, acting as an embodiment and enforcer of the cosmic principle of chaos. They were formerly humans who were approached by Kalawi and given supernatural powers in exchange for their souls; Kalawi confines them to the ‘shadow plane’, a kind of hell, after death instead of being reincarnated.

The various different types of demon have significant morphological variation, with most not being humanoid. Nonetheless, these types share physical and psychological traits. Demons are faster, stronger, and more aggressive than the average human- most types of demon are so physically different from a human that such comparisons are meaningless. Like angels, they have the ability to cease feelings of physical pain or discomfort (e.g. nausea, vertigo, etc).

Psychologically, demons are characterised by destructive emotions like anger, pride, greed, gluttony, and envy. Though they are capable of rational thought and cognition, only standard demons possess standard human cognitive abilities. Arachnodemons and striga have diminished cognitive abilities compared to humans, and the intelligence of abominations and fiends is closer in magnitude to an animal than a man. These demons are thus governed almost entirely by emotion, instinct, and feeling. Even standard demons, capable of rationality and restraint, typically choose to subordinate this to emotion and instinct.

The emotions of demons tilt them towards chaos rather than order: hatred, anger, and greed guide them towards wanton violence and aggression, and they will spread chaos indiscriminately. Although standard demons have the intellectual capacity to understand and act in the service of morality, they forgo this in favour of indulging their primal urges to destroy and dominate. These demons may have the biological ability to feel love or remorse, but Kalawi only makes demons out of malign people anyway, and as such standard demons do not demonstrate empathy or compassion. Less cognitively advanced demons lack these abilities entirely.

Due to demons’ desires to conquer, destroy, and spread chaos, they are unable to integrate into society or cooperate. Standard demons are rational enough to occasionally work with others in order to achieve their own ends- e.g. working for Lord Morningstar- but this extremely rare in practise and is not heard of outside of this context. After all, demons are embodiments of chaos, and forming coalitions and societies is a form of order: demons simply lack the psychological toolkit to be a part of a society. They are too emotional and destructive, and will fight each other simply out of anger, envy, greed pride, etc.

The one exception to this is in Act III of the story wherein Kalawi begins commanding the demons to unite in order to attack Ironhand and his coalition of forces. Whilst these demons don’t outright attack each other, the force they form is a horde, not an army. Demons are not emotionally inclined to cooperate or coordinate. Demons in the same horde may even turn on each other, e.g. fiends defending the Mask of Immortality will kill humanoid demons who try and steal the Mask.

Whilst the demons of a horde may not outright attack each other, they nonetheless form a brutal society with a rigid and unstable dominance hierarchy, akin to that of chimpanzees. Every demon is in competition with the other for dominance; they will bully their inferiors and be bullied by their own superiors.

##### Demon

[Tier 2] Courage Level: IV

Powers:

Phase II | Same as Shadowbound’s power

Liquid Shadow I | Same as Shadowbound’s power

##### Arachnodemon

[Tier 2] Courage Level: III

Powers:

Swarm Caller | Cough out a swarm of spiders that attack nearby NPCs

Striga

[Tier 2] Courage Level: IV

Powers:

Phase II | Same as Shadowbound’s power

Firebolt | Send out a dart of burning fire which deals damage on impact

Abomination

[Tier 3] Courage Level: V

Fiend

[Tier 5] Courage Level: VI

#### Animals

Spider

[Tier 1] Courage Level: [Depending on number, 0-IV]

Crow

[Tier 1] Courage Level: I

Chimpanzee

[Tier 1] Courage Level: II

Hyena

[Tier 1] Courage Level: III

Horse

[Tier 2] Courage Level: III

Lion

[Tier 3] Courage Level: IV

Elephant

[Tier 5] Courage Level: V

#### Humans

All humans are [Tier 1]

Slave (Non-combatant)

Courage Level: I

Commoner (Non-combatant)

Courage Level: I

Gentry (Non-combatant)

Courage Level: I

Slaver

Courage Level: II

Levy

Courage Level: II

Cavalryman

Courage Level: III

Elephant Cavalryman

Courage Level: III

Sergeant

Courage Level: II

Jagal

Courage Level: III-IV

Asthan

Courage Level: IV-V

Semadai

Courage Level: V

Assassin

Courage Level: IV

Retinue

Courage Level: III-IV

Lord

Courage Level: III-V

#### Angels

Angels are humanoid entities that have been chosen by the elephant god Ilyzor to serve him, acting as an embodiment and enforcer of the cosmic principle of order. They were formerly humans who were approached by Ilyzor and given supernatural powers in exchange for their souls; Ilyzor allows them to pass into oblivion after death instead of being reincarnated.

Angels and archangels (an archangel is a type of angel, though distinct from the standard angel which derives its name from the type of organism it is) differ morphologically, but they both broadly resemble humans though have more elephantine features. Their skin is more grey and durable than humans’ (unbeknownst to the people of this world, this is because it has more keratin than normal) and their frames are larger, bulkier, and more formidable than the average human’s. In-game, their height and stature are equivalent to those of the largest humans. Like demons, they have the ability to cease feeling physical pain and distress at will, but are also incapable of feeling psychological pain or distress.

Angels are physically and emotionally sterile: they act purely based on rationality and lack any capacity for emotion, creativity, or empathy. They cannot and have no desire to reproduce. Their sense of morality comes from a strongly felt imperative (coming from Ilyzor) to promote the cosmic principle of order rather than any sense of compassion, conscience, or love. When it is advantageous from a utilitarian perspective to commit immoral acts, they will do so without hesitation. Individuals’ feelings and beliefs are not important to them: their sole psychological goal is to bring order to the world by the most efficient means.

Angels are more intelligent than the average human and excel at analytical thinking, with mathematics/numeracy being their greatest cognitive strength. Despite lacking affective empathy (feeling the emotions that others are feeling) they are highly adept at cognitive empathy (being able to tell the emotions that others are feeling).

In social situations, angels almost always dominate over humans and assume an authoritarian leadership role; this is due to their great power and psychological inability to feel unconfident or demoralised. However, they lack the emotion of pride and will therefore serve under or even sacrifice themselves for humans if they calculate it to be beneficial. Archangels will always be superior in status and authority to regular angels, but between angels of the same class there is no such rule. If an angel calculates it to be more efficient to serve under another angel, they will do so without compunction, though unless in a formal hierarchy angels will practically always act as equals and may issue commands to each other.

When in combat, angels are some of the most formidable enemies that the player can face. They are immune to fear as they lack the capacity for emotions and thus cannot be terrified or even unnerved. Their keratinised skin and vast size makes them formidable and hardy. Being servants of the god Ilyzor, they have resistance to most supernatural powers at the player’s disposal. Even their superior intelligence is relevant in combat, as they will coordinate and tactically manoeuvre to try and best the player. Finally, chemical tools like sleep darts and arsenic bombs have reduced effectiveness when used against them.

Killing an angel from stealth requires two drop-assassinations; the first strike will halve their brain and cause them to wander aimlessly, attacking in the direction of the player’s steps as they can feel the vibration of these steps. They are unable to see or hear, however. The second drop-assassination will kill them. Archangels are as vulnerable to being choked out or drop-assassinated as standard angels, but their ability to fly makes this much harder and their wings will prevent players from choking them out from behind if they are flexed (this occurs when the archangel is alerted).

##### Angel

[Tier 3] Courage Level: Immune

Angels are named for the ‘Angel’ class of enemy and they are the most common organism of this class that the player encounters. They have the ubiquitous angel morphology and short black stubs on their face in the same facial location that an elephant’s tusks would protrude. In the right hand they wield a large silver alloy sword (this deals more damage than a standard steel sword) whilst their left hand is typically empty, although it can be used for carrying/throwing objects both inside and outside combat.

Sleep darts take longer to work on standard angels but are still effective.

Powers:

Charge | Rapidly burst in the direction of your sword, dealing large damage on impact

Meteorite | Throw an explosive ball of energy which starts fires on impact with surfaces

##### Archangel

[Tier 4] Courage Level: Immune

Archangels are in the ‘Angel’ class of enemy and are senior to, and considerably rarer than, standard angels. They have the ubiquitous angel morphology and large white tusks, as well as large wings sprouting from their back which allows them to fly, hover, and glide. The texture and appearance of the wings resembles elephant ears although the shape is reminiscent of standard angel wings as depicted in Western art. Archangels are slightly larger in frame than standard angels. They have two pairs of arms (four in total), with one pair above the other. Each pair of arms is equally muscular and functional. In the lower pair, they wield a flaming, large silver alloy sword in the right hand and leave the left hand empty for carrying/throwing objects. The upper pair of hands are kept empty and are used in combat for their Radiant Arms power. Archangels wear a similar kind of armour that standard angels do, though with slight modifications to allow for their extra appendages.

The cognitive and psychological capabilities of archangels are the same as those of standard angels, although due to their increased power they will assume authority over standard angels and issue them commands without being commanded by them in turn. Lore-wise, archangels and angels are both made by Ilyzor from human beings, but the most formidable humans are transformed into archangels instead of angels; it is ambiguous whether this is a conscious decision by Ilyzor or a side-effect of the humans’ abnormal power and abilities.

Archangels are more resistant to supernatural powers than standard angels are, as indicated by their higher Tier. Even powers upgraded to Level III often don’t affect them at all or affect them in a diminished way, unlike standard angels which are vulnerable to Level III powers. Archangels are also immune to sleep darts, although they can be choked out.

Powers:

Charge | Rapidly burst in the direction of your sword, dealing large damage on impact

Radiant Arms | Telekinesis akin to Dark Reach IIIa but with golden instead of black arms

Meteorite | Throw an explosive ball of energy which starts fires on impact with surfaces

Cyclone | Cast a polymorphous field of energy on the ground which flings enemies who step on it into the air

#### Named

Ironhand

Courage Level: VIII

The Sword of Semidon

Courage Level: VI

Sharkjaw

Courage Level: Immune

Purgatory

Courage Level: IV

Soul Eater

Courage Level: III

Chainbreaker

Courage Level: V

Armageddon

Courage Level: VI

##### Shuriken

[Tier 1 Low Depravity, Tier 4 High Depravity] Courage Level: VII

Powers: [High Depravity only]

Pounce | Grow large shadowy claws and pounce at a target at high speed

Mantis | Teleport and adhere onto walls and ceilings

Infernal Hail | Release a rapid-fire barrage of large shadowy darts

Majesty | Metamorphose into a large demonic crow with greatly increased damage resistance and output which can peck out the eyes of fiends or of players in fiend form

##### Abomination

[Tier 4] Courage Level: V

### Equipment

The sword is absent from the weapons wheel, being constantly held in the right hand (or, when wearing the Parasite mask, cannot be equipped at all).

All unlocked powers are included in the weapons wheel. All other items in the player’s weapon wheel are classed as non-magic (e.g., players wearing the Warlock mask will take damage when using them).

Razor Dart

A quiet, lethal projectile fired from the player’s Dartbow that exerts physical force and damages targets.

Inferno Dart

A quiet, lethal projectile fired from the player’s Dartbow that exerts physical force, starts a fire, and damages targets.

Sleep Dart

A quiet, non-lethal projectile fired from the player’s Dartbow that does not exert physical force and renders targets unconscious. This will work only for Tier 1 and Tier 2 enemies. The effect for enemies in combat is delayed.

Terror Dart

A quiet, non-lethal projectile fired from the player’s Dartbow that does not exert physical force and induces Terror in targets, with a starting Terror value of III. If used on targets with a Courage value of III, it will render hem unnerved.

Oblivion Dart

A quiet, non-lethal projectile fired from the player’s Dartbow that does not exert physical force and which blinds targets, causing them to loudly yell and, when in combat, attack wildly. This will work only for Tier 1 and Tier 2 enemies.

Shot

A loud, lethal projectile fired from the player’s Hand Cannon that exerts physical force and damages targets. Smoke is released when fired.

Rocket

A loud, lethal projectile fired from the player’s Hand Cannon that exerts physical force and explodes on impact, dealing large damage and setting targets on fire. Smoke is released when fired.

Smoke Bomb

A quiet throwable projectile which detonates immediately upon impact, releasing large amounts of obscuring smoke. The player will be able to see outlines of surfaces whilst within and through smoke clouds. Angels will be able to see through smoke clouds partially, and archangels will be able to see through smoke clouds completely. Adheres to surfaces.

Dragon Bomb

A loud throwable projectile which detonates shortly after being thrown, dealing explosive damage.

Quicklime Bomb

A quiet throwable projectile which detonates shortly after being thrown, releasing a cloud of quicklime that temporarily blinds and disables enemies. This will work only for Tier 1 and 2 enemies.

Fire Lance

A loud disposable siphon-like weapon with a handle releasing fire in a cone from its muzzle when fired.

Devilcharge

A quiet proximity mine which releases a cloud of rapidly lethal arsenic when approached by an NPC. This will work for all enemies except archangels, although for large enemies, e.g. fiends and elephants, the mine must detonate close to their heads for it to be effective.

Nightcharge

A quiet proximity mine which renders an NPC unconscious when they approach it. This will work for all enemies except archangels, although for large enemies, e.g. fiends and elephants, the mine must detonate close to their heads for it to be effective. The effect for enemies in combat is delayed.

Monsoon Siphon

A quiet disposable siphon weapon releasing large amounts of water in a cone from its muzzle when fired, putting out fires and disabling any blackpowder-based weapons; these include any of the above pieces of equipment except Darts, as well as thunder spears and cannons equipped.

[Unusable by player]

Longbow, Arrow

A projectile shot from a two-handed longbow which exerts physical force and deals damage on impact.

Longbow, Fire Arrow

A projectile shot from a two-handed longbow which exerts physical force and deals explosive damage on impact, generating fire.

Thunder Spear

A loud, two-handed disposable siphon-like weapon which releases large amounts of fire in a cone from its muzzle and explodes when fired, releasing shrapnel. Can also be thrown to explode on impact.

Cannon

A loud, two-handed weapon which shoots cannonballs, a large projectile which exerts physical force and deals large amounts of damage. They can also shoot rockets.

### Equipment Upgrades

These can be purchased in exchanged for currency at the start of each mission.

Upgrades labelled ‘II’ are only available for purchase when the ‘I’ version is purchased.

Some upgrades can only be purchased after the relevant scroll is found in a mission. The mission in which the upgrade’s scroll can first be found is written in square brackets, preceded by the letter M.

**Dartbow**

Razor Dart Capacity I | Increase Razor Dart capacity from 10 to 20.

Razor Dart Capacity II | Increase Razor Dart capacity from 20 to 30.

Specialist Dart Capacity I | Increase Sleep/Inferno/Terror/Oblivion Dart capacity from 5 to 10.

Specialist Dart Capacity II | Increase Sleep/Inferno//Terror/Oblivion Dart capacity from 10 to 15.

Bamboo Sight | Dartbow accuracy is increased.

Quick Mechanism | Dartbow rate of fire is increased.

Sleep Dart Efficacy | Sleep Darts can knock Tier 3 enemies unconscious after a delay.

Terror Dart Efficacy | Terror Darts have a Terror value of IV.

Sleep Dart Potency | Sleep Darts work immediately on Tier 1 and 2 enemies in combat.

[MIII] Custom Bowstring | Dartbow range is increased.

[MV] Neurotoxin Supply | Enable purchase of Terror and Oblivion Darts

[MVIII] Naphtha Supply | Enable purchase of Inferno Darts and Rockets.

[MVIII] Oblivion Dart Efficacy | Oblivion Darts can blind Tier 3 enemies, for a shorter amount of time.

[MIX] Terror Dart Efficacy II | Terror Darts have a Terror value of V.

**Hand Cannon**

Powder Horn I | Increase shot capacity from 10 to 20.

Powder Horn II | Increase shot capacity from 20 to 30.

Shot Chambers I | Fire two shots with the Hand Cannon before reloading.

Shot Chambers II | Fire three shots with the Hand Cannon before reloading.

Longer Muzzle | Increase Hand Cannon accuracy and range.

Rifled Muzzle | Increase Hand Cannon accuracy and range.

[MIV] Firearm Ventilation | Decrease reloading time and amount of smoke emitted.

[MVII] Silvered Barrel | Increase shot and rocket damage to demons.

**Fire Lance**

Lance Capacity I | Increase Fire Lance capacity from 4 to 7.

Lance Capacity II | Increase Fire Lance capacity from 7 to 10.

Realgar Infusion | Fire Lances produce more fire and in a larger cone.

Blackpowder Doubling | Fire Lances can be used twice.

[MVI] Thunderclap | Fire Lances deal explosive damage when used.

**Bombs and Charges**

Saltpetre Packing | Dragon Bombs’ explosion have a higher radius and deal more damage.

Quicklime Packing | Quicklime Bombs have a larger radius.

Detonation Volatility | Dragon and Quicklime Bombs will detonate on contact with an NPC.

Bomb Capacity | Increase Smoke/Dragon/Quicklime Bomb capacities from 4 to 8.

Devilcharge Reach | Devilcharges have an increased radius.

Nightcharge Reach | Nightcharges have an increased radius.

Charge Capacity | Increase Devilcharge and Nightcharge capacity from 4 to 8.

[MII] Soda Packing | Smoke Bombs release more smoke.

[MIII] Quicklime Supply | Enables the purchase of Quicklime Bombs.

[MV] Bitumen Coating | Dragon and Quicklime Bombs will adhere to surfaces.

[MVI] Arsenic Doubling | Devilcharges can be used twice.

[MVII] Toxin Doubling | Nightcharges can be used twice.

**Clothing Upgrades**

Boot Cushioning I | Make less noise when walking.

Boot Cushioning II | Make less noise when running.

Boiled Leather | Reduces damage taken slightly.

Improved Black Paint Recipe | Reduces visibility slightly.

Pocket Stitching I | Increase charm capacity from 5 to 7.

Pocket Stitching II | Increase charm capacity from 7 to 9.

Pocket Stitching III | Increase charm capacity from 9 to 11.

**Masterpieces**

These upgrades are available for purchase when all ‘requirements’ have been purchased. For a specific weapon, each masterpiece upgrade is mutually exclusive to the other.

Dartbow - Requires Custom Bowstring; Bamboo Sight; Quick Mechanism

I. Inexorable | Razor Darts can pierce as many enemies as lie in its trajectory. All Darts have increased range.

II. Insatiable | Greatly increases firing rate for all Darts.

Hand Cannon- Requires Longer or Rifled Barrel; Firearm Ventilation; Silvered Barrel

I. Perfectionist | Greatly increase accuracy, range, and firing rate.

II. Sadist | All shots deal area-of-effect shrapnel damage on top of more damage in themselves. Shots have a reduced range.

Fire Lance- Requires Realgar Infusion; Thunderclap; Blackpowder Doubling

I. Careful | Using Fire Lances is silent and they emit almost zero smoke.

II. Wrathful | Fire Lances emit more fire, have a louder explosion, and emit more smoke.

Bombs- Requires 3 of the 6 available upgrades to any bombs.

I. Elusive | Massively increases Smoke Bomb smoke output.

II. Abrasive | Quicklime Bombs have a larger radius and incapacitate enemies for longer.

III. Destructive | Dragon Bombs deal more damage and have a larger explosive radius.

### Achievements

Clean Hands | Complete an entire playthrough without killing anyone

Shadow | Complete an entire playthrough without being detected

Ghost | Complete an entire playthrough without being detected and killing only mission targets (sparing mission targets is also allowed)

Bare Flesh | Complete an entire playthrough without ever equipping a mask

The Archdemon | Complete the game

Salvation | Complete the game with Low Depravity

Shadowbound | Complete the game with High Depravity

From Whence They Came | Destroy the Mask of Immortality at the end of the game

Conquering Death | Take the Mask of Immortality for yourself at the end of the game

Lazarus | Complete Act I, escaping Semidon

Vengeance | Complete Act II, eliminating the Shurhath

Not So Servile | Complete any mission without killing anyone

Wraith | Complete any mission without being detected

Defying Fate | Complete a mission by non-lethally eliminating a target

Disappeared | Complete Act I without being detected

Deathly Precision | Complete Act II or Act III with 10 total kills or fewer

Agent of Justice | Eliminate all mission targets in a playthrough non-lethally

Oni | Complete an optional boss fight in a mission

Kanabo Oni | Complete every optional boss fight in a single playthrough

Silent Slaughter | Complete five boss fights without being detected by the boss

Revenant | Complete a mission without being detected and killing 5 people or fewer

Tempest | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Tempest mask for its whole duration

Juggernaught | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Juggernaught mask for its whole duration

Parasite | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Parasite mask for its whole duration

Arachnid | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Arachnid mask for its whole duration

Abadon | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Abadon mask for its whole duration

Mammon | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Mammon mask for its whole duration

Inferno | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Inferno mask for its whole duration

Nightmare | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Nightmare mask for its whole duration

Warlock | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Warlock mask for its whole duration

Starbound | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Starbound mask for its whole duration

Chaos | Complete a mission whilst wearing the Chaos mask for its whole duration

Versatility | Use every piece of equipment once in a single playthrough

Thaumaturge | Use every supernatural power once in a single playthrough

Twelve-Faced | Collect every mask in a single playthrough

Artisanal | Unlock all available masterpiece upgrades in a single playthrough

Dark Materials | Acquire 20 charms in a single playthrough

Midas Touch | Acquire 10 equipment upgrades in a single playthrough

Unbounded | Phase through three NPCs at once

Arm of the Devil | Successfully wrestle an archangel using Radiant Arms via Dark Reach

Speed of Shadow | Travel 50m in a single use of the Liquid Shadow form

Winter is Here | Freeze an enemy using Iceblast and use Dark Reach to kill three of their allies by hitting them with the block of ice

Prisoner of Spacetime | Trap an enemy in an endless loop using the Vortex power

Bait and Switch | Use the Tarantula power to hang an enemy, causing an enemy to see this and run terrified into a Tarantula web

Sea of Teeth | Produce 150 Scourge spiders on the screen at once

Goliath Versus Goliath | Successfully wrestle a fiend whilst in Splendour form

Speed of Darkness | Reach the maximum walking speed in the game

Angel of Death | Kill an archangel with a single strike

Bird of Prey | Eliminate 20 enemies with drop-assassinations or drop-takedowns

Shield of Speed | Cut through 3 incoming projectiles with the sword in the space of 10 seconds

Bend the Knee | Defeat a lord in combat

Superior | Defeat a standard demon in combat

Falling Star | Cause an airborne archangel to plummet down to the ground

Arm Wrestle | Snap off an Abomination’s tentacle using Dark Reach

Tenacity | Stay atop a bucking elephant or fiend for 7 seconds

To The Gods | Kill 5 enemies within 5 seconds

Coagulate Gore | Face 5 enemies in combat at once and ensure that none of them survive

Out of Reach | Elude 5 pursuers at once without killing them, knocking them out, or leaving the area

Berith | Cause 5 different NPCs to kill one or more of their own allies

Shameless | Urinate on a shrine whilst an NPC is praying to it

To The Skies | Stay airborne for a full minute

Table Manners | Eat an NPC alive whilst they’re having a conversation with another NPC

This is Ethagis | Knock a guard off the Palace battlements into the River Antavar, Mission I

For the Common Man | Prevent a commoner getting press-ganged into the navy, Mission II

Rise Up | Complete both of Crossbow’s side-quests, Mission III

The Unlikely Saviour | Free all the prisoners from the Oubliette, Mission IV

The Hour Cometh | Eliminate both Soul Eater and Purgatory in the premidnight phase of the mission, Mission IV

The Doctor-General | Successfully perform surgery whilst disguised as a doctor, Mission V

Astaroth | Cause the elephants in the grove to become intoxicated, Mission V

Accidental Betrayal | Follow Valorous to the Juggernaught and discern his identity this way, Mission VI

Avaricious Betrayal | Bribe or aid Bloodhound so that he tells you the Juggernaught’s identity and discern it in this way, Mission VI

Blaze of Glory | Defeat the Sword of Semidon in single combat, Mission VII

Third in Line | Cause Wraithwreaker to inherit the imperial throne, Mission VII

Blackpowder is My Key | Blow open the vault without using the keys, Mission VIII

Eureka | Discover where the Mask is bit by bit using piecemeal scraps of information, Mission IX

Kalawi’s Chainbreaker | Free a slave ship in the harbour, Mission X

Lord of Pain | Cause Sharkjaw to spill his secrets in only three moves, Mission X

A Snake in the Garden | Eliminate the angel stronghold without your cover being blown, Mission XI

Vendetta | Kill every angel and archangel individually without putting anything into the water supply, Mission XII

Shadow and Shuriken | Free Shuriken from her bonds and confront Abomination together, Mission XII

To Reign in Hell | Lead demons into battle in the Battle of Antavar, Mission XIII

The Final Battle | Kill or eliminate Ironhand, Mission XIII

Azrael | Defeat Ironhand in combat using only the sword, Mission XIII

### DLC: Ironhand

#### Story and Missions

Prologue- heroic Reefshark, ethical anti-pirate mission, comes home a hero, then does unethical stuff with trauma, gets shot and falls in the river

Mission I- months later, defending semadai mountain, sees flashbacks from rehab, player hears about Mask, then goes out into the world, Ilyzor offers services and then tattoos

Mission II- Indigo is stable but a blank slate, goes back home finds it invaded by bandits and rescues Grizzly Falcon, who explains situation and that Shadowbound ruined everything

Mission III- gets the cooperation of some lords, convincing them to let him lead an anti-piracy fleet

Mission IV- Becomes Ironhand, proclaimed new Mighty Lord of the Delta. Shurhath, Sword of Semidon, Red Mantis are gone by Shadowbound, Wraithwreaker proclaimed Shurhath. Ironhand vows to stop him

Mission V- Ironhand liberates the last bandit/demon stronghold in the Delta

Mission VI- Ironhand expands outside the Delta, establishes the mausoleum base, Horde starts to form, Sharkjaw found by Ironhand’s forces and says that Shadowbound is looking for the Mask but is side-tracked looking for Shuriken

Mission VII- Gets Kusaila on side, defeats Horde

Mission VIII- Gets Elphensbane on side, defeats Horde, hears Shadowbound has eliminated the entire mausoleum stronghold

Mission IX- Battle of Antavar

Mission I- noncity, semadai

Mission II- city, save Grizzly Falcon

Mission III- castle, save captured lords

Mission IV- noncity, target a unique demon

Mission V- city, target

Mission VI- noncity, save a lord outside the Delta

Mission VII- city, save Kusaila

Mission VIII- noncity, save Elphensbane

Mission IX- noncity, confront Shadowbound

Background

* The Reefshark is a highly respected senior levy of the Blackfish, the Mighty Lord of the Delta. He does have land and wealth, but his authority mainly comes from his role

Prologue

* The Reefshark and a ship of soldiers are sailing along the river, with a ship in the distance sailing away from them that the Reefshark’s ship is catching up to
* It is clear that, although the Reefshark isn’t sailing the ship, he is commanding the soldiers there, and they all idolise him
* The Reefshark, or Lacaideon to use his surname, is extremely charismatic, confident, charming, and in control. He’s a little cocky, but due to his competence and esteem this is justified
* The opening dialogue between the Reefshark and his soldiers provides exposition: who is this man, what has he done, and what is he currently doing
* The Reefshark is leading an anti-piracy operation, using his own flagship to hunt down a pirate ship that has been marauding the Delta rivers attacking traders
* The Reefshark catches up and the cutscene ends, allowing the player to learn the mechanics of the game by attacking the pirates
* After the battle, the Reefshark is hailed as a hero and the victorious Blackfish soldiers chant his name, as well as one soldier, his second-in-command, who is directly ahead of him
* There is a sudden jump cut. He is also on a ship, but it is littered with dead bodies and gore, and ahead of him is a chained up, wounded prisoner pleading with him by desperately repeating his name. In the corner of the screen the player is told that time has skipped by three months
* The lighting has shifted from warm daylight to cold night. Shuddering and breathing heavily, the Reefshark quickly executes the prisoner
* He turns behind him to his men, who are different than the ones he was with before. They look traumatised and afraid, and as the Reefshark turns to look at them they back away. The Reefshark chokes back tears
* The crowd of milling soldiers parts as the Blackfish strides through, stopping to steal a purse of coins from a dead man and pocketing it. He eagerly congratulates the Reefshark on the success of his mission
* It becomes clear from the Blackfish’s dialogue that the mission that the Reefshark is currently engaged in is killing fishermen who had broken a quarantine that the Blackfish had imposed on the people of the Delta
* It also becomes clear that whilst the quarantine is ostensibly a necessarily evil measure to prevent the movement of demons between walled settlements, the Blackfish has been using it as a legal justification to ‘punish’ quarantine-breakers by taking all their property
* It is finally evident that the Blackfish has been using the Reefshark as the tool by which to do this, and consequently the Reefshark has been severely traumatised and a shell of his former self
* After the Blackfish’s dialogue, a wounded prisoner, lying in a pool of blood on the floor, suddenly regains consciousness and staggers over to the Reefshark, calling him a murderer
* The Reefshark does not deny it and looks down in shame, weeping. The prisoner pushes him over the edge and the Reefshark breathes a relief sigh as, on deck, the Blackfish hurriedly- but too late- orders his levies to finish the prisoner off
* The Reefshark falls into the water and the prologue ends

**ACT I**

Prologue

Objective: Eliminate the pirates

Mission I

Objective: Liberate the home of the semadai

Target & Boss: Bloodhound

* Before each mission is a short period of narration by Indigo/Ironhand, and in this segment he describes how he effectively committed passive suicide that day on the river, and due to the tidal anomaly of the River Antavar flowing upwards, he drifted to the mountain of the semadai
* For a month he stayed there and recovered psychologically, overcoming trauma and finding peace within himself, with this process being driven by the Hammer of Ilyzor, who initially found the Reefshark in the river and saved him both physically and mentally
* The Reefshark adopts the new name Indigo, after the colour of his armour and to adopt a fresh start
* The mission begins with Indigo waking up in the forest shrine having fallen asleep whilst meditating, and being visited by the elephant god Ilyzor
* Ilyzor states that he sees great potential in Indigo and wants to make him into an angel; in fact, he says, due to Indigo’s immense potential Indigo would be transformed into an archangel or possibly something even more powerful
* Indigo, however, refuses; he has dealt with angels before and was disturbed by their lack of humanity and empathy, noting that although they did the right thing, they did it as robots with an imperative rather than humans acting for what was right
* Indigo therefore refuses Ilyzor’s offer. Ilyzor tells him that the mountain has been invaded by bandits and without supernatural powers Indigo may not be able to save his new family
* Indigo, however, resolves that he will try, even if it means dying, and that if he can die for the semadai he will be satisfied
* Ilyzor is impressed with this answer and states that there may be another option; of all the ten gods, Shurhath Ilyzor and Kalawi are the most powerful and they alone have the power to transform humans into ‘something better’
* However, each of the other 7 gods can confer limited supernatural abilities on a person without changing their physiology or psychology
* Individually, a single god’s gifts may not greatly strengthen an individual, but with the gifts of all 7 gods combined a person could become extremely powerful
* Most individuals are not deemed worthy by all 7 of these gods to be favoured in this way; but Ilyzor reports that Indigo is an exception. All of thee 7 gods deem Indigo exceptional enough to be worthy of their gifts, but also enough of a blank slate that each god believes that they can manipulate Indigo into being a servant of their will
* Indigo accepts the gifts and the mission begins
* Under the cover of night, a large group of bandits have invaded the semadai mountains, and by overhearing their conversations the player can deduce why
* The bandits were initially various commoners, levies, Jagals, etc, all having sworn allegiance to the Juggernaught
* However, after he was assassinated, his lordship fell into complete chaos and it became an anarchic disaster of infighting and demonic invasion
* A Jagal levied by Juggernaught called the Bloodhound has whipped together a large clan of bandits, which he led into the semadai mountains to occupy them; the mountains form a safe haven above the chaos and demons below
* They struck all at once at night, overwhelming the gate guards and swarming across the area. Several semadai were taken prisoner and a very small force- including the Hammer of Ilyzor- locked themselves in the vault, where they’re planning a counterattack
* Indigo’s objective is to free as many semadai prisoners as possible; for the objective to succeed this must be at least three- and then to either knock out or kill Bloodhound
* After this, he can knock on the door of the vault to alert the Hammer of Ilyzor of the situation, and the latter will then open the vault and organise a counter-attack
* Indigo explains that he was visited by Ilyzor and accepted the gifts of 7 gods, and the Hammer of Ilyzor asks what he’d like to do next

**ACT II**

Mission II

* In the pre-mission narration, Indigo explains that the invasion of Bloodhound was a wake-up call for him, reminding him of the events of the outside world
* Although he is now psychologically stable, two key questions weigh on his mind every day: *who am I?* and *what should I do with my life?*
* The latter question he has an answer to. The wake-up call reminded him of the chaos and bloodshed going on outside the bubble of the semadai mountains, and he resolves to return to the Delta and redeem himself by doing good there and restoring order
* But the former question- *who am I?*- he has more difficulty with
* Unlike his life as the Reefshark where he had a clearly defined personality, he reflects that ‘Indigo’ is a blank slate; although he has a vague, overarching aim, how he will go about and the kind of man he will become to achieve it is completely unknown to him
* With these reflections, the mission begins
* Indigo stops off at a riverside town which is the stronghold of a lord called the Grizzly Falcon
* He hadn’t planned to stop here initially, but on the way to the Blackfish’s capital he noticed the complete anarchy that the Delta had descended into and noticed that the town was partially in flames and with pirate/slaver ships docked in shore
* He leaves his horse in an abandoned stable and enters the town, resolving to find the Grizzly Falcon and offer some help + see what’s going on
* He learns that the Grizzly Falcon’s levies are under siege in the keep of his castle, and that an organised force of pirates, slavers, and bandits

#### Powers

Expulse | Sinthar, Lion

Short range teleportation. The player can double tap the assigned key to place a ‘marker’ which can be teleported to at any time as long as the player is in range of it and has the Expulse power equipped, regardless of which way the player is facing or where within that range they are. Only one marker can be placed at once

I- Power is as described above

II- Increases range of Expulse

III- Markers placed with Expulse can be teleported to even without the Expulse power equipped, using a unique key-bind / Massively increases the range in which the player can teleported to their placed marker

Typhoon | Sibira, Zebra

A telekinetic power which can pull objects and NPCs towards you, push them away, or lift them, without the projection of supernatural limbs. Throwing NPCs into surfaces deals damage and can instantly kill NPCs if this damage is high enough

I- Power is as described above

II- Increases range, allows for moving of demons, arachnodemons, striga, and horses

III- Increases range, allows for moving of all NPCs, and slow pushing and pulling of fiends and elephants / Allows pulling and pushing of multiple NPCs at once, and the movement of individual Tier 3 enemies

Earthquake | Azor, Crocodile

Generate a shockwave in a radius around the player through the ground, stunning nearby NPCs and knocking them to the floor

I- Power is as described above

II- Increases Earthquake radius and power. NPCs are stunned for longer, and Tier 2 enemies are stunned as well

III- Increases earthquake radius and power further, and affecting Tier 3 enemies as well / Stunned NPCs will be stunned for longer and will forget about the player’s presence after coming to

Thunderstrike | Qarthal, Harpy

Unleash a bolt of lightning that deals massive damage and causes an explosion around it and fire. Causes a loud thunderclap with its use

I- Power is as described above

II- Increases Thunderstrike range, damage output, explosive power, and fire generation

III- Increases Thunderstrike range, damage, explosive power, and fire generation further / Thunderstrike use releases a caustic smoke which blinds nearby NPCs

Monsoon | Garash, Shark

Silently unleash a continuous cone of water that continually drains Mana and is stopped only when the player stops using the power or runs out of Mana. Can stun Tier 1 NPCs, ruin blackpowder weapons, and render NPCs unconscious if used on their heads for 4 continuous seconds

I- Power is as described above

II- Increases the range and breadth of the cone, stuns Tier 2 enemies

III- Increases the range and breadth of the cone, stuns Tier 3-5 enemies if used at head level / Increases the range and breadth of the cone, knocking NPCs unconscious takes 2 continuous seconds of use

Eye Within | Akkar, Octopus

Remotely look through an NPC’s eyes and move them around for a brief amount of time, marking up to 3 NPCs/objects that the player can then see through walls. Whilst looking through an NPC’s eyes, the player is invisible

I- Power is as described above

II- Mark up to 4 NPCs/objects

III- Mark up to 5 NPCs/objects / Access an NPCs secrets when looking through their eyes, gaining intel about the mission and the world around you

Prowl | Namur, Leopard

Turn invisible and gain the ability to move via large, swift pounces from place to place. The player can in this form pounce onto walls and ceilings. NPCs can be knocked out or killed in this form, but the player is not invisible whilst doing this. The player can use their equipment and powers whilst Prowl is active

I- Power is as described above

II- Prowl lasts for longer and each pounce is faster and can go further

III- Time massively slows down whilst the player uses Prowl / The player can pounce whilst in mid-air when using Prowl

#### Abilities

Warrior | Sinthar, Lion

I- Sword movement speed is increased

II- Sword damage is increased

III- Unlock a combo where with both of Ironhand’s swords, the player can impale two NPCs and pull them into each other to deal large damage / Unlock a combo where with both of Ironhand’s swords, the player can impale NPCs which aren’t in their field of vision

Skybound | Qarthal, Harpy

I- Increase jump height and distance

II- When falling from a large distance, the player can glide gradually over a moderate distance instead of just falling (this has a cooldown)

III- The player can levitate in the air for 5 seconds after a double jump (this has a cooldown) / Stay airborne when gliding for much longer and descend more slowly

Adrenaline | Azor, Crocodile

I- Build up adrenalinę with each kill which can be used for swift insta-kills

II- Build up adrenaline at a faster rate, and maintain full adrenaline for longer

III- Build up adrenaline even faster / outside of combat maintain some adrenaline

Focus | Namur, Leopard

I- Cut through incoming projectiles with your sword

II- Deflect incoming projectiles back at the sender with your sword

III- Time slows when an enemy first spots you, allowing you to react quickly / time slows when an enemy is about to kill you, allowing you to react quickly

Cataphract | Sibira, Zebra

I- Ride horses that are not hostile to you. Horses move at great speeds and can trample weaker enemies

II- Ride elephants that are not hostile to you. Elephants move faster than the player, can trample almost all enemies underfoot, and can buffet enemies in combat. Buffeting deals very high damage and throws most NPCs into the air

III- Horses that you ride move faster, can jump over enemies, and deal more damage / Elephants that you ride move considerably faster, accelerating the longer they sprint for

Liquid Skeleton | Akkar, Octopus

I- Take less damage and receive less knockback

II- Squeeze through iron bars and gates (this has a cooldown)

III- Squeeze underneath wooden doors, bypassing them silently without damaging them (this has a cooldown) / Squeeze into the pockets of dead or unconscious NPCs; you cannot move whilst in this state but are undetectable (this has a cooldown)

Juggernaught | Garash, Shark

I- Passively regenerate health and throw objects further

II- Slice NPCs’ firearms and bows in half with the sword

III- Take no knockback and cause all of your damage-dealing attacks to have knockback / Move much faster in water, become harder to see whilst in water, and breathe much longer

#### Banners

Banner of Namur

+ The player can shape-shift by sneaking behind NPCs and pressing an added button that knocks out the target and transfers their form to the player. In this form, they will not be attacked by that NPC’s allies and can use any component in the weapon wheel. Hostile or unnatural behaviour towards that NPC’s allies will break the illusion, causing the player to revert back to their normal form and for NPCs to attack them. This ability is temporary and has a cooldown

- The player has considerably decreased Health; the player deals less damage when detected; the player has decreased Mana

Banner of Qarthal

+ The player can use Expulse to teleport to somewhere in mid-air

- Expulse consumes a small amount of Health as well as Mana when used

Banner of Sinthar

+ Have more health; deal more damage; Terror value of all player actions increased by +1

- The player is easier to detect

Banner of Azor

+ Increase Terror value of all player actions by +2; the player is harder to detect; the player deals increased damage when in stealth mode

- The player has decreased Health; the player deals less damage when detected

Banner of Garash

+ The player can turn dead bodies into white bone powder that NPCs will not react to

- The player will find less money and ammunition throughout the world

Banner of Akkar

+ The player cannot be detected when they are standing still outside of combat; the first enemy to detect the player at any given time will be temporarily blinded if they are a Tier 1 NPC

- Mana does not regenerate

Banner of Sibira

+ Move faster; jump higher; horses and elephants have increased movement speed when ridden

- Decrease Terror value of all player actions by 3

[New Game + and Sandbox Modes only] Banner of Shurhath

+ All Tier 4 and Tier 5 NPCs are affected by powers, abilities, and equipment in the same way that a Tier 3 NPC is

- The player cannot restore Health or Mana at any shrines except those of the god Shurhath

#### Marks

These are collectable items which greatly increase the ability of the player’s powers. However, equipping them will reduce the player’s max health by 1 or 2 points; the default total amount of Health the player has is 10 points

Expulse

The player can teleport onto walls, and will slowly slide down to the ground after doing so

-2 points of Health

Typhoon

Throwing NPCs against surfaces will knock them out instead of killing them

-2 points of Health

Earthquake

Tier 4 and Tier 5 enemies will be stunned for a short duration if they are in contact with the ground

-1 point of Health

Thunderstrike

Using Thunderstrike is silent

-1 point of Health

Monsoon

Using Monsoon on the ground causes Tier 1 and Tier 2 enemies to slip on it

-1 point of Health

Eye Within

The player can mark an extra NPC/object and the power stays for slightly longer

-1 point of Health

Prowl

The player is invisible whilst knocking out or killing NPCs

-1 point of Health

#### Charms

Amateur Craftsmanship | Enemy bombs sometimes malfunction

Arquebusier | Bullets inflict more damage

Barbed Bolts | Dartbow bolts deal more damage

Bull | Running into weaker enemies knocks them down

Cast Away | Throw objects much further

Cat | Fall damage reduced

Cloak of Stealth | The duration of the Prowl power is increased slightly

Counterbalance | Teleportation of enemies to your location sometimes staggers them

Crocodile | Attacking an enemy from stealth deals slightly more damage

David | Damaged against fiends is increased

Deathly Fog | Arsenic clouds from arsenic bombs linger for longer

Desperation | Attack damage is increased when Health is low

Dominant | Staring at chimpanzees unnerves them

Eagle Eye | Magnification of vision when peering through keyholes

Elephant | Choking out enemies takes less time

Enforced Haste | When controlling NPCs using Eye Within, they move slightly faster

Falling Star | Drop-assassinations restore a small amount of Mana

Faltering Aim | Enemies are more likely to miss with hand cannons, cannons, and longbows

Fearsome | Killing enemies sometimes has an increased Terror value by 1

Firebird | NPCs take increased fire damage

Fireflesh | Take less fire damage

Forceful | Knock back enemies slightly when striking them with the sword

Gale Force | The range for Typhoon is increased slightly

Gods’ Armour | When damaged, lose Mana before Health

Golden Warrior | Deal more damage whilst in direct sunlight

Golden Zephyr | Move faster whilst in direct sunlight

Harpy | Drop-assassinations restore a small amount of health

Heaven’s Reach | The range for Thunderstrike is increased slightly

Hokode | Climbing speed increased

Hippopotamus | Damage output increased

Iron Bolts | Dartbow bolts are much less likely to break on impact

Ironsides | Maximum Health increased

Justice | Killing criminals, bandits, pirates, and gangs restores a small amount of Mana

Karma | Killing slavers increases Mana

Lawbringer | Increased damage against criminals, bandits, pirates, and gangs

Leap of Faith | The range for attacking NPCs using the Uproot power is slightly increased

Leopard | When following enemies in stealth mode, move faster

Lion | Knocking enemies off balance in combat is easier

Magnitude | The range for Earthquake is increased slightly

Midnight Iris | See better in darkness

Mobility | Having weapons drawn doesn’t slow movement speed

Needle Flesh | Enemies dealing damage to you take a small amount of recoil damage

Obscuration | Smoke from smoke bombs lasts longer

Octopus | Become far less visible in water

Pest Control | Killing spiders and crows increases adrenaline

Powerful Scent | With the Banner of Garash equipped, smell enemies through walls further

Prudence | Occasionally find more money and/or ammunition

Quicklime Affinity | Quicklime clouds last for longer

Quicksilver | When two swords are equipped, move slightly faster

Resourceful | Find more ammunition

Rhinoceros | Take less damage from explosions

Righteous Anger | Killing demons increases adrenaline

Rooted | Become more difficult to knock down

Scarecrow | Crows will attack you only when in slightly larger numbers

Shark | Movement speed in water is increased

Shivering Silhouette | Enemy accuracy with projectiles is decreased (doesn’t apply to Angels)

Silent Worship | Muffles your sounds when near a shrine that isn’t Kalawi

Silver Blood | Regenerate Mana at a slightly faster rate

Soldier of God | Increases maximum Mana

Swordsman | Advantage in sword combat

Tsunami | The time taken for Monsoon to render NPCs unconscious is reduced by 1 second

Unburdened | Increases movement speed when carrying bodies

Vengeance | Getting damaged increases adrenaline

Whirlwind | Swing speed for the sword is increased

Winged Warrior | With the Banner of Qarthal equipped, fly for slightly longer at a time

Wrath | Adrenaline charges faster

Zebra | Horses move faster when ridden by the player

1. As I anticipate that the majority of those reading this document will be Western like myself, I am using Europe as an example here. However, the pattern of ubiquitous warfare has historically been common to all societies. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. This happened on Earth when Julius Caesar worked with various scholars to create the Julian Calendar, which replaced previous solar calendars which required days to be manually added in every so often to keep the calendar in sync with the seasons. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, the lack of such manual interventions meant that the calendar was off by so long that people in the Empire genuinely did not know what date they lived in. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. As well as, of course, my personal desire to design a unique language that differs from my own language (English) and which does so in interesting ways. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. If this sounds too fantastical, note that Europe in the period of Early Modernity (to name a single example) also saw war as a good thing. It was believed that peace made a nation and its people weak and decadent, and war brought strength. Of course, the view of an individual peasant on war may well have been negative, but as a culture and society, this was not the case. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. I cannot overstress the importance of understanding that I am trying to convey the views of others which I do not hold, and that these views based on reasons which I don’t believe in. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Just as it was in Europe before modernity. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Naturally, the idea of a republic is laughable to Ethigeans, just as it would have been to the vast majority of people from the vast majority of history. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Of course, Ethigeans lack any knowledge of atoms, molecules, or any other real concepts in chemistry. Materials are grouped together according to simple qualities which are directly apparent upon observation or rudimentary experimentation. Hence, the crude Ethigean classification of materials may be contradictory to actual, correct chemical groupings. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Note that this is not how the solar system in this project is actually structured. The project’s solar system is heliocentric, unlike the geocentric model held by Ethigeans. There are various other discrepancies between the astronomic reality of the solar system and the Ethigean cosmological system, although will be the final disclaimer in this article to this effect. Bear in mind that this article describes a belief, not a reality. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. This, much like many other beliefs stated in this articles, is pseudoscience. For *all* of the ‘Knowledge and Learning’ articles dealing with specific scientific disciplines, the principles written are the beliefs of Ethigeans. These beliefs may or may not align with actual scientific fact: just as the beliefs of historical inhabitants of Earth were far more often than not pseudoscientific as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. It must be noted that the functions of the organs attributed to Earth’s modern science are very different to what people believed them to be throughout Earth’s history as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Temperature perception, for example, comes from sensory receptors in the skin. By the Ethigean definition, temperature perception *should* be a sense as it is a form of conveying sensory information to the mind. But, exactly as with Earth science throughout history, this has not been accounted for out of sheer ignorance and lack of insight. Reluctancy to propose and accept new scientific paradigms leads to oversights in theories that may not be rectified for centuries. Ethigean medical science has been deliberately made fallible and imperfect as a reflection of real-world historical depictions of science. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Note that Ethigeans do not use the word stimulus and it is used here purely for the readers’ understanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. There is no legal obligation for the Shurhath to be male, but no woman has ever been Shurhath and daughters are barred from the imperial succession by long-standing convention. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. As one might expect, the idea of ‘shared decision-making’ is utterly alien to Ethigeans. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Belief systems I researched when formulating the Way include Buddhism, hermeticism, Taoism, Graeco-Roman polytheism, Western esotericism, Gnosticism, Monism, Hinduism, Aristotelianism, Zoroastrianism, Wuxing, and Neoplatonism, although I learned about and considered a wider range of philosophies and worldviews that simply had less influence on me. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. This term is hyperlinked so you can read about it, but I strongly recommend reading the Philosophy tab from start to finish if you want to understand the Way. It is written so that it is easiest to understand when looking at each article of the Way in the order they are written. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. There is a significant argument to make that the current scientific paradigm as of 2021 is not *guaranteed* to be correct, but for the sake of comparison this document considers the current paradigm to be the ‘correct’ explanation of the universe. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. There is actually a modern scientific debate on how animals experience morality. There is actual evidence that animals such as mice are capable of altruism, but altruism isn’t the same as a fully developed moral compass. The point for now is that Ethigeans do not believe animals are capable of morality. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. I worded the article in a certain way to prevent the presentation of an atheist view as an objective reality, but my own belief is that ideological and religious tenets develop (partially) as a result of observations and realities. Social and economic factors that affect populaces are all contributing factors to that populace’s worldview. For example, wolves have negative associations in Western societies because wolves hunted farmers’ livestock. Lions are associated with strength and bravery because lions are strong and brave. The cultural associations of animals in Ethagis and their roles in religious worldviews are thus reflections of the real-life experiences of Ethigeans. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Modern Western scientific thought would break down the abstract idea of ‘potential’ into various factors, primarily the facts that humans possess superior intelligence, the capacity to form large and cohesive social groups (societies), and opposable thumbs. However, as Ethigean scientific thought revolves around religion (much as, for example, European scientific thought did until the Enlightenment), the superiority of humans to animals in explained in scientific terms as the possession of the gift of potential. Although it is evident to Ethigeans that humans are, for example, more intelligent than animals, the gift of potential is one of the things that marks humanity as philosophically *superior* to animals and destined for greater things. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Ethigean natural history explains the presence of fossils by theonomic mechanisms like this one or, when such explanations are inapplicable, by the statement that such animals may have once existed in Ethagis but do so no longer, however are still extant in other parts of the world. The *Palaeoloxodon* skull was only explained by a different mechanism because of the religious and cultural significance of the elephant. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Indeed, if one were to look at a graph of the size of the world population since the start of the Neolithic Era (10,000 BCE), one would find that it increases exponentially throughout history. However, before 5,000 BCE this exponential growth was so small that on a graph the line of the world population appears flat, and thus the human population appears to be constant. From 5,000 BCE to 1,000 BCE, the exponential growth still seems small enough such that the line of world population looks like a straight diagonal line. It thus appears that the world population is increasing at a constant rate between these years. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)