

ELSERIDGE ACADEMY

A yellow circular logo featuring a black hourglass with a small circle above it, positioned between the words 'ELSERIDGE' and 'ACADEMY'.

A BOROUGH BOUND CITY

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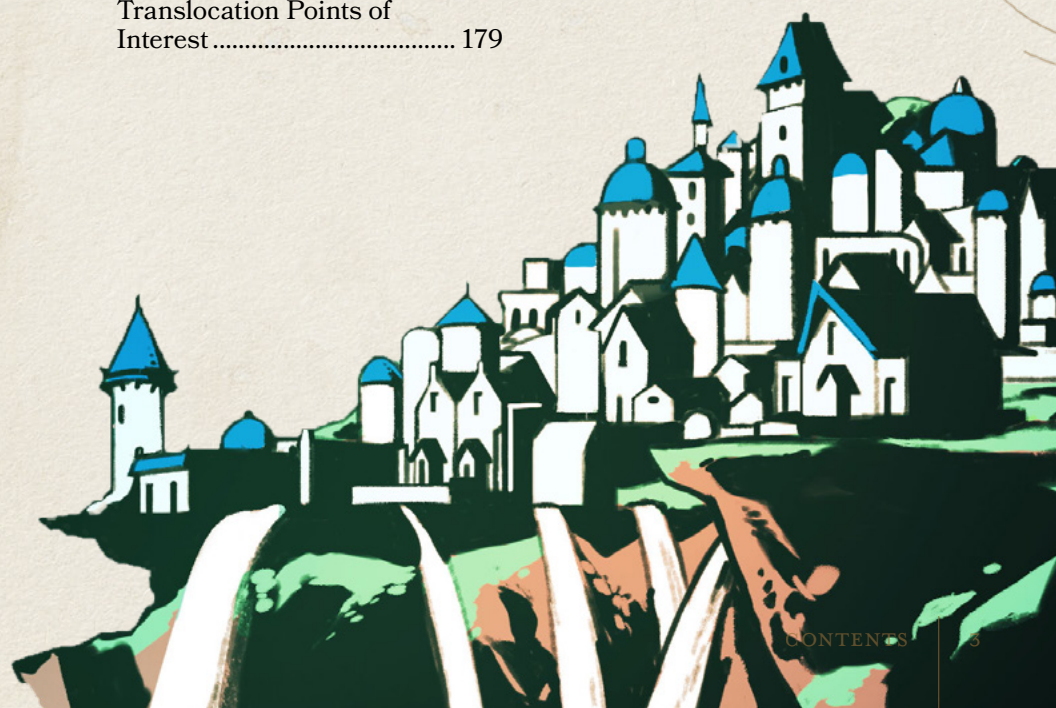
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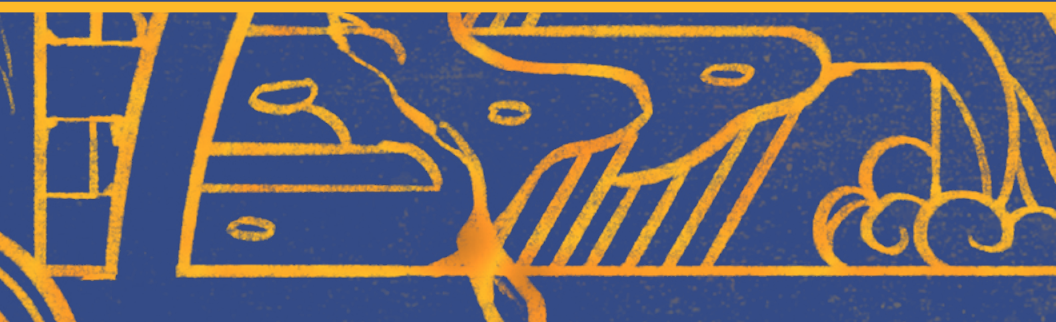
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ON THE PRECIPICE



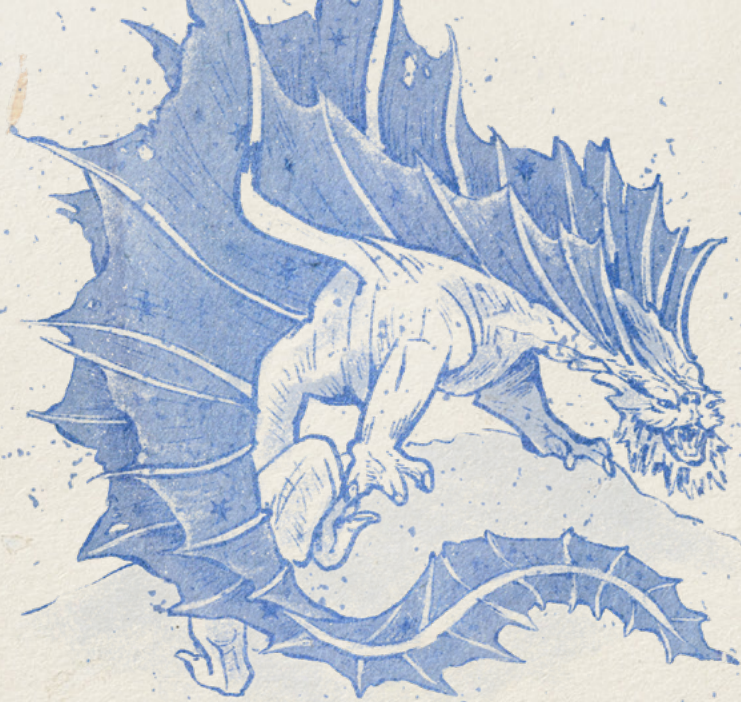


THE SCHOOL AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

At the very edge of the world, north of the Vyndur Mountains and perilously close to the stars, where enchanted waters flow over salt flats and into the immeasurable abyss beyond, a school has stood for three thousand years. Elseridge Academy is the realm's premier institution for practitioners of each of the magical arts, a home both for beginners to hone their craft without endangering civilians and for experts to further the realm's understanding of high-level magic.

The history of Elseridge Academy is the very history of magic itself. Once a small outpost for studying the Old Magic, the academy gradually expanded to include facilities for newer and progressively complex schools of arcana. As innovators from across Hjass discovered revolutionary means of evoking magical effects, the school grew to encompass increasingly diverse modes of spellcasting. Today, the academy consists of six colleges:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| ✦ The Old Magic | ✦ Cosmology |
| ✦ Druidry | ✦ Alchemy |
| ✦ Divinity | ✦ Translocation |



One need not study at Elseridge to become an expert spellcaster. Still, many organizations, corporations, and governments across the realm will not work with individuals unless they have received a spellmark from one of Elseridge's colleges. An aspiring alchemist will find no work in the great cities of Tokaren without this priceless license, and militaries rarely trust pyromancers without the proper training. As such, studying at the academy is the single best way for a young mage to prepare for life as a professional spellcaster, whether as a freelance enchanter, a court mage, or a professor.

Life at Elseridge is complicated. Coursework is rigorous, extracurricular participation is compulsory, and the demands of social life can be more complex than even the most intricate spell. What's more, the academy holds valuable secrets that any self-respecting mage-in-training would be foolish to ignore. Villainous professors plot in open defiance of the institution's trust, and promising students may be tempted to join the wicked legions that linger in the shadows of the academy.

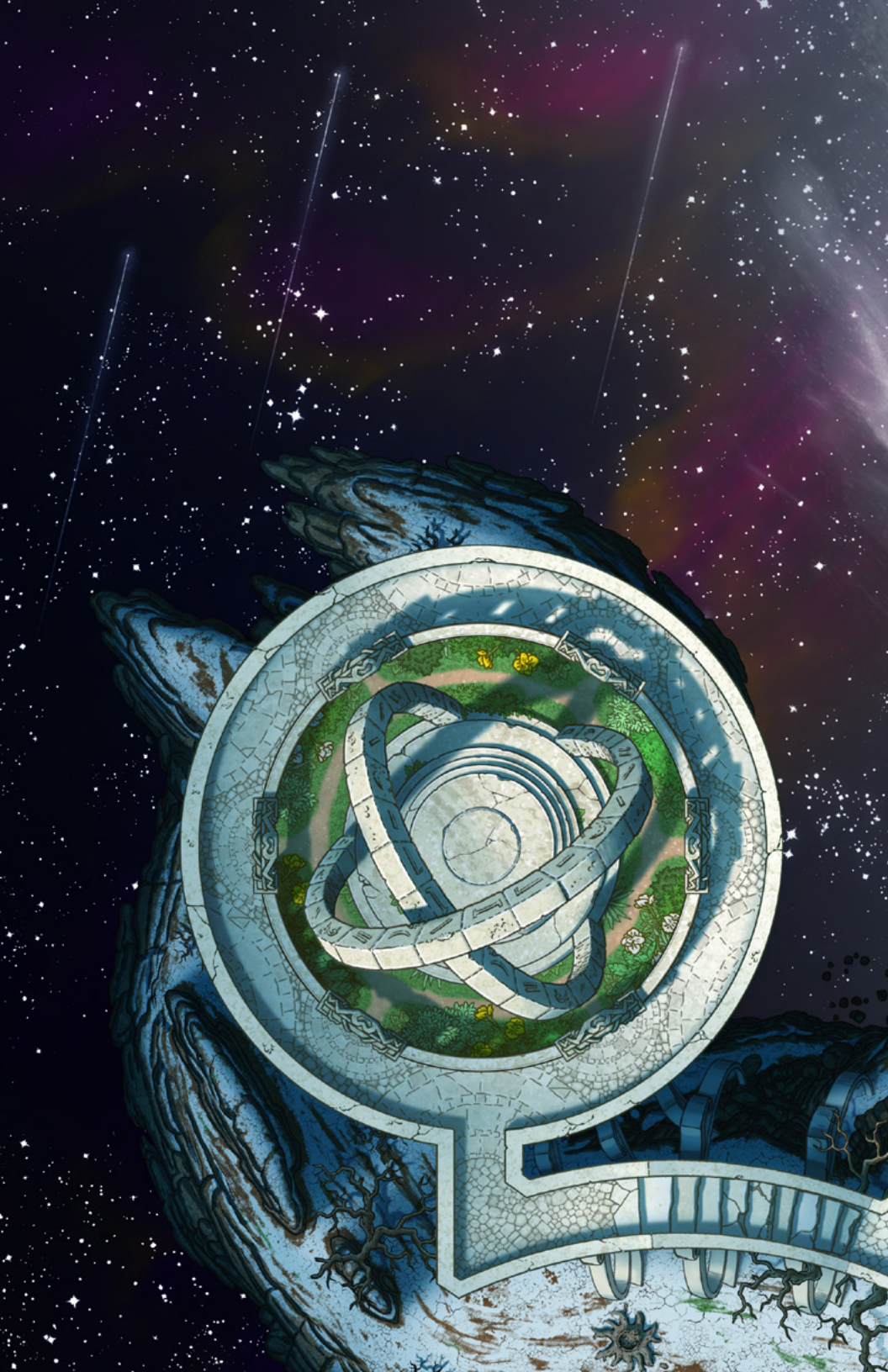
There is danger and opportunity at the edge of the world. The possibilities for a mage who earns their spellmark at Elseridge are endless, but earning one is not so easy as merely acing a few exams. Thriving at the academy necessitates taking risks, pushing boundaries, and cultivating unlikely friendships. A new crop of students has just begun their first year at the academy, and their exploits may just shape the future of the academy and of magic across the realm.

GMING ELSERIDGE ACADEMY

Elseridge Academy is Borough Bound's answer for GMs who want to run campaigns in a school for magic. This is an exceedingly popular fantasy subgenre, and yet few comprehensive resources exist to help facilitate tabletop campaigns with a magic school as a backdrop. We want to be exceedingly clear about what this guide is and is not and provide some tips for how to proceed.

- » We will not make any assumptions about the RPG system you're using.
- » We have embraced some of the tropes of this subgenre, but we've also subverted just as many.
- » Our six schools of magic will not line up one-to-one with the arcane taxonomy you're used to. It's totally fine to slot your players into colleges that don't perfectly align with their class or spellcaster archetype, but you should also feel free to add or subtract colleges to fit your RPG mechanics or worldbuilding.
- » This guide does not include an overarching adventure. We provide a setting, NPCs, some interlocking plot hooks, and a number of additional roleplaying tools. Ultimately, however, you will still be responsible for defining the central narrative of your Elseridge adventure.
- » Elseridge Academy exists in our world of Hjass, but you can easily slot it into another fantasy setting with minimal changes. Likewise, its placement "at the edge of the world" is not absolutely essential, and we provide maps presenting the school in more traditional settings.
- » Most of the materials in this guide assume that the player characters are 1. proficient in magic and 2. students. That said, you can absolutely run adventures in which some or all of the PCs are nonmagical and/or do not enroll in the school. Perhaps the party consists solely of professors, or maybe they're all Luddite bandits who want to ransack the school. There are still plenty of useful tools in this guide to facilitate those sorts of adventures.
- » The standard arc of a magic school adventure starts during the first year of studies and wraps up as the party graduates. As this will necessarily take a number of in-game years, we provide mechanics to facilitate time skips, delineate discrete phases of play, and streamline downtime.







THE FOUNDING OF ELSERIDGE ACADEMY



Magic is dangerous because people are dangerous. No one knew this better—nor will ever know this better—than Salma Sahrou (she/her), the founder of Elseridge Academy. Salma's world was one in which unfettered magic ran rampant, where petulant magi wielded apocalyptic spells with reckless abandon. For decades, Salma watched as her world inched toward a cataclysmic end at the hands of irresponsible spellcasters. She knew just how close the world was to destruction, for she was one of the magi toying with equally unpredictable spells. Knowing that total ruin was near, Salma thrust herself into the distant past with the intention of averting a catastrophic future. She traveled to the edge of the world and founded a school for the magical arts. That school is Elseridge Academy, and as far as anyone can tell, its mere existence has prevented the worst possible future.

Salma's goal in founding the academy in the distant past was to steer the progression of magic. She wanted to ensure that those with a capacity for spellcasting could practice in a safe environment—or, at least, an en-

vironment far from the rest of civilization. She wanted to transform how the people of Hjass saw magic, not as an unlimited force of radical potential but as an academic discipline that must be studied carefully lest its power tear the world asunder. She could not save the Hjass she was born to, but she could commit one last irresponsible act in an effort to rewrite history.

When Salma traveled back in time, she brought with her riches from the future in the form of gold, gemstones, rare metals, and arcane artifacts. She used this wealth to establish a trust to invest the riches and use the earnings to fund the school's wildly expensive operations. This trust still acts as a board of overseers, selecting headmasters as necessary and approving the creation of new colleges. Needless to say, the location of the trust, the nature of its investments, and the identities of its board members are all closely guarded secrets.

All of this happened 3,000 years ago... allegedly. The origin of Elseridge Academy sits firmly in the category of legend, not verifiable history. There was almost certainly a powerful wiz-

ard named Salma Sahrou, and she almost certainly helped to found the school. However, little concrete evidence backs up the

rest of the tale. Consider rolling on the Academy Origin Rumors table for some alternative possibilities.

D8 ACADEMY ORIGIN RUMORS

- 1 Salma was not from the future but the distant past. The Hjass of today is, in fact, post-post-apocalyptic.
- 2 Time travel is possible, but it is not possible to alter the past. Regardless of what Salma accomplished, the world will still eventually cascade into an arcane catastrophe.
- 3 The academy was founded by a sect of ancient magi who fabricated the entire story of Salma as a means to scare young spellcasters.
- 4 Salma was a malevolent wizard who was responsible for all of the tragedies of her version of Hjass. She fled to the past in order to avoid suffering retribution.
- 5 Salma traveled through space, not time. Her distant home realm was destroyed, and she traveled to Hjass to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring in this world.
- 6 Salma was an avatar of the Goddess of truth and lies. She founded the academy so that she could more easily keep an eye on the mages of Hjass.
- 7 Salma was an avatar of the Goddess of past and future. She founded the academy to ensure that future mages wouldn't time travel irresponsibly.
- 8 The official story is true, though it omits the fact that Salma is still alive and well. She used magic to greatly lengthen her lifespan. She now controls the academy and the trust in secret.



THE SIX COLLEGES

Elseridge Academy has six colleges, each formed in response to the emergence of a new field of arcane study across Hjass. In the early days of the academy, the Old Magic was the *only* magic practiced widely among academically-minded mages.¹ When Druidry became more common—and, more importantly, better understood—Elseridge added a college specifically for its study. Over the next few millennia, the academy added four more schools, with the College of Translocation only opening its doors several decades ago. The inevitable progression of magical understanding is a core tenet of Elseridge Academy; there is no doubt that more fields of study will become available in the centuries to come.

Elseridge Academy's six colleges act semi-autonomously. Each has its own body of students, curriculum, culture, academic policies, and administrative hierarchy. As such, one's experience at the academy depends largely on the choice of college. Students can enroll in whichever college they choose when they first arrive at Elseridge, but they will be forced to withdraw or transfer if they do not meet academic standards. In most instances, a student's natural proclivities determine which college will be the right fit.

As many academy facilities are college-dependent, it's worth understanding the basics of each school before delving into lengthier explanations in future chapters.

[1]

There were those who dabbled in other magics even prior to the academy's founding. Nascent forms of alchemy were common in prehistoric times, and druidic magic may *technically* predate the Old Magic (counter-intuitive though that may seem). However, common arcane standards and communities of practitioners for the other five schools did not emerge for hundreds of years.

GM NOTE

Choice of college is an essential part of an Elseridge campaign. It deserves a healthy amount of fanfare and narrative complexity. Make sure to consult this chapter's Plot Hook for some tips on making the most of the occasion.



THE OLD MAGIC

AREAS OF STUDY: Elemental manipulation, elemental summoning, probabilistic influence

SIGNATURE CHARACTERISTICS: Practitioners of the Old Magic tend to be chaotic and ambitious. They are tapping into raw forms of power, and though their methods may be ancient, the possibilities for this magic are still ever-expanding.

AESTHETIC: Simple robes with gemstone accessories, runic symbols, simple geometric patterns

DRUIDRY

AREAS OF STUDY: Nature magic, familiar bonding, agricultural/ climatological manipulation

SIGNATURE CHARACTERISTICS: Druids are in tune with nature, and as such, they rarely study in buildings. They work closely with animals and plants and are, by and large, committed to preserving the sanctity of the natural world.

AESTHETIC: Furs and leather, horns, talismans, tattoos

DIVINITY

AREAS OF STUDY: Blessings, wards, healing, necromancy

SIGNATURE CHARACTERISTICS: Priests, prophets, and oracles channel the magic of gods and other divine beings. As such, true faith is an absolute requirement. This often—though not always!—goes hand-in-hand with ritual and orthodoxy.

AESTHETIC: Vestments and sacred imagery²

[2] Divinity students display a wide range of aesthetics, owing particularly to the diversity of faiths and customs represented within the college.



COSMOLOGY

AREAS OF STUDY: Star magic, divination, light manipulation

SIGNATURE CHARACTERISTICS: Cosmologists tend to be spacey. They spend their time in observatories, studying star maps and doodling geometric proofs. They are often introverted and kooky. Theirs is the most disparaged discipline.

AESTHETIC: Big hats and elaborate robes, bright jewelry, complex geometric patterns

ALCHEMY

AREAS OF STUDY: Healing, brewing, golemetry, item enchantment

SIGNATURE CHARACTERISTICS: Alchemists are consummate professionals. Their work is by far the most in demand across the realm, and thus alchemists must study diligently to compete with their classmates. They are driven and typically extroverted.

AESTHETIC: Practical shirt and pants, copious pockets and functional accessories, minimal aesthetic accessories, alchemical symbols

TRANSLOCATION

AREAS OF STUDY: Teleportation, gravitational manipulation, chronomancy

SIGNATURE CHARACTERISTICS: Translocation is still a nascent field of study; thus, practitioners are among the academic vanguard. They are thrill seekers, creative, and curious. They are also often reckless and foolhardy.

AESTHETIC: Ultra-modern clothing, high fashion, abstract art, gaudy colors

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRACKS

In addition to the six primary areas of study, Elseridge Academy also offers two interdisciplinary tracks. These programs are no more or less prestigious, and their curricula are equally demanding. While access to a standard program is granted to every capable applicant, admission standards for interdisciplinary tracks are quite a bit more involved. Students must declare their intent to study Harmony or Arcanology before they arrive at Elseridge.

HARMONY

Students studying Harmony are able to evoke a wide range of magical effects through aesthetic means: most commonly music, dance, or poetry. Typically, students who study Harmony are already talented performers before they arrive at the academy. During their studies, they work with both dedicated tutors as well as professors from each of the six colleges, thereby gaining proficiency in a variety of magical fields.

ARCANOLOGY

All students at Elseridge have at least some ability to cast spells. Some, however, are better at the

REDUNDANCIES

A number of schools teach magics with overlapping effects. For example, scholars of both Divinity and Alchemy learn how to heal, though the methods are wildly different. This can occasionally lead to conflict between practitioners, particularly when members of one college view the means of another college as wasteful, dangerous, or simply inelegant.

theory of magic than its actual practice. Students of Arcanology must demonstrate minimal competency in one or more forms of magic, but their primary academic focuses are history, ethics, mythology, political science, and ethnography. Understanding magic's place in the world is a crucial part of Elseridge's mission statement, for it's hard to protect the future if one does not understand the past and present.



THE EDGE OF THE WORLD



Elseridge Academy sits at the precipice where Hjass ends, and the cosmos begins. This is not a euphemism. At Hjass's northern edge, the world simply stops, and the gaping maw of space opens up beyond an infinite cliff face. Elseridge's placement here is no accident; Salma Sahrou wanted the study of magic to occur as far from civilization as possible. She knew the mages of Hjass would someday discover cosmological magic and wanted the academy to be as close to the stars as geometry would allow. Most of all: she wanted to ensure no government could claim ownership over the far-off school.

SEASONS

As a rule, the further north you travel in Hjass, the colder it gets. The Vyndur Mountains are one of the harshest terrains inhabited by any of the world's unusual populations, and the entire range lies *south* of Elseridge Academy. And yet, students at Elseridge enjoy comfortable temperatures nearly the whole year round.

So close to the stars, the seasons and climate are determined not by latitude and axial tilt but instead by cosmological influence. The distant stars provide arcane warmth, and interstellar winds carry astral phenomena into the skies above Elseridge. The atmosphere can be a danger to students, to be sure, but the academy is altogether more hospitable than the snowy mountains further from the edge.

The cosmological year near the edge of the world is the same length as in the rest of Hjass,³ but spring, summer, winter, and fall are replaced with the uneven seasons of lightwind, starfall, and fluxum.

Lightwind. The longest of the 3 seasons, lightwind lasts for roughly 180 days. Temperatures are mild, rarely requiring little more than a light jacket. Rain is infrequent, but runoff from the Vyndur Mountains provides plenty of potable water. Unexpected astral storms occasionally cause bursts of extreme temperature or wind, but nothing approaching the dangerous weather phenomena of Hjass's more inhospitable environs. Elseridge's school year starts on the first day of lightwind.

[3] 244 days, divided into 26 weeks of 9 days and 1 week of 10 days at the end of the year.

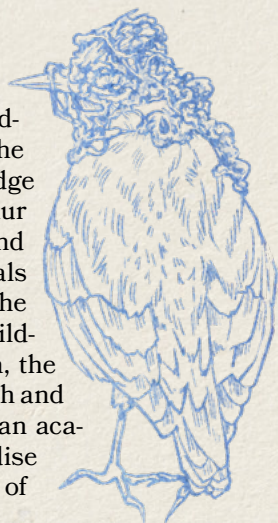
Starfall. During starfall, a cloud of astral debris blocks out the sun. There is no “daytime” but instead 20 days of uncanny darkness. Partway through, tiny beads of light start raining from the sky, ethereal, weightless crystals that are used in countless cosmological rituals. These “starfall gems” give the academy an enchanted and otherworldly appearance. Starfall showsers pick up in intensity over the course of the season, culminating in a stunning downpour of beads as Hjass passes through the thickest section of the debris cloud. Exams are held during starfall.

Fluxum. During the final 40 or so days of the year, Hjass passes through the most chaotic arc of its orbit. Throughout fluxum, solar winds create a variety of bizarre and dangerous effects near the edge of the world: nebula storms, hyperstatic auroras, and radiation bursts. Fluxum creates the potential for heightened magical rituals, but students are required to return to their homes until the school year starts anew at the dawn of the following lightwind.

ENVIRONMENT

Druids have transformed the grounds of Elseridge Academy over millennia, rendering it verdant and hospitable. They have drawn the flows of disparate riv-

ulets descending from the northern edge of the Vyndur Mountains and carved canals between the school’s buildings. As such, the campus is lush and picturesque, an academic paradise on the brink of the cosmos.



However, the territory surrounding Elserdige is a far more punishing terrain. Eons of oppressive solar winds have carved the plains into barren crags. Interstellar radiation has killed all but the hardiest ferns and lichens. The tumultuous confluence of frigid northern winters and oppressive fluxum storms create a land where little can grow, and geography is constantly morphing. Most of the land between Elserdige and the mountains is an unforgiving salt flat.

In decades past, students would have to traverse this treacherous landscape twice yearly, typically by airship or on the backs of powerful creatures. The College of Translocation has rendered such mundane means of travel unnecessary via their device the *Hexacoil*, but some still opt to make the dangerous journey without teleportation.

FAUNA

Despite the perilous climate of Hjass's distant north, a number of strange animals make their home in the star-scorched plains beyond the mountains.

Steppebeasts. One of the hardest creatures throughout the multiverse, the humble steppebeast has no trouble thriving among the salt flats at the edge of the world. These scaly bovine grazers subsist off of little else than salt, carrion, and cosmic algae. Steppebeasts lumber across the plains, cracking the ground under their bulky frames. Students often use roaming steppebeasts as target practice for long-range spells; after all, there's almost no chance that a dinky starbolt or iceshard will pierce their thick carapace.

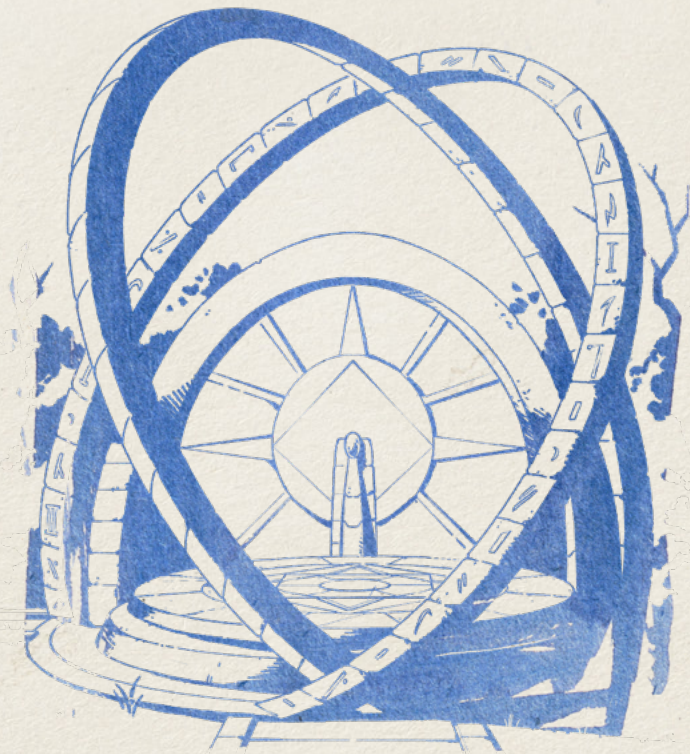
Starlarks. There's little in the way of seeds or insects throughout the northern fringes of Hjass. Nevertheless, a unique species of bird has claimed the edge of the world as its territory. So-called "starlarks" symbiotically bond with a form of exotic lichen that produces excess ener-

gy from starlight. The lichen covers the starlark's face, rendering the bird completely blind. However, starlarks are able to perceive the world in a vivid magical array via the symbiotic bond they share with the lichen.

Dragons. Countless dragons make their homes among the plains and alongside the cliff face that descends below the academy. They roost in gemstone caves, atop salty mounds, and along the beds of deceptively deep rivers. Most dragons at the edge of the world have cerulean and white-marbled scales and feed on steppebeasts or other large prey wandering north beyond the mountains. While many students dream of bonding with a dragon or—at the very least—riding one, the druid faculty at Elseridge strictly forbid the practice. Officially speaking, the druids have no right to forbid students outside their college from approaching the dragons. In practice, the administration has little ability to reign in insubordinate druids.

ELSERIDGE'S FLAMINGOS

Mundane flamingos are more prevalent by far than any magical beasts at the edge of the world. These flamingos thrive in the extreme salinity, and they've become something of a mascot for the academy. For most Elseridge residents, the novelty of these hyper-social birds quickly wears off, as students have to constantly shoo flamingos away from practice fields, residential halls, or even classrooms.



THE HEXACOIL

Travel to and from the academy is now a simple process. Thanks to a collaboration between the Colleges of Cosmology, Alchemy, and Translocation, students and faculty from across the realm can arrive at Elseridge Academy via a device known as the *Hexacoil*. This arcane gateway is a masterwork of teleportation, a portal that can simultaneously connect to dozens of simpler portals across Hjass, resist magical disruptions, and juggle hundreds of overlapping translocational channels without producing undesired effects (e.g., teleporting two students to the exact same location, or thrusting cosmic energy into an explosive feedback loop).

The *Hexacoil* accounts for 98% of trips to and from the academy. There's just one catch: it only functions during the season of fluxum and the first few days of lightwind. The teleporter requires a massive influx of interstellar energy to charge its runic apparatuses. As such, it lies dormant in the quad for most of the year. Luckily, its active period lines up perfectly with students heading home for fluxum break and returning for the start of the new year. If anyone wishes to leave the school mid-semester, they must politely request the assistance of one of the Translocation professors or else voyage over the treacherous terrain at the edge of the world.

ADMINISTRATION

GM NOTE

If your friends are excited to play as students in a magical school, don't bungle the pacing by having one or more lengthy sessions during which each PC meets with an admission counselor. Just start the campaign at the school! If you absolutely must explore the home life of the adventurers, run those sections during fluxum break or consider roleplaying some flashbacks once the meat of the adventure has already begun.

Overseeing the academy is a herculean task. While most universities across Hjass feature complex centralized administrations, Elseridge instead divvies up most responsibilities to the various colleges: druids are responsible for the grounds, translocators for travel to and from the academy, cosmologists for record-keeping, and so on. However, a handful of administrators work directly for the academy's trust.

ADMISSIONS

Students may choose to join any college they wish if they are granted access to Elseridge. As such, the office of admission must act independently from individual colleges. Perhaps counterintuitively, the admission counselors are among the most talented voyagers working with the academy. Each year, they travel across the entirety of Hjass, visiting both massive cities and tiny, far-flung hamlets in search of promising mages to interview. Elseridge admission counselors are multilingual, extremely extroverted, and tireless in their quest to seek out all young mages from across the realm.

Once they've completed their treks across Hjass, they return to the academy to confer. The mission of Elseridge is to train *all* mages, regardless of their specific aptitudes, backgrounds, or proclivities toward acts of profound evil. Of course, not every young spellcaster will accept the summons to Elseridge, but unless there's evidence that a mage is, in fact, a stage magician—that is: a charlatan—they *will* be offered admission. The admission counselors set off again to deliver acceptance letters by hand. All across Hjass. Gods bless them.

HEADMASTER IFFDISDEM BRONGOR

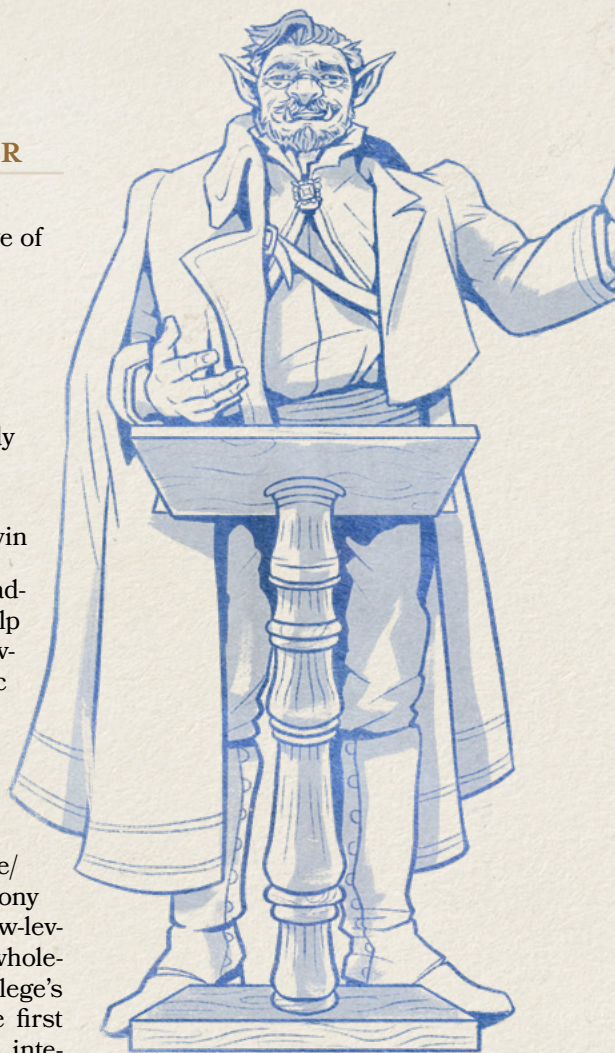
RANK: Headmaster with a spellmark from the College of Harmony

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Item enchantment

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A celesta he built himself, which he keeps in his study

HERITAGE: Orc, son of his tribe's storyteller, from the tiny forest village of Luugwin

The ideal Elseridge headmaster is one who can help the academy adapt to the ever-changing nature of magic in Hjass. When the College of Translocation opened its doors a mere 33 years ago, many feared what it would mean for the academy. Iffdisdem Brongor (he/him), then a young Harmony graduate working as a low-level administrator, believed wholeheartedly in the nascent college's vision. He worked with the first batch of professors to help integrate the college into the rest of the academy. It was only because of Brongor's influence that the previous headmaster—a gnomish sage of the Old Magic known as The Amber Sculptress—allowed for the installation of the *Hexacoil*, the teleporter that allows students and faculty to rapidly travel to and from the academy.



At the time, Brongor's influence was scandalous. Many feared the *Hexacoil* was too dangerous or that it gave too much precedence to a poorly understood field of magic. Many believed it was inappropriate for Brongor, a recent graduate, to influence the headmaster's decision-making. Brongor was not

swayed. He knew the *Hexacoil* would bolster student retention and outreach, that it would save the academy countless resources, and that, over time, it would bring the school together, not tear it apart. The years have proven Brongor right, and now he is the first harmonist and first orc to serve as the academy's headmaster.

BRONGOR'S HARMONIC MAGIC

Brongor is a musician, and though he is a bridge builder and excellent public speaker, he typically only performs in the privacy of his study. He has enchanted countless curious artifacts via his musical influence, channeling unusual effects into various baubles and amulets through his arcane compositions. Many of these unique creations now sit in the Hall of Marvels on this very campus.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Headmaster Brongor makes excellent proclamations, convincing and emphatic. Whenever he makes a speech to the entire school, students and faculty alike listen with rapt attention. He is authoritative but never comes across as condescending. More than anything, his passion for magic and higher education comes across as unambiguously sincere. One-on-one, Brongor is quite a bit more awkward. He

gets nervous around others and speaks frantically. As such, he is a decidedly private person, choosing instead to make grand and important decisions only once he has had ample time to first prepare his remarks.

ENEMIES AND ALLIANCES

In general, faculty from the older colleges look upon Headmaster Brongor with disdain. They see him as responsible for "diluting" the academy by legitimizing the College of Translocation when it was still new. Some bigots also scoff at the notion that an orc from a tiny tribe could possibly be worthy of the title of headmaster. Regardless, Brongor has plenty of allies among the three newest schools and is beloved among the Harmony and Arcanology faculty. He is often called upon by the academy's trust to speak with world leaders, and they overwhelmingly find him to be charming and easy to negotiate with... of course, these leaders are also quite relieved to know that they have direct access to the academy via the teleporter Brongor himself helped install.

D4 ENCOUNTERS WITH HEADMASTER BRONGOR

- 1 The party is summoned to Headmaster Brongor's study. They were accused of stealing one of his creations from the Hall of Marvels. To prove their innocence, they must deduce who actually stole the artifact.
- 2 As the party returns from the dining hall, they cross paths with Brongor. The frantic headmaster is chatting with a visiting diplomat, and he is clearly making a terrible impression. The party could earn favor with Brongor by buying him some time to collect his thoughts.
- 3 One of the adventurers wakes up to find Headmaster Brongor cowering in the corner of their dorm room. Brongor whispers that he is hiding from a violent golem that started thrashing about the school in the middle of the night. Without an arcane instrument to play, Brongor is essentially powerless.
- 4 The party crosses paths with Headmaster Brongor in the library. He looks up from the tome he is reading to share a tale of a legendary arcane implement known as the Pentode Stones. He slyly implies these stones might be hidden not far from the academy... Does he *want* the party to discover this artifact?



PLOT HOOK:

ENROLL AT ELSERIDGE ACADEMY

Unless an aspiring young mage does everything in their power to avoid being found, Elseridge Academy's admission counselors will eventually arrive at their doorstep and implore them to receive proper training at the edge of the world. Inevitably, countless spellcasters refuse this summons: dwarven inkbinders prefer to learn amongst their own kind in Vyndurvoht, gulch witches reject the authority of the academy, and anyone dabbling in mind-manipulation knows that they'll be endlessly stymied at Elseridge. Nevertheless, anyone who *wants* to go to Elseridge certainly can.

TRAVEL TO THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

New students at Elseridge are expected to bring very little to the academy. Primarily, this is because the academy wants to ensure that wealthier students do not arrive at the edge of the world with boundless luxuries. There ought to be no disparity between students based on heritage and upbringing. At Elseridge, everyone starts as equals.

When an admission counselor offers a student their acceptance letter—usually a few months after meeting the fledgling spellslinger—they also pro-

vide a map and a calendar that show where they need to be in order to teleport to the school at the beginning of the new school year. Most often, this is a public square, church courtyard, or noteworthy landmark no more than 50 or so miles away. If the student foresees trouble making the trek, the academy will do its best to provide accommodations.⁴

At the appointed time, anyone in the vicinity of a teleportation zone holding a letter of admission will be transported directly to the *Hexacoil*.

[4] Typically, this means deploying a professor of Translocation to the student's home to teleport them directly.

OTHER MEANS OF TRAVEL

Students do not technically have to use the teleportation zones that the academy recommends. Instead, they can journey hundreds of miles over snowy mountains and oppressive salt flats. Some traditional students—mostly druids, unsurprisingly—prefer the enriching ritual of this trek. Wealthy students who spurn undignified teleporters might charter an airship or ride on the backs of winged mounts. Either alternative is decidedly rare.

GM NOTE

Don't agonize too hard about which colleges your players pursue. A thief-archetype character could study Alchemy to make poisons or Cosmology to study the shadows. A barbarian might study Druidry to tap into their primal side or Divinity if they see their fervor as emanating from faith. A cleric will probably gravitate toward Divinity, but they might prefer the Old Magic if they worship a fire god. You can *always* come up with a justification for why a student might slot well into any given college. Plus, if it really does end up feeling like a bad narrative or mechanical fit, you can lean into it! Maybe the party's wizard finds they disagree with the Old Magic faculty and transfers to Translocation. Maybe, the bard forsakes the Harmony track to just play drums with all of the druids. Just like at real universities, academic departments are not one-size-fits-all. Let that friction drive your narrative, not derail it.

SELECT A COLLEGE

Upon arrival at the courtyard surrounding the *Hexacoil*, students will find themselves surrounded by six festooned gates. Each gate corresponds with one of the six colleges. The very first choice a first-year student must make is which line of study they will pursue. Upper-level students from each of the programs stand ready to direct new students, pitch the merits of their college, and help the first-years assess their own innate proclivities. When the new student is ready, they must walk through the gate. As they do, documents deep below the academy's observatory will automatically register their choice. The student is now officially officially enrolled at Elseridge Academy.

Any students hoping to pursue spellmarks in Harmony or Arcanology must have already cleared the decision with an admission counselor before arriving at Elseridge. When they arrive, they must travel through each of the six gates before speaking with a representative from their chosen track. This representative will then manually edit the student's records.

MEET YOUR DORMMATES

Soon after the first-year students select colleges, a team of upper-level students will chaperone them to their dorms. First-year students live together in suites with three to six beds. These suites almost always consist of students from different colleges. The administration wants students to intermingle, so while these first-years may be required to follow different rules and practice distinct magics, they live together all the same.

A student's dormmates will almost certainly be the first other Elseridge students they get to know. As a group, they'll have to find common ground to avoid conflict. It is not always so easy for a druid and an alchemist to share a living space.

ATTEND THE LIGHTWIND FEAST

Once the students have settled into their dorm rooms, their next obligation is to attend the Lightwind Feast, a banquet celebrating the start of the new school year. The Lightwind Feast will be the first opportunity for students to meet their professors, mingle with upper-level students, and explore some of the more ornate halls within the academy. In all likelihood, most students will still be dumbstruck by the splendor of the occasion.

If all goes well, the Lightwind Feast is also the academy's first opportunity to truly wow the students. Chefs serve elaborate dishes spiced with exotic herbs from the druid gardens, lanterns filled with starlight give the banquet hall an ethereal glow, and students of Harmony perform enchanting fugues on arcane instruments. New students *ought* to be wowed by this display, but something inevitably goes wrong. Consider rolling on the Lightwind Feast Mishap table to add a little excitement to the first night of the school year.

GM NOTE

The assumption is that the party will all live together in one suite. This streamlines the campaign, giving you a perfect excuse to bring the players together right at the start of the adventure. If the characters have not yet met, you can roleplay their first introductions as they enter their shared dorm one by one.

You can also use the dorms as an opportunity to force your characters to interact with different students. If each adventurer lives in a separate dorm suite, they'll each have a small cast of additional NPCs to interact with during their downtime. Keep in mind that having even just a couple dormmates each might introduce a few too many NPCs for you to juggle.

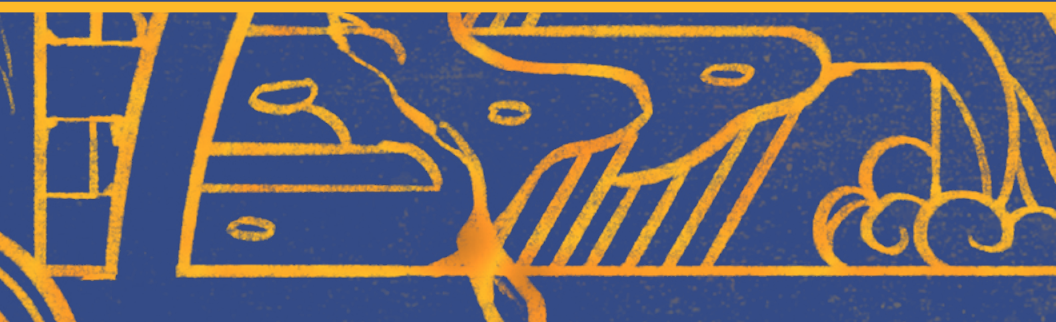
D6 LIGHTWIND FEAST MISHAP

- 1 Student protesters cause a scene as they demand Headmaster Brongor address the supposed “encroaching influence of interstellar superpowers.”
- 2 A freak storm bathes the banquet hall in cosmic energy, briefly snuffing out all of the arcane lights in the room. In the darkness, a single maniacal chuckle resonates from the walls.
- 3 The students and faculty all find that they are having a bit *too* much fun. Professor Dwegyd realizes that one of the harmonists is playing a forbidden bewitching melody and escorts the student outside to an unknown fate.
- 4 A 20-foot-tall mountain giant smashes through the door to the banquet hall. There is a moment of panic before an admission counselor announces that this giant is a new student who has arrived late to campus.
- 5 The banquet hall lurches; it seems that yet another teleportation mishap has shaken the foundation on which Elseridge sits. Or, perhaps, it is the work of the Haritama Society.
- 6 A priestess of a war God starts hovering in the air, her eyes rolling back in her head. She bellows with a demonic voice, “*The mages of Elseridge are ready for war, and it would be a disservice to deny them this honor. March through your eldritch gates and into realms of unceasing battle.*” When she’s done, she sits back down and hiccups.

Finally, after dessert bowls are bussed, and tea is served, Headmaster Iffdisdem Brongor delivers a rousing speech. He speaks of founder Salma Sahrou and the academy’s mission. He muses on the importance of collaboration and responsibility. And finally, he delivers the three rules that all students of the

academy must follow, rules that are repeated across the academy. Should the students break these rules, expulsion will be the least of their worries.

1. Do not destroy books
2. Do not use magic to control or alter minds
3. Do not go back in time





LIFE AT THE
ACADEMY





THE MAYHEM AND THE MUNDANE



When you ask a graduate of Elseridge Academy what they remember most about their tenure at the school, they typically respond with tales of some grand adventure they undertook, a bit of mischief they caused, or a conspiracy they perpetrated or unraveled. It is the nature of a magic academy that most students end up involved in one or more outrageous plots during their studies. For many, that promise of excitement is half of the appeal.

Nevertheless, speak to a graduate a bit longer and they are bound to muse about their favorite chronomancy professor, conversations with wizened dragons along the canals, or joyous hours spent rock climbing on the precipice of space. Though these memories may seem fantastical to nonmagical commoners, they constitute the mundane reality for hundreds of Elseridge students at any given time. There *will* be time for adventures, but the day-to-day is part of the fantasy as well.

THE CURRICULUM

The academic school year is divided into two semesters known as earlywind and latewind, with midwind break occurring in between. Following latewind, students are given 15 days of exam prep during the season of starfall before 5 days of final exams. Once exams are complete, most students are required to leave campus for the season of fluxum.

Courses taught during earlywind have a significantly different structure than those taught during latewind, featuring more homework and group projects but no exams. These courses are all offered pass/fail with no letter grade attached. Latewind courses feature considerably more lecture time and practical work, and grades are wholly dependent on completion of final exams.

Most students take three classes per semester for their first two years of study. In their third years, students go on their “journey year” away from school, traveling in groups to accomplish some minor quest or magical experiment. Finally, in the fourth year of study,¹ students take three courses during earlywind semester, followed by

[1] Some students take longer than four years to graduate.



one mastery level class during latewind. At the culmination of their studies, students must unveil a brand new spell, device, or other magical evocation they've devised, their so-called "arcane thesis." If a student passes their mastery level exams and arcane thesis, they receive a spellmark from their program.²

Students may take courses from colleges outside of their primary area of study, but no more than once per semester. Most also take a handful of General Education courses throughout their studies. Any student can take "Gen Ed" classes, and they do not count against the number of non-primary college courses they can take in a given semester.

[2] Students following the Harmony or Arcanology tracks have slightly different curricular requirements, as documented in *Elseridge Academy 12: Alternative Educations*

GM NOTE

Narratively, we require students to leave campus for fluxum so that you can allow for the characters to see their families and for events to transpire at campus while the PCs are away. However, you should absolutely feel free to establish one reason or another that players must *stay* at campus for at least one fluxum. Perhaps an epic storm disrupts the *Hexacoil*, or maybe a lengthy experiment demands the party's attention. Keeping students on campus for an extra dangerous season without the responsibility of attending classes is the perfect excuse for a perilous quest arc.

EXAMPLE COURSE LOAD FOR A STUDENT OF THE OLD MAGIC

Dear Student,
We are pleased to inform you that your submitted course list has been approved.
See the attached document for the full final course list.

EARLYWIND I

Intro to Pyromancy

Understanding Elementals

Intro to Chance and Fate

LATEWIND I

Applied Pyromancy

Elemental Summoning

Ancient Rituals (Gen Ed)

EARLYWIND II

Wards Against the Elements

History of Magical Warfare (Gen Ed)

*Intro to Weather Manipulation
(Druidry)*

LATEWIND II

Advanced Pyromancy

Elemental Combinatorality

Offensive Enchantments (Alchemy)

JOURNEY YEAR

Claiming an Ember of the Forge God's Flame

EARLYWIND IV

Elemental Manipulation

Fire, Water, Chance, and Causality

Ethics of Offensive Magic (Gen Ed)

LATEWIND IV

Pyromantic Mastery

Arcane Thesis: Defensive Fire Storm

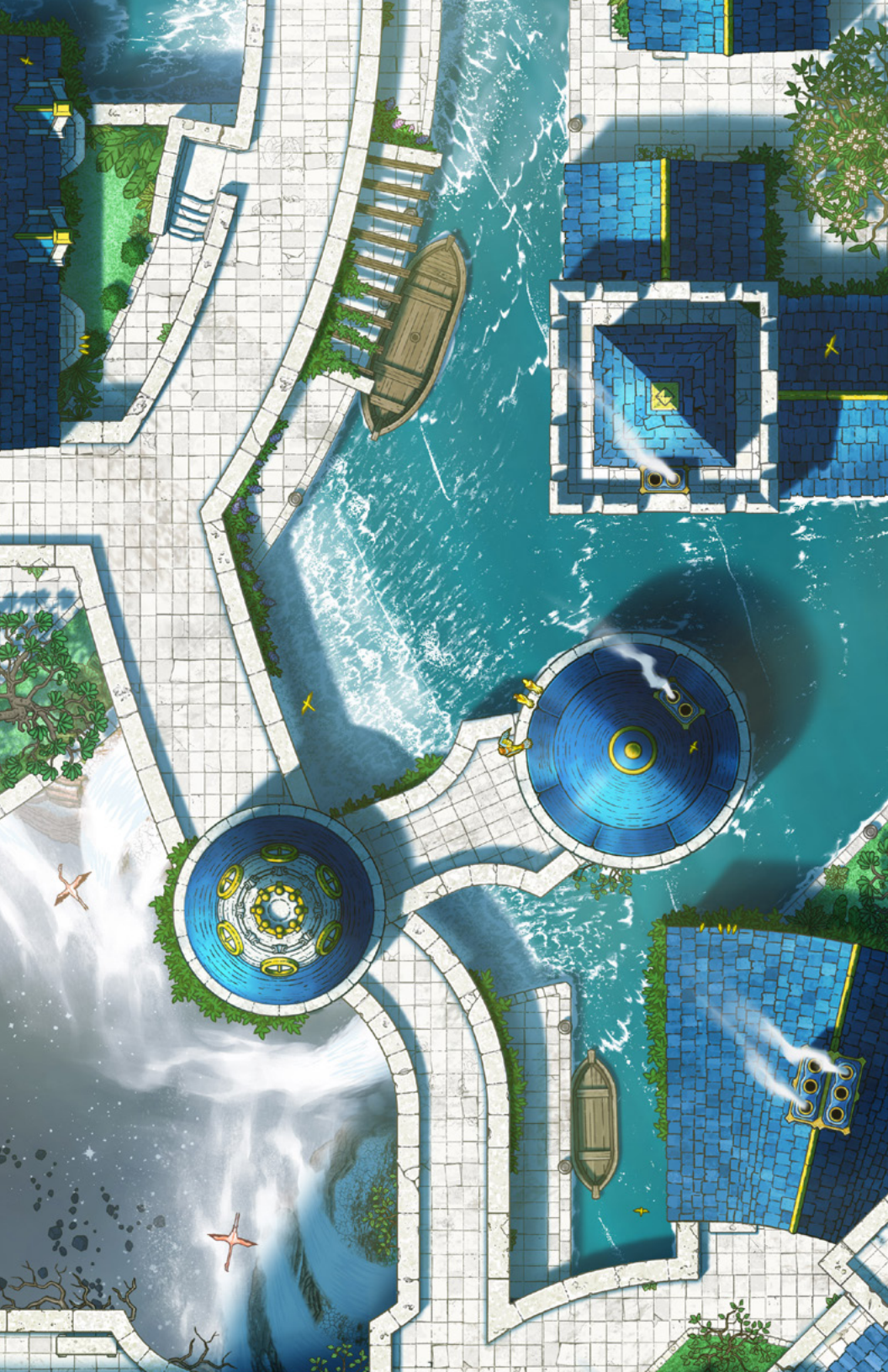
GUIDELINES FOR DESIGNING CURRICULA

Inevitably, your players will want to tailor their education to match their interests and their particular character builds. While we provide copious example classes taught within each of the colleges, you will still probably want to tweak these examples and/or create your own classes.

Consider brainstorming with your players before the start of each semester. If they have particular spells or abilities they plan on learning as they level up their characters, it can be fun to create courses with the intention of narrativizing their mechanical advancement. For example, if your player has their eyes on a lightning spell for their cleric character, you could create a course for them to take titled “Thunder Gods and Their Influence.”

Some additional considerations:

- ★ Your players should have flexibility in what courses they take—give them agency!—but you can also call any course you want “mandatory” if it has relevance to the greater plot.
- ★ See if you can find some common ground between the characters so that you can run classroom scenes that feature all of the PCs. Examples of General Education classes can be found in chapter 3.
- ★ When in doubt, consider the NPCs. If a rival student focuses on a given field of study, have your players enroll in a relevant class so that you can guarantee some juicy classroom scenes that feature the rivals. If your players have allied themselves with a certain professor, they may want to all take that professor’s courses.
- ★ Having trouble coming up with a name for a course? Just take an existing spell in your RPG system and add “Intro to,” “History of,” or “Applications” to it, e.g., “Intro to Starbolts,” “History of Starbolts,” “Starbolt Applications.”
- ★ Ultimately, the *specifics* of the courses need not be important. The purpose of a curriculum is to narrativize the students’ magical advancement, dole out clues and relevant information for quests, and facilitate roleplaying scenes between students and professors.



RESIDENTIAL LIFE

All students studying at Elseridge Academy must live on campus throughout their studies. Students may choose their dormmates at any time after their first year. In rare instances students will be allowed to live within the facilities of a given college (e.g., within the College of Cosmology's Prime Observatory), but the overwhelming majority of students live in the communal dorms.

NARCS

In keeping with the spirit of decentralized responsibility, Elseridge's administration bequeaths a surprising amount of authority to Non-Administrative Residential Counselors, more commonly referred to as NARCs. NARCs are upper-level students who choose to act as "leaders" and "assistants" throughout the dormitories, assisting students with non-academic concerns and

acting as mediators for feuding dormmates.

In practice, NARCs are usually power-hungry pipsqueaks who crave either attention or some sense of authority. Each NARC has a key to every dorm room on their assigned floor, and they are free both to invent rules as necessary and recommend students to the Disciplinary Order. While some NARCs are pushovers, many of them are strict authoritarians.

HOW OLD ARE ELSERIDGE STUDENTS?

The tone of your campaign is going to vary wildly based on how old you decide the students are. Given the complexity of ages and maturity vis-à-vis fantasy races, the easiest way to sidestep this is by saying "students enroll at Elseridge whenever they're ready." If your players are interested in roleplaying with adult themes, you should explicitly state that every student is at least 18 years old, or perhaps even older in the case of fantasy species that mature more slowly.

To keep the tone consistent, our guide assumes that Elseridge is roughly equivalent to a university, but you can easily tweak that as necessary. If you want to roleplay a PG, light-hearted, YA-esque story, you can decide that Elseridge is a high school! Just make sure to adjust some of the more adult content accordingly.

BIXBY FIQWINGE

RANK: Second-year Alchemy student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Invigorating potions

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A set of perfectly organized crystal pipettes

HERITAGE: Gnome, from a wealthy family of Tokaren aristocrats

Bixby (he/him) is a NARC in the first-year dorms. He is a snooty alchemist who will certainly get a high-paying job right out of Elseridge regardless of his actual expertise. Bixby does not enjoy cooperation, competition, or creative pursuits, so joining the NARCs was just about the only remaining extracurricular activity available to him. As such, he now receives extracurricular credit for doing little more than bullying first-year students and generally frustrating everyone that lives in his dormitory.

Bixby does not allow his residents to make noise late at night. He does not allow his residents to cast any spells in common spaces. He does not allow his residents to keep food in their rooms. Bixby generally does not allow the students to have any fun whatsoever. There is no particular reason for this other than the condescending bitterness in Bixby's heart.

In all likelihood, Bixby will be the first nuisance that the adventurers meet, a privileged jackass that makes their otherwise pleasant dorming experience a constant nightmare. Perhaps Bixby will get his comeuppance at their hands... If the party makes friends with any of the other students in their dorm, at least one of them will suggest pulling some pranks on Bixby or somehow getting the NARC in trouble with the Disciplinarians. If the students succeed, Bixby will leave them alone for the rest of the year. They should be warned, though: when he returns after his journey year, he may just have a vendetta against the adventurers.



LORRAINE DEBBLEDEW

RANK: First-year (technically)
Arcanology student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Just passing
some basic coursework

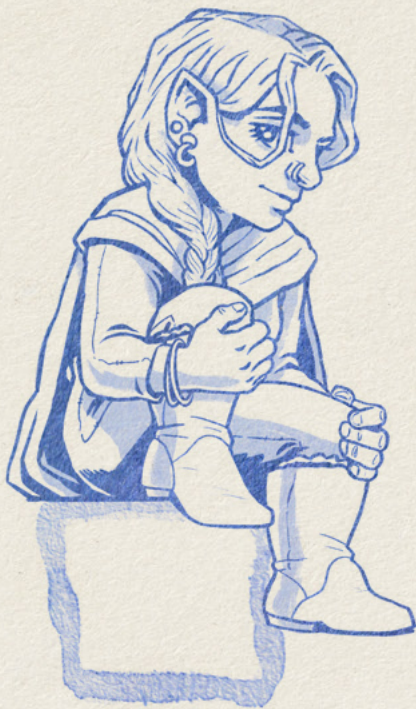
ARCANE IMPLEMENT: N/A

HERITAGE: Halfling, from a
peaceful farming hamlet in a
forgotten corner of Wemboren

This is the third year in a row that Lorraine has lived in the first-year dorms due to repeatedly failing her exams. Typically, students who fail their exams even once are expected to change colleges to something more suited to their talents or withdraw from Elseridge altogether. Lorraine, however, is an Arcanology student with no proclivity for spell-casting whatsoever. As such, the Arcanology program does not know what to do with her. She does excellently in her coursework all year, so it seems she is *capable* of passing her exams, but she always seems to bungle it in the end. Thus, she is presently repeating her first-year for the third time.

Lorraine does not mind one lick. She has truly come into her own at Elseridge. She is sociable, charismatic, and always interested in cutting classes to goof off. She may not be the academic success story she was hop-

ing to become, but she is happy. Lorraine is one of exceedingly few students at Elseridge who is able to thread the social needle: she is popular with the wealthy students, partiers, nerds, jocks, and members of every college. It turns out that if you dedicate 100% of your time to being an easy hang, it's altogether not too difficult to make friends with just about everybody. Passing exams, on the other hand, seems to be a bit of an insurmountable obstacle.



EXTRACURRICULARS

All students at Elseridge must be enrolled in at least one extracurricular throughout their first two years of their study. This rule might sound hard and fast, but the range of options available is extensive, and the degree of effort required can vary drastically from activity to activity. Every student is sure to find *something* that appeals to them.

Students who dedicate particular effort to a given extracurricular often find that the skills they gain are transferable. For example, a student who masters the strategic gambling game *chankla* may learn to think more tactically in high-pressure scenarios, and students who practice rock climbing will thank themselves the next time they have to sneak into a 100-foot-tall mage's tower. Additionally, friendships formed in extracurriculars have a habit of lasting lifetimes.

CLIFF CLIMBING CLUB

Members tie themselves to the cliff-face and race each other up and down the sheer wall at the edge of the world. Daredevils may forego safety harnesses, but it's an impossibly long way down if they fall.

EXAMPLE BOON: Expertise in climbing any surface; expertise in ropes and knots

CANAL FREESTYLE

In a variety of elegant slender boats, students perform dazzling acrobatic routines, combining exceptional paddling, dancing, and illusory magic.

EXAMPLE BOON: Expertise in manipulating watercrafts; expertise performing in front of crowds

SCRAMBLE SHARD

By far the most popular climbing-based activity at Elseridge Academy is Scramble Shard, a team-based climbing sport wherein groups of students use a variety of strategies to summit the bewildering *Fluxum Shard* that rises imperiously above the campus grounds. Dedicated rules for Scramble Shard are provided in *Chapter 4: Unusual Grounds*.

SONIC DUELING

Two teams of musicians improvise energetic music at each other in a sort of instrumental rap battle. The use of sonic spells is strongly encouraged; most participants wear protective padding.

EXAMPLE BOON: Expertise in instrumental performance; access to music-themed combat spells

BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

Teams of students trek out into the dangerous ground off-campus in search of arcane fauna of all varieties. Plenty of “bird-watchers” really just want an opportunity to relax off campus, but others are decidedly more invested in ornithology.

EXAMPLE BOONS: Expertise in tracking arcane creatures; increased survivability in the wilderness

CHANKLA CLUB

Chankla is a strategy game featuring stacked game boards and an emphasis on calculated gambles. Enthusiasts must outthink their opponents, but they also must know how to read them; chance and asymmetric information are at the heart of this ancient pastime.

EXAMPLE BOONS: Additional mechanical options for tactical combat; the ability to more easily bluff when lying

ORDER OF BOOK PRESERVERS

One of the only universal laws across Hjass is that books must not be damaged. This rule transcends culture and religion. The Order of Book Preservers employs a variety of arcane and mundane practices to keep all manner of books maintained and protected against future tampering.

EXAMPLE BOONS: Expertise when manipulating magical or delicate artifacts; greater chance to succeed at any task while in a library

COVEN OF THE OCCULT

A variety of arcane practices are considered “wholly unacademic” by the administration: astral projection, blood magic, and certain alternative approaches to divination. Elseridge does not *forbid* these practices, but they are relegated to the status of “mere” extracurricular pursuit.

EXAMPLE BOONS: Access to unorthodox spells; knowledge of forbidden arcane lore



ANIMAL CARETAKERS

The College of Druidry keeps a wide variety of arcane animals on campus: flying serpents, giant spiders, minor drakes. These animals are essential for many druid classes, but the professors are not responsible for their care. Instead, a team of student animal-lovers feed and groom the strange beasts.

EXAMPLE BOONS: Expertise when working alongside magical creatures; greater ability to withstand horrendous odors

RADICAL ASSOCIATION FOR DEEP INTERSTELLAR OUTREACH (RADIO)

There are influential beings that exist beyond Hjass, and many of them are surprisingly talkative.

Members of RADIO use an assortment of arcane tools to chit-chat with extradimensional oddballs.

EXAMPLE BOONS: Influence with powerful interstellar beings; access to long-range communication spells

PUZZLE TEAM

Logic enthusiasts across the realm delight in attempting to conquer the multilayered puzzles and ciphers created by the enigmatic Slabomir Tektov. Elseridge's puzzle team is among the best, but even they rarely complete an entire puzzle set.

EXAMPLE BOONS: Access to hints from the GM when solving dungeon puzzles; expertise in creating or cracking arcane locks

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Though all Elseridge courses are led by full-time faculty members, many classes also rely on the assistance of teaching assistants. These teaching assistants are student volunteers, often—though not always—students who have already taken the class in question and excelled. Teaching assistants are occasionally present during lectures, but their presence is felt more keenly during tutorials and practical assignments. After all, it is often far easier to learn a new spell from someone who has just picked it up than from someone who has been wielding it effortlessly for decades.

Teaching assistants *technically* have no authority over students. They cannot assign additional homework, send rule-breakers to the Disciplinary Order, or influence grades. Their role is solely to assist. Elseridge does not operate under the assumption that all students learn in the same way. Some excel by reading textbooks, others must comprehend spellcasting visually, and others can only grapple with the finer points of arcana by talking it out. Teaching assistants help students to achieve their potential no matter how they learn.

✦ **Tadj** (he/him), orc, College of the Old Magic. A practiced mage who learned many of the basics of elemental magic via oral lessons from his tribe. Speaks plainly and without pretension, as opposed to some of the more long-winded professors.

✦ **Ellis Banbury Dweet** (she/her), halfling, College of Druidry. A nature mage who believes magic is best internalized via muscle memory. Helps druids to cast their magic by perfecting the exact motion of their limbs. Always asks for consent before adjusting another student's spellcasting form.

✦ **Inquil Andermip** (he/him), gnome, College of Divinity. A theologian who “proves” the value and power of magic via deductive reasoning. Students often cast divine magic more easily when they are certain that their faith is logical.

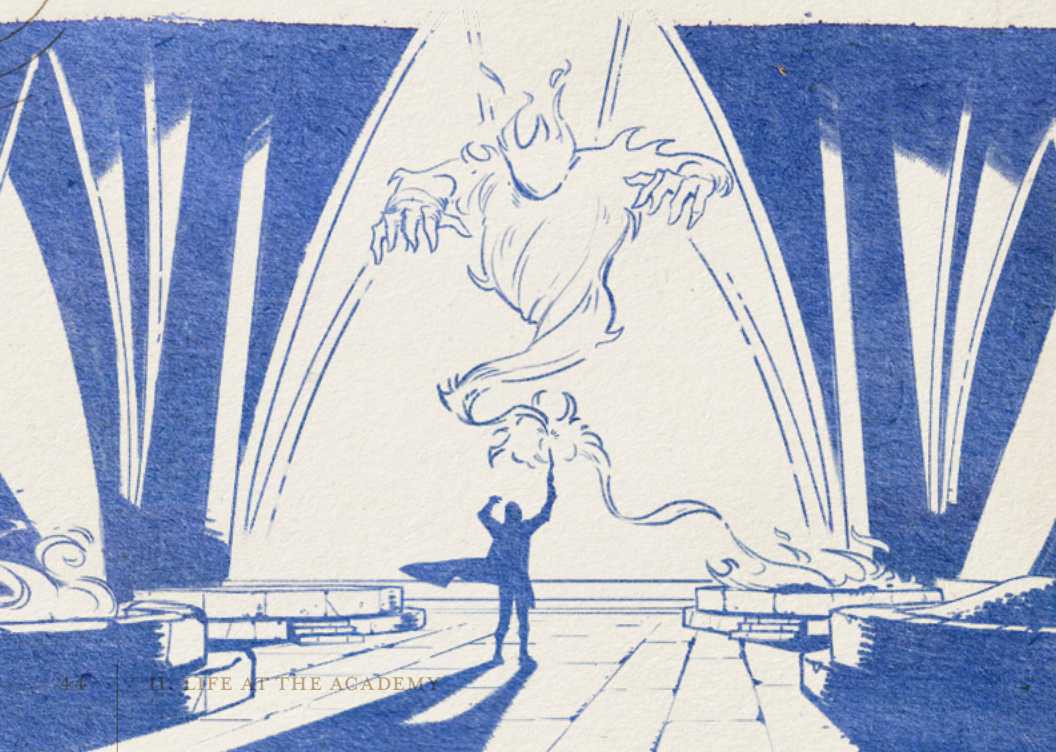
✦ **Bellanie Bel Borus** (she/her), human, College of Cosmology. A master geometer that illustrates complex cosmological concepts with stunning visual aids. With little more than quill, ink, and graph paper, Bellanie elucidates geometric arcana with surprising clarity.

★ **Sheery Cambrus** (she/her), human, College of Alchemy. An expert in the theory of potion-making, if not the execution. Has memorized thousands of pages of alchemical treatises and encyclopediae. The very definition of “book smart.” Assists in any course for which rote memorization is essential.

★ **Argus O'Day** (he/him), dwarf, College of Translocation. Trusts that students learn best when they feel unencumbered by the physical stress of the classroom. Often leads field trips into the salt flats so that students can practice teleportation and chronomancy in a low-stress environment.

★ **Corbin Tan Guajillus** (them/ them), chesskæl, Harmony Track. An exceptional improviser on their bugle. Rarely remembers the “proper” way to cast harmonic magic, but can approximate easily by riffing a bit. A useful assistant for students who need to learn by doing.

★ **Guzina Al-Meedy** (she/her), human, Arcanology Track. An essayist and orator with a knack for clear language. Helps students to better comprehend complex problems by addressing their prose first and foremost. Any student who can write a concise and persuasive essay will invariably grasp the underlying concepts as well.



RUNNING THE GAME: COLLABORATIVE SPELLCASTING

One of the risks when running a magic school campaign is that the party does not feel like a unified body. Each student is pursuing their own studies and extracurriculars, and the party only comes together for social engagements or proper “questing.” Whenever possible, you should try to find ways as a GM to encourage party-wide collaboration.

One of the best ways to get the party working together at a magic school is via collaborative spellcasting. Most tabletop systems assume that casting a spell is something that *one* character does, usually following strict mechanical rules. We propose an additional system of collaborative magic with a number of tweakable rules.

BASIC MECHANICS

When the party seeks to cast a spell that is either particularly powerful or particularly complex (i.e., involving a large variety of different effects), they can attempt to cast this spell as a group. Each player must say one effect they want to evoke and how they plan to do it (i.e., by wielding an existing spell in your RPG system or by using some other arcane means). If multiple people choose the same effect, that effect gets amplified. If the effect is something the character would not otherwise be able to cast, there is a greater chance that their contribution is ineffective.

A player can also choose to focus on something other than adding an additional spell effect. For example, one player might

channel all of the energy of the other spellcasters by performing a special dance with their staff, or they might act as a sort of “conductor” and help the other party members stay focused. All that matters is that they declare something that is likely to have both a mechanical and narrative impact on how the spell proceeds.

Once every player has declared their intentions, each player determines how successful they are—most RPGs use some variety of dice-based skill check, but you might also use a deck of cards or an exhaustible in-game resource. So long as *even one* character succeeds, the spell is cast. For each failure, there may be one or more unintentional effects. These can be deficiencies

GM NOTE

Consider introducing this mechanic in a classroom scene! Roleplay a scene in which one of the professors requires the party to collaborate on some complex spell, and show the party *in-game* just how powerful and flexible the system can be.

of the spell (intended effects that fizzle out, amplified effects that still aren't strong enough), dangerous mishaps (explosive side-effects, damage to the surrounding terrain), or truly random side-effects (the emergence of a dangerous elemental, a useful but unrelated boon to one of the party members).

Work together with the party to narrate how they cast the spell and then how the spell actually functions. The narrative impact of the scene ought to be as important as the mechanical impact of the spell itself. The goal is for the players to have more flexibility in how they express their magic, and for the party to find unique ways to work together outside of the sometimes clinical cooperation of tactical combat.

EXAMPLE 1

The party wants to break into a magically sealed safe. If they do not succeed all at once, the safe will teleport itself into an inaccessible pocket dimension. The party decides to perform some collaborative spellcasting on the team's alchemist to help him crack the safe with improbable speed and efficiency.

The student of the Old Magic attempts to twist fate in the alchemist's favor. The student of Divinity attempts to bless the alchemist with defense against any of the safe's protective measures. The alchemist attempts to brew a potion to make himself more dextrous. The student of Translocation attempts to slow time for the alchemist.

All four players roll dice to determine their degree of success. The student of the Old Magic succeeds spectacularly, but the Divinity student fails disastrously. The alchemist just barely misses the threshold for their roll, but the translocator succeeds. The party casts their collaborative spell on the alchemist: fate is twisted in the alchemist's favor, but the alchemist does not gain any particular protection against magical defense mechanisms. The alchemist brews a potion that makes his fingers more nimble, but this also makes him

extremely sick in the immediate aftermath. Time slows for the alchemist, and he is able to quickly try a bunch of solutions, correctly guessing the safe's combination in a fraction of a second. Unfortunately, the safe's backup defense mechanisms fire, and the alchemist is badly burned. The party succeeded at breaking into the safe, but the alchemist is now severely weakened for the remainder of the adventure.

EXAMPLE 2

The party wants to contact a cosmic dragon that inhabits a far-off star. None of the party members have yet gained access to such high level magic, but they figure they might be able to pull it off by pooling their talents and resources.

The party's harmonist attempts to contact the dragon with a resonant melody, knowing that they won't be powerful enough to deliver the message alone. The party's druid draws lines of force in the soil to heighten the arcane capabilities of the divinity student's message. The party's cosmologist carefully consults a star chart to help the druid fine-tune their lines of force.

All three players expend some of their finite mana points. The GM concludes that the total effect of the collaborative spell still is not quite adequate for the intended purpose, but determines that the message will

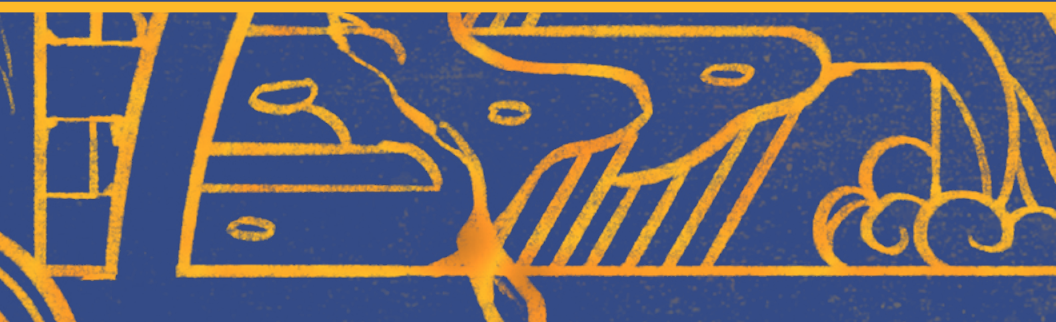
reach the ears of the dragon's vassals. The party roleplays a scene in which they convince the vassal to deliver the message to the dragon. A partial success!

BALANCE

When determining how collaborative spellcasting will work in your campaign you must decide how you will measure the success of the party, and how you will dole out side effects. You can make these rules as forgiving or as punishing as you like, but you should make sure that however you decide to balance the effects that your players feel *incentivized* to use this mechanic.

We suggest that you tune the rule such that the spell always succeeds in some way, but that there may be some twisted side-effects depending on how difficult the proposed spell becomes and how your players may or may not have failed. That way, the party feels as though it's always worth it to try something cool and heighten their magical roleplaying, but they will still take the drawbacks into consideration.

If that feels overpowered, simply limit the party's ability to perform a collaborative spell to once per in-game day or once per session, or consider adding an additional resource they need to spend each time they perform such a spell.





III

PRACTICAL AND
CATASTROPHIC

WRONG CAMPUS

There's a misconception throughout Hjass that Elseridge students are overwhelmingly malevolent or megalomaniacal. These traits may be more common among practitioners of magic than the nonmagical populace, but the villainous tendencies of Elseridge students are still grossly exaggerated. Most Elseridge students are well-intentioned, if occasionally misguided.

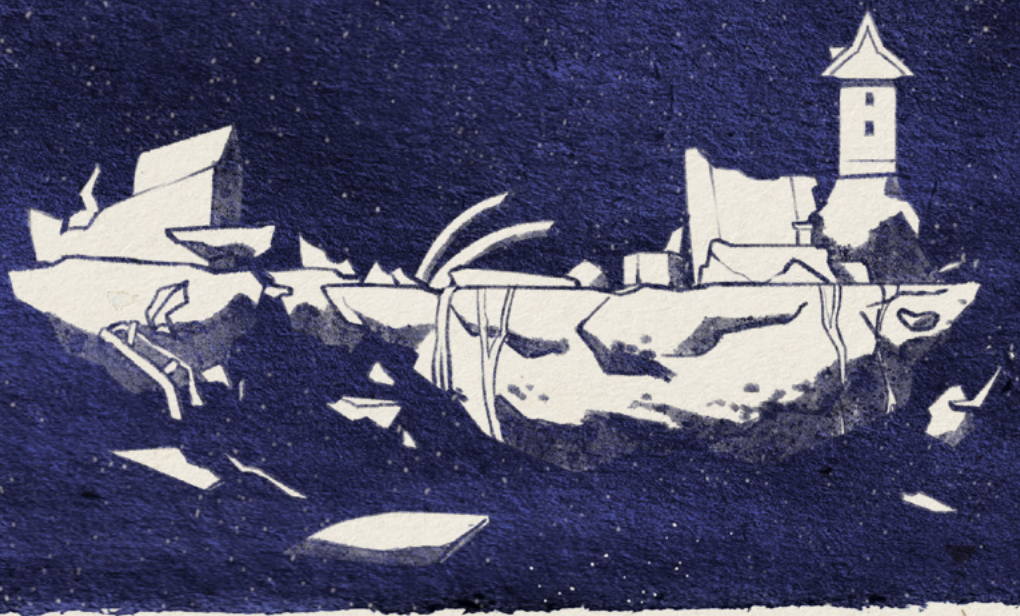
Case in point: Wrong Campus.

200 years ago, before the creation of the College of Translocation, a group of five third-year students decided they would give back to the academy. They set aside time during their busy academic schedule to craft an exceptionally elaborate spell, an unprecedented collaborative arcane feat. At the end of the semester, they put the spell into action.

- ✦ **Yoref Eerik**, human scholar of the Old Magic, summoned a massive stone in the void of space just beyond the precipice of campus.
- ✦ **Reena of Yezanthell**, elven druid, brought forth life-giving flora across the conjured rock.
- ✦ **Crelli Mimolette**, halfling priestess, warded the summoned stone against malevolent influence.
- ✦ **Benhulion Qeberth**, gnomish cosmologist, drew forth a bridge of pure light to connect the rock to the adjacent cliff face.
- ✦ **Olga Obark**, orcish alchemist, programmed golems to construct academic buildings on the newly created terrain.

The quintet of young mages intended to build a new campus for Elseridge, not with the labor of untold contractors but with the raw power of unconstrained magic. Unfortunately, as well-intentioned as these five students may have been, they were not the most expert spellcasters. As such, each effect of the synergistic ritual backfired catastrophically.

- ✦ Yoref's conjured stone was misshapen and seismically unstable.
- ✦ Reena's flora was tainted and corrupt.
- ✦ Crelli's ward had the opposite effect, attracting cosmic radiation and extradimensional meddling.
- ✦ Benhulion's bridge shattered after only three days.



✦ Olga's golems became agitated and combative, and they built the satellite campus buildings with unsettling *wrongness*.

The creation of Wrong Campus had two primary consequences. Firstly, there is now a bizarre and wicked space rock permanently floating just beyond Elseridge's primary campus. This stone is a nexus of magical anomalies, a hub for malicious interlopers, and an infuriatingly tantalizing attraction for mischief makers. In short, it's not the sort of thing that any academic faculty would like to have around.

Secondly, the administration decided that Elseridge would be better off if every student had an opportunity to stretch their wings before graduation. In direct response to this egregious mishandling of magic, the administration devised the journey year system, requiring all students to vacate campus for the entire third year of their studies. Now, students have a designated window during which they can experiment with strange magics, and—crucially—they must do so far away from the rest of the student body.

WRONG CAMPUS TODAY

One might suspect that an academy full of talented mages would simply destroy or contain Wrong Campus and be done with it, but nothing is ever quite so simple at Elseridge. The tainted satellite has become a magnet for malignant energy.¹ If a powerful mage were to blast Wrong Campus to smithereens, the rest of Elseridge would be bathed in 200 years of accumulated radiation and anomalous miasma.

Additionally, many among the Colleges of Druidry and Cosmology value the existence of Wrong Campus, even though they recognize it as a blight on campus. The strange wildlife, tainted though it may be, is still a microbiome worth protecting. Likewise, the cosmological interactions between Wrong Campus and the unusual energies at the edge of the world prove endlessly compelling for any mage studying astral enigmas.

Wrong Campus is far from uninhabited. Cosmic dragons roost within the malformed belfries, feasting on interstellar magic that arcs toward the accursed satellite. Innocent wandering spirits summoned by novice necromancers accumulate in the halls of the broken buildings. Plus, at least one student still lives in Wrong Campus: Reena of Yezanthell, the druid who helped create the school.

REENA OF YEZANTHELL

RANK: Third-year (technically) Druidry student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Corrupted flora

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A star-scorched staff from her own corrupted woods

HERITAGE: Elf, from the now ravaged city of Yezanthell

After the calamitous outcome of her party's ritual, druid Reena of Yezanthell decided to set things right. She set down roots in Wrong Campus and has lived there ever since. She tends to the unnatural plants she created, keeps her former companion's golems in check, and has gradually produced druidic wards to ensure that the wicked forces accumulating within Wrong Campus never escape to Elseridge proper. She never intended to live the rest of her days on this unholy satellite, but when she received word of the atrocities visited upon her home, she decided to dedicate her life to righting her wrongs.

Reena has become twisted by the unceasing onslaught of dangerous magic. The once beautiful elf has slowly merged with the floating space rock itself, transforming into an unnatural amalgam of stone, vine, and cosmic radiation. Despite the par-

[1] In a strange twist of luck, this actually protects the rest of Elseridge from the harmful rays of the cosmos. Much of the dangerous interstellar energy that showers the edge of the world is now redirected toward Wrong Campus.

asitic influence of Wrong Campus, Reena continues to fight for the stone's protection. She dreams of a day when she can rid the microbiome of its interstellar contamination, a day when she can make Wrong Campus right.

Unfortunately, Reena is misunderstood by the student body. Everyone hears tales of the corrupted druid living on the floating rock, but most tell Reena's tale as though it were a ghost story. She is a spooky mystic living in an unholy dungeon. She has no morals and lives only to keep students far away.

When a curious student teleports himself to Wrong Campus, Reena quickly emerges to shoo them away. She has no interest in speaking with current students and will launch them back to campus with force if she has to; typically, this means beating them senseless and then commanding her trees to fling the student across the bottomless chasm back to campus. She cares for Elseridge, but the importance of her ongoing arcane work far outweighs her interest in keeping individual students safe. Her *intentions* are good—she doesn't want anyone falling prey to Wrong Campus's influence!—but ultimately, she *does* end up hurting many students.



GM NOTE:

Wrong Campus can be your go-to locale for on-campus dungeon crawls. Because it is both off-limits and subject to extradimensional influence, you can feasibly insert just about any monsters, puzzles, or magical objectives you want. If you can, try to foreshadow your version of Wrong Campus with hints about what sorts of dangers or secrets may be lurking within. That way, it won't feel like you just decided last minute how you were going to shoehorn in some arbitrary encounter or scenario.



RUNNING THE GAME: MAGICAL CATASTROPHES

The potential for magic's calamitous consequences is one of the primary themes of this setting. The entire reason the academy was founded in the first place was to avoid a future in which the uncontrolled use of magic threatened to destroy the world. As such, you may want to include mechanics in your roleplaying for magical mishaps.

THE TWO TYPES OF CATASTROPHE. In general, there are two types of magical catastrophes: those that result from the intended effects of a spell (e.g., a mage summons fire, and the inferno blazes out of control) and those that result from improper use of a spell (e.g., a mage tries to summon fire, but accidentally summons an ice storm instead).

This may seem like an arbitrary distinction, but the two types of catastrophes have vastly different narrative connotations. When a mage's spell works as intended but causes terrible consequences anyway, it is the mage's fault for not thinking ahead. They could have predicted that their spell would have a deleterious effect, but their hubris or their lack of foresight got the better of them. If, on the other hand, a spell misfires, this either means that the mage lacked proper training or that such magic is simply too complicated to ever reliably depend upon. The mage ought to

have studied harder, or perhaps they ought to have thought twice about casting magic at all.

MECHANICALIZING FORE-SEEABLE CATASTROPHES. When a spellcaster does something stupid, you don't need to rely on chance to determine the effect. For example, if a mage summons a ball of fire in a wooden house, you do not need to roll dice to decide whether or not the house starts to burn. As a GM, you are well within your rights to determine that the spells your players use might have effects that are *explicitly* enumerated in the documentation for your RPG. When your player chooses to use magic in an irresponsible way, you can simply declare that *something else* happens as well.

To balance this, you can encourage your players to call you out if their enemies make a similar blunder. The easiest way to treat your players fairly is by letting their opponents make comical mistakes as well.

MECHANICALIZING FLUKE CATASTROPHES. Unless you specifically want to incorporate an extra degree of random chance into your campaigns, you probably don't want to add a greater chance for calamitous failure for your spellcasters than what is already suggested by your RPG system. Some systems have a system of "critical failures" dependent on dice rolls; if you want that to result in a magical catastrophe, that's fine! Still, most players won't enjoy playing mage characters if their spells completely misfire 50% of the time.

Alternatively, consider creating additional rules that specify when fluke catastrophes might be possible. For example, you might determine that adventurers can attempt to cast spells they wouldn't otherwise have access to, but only with a great chance of accident. Or, instead, you can say that students who are falling behind in their studies have to roll additional dice that might result in catastrophes. Finally, you can determine that certain environments or scenarios are more likely to cause them to fumble.

If you want to balance this out, you can dole out opposite boons as well: adventures who excel in their studies and cast spells in their favored environments can gain additional *bonus*es to their spells.

MASSIVE CATASTROPHES. Many tabletop settings include locations that are plagued by some ancient or ongoing magical disaster. These are world-changing events that are either significant plot hooks that will motivate entire campaigns, or they are MacGuffins to justify the inclusion of dungeons or unusual combat scenarios.

While you will probably bake these massive catastrophes into the lore of your world, they can also occur in-game. Showing your players that their magic can have truly devastating effects is a great way to raise the stakes and indicate that they are participants in your world's lore as opposed to mere observers. That said, this category of catastrophes should always be heavily foreshadowed. If your players wield a seemingly mundane magical item and it wipes out an entire town, that won't feel very satisfying. Instead, your players should always have some means of predicting that a massive catastrophe is possible so that they can weigh the pros and cons of wielding such dangerous magic. You can involve chance (e.g., a powerful wand has a 1-in-100 chance of causing a devastating explosion), but for the catastrophe to feel earned and justified, the players ought to know the risk.

THE DISCIPLINARIAN ORDER

Salma Sahrou founded Elseridge Academy with the explicit purpose of producing knowledgeable and *responsible* spellcasters. As such, discipline is a top priority for the academy. When a student breaks a rule, it is not enough to penalize a grade. The academy must show the student the error of their ways and discourage any such future offenses.

Any authority figure can demand that a student caught breaking a rule head directly to the Office of the Disciplinary Order. The broken rule in question may be explicitly outlined in the student handbook, or it might be an obvious rule that need not be enumerated; naturally, the ambiguity of this latter category leads to a large degree of discretion in judgments and punishments.

The members of the Disciplinary Order are not associated with any college, and as such,

their judgments are seen as decidedly unbiased.² While each has an impressive familiarity with magic, few are expert spellcasters themselves. Most Disciplinary Order members are learned nobles with a disdain for mages, former constables overflowing with condescension, or disgraced judges and magistrates. They work at Elseridge not for the prestige but for the excellent pay, impressive views, and cozy accommodations.

PUNISHMENTS

Disciplinary Order members are free to dole out punishments as they see fit. Some choose to heighten the severity for repeat offenders and some try to add ironic twists to make the punishments fit the crime. Other Disciplinary Order members are less creative. When considering the connection between broken rules and associated punishments, consult the table below.

[2] In practice, this is rarely the case. Most Disciplinary Order members are notorious for their biases against certain varieties of spellcasting.



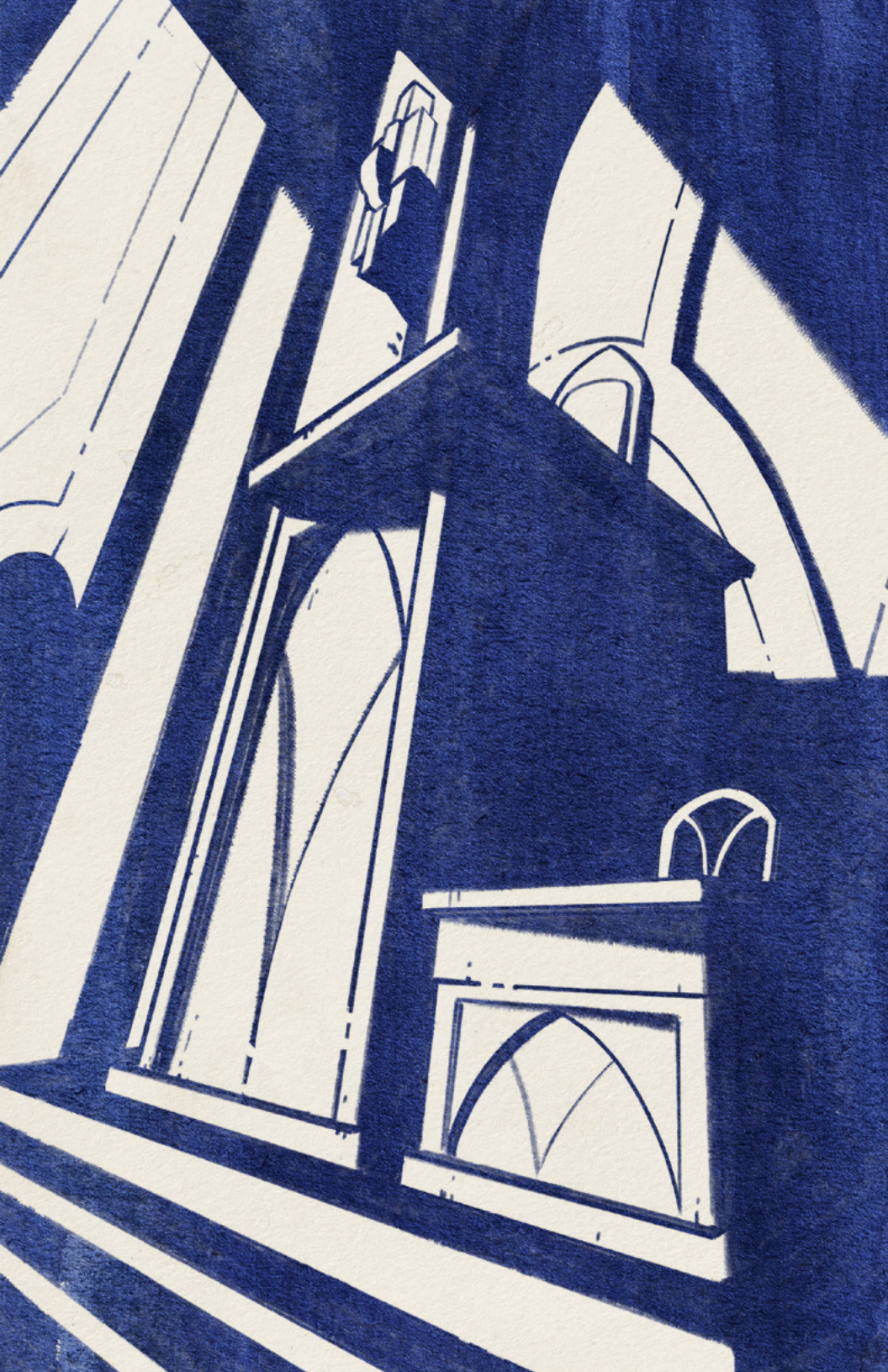


D6	EXAMPLE INFRACTION	ASSOCIATED PUNISHMENT
1	Using an illusory double to skip class	Student must attend additional classes on behalf of sick students and take notes for them.
2	Wielding offensive spells against another student	Student must act as a “volunteer” during the final examination for “Methods for Preventing Friendly Fire.”
3	Sneaking into administrative offices without permission	Administrators may freely enter the student’s dorm room whenever they choose.
4	Misusing alchemical reagents	Student must assist the alchemy professor by cleaning the lab for the rest of the semester.
5	Inviting dangerous extradimensional beings to campus	Student must report to detention in an unstable pocket dimension.
6	Relying on a familiar to cheat during an examination	Professors may deploy their own familiars to annoy and distract the student during examinations.

THE THREE PRIME RULES

When a student breaks one of the three prime rules—by destroying a book, employing mind-control, or traveling backward in time—the highest-ranking faculty of their college decide their fate. Such despicable crimes bypass the need for the Disciplinary Order altogether.

In most cases, students are expelled and blacklisted from magical organizations across the realm. Occasionally, a faculty member will place the student in arcane manacles and escort them directly to relevant legal authorities from their home community. On very rare occasions, the faculty will take extreme action; at least one student was executed by Elseridge faculty for their egregious crimes. The Disciplinary Order might be scary, but any student would rather face their judgment than be tried for breaking a prime rule.



WAGNIK STEELTOOTH

RANK: Disciplinarian

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Military tactics (though cannot read, let alone cast spells)

ARCANE IMPLEMENT:

Warhammer (enchanted, though Wagnik doesn't realize this)

HERITAGE: Human, from a tribe of wild men in the Vyndur Mountains

Wagnik (he/him) spent a lifetime fighting brutal battles in the frigid north. He led his tribe in conquests and retreats, fighting dwarves, dragons, and rival bands of wild men. He slept in tents, ate meat from bears he killed with his own hands, and bathed rarely. He was a hero among his tribe, the paragon of a wild man. That all changed when his tribe was wiped out by an army of skeletons commandeered by a wayward necromancer who just so happened to graduate from Elseridge. Now, Wagnik is employed by the school to judge students accused of heinous infractions.

GM NOTE

You want your players to be wary of getting in trouble—this raises the stakes beyond the risk of running out of hit points. Still, you don't want the punishment itself to suck the fun out of the game. An ideal punishment advances the plot and provides some means for player expression. A run-in with the Disciplinarian Order should shift relationships between the party and various NPCs and create opportunities to advance subplots while they serve their sentences.

Alternatively, you need not roleplay the punishments at all. Instead, you can skip ahead and mechanize a penalty: a temporary reduction in one of their stats, a limit on the spells they can learn, or forfeiture of certain boons gained through their academics or extracurriculars.

Wagnik does not like magic, he does not like schools, and he certainly does not like Elseridge students. The harsh northman has seen the follies of magic, and he has yet to see much it does well. As such, he is a harsh Disciplinarian and one of the authority figures on campus that students fear most. Wagnik disdains Elseridge, but he believes his work is righteous. So long as the academy never produces another student like that damned necromancer, Wagnik's efforts will have been worthwhile.

FANCH WIDDLEBUG

RANK: Disciplinarian

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Childcare

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Gavel (nonmagical)

HERITAGE: Half-dryad, from the enchanted woods of Quaressa

Legends abound of the wonders of Quaressa and its magic trees. These legends are so common and persuasive that impressionable children flock to the

forest to flee unhappy homes. Inevitably, *someone* has to take care of all of those lost kids. For years, that was half-dryad Fanch Widdlebug (she/her), an unwilling orphanage overseer. When Tokaren industrialists annexed the woods, Fanch fled northward and made her way to Elseridge.

Fanch may be half-fae, but she has never found a means to control her latent magic. Instead, she exudes a small aura of fae enchantment, so ferns emerge from every surface wherever she finds herself. In general, Fanch doesn't feel strongly one way or another about magic. It is simply a tool that belongs to other people. Fanch's disciplinary style is instead guided by her former life as a caretaker for lost children. She is kind but condescending, treating accomplished mages as though they were petulant toddlers. Some druids enjoy getting sent to Fanch's office, but they always end up cranky after enduring her infuriatingly infantilizing diatribes.

BREGGERT EESTVART

RANK: Disciplinary

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Contracts, edicts, and decrees

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Golden pen (nonmagical)

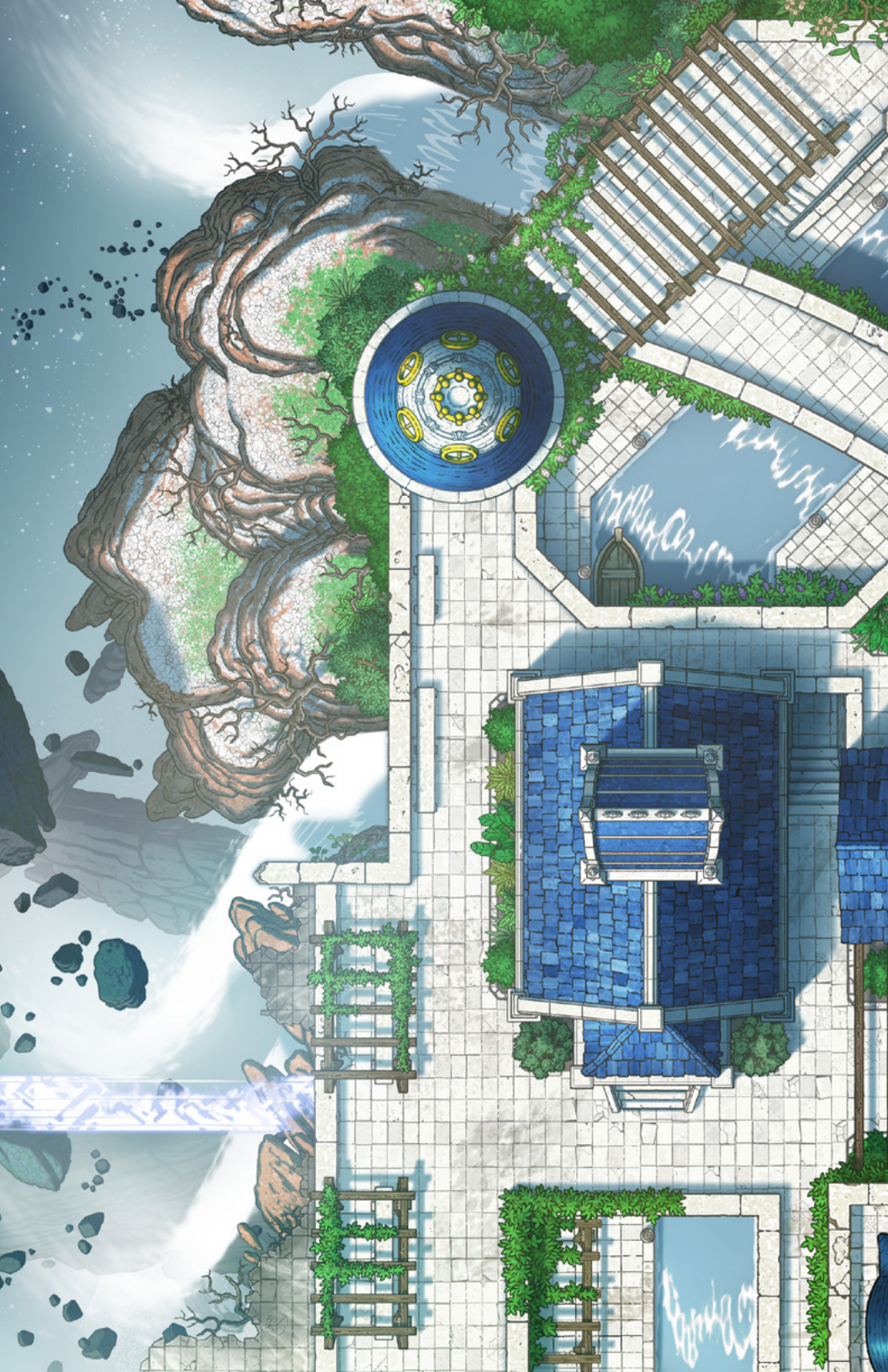
HERITAGE: Human, most recently from the courts of Tokaren

Lord Breggert Eestvart (he/him) is one of the few Elseridge administrators with dual responsibilities. He is a Disciplinary with years of experience adjudicating high-profile legal disputes among Tokaren nobility and *nouveaux riches*. Naturally, he is well versed in administering justice and discerning shades of gray in matters of ethics and constitutionality.³ He finds his work at Elseridge fairly cushy, with none of the backstabbing politics of Tokaren's courts.

However, he is also responsible for acquiring writs and other legal affordances as a journey year advisor. When a student decides to venture in contested lands for some magical experiment, Lord Eestvart needs to clear the excursion with relevant governments or factions. Usually, this is accomplished via donations from Elseridge's trust, but diplomacy is often just as important. This portion of Lord Eestvart's work is considerably trickier, as he made countless enemies before fleeing the courts of Tokaren in disgrace. When it proves difficult to acquire the necessary documentation, Lord Eestvart is happy to negotiate via pseudonym or doctor the occasional writ. Remember: it's not immoral if it's for the students.

[3] "Shades of gray" meaning "whichever party offered a heftier bribe."





GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

Depending on the nature of a chosen curriculum, any Elseridge student may be asked by their college's faculty to enroll in a number of General Education courses. These courses are intended to fill in gaps in a student's education, ensuring that they graduate from Elseridge with a grounded understanding of magic and its context in the world. For example, a student who exclusively practices offensive magic may be required to take a course on ethics, and a student who only learns newer forms of spellcasting may be required to study the history of magic.

Gen Ed classes are not considered part of individual colleges, but they are nevertheless taught by faculty members who may be employed by one school or another. As such, a student's experience in a Gen Ed class will vary dramatically depending on the professor. A philosophy course taught by a tenured professor of Divinity will inevitably have a different tone than one taught by a professor of Arcanology.

SAMPLE GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

Ancient Rituals	Basic Mathematics for Non-Cosmologists	History of Modern Hjass
Modern Rituals	Political Science for Independent Mages	History of Magical Warfare
Survey of Heterodox Arcane Disciplines	Political Science for Court Mages	History of Arcane Thought
Intro to Ancient Elvish	Foundations of Arcana	History of Arcane Cataclysms
Intermediate Elvish	Aesthetics of Arcana	Ethics of Offensive Magic
Runes and Glyphs for Non-Alchemists	Intro to Rhetoric	Alternative Arcane Philosophies
Poetics and Linguistics	Survey of Nonmag- ical Technologies	

THE JOURNEY YEAR

At the end of the second year of studies, every student must speak with academy faculty members about what they will do the following year. All Elseridge students are required to venture off campus to pursue some arcane quest for the duration of their third year of studies. Most do so in groups of three to six, and cooperation between students of different colleges is strongly encouraged. Quests need not be obviously relevant to a student's academic focus. Still, upon return to the academy, each student must explain to their professors how their journey year activities relate to their field of study. Ideally, students will also prepare for their arcane thesis while traveling abroad.

After students pitch their adventure to the faculty, they are given funding and supplies as needed. Occasionally, students will be granted requests for vehicles, magical mounts, writs of passage, reserved books, and any rare or expensive resource. Few journey year proposals are denied; the assumption is that students will *want* to use the academy's resources to go on an epic adventure, even if they could also slack off. Of course, most employers will inquire about a student's journey year at great length before hiring them. If a student decides to squander the opportunity, there is a strong likelihood that they will be passed over in favor of a more ambitious applicant.



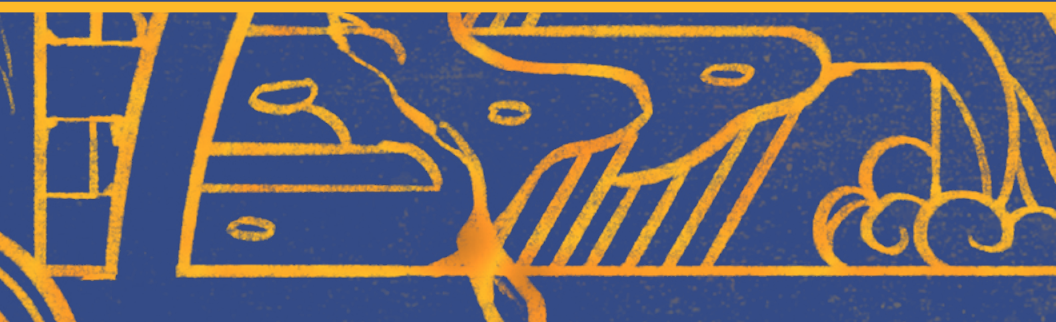
GM NOTE

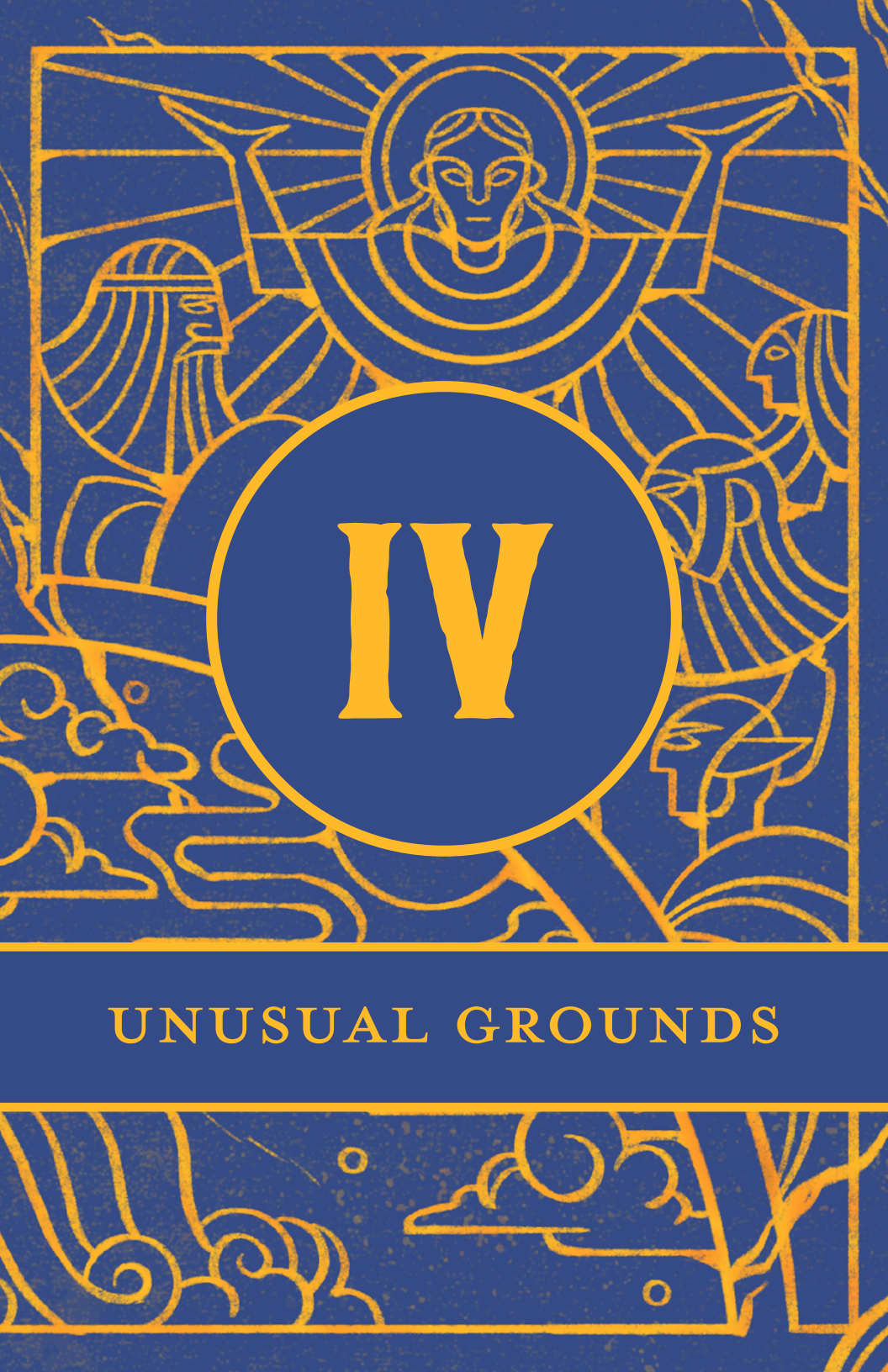
Work with your players to determine the nature of their journey year quest. If your campaign has a strong overarching plot, they will probably already know what they want to do well in advance. After all, if you have been tactfully laying narrative breadcrumbs for them to follow, the next steps in their grand adventure should be obvious. If not, however, consider roleplaying some scenes in which the adventurers meet with faculty or other students proposing a few potential options.

EXAMPLE JOURNEY YEAR QUESTS

- ✦ Contact and bargain with the extradimensional mastermind threatening to destroy Hjass
- ✦ Seal the violent darkness that lingers beneath Vyndurvoht
- ✦ Infiltrate a coven of gulch witches and reclaim their stolen alchemical formulae
- ✦ Summit the turbulent peaks of the Everblight Range
- ✦ Track the being known as Eenofur the Exalted and discover the source of his power
- ✦ Gain an audience with the King of Tokaren and convince his court mage to cease his dark experiments
- ✦ Craft an enchanted blade with metals from the five corners of Hjass
- ✦ Seal the violent portal unleashing miasma across the Geldri Forest
- ✦ Unite the warring houses of pixies at Lake Omishaw
- ✦ Reverse-engineer the mysterious airship with the eyeball insignia
- ✦ Disenchant the corrupted monolith near the desert city of Thazz
- ✦ Solve the mystery of who killed the former despot of Chiuseppoli
- ✦ Research the slaughter of Yezzanthell and disseminate a definitive history of the atrocity
- ✦ Prepare an arcane feast that will delight the genie gourmand Duzul the Luminous
- ✦ Locate and harness the legendary pentode stones
- ✦ Devise a formula for a topical anti-radiation salve
- ✦ Decipher the enigmatic texts discovered near the fallen comet *Elya's Wish*
- ✦ Unravel the choral knot that has plunged the Eleftheri satellite into a time loop
- ✦ Mend the torn skies that unleash perpetual storms over the Vutmarin Seas
- ✦ Chart a map that will allow for airship travel to the extradimensional realm of Haritama







IV

UNUSUAL GROUNDS

“OFF CAMPUS”

Most schools in the southlands—that is, the rest of Hjass—exist either in city centers or peaceful rural environs. Elseridge Academy is unique in its dangerous isolation. When students want to leave campus for some non-academic relaxation, the options are limited. They can wander into the irradiated salt flats beyond the safety of campus (dangerous), climb along the edge of the world (extremely dangerous), or venture into the void of space (almost certainly fatal).

Alternatively, they can head “off-campus.” Along Elseridge Academy’s eastern edge lies a small patch of land claimed by no college and no administrative office. Instead, this land is maintained by the druids—ensuring that plant life can still flourish—

but remains wholly independent from the college...

Of course, this land is not, in fact, *truly* independent. Centuries ago, Professor Antoine Gurtchel submitted a request to the academy’s trust. In the confidential letter, he outlined his plan for a *seemingly* independent cafe and bar that would exist for the twin purposes of appeasing students and keeping tabs on them. Gurtchel’s request was granted, and while the academy has gradually dialed back its more paternalistic tendencies, the Gurtchel family still maintains a partial deed to the land centuries later.

Now, this verdant patch of non-Elseridge land is home to three equally significant off-campus landmarks:

- ★ **Other Leg**, Elseridge Academy’s pub, where students can sit down with a drink and relax, or grab some stationary and knickknacks for their dorm rooms
- ★ **The Fluxum Shard**, a massive and mysterious space rock that exudes a bizarre interstellar magic and is used almost exclusively for sporting events
- ★ **The Boardwalk**, a winding tangle of pathways from which students can watch Scramble Shard matches or toss shrimp to countless flamingos



OTHER LEG

When Antoine Gurtchel petitioned the academy's trust, he did not expect the secretive board of overseers to grant him and his descendants a deed to the land in perpetuity. As soon as they did, though, he immediately retired from his academic career to ensure that his new pub would become the ultimate hangout spot for Elseridge students.

Other Leg is still owned and operated by the Gurtchel family today. Though they are loathe to discuss their unusual claim on the land, most suspect that the exact wording forbids the family from transferring the property to anyone else. Luckily, each generation of Gurtchel children has produced at least one or two offspring who have been willing and able to run the family business.

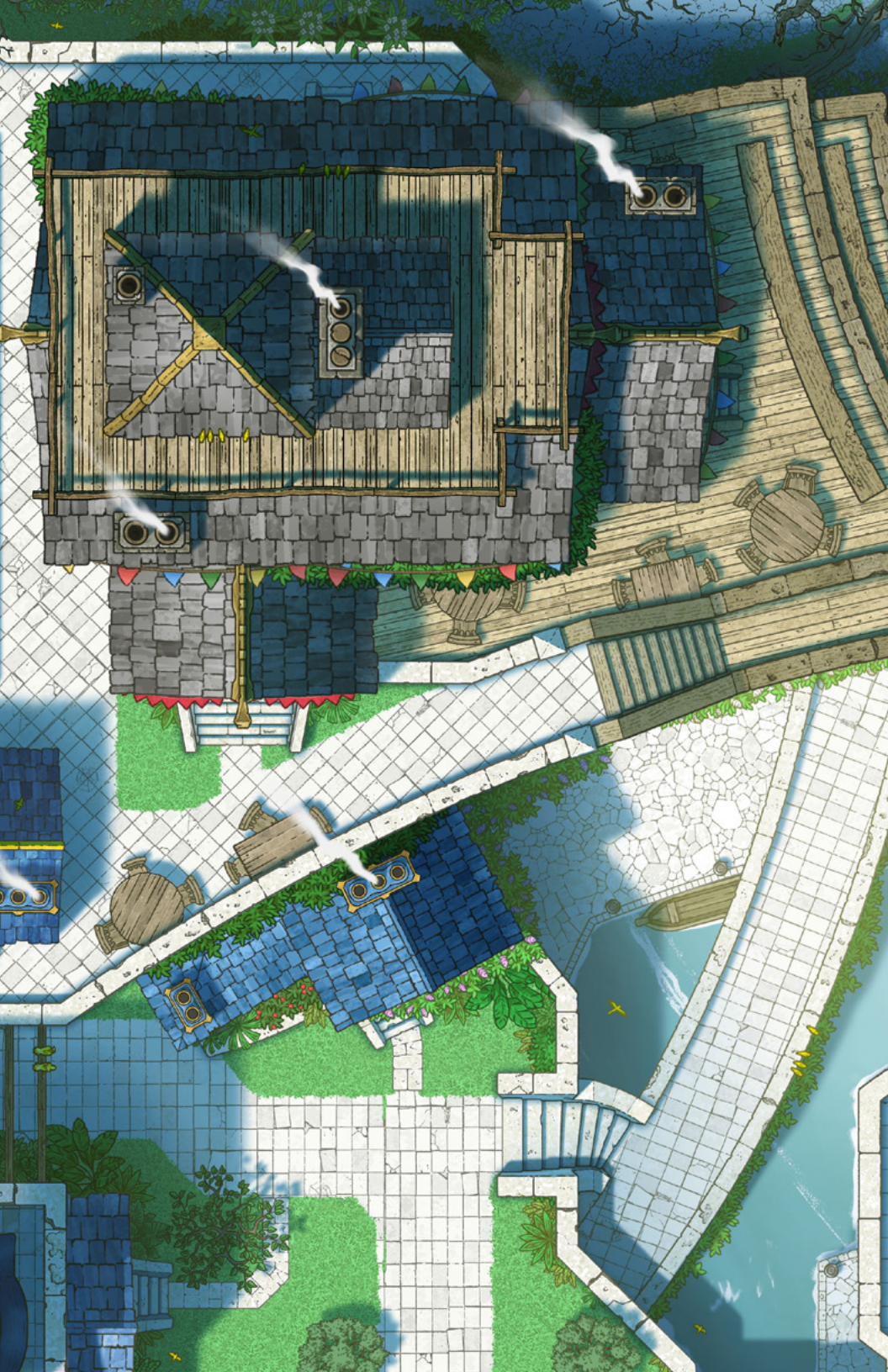
As the pub operates independently from the school, Other Leg does not have the luxury of existing more or less outside the

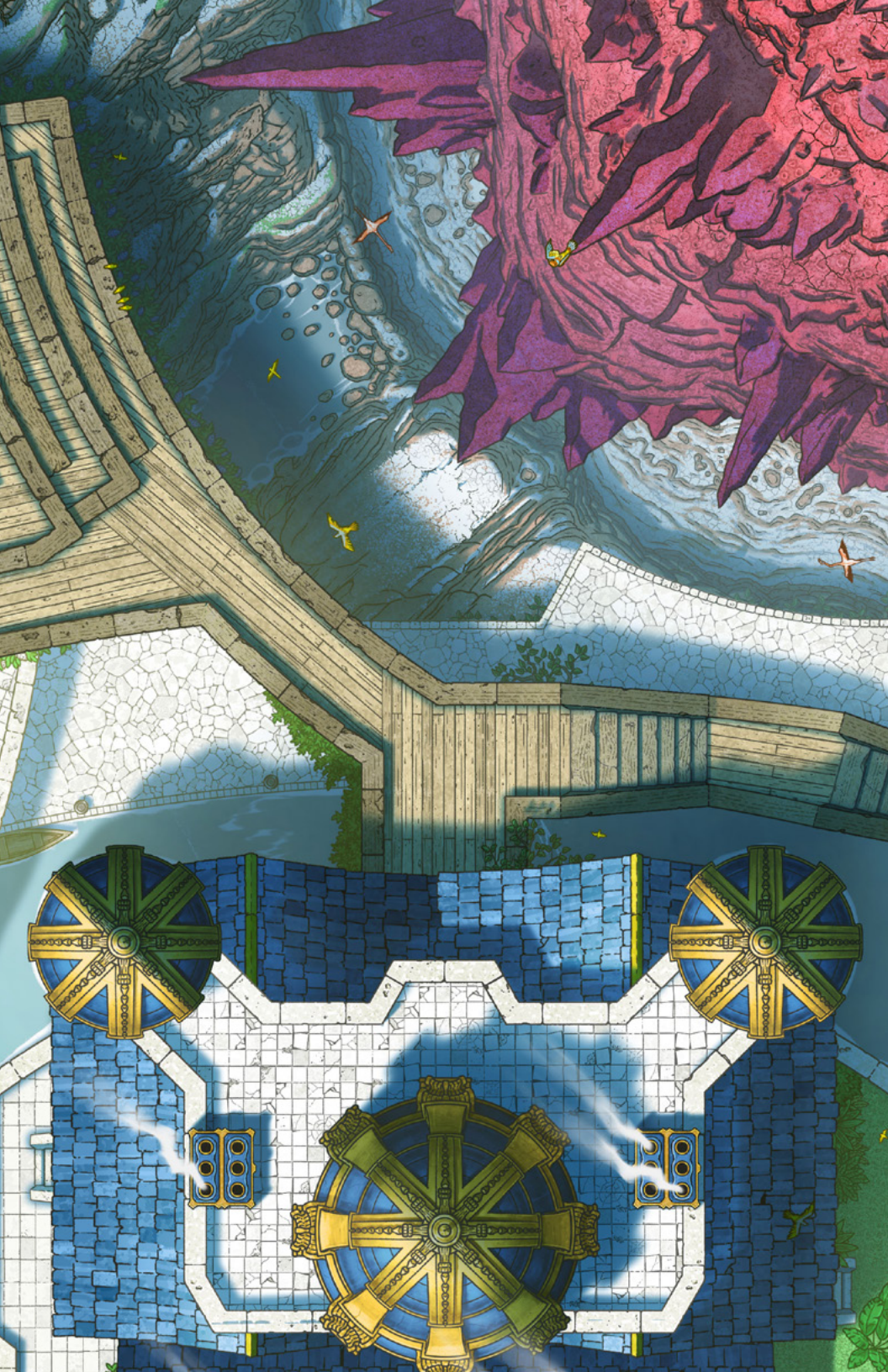
constraints of economics. While the trust has seemingly bottomless coffers with which to pay faculty and staff, the Gurtchel family must actually run their business like a business. Food and drink cost money, and though the bar has little competition in the way of other nearby eateries, they must do their best to actively attract clientele. After all, the alternative to spending money at Other Leg is eating delicious food for free in the grand banquet hall. Accordingly, most items are priced affordably, though charging anything at all means that wealthier students tend to frequent the establishment far more often than those of meager means.

In addition to snack and beverage offerings, Other Leg also features a market stall where students can purchase small accoutrements: kettles, backup wands, wool socks, envelopes, or any other odds and ends they might need throughout the semester.

WHY IS IT CALLED OTHER LEG?

Flamingos spend most of the day standing on one leg. Pub founder Antoine Gurtchel reckoned that whenever they switch legs, it must come as an incredible relief.







JULES GURTCHEL

RANK: Bartender / Barista

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Mixology
(typically non-alchemical)

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Spoons,
shakers, strainers, kettles, etc

HERITAGE: Human, from a long
line of Elseridge natives

Any time a student walks into Other Leg, they're likely to see Jules Gurtchel (he/him) tending bar. While some students take on shifts at the pub to earn a bit of spending cash throughout the school year, mostly it's just Jules waking up early for the morning rush and staying up into the wee hours of the morning serv-

ing drinks and catering to late-night studiers. Jules's husband insists that he can't keep burning the candle at both ends, but Jules is terrified of what his sister Camille would say if he were to request any time off.

Though Jules comes from a long line of magically proficient bartenders, chefs, and business owners, he never received proper training himself. He decided not to attend Elseridge in his younger years, though he deeply regrets his decision. Luckily, a handful of Alchemy students have been tutoring Jules over the past couple years. Now, Jules will occasionally infuse his drinks with a bit of magical *je ne sais quoi*.

D8 DRINK SPECIALTIES

- 1 **Salt Flat White.** An espresso drink topped with salted foam. A favorite drink during rainy days filled with studying.
- 2 **Wrongish Mead.** Mead made from the honey of bees that collect their nectar from Wrong Campus. “Funky” doesn’t do this unusual drink justice.
- 3 **Imported Cherry Wine.** The drink of choice for younger professors who don’t trust Jules’s more unusual offerings.
- 4 **Vyndurbjór.** This dwarven stout is almost disgustingly chocolatey and far too strong for most students. Still, it’s quite easy to get shipped in from the nearby mountains.
- 5 **Moonbeam.** This drink sounds like it ought to be some sort of alchemical creation, but it’s actually just a stellar smoothie made with fruits from the greenhouse.
- 6 **Steppebeast Milk.** Cityfolk might find it repugnant, but many students from rural homes find the piquant flavor of fresh steppebeast milk uniquely nostalgic.
- 7 **Cool Morning.** This fizzy refreshment is guaranteed to stay cold for up to an hour even without ice. A neat trick from the fledgling alchemist.
- 8 **The Jules Julep.** Jules’s finest alchemical concoction. This mint julep is infused with invigorating reagents that allegedly boost memory retention. Of course, it *also* has alcohol in it, so it’s not exactly the best study aid.

GM NOTE

While we refer to Other Leg as a “pub,” you absolutely do not need to include alcohol in your magic school games. Whether you’re playing Elseridge more as a high school analog or whether you just don’t like including addictive substances in your games, alcohol is completely optional.

CAMILLE GURTCHER

RANK: Pub Owner

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Economics

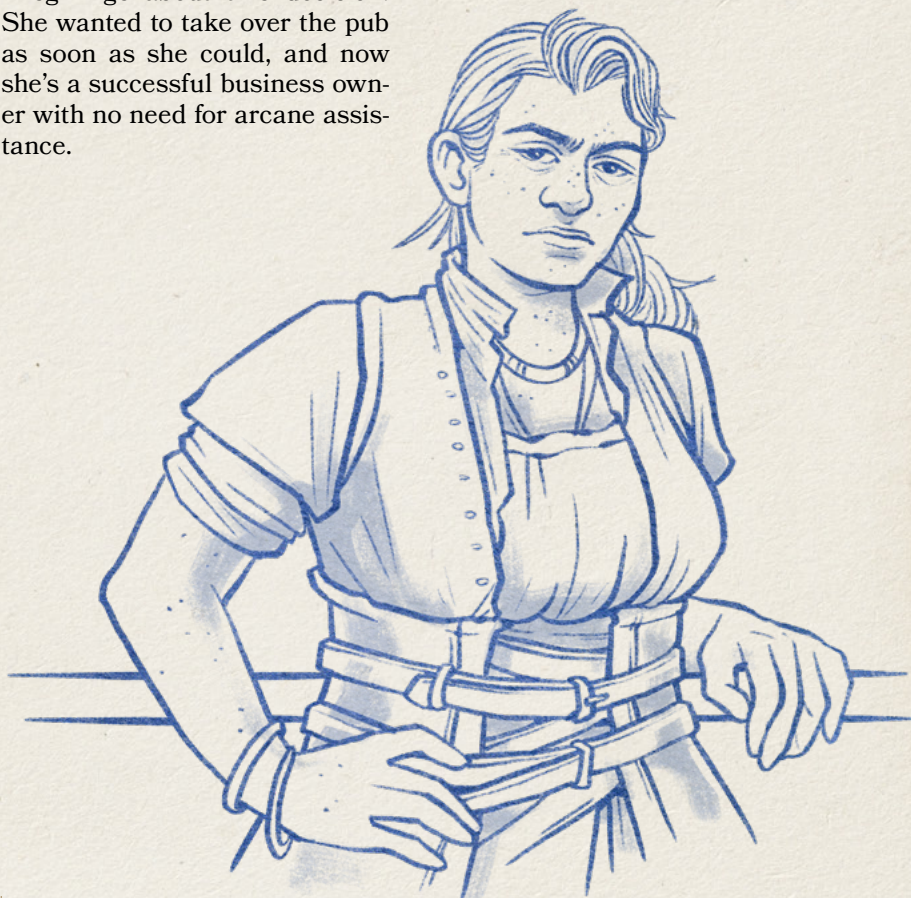
ARCANE IMPLEMENT:

Spreadsheets (nonmagical)

HERITAGE: Human, from a long line of Elseridge natives

Camille Gurtchel (she/her) is the owner and operator of Other Leg. Like her younger brother, she also opted not to attend Elseridge, though she has no misgivings about this decision. She wanted to take over the pub as soon as she could, and now she's a successful business owner with no need for arcane assistance.

Camille is gruff and focused. Her goal has always been to honor her forebearers by elevating Other Leg to higher and higher heights. She has been, at best, middlingly successful. The bar is exactly as popular as it has always been, which is to say, fairly popular! Ultimately, it doesn't matter how many treatises on entrepreneurship one reads. If a university has but a single pub on campus, that pub will always do just fine.



SHEFFIR GURTCHEL (NÉ SULIANA)

RANK: Huckster

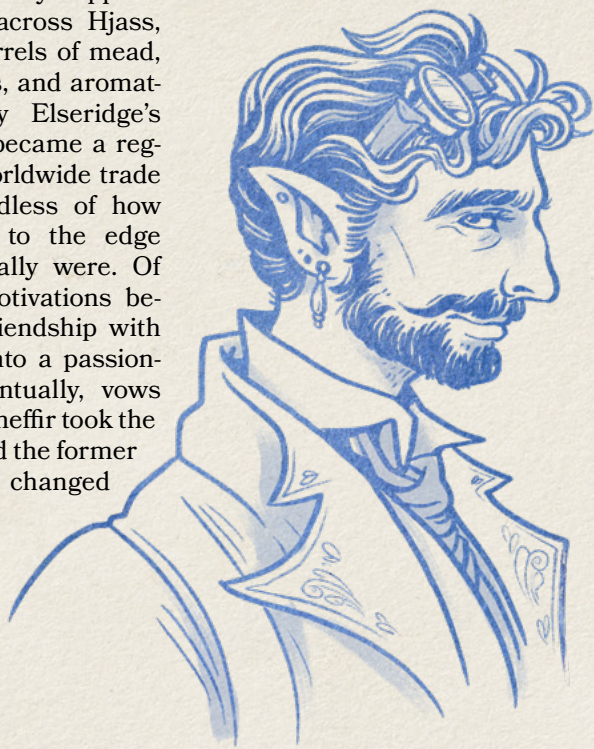
ACADEMIC FOCUS: Airship
piloting (formerly)

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Merchant
stand (nonmagical)

HERITAGE: Half-elf, from
the cosmopolitan city of
Chiuseppoli

Other Leg relies on airship deliveries for much of their supplies, and for years, Sheffir (he/him) was the pub's primary supplier. He would fly all across Hjass, stocking up on barrels of mead, exotic coffee beans, and aromatics overlooked by Elseridge's druids. Elseridge became a regular stop on his worldwide trade expeditions, regardless of how unprofitable trips to the edge of the world actually were. Of course, he had motivations beyond profit. His friendship with Jules blossomed into a passionate romance. Eventually, vows were exchanged, Sheffir took the Gurtchel name, and the former airship business changed hands.

Now, Sheffir sells various knickknacks to students and faculty from a booth in Other Leg. He has settled into his new role of quirky salesman gracefully, though he is constantly butting heads with Camille over how she treats her brother. Sheffir repeatedly pressures Camille to hire some extra help and to go see the world a bit. After all, he and Jules aren't going to have any kids any time soon. If Other Leg is going to stay in the family, Camille is going to have to find some love of her own.



OTHER LEG SPECIAL EVENTS

New Semester Hoorah. At the end of the first week of each semester, students team up with the Gurtchels to host an inclusive party for everyone at Elseridge. All professors and students are invited, though few professors ever attend. The school pays for drinks with the intention of simply getting everyone mingling.

Midwind Ball. Dating can be an awkward affair at Elseridge. Plenty of young mages are shy, and the edge of the world is not necessarily conducive to conventional courtship. The Midwind Ball is an opportunity for students to invite a special someone to a formal date dance in between semesters.

Starfall Silent Time. During the peak of exam studying, Other Leg enforces “quiet hours,” during which students can come to the pub for coffee or tea and be sure that they won’t get distracted by loud noises.

Jamboree. Right before fluxum break, after exams are finished, but before the *Hexacoil* activates, Other Leg hosts their yearly jamboree. This is the most raucous party of the year, a time for late-night dancing and heartfelt confessions.



SCRAMBLE SHARD

The most popular extracurricular at Elseridge Academy is an arcane sport known as Scramble Shard. Opposing teams use a mixture of magical know-how and raw athleticism to claim as many fluxum gems as they can. Professors act as referees, and scores of students show up to watch even the most inconsequential of exhibition matches.

TEAM COMPOSITION

Two teams of three to seven¹ compete in an odd number of rounds. A Scramble Shard team consists of the following positions:

- ★ The **scrambler** climbs up and along the *Fluxum Shard* in search of the fluxum gem
- ★ The **honer** casts spells that assist the scrambler
- ★ The **rascal** (or rascals in large-team formats) casts spells to harry the opposing team

Each round, the scrambler from both teams must ascend the *Fluxum Shard* (usually just called “the shard”) and attempt to locate the sole fluxum gem that has emerged from the stone. This gem might appear anywhere on the shard, and thus the

scramblers must be prepared to search and quickly climb. Once a scrambler grasps the gem, they must then return it to their team’s honer. The scrambler may not cast spells unless the opposing scrambler has claimed the gem.

Meanwhile, the honer may cast spells to assist the scrambler or counteract the effects of the shard’s harmful or disorienting magical auras. The honer is allowed to perform any magic they wish, but they may not move from their starting position, and they may not cast spells that negatively impact the opposing team.

The rascal (or rascals) may freely move around the shard, but they may not touch it. The rascal may cast magic that affects the other team, but they may not cast spells that directly assist their scrambler. Spells cast by the rascal cannot directly harm the other team (e.g., setting them on fire), but they may cast spells that *indirectly* harm the other team (e.g., telekinetically yanking a scrambler off balance or temporarily paralyzing the opposing honer). Rascals may also defend themselves against opposing rascals.

[1] Scramble Shard team sizes don’t need to be irregular. You can just select the team size that matches your party size.



SCRAMBLER



HONER



RASCAL

Typically, each team has one dedicated scrambler, one dedicated honer, and one or more dedicated rascals. However, teams can also elect to shuffle their positions between rounds.

SCORING

- ✦ When a scrambler claims a fluxum gem and returns it to their honer, they earn **3 points**, and the round ends.
- ✦ If a rascal or honer is able to recover the gem from the opposing team, they earn **2 points**, and the round ends.
- ✦ If, at any time after mounting the shard, both scramblers or the fluxum gem end up on the ground, the team with fewer points **earns 1 point**, and the round ends. If teams are tied, neither team earns a point.
- ✦ When a team commits a foul (e.g., the honer moves from their starting position, the rascal enhances the abilities of the scrambler, or the scrambler casts a spell before the opposing team has

claimed the fluxum gem), that team **loses 1 point**, and both teams restart the round.

- ✦ Matches last three, five, or seven rounds. At the end of the match, the team with the **most points wins**.
- ✦ In the event of a tie, teams play a tiebreaker round. All team members can cast any non-lethal spells they wish, and all competitors are allowed to ascend the shard. Whoever grasps the fluxum gem first **wins the match** for their team.

THE FLUXUM SHARD

Key to the Scramble Shard match is the *Fluxum Shard* itself. This unsettling meteor gently landed on Elseridge's campus some 1,000 years ago. Teams of mages have determined that the meteor's magical effects are ultimately harmless, though the same interstellar magic that causes fluxum storms also causes space near the shard to act irrationally.

The *Fluxum Shard* has three noteworthy traits pertaining to the sport played on its surface.

The exact **shape of the shard subtly morphs** over time. As such, scramblers must be prepared to adapt their strategies on the fly. There is no purpose in memorizing and perfecting climbing routes, as those routes will undoubtedly change before the next match.

At any given time, the shard **emits exactly one fluxum gem**

from its surface. The location of this gem is completely random. If the gem ever touches the ground or finds itself greater than 20 or so feet from the shard, it will disappear, and a new fluxum gem will emerge.

A constant aura of unusual **interstellar energy surrounds the shard**. These swirling vapors cause a wide array of fluctuating magical effects, many of which have a profound impact on Scramble Shard matches.

D10 FLUXUM SHARD MAGICAL EFFECTS

- 1 Anyone within 5 feet of the shard experiences no gravity.
- 2 Anyone touching the shard moves at half speed (i.e., the honer and rascal act twice as quickly compared to the scrambler).
- 3 The shard becomes shrouded in a nearly opaque fog.
- 4 A mucus-like slime emerges from the shard.
- 5 A cloud of interstellar particles nullifies magic within 5 feet of the shard.
- 6 The shard becomes charged with electricity, occasionally zapping anyone touching it.
- 7 Hypnotic lights and colors emanate from the shard, transfixing those who gaze upon it.
- 8 An unnatural plume of total silence engulfs the shard.
- 9 The shard emits a sweet scent that attracts all nearby fauna, particularly flamingos.
- 10 A psychedelic compound heightens the emotions of anyone within 20 feet of the shard.

ADDITIONAL RULES

Magic reset. Between rounds, any spells affecting the competitors or the environment must reset. For example, boons granted to scramblers must be deactivated before the next round begins. Teams can loan a *sphere of purging* from Other Leg to assist in removing magical effects.

Equipment. Competitors may wear armor and may wield exactly one arcane implement. The use of any additional items is forbidden *unless* the student is a member of the College of Alchemy, in which case they may bring up to three potions or contraptions for use in the game.

Non-Student Participants. The use of golems, elementals, or familiars is forbidden.

Referees. Competitors may act as their own referees for exhibition matches. During any ranked match, a professor must adjudicate.

GM NOTE

We recommend rolling on the *Fluxum Shard* Magical Effects table each round. If you want fewer magical effects, roll a d20 and interpret any roll of 11 - 20 as indicating there is no meaningful effect. For maximal chaos, roll twice and apply both results. Feel free to craft your own effects as well!

GMING SCRAMBLE SHARD MATCHES

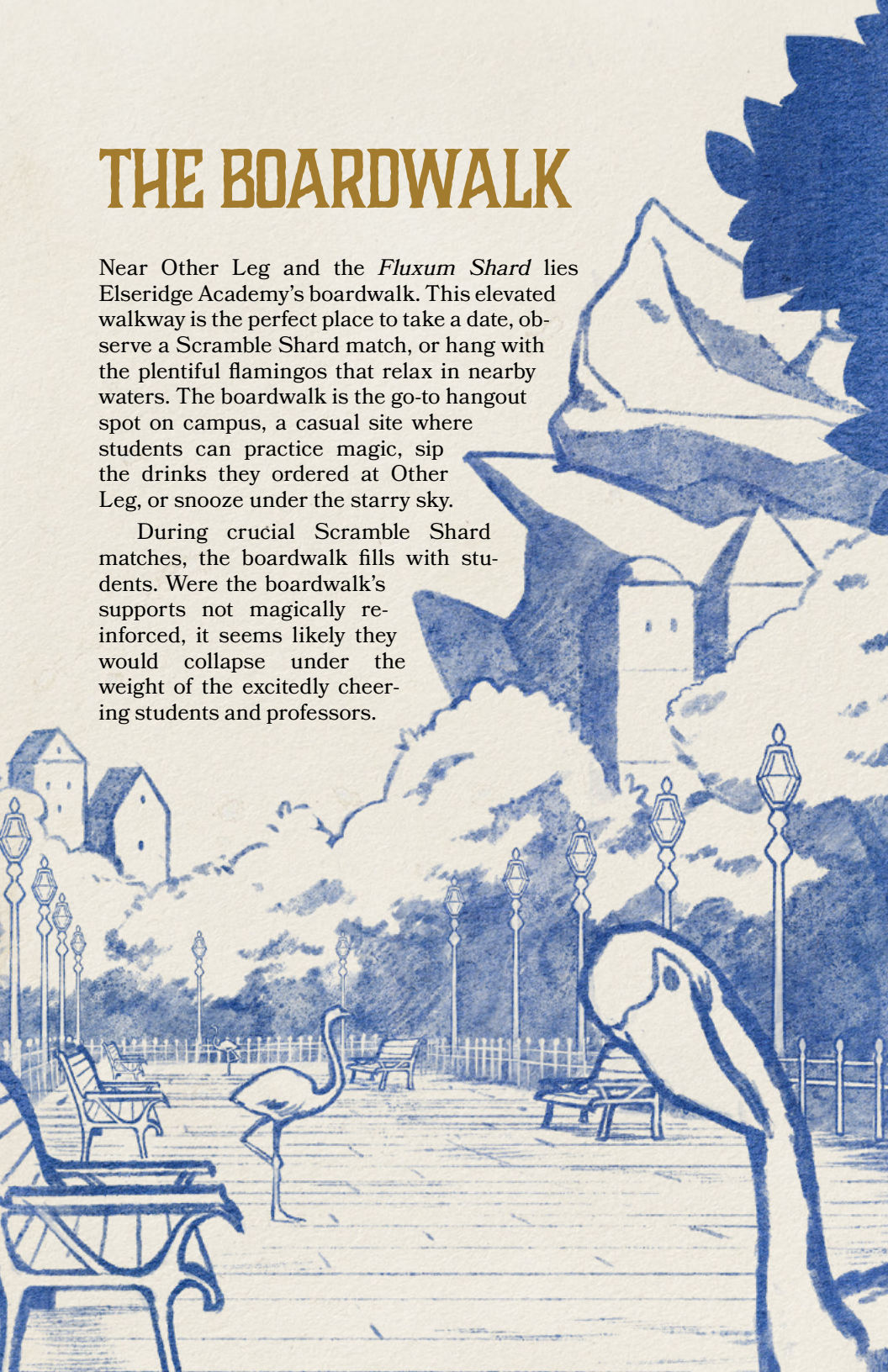
Scramble Shard is a great way to give your players the opportunity to use spells and abilities in a highly social non-combat encounter. We encourage you to tweak the rules to better fit the mechanics of your RPG. Here are some further considerations:

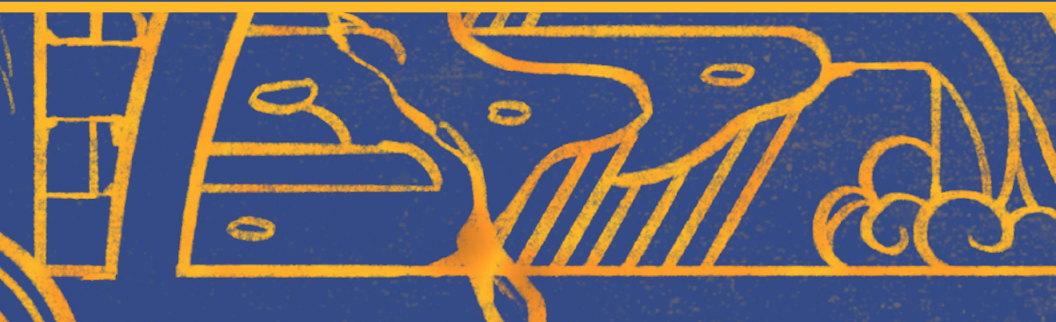
- ★ You will probably want team sizes that correspond with your party size. The scrambler position is the least magical and, thus, a great fit for player characters that are not mages.
- ★ Make sure opponents are appropriately equipped with magic. The main determinant of victory is access to spells. For example, if one team can grant their scramblers flight, that team will almost always win.
- ★ You can tweak what's considered a "harmful" spell. If your version of Elseridge is particularly violent, go ahead and let your rascals sling fireballs at each other.
- ★ If matches are taking too long, consider adding a rule that limits the number of spells each team member can cast per match or round.
- ★ Due to the impact of fouls on scoring, no team can ever *technical-*ly clinch a match until all rounds are completed. As such, you may want to add a rule that if one team ever gains a great enough lead, the match ends immediately.

THE BOARDWALK

Near Other Leg and the *Fluxum Shard* lies Elseridge Academy's boardwalk. This elevated walkway is the perfect place to take a date, observe a Scramble Shard match, or hang with the plentiful flamingos that relax in nearby waters. The boardwalk is the go-to hangout spot on campus, a casual site where students can practice magic, sip the drinks they ordered at Other Leg, or snooze under the starry sky.

During crucial Scramble Shard matches, the boardwalk fills with students. Were the boardwalk's supports not magically reinforced, it seems likely they would collapse under the weight of the excitedly cheering students and professors.







COVENANTS



SECRET SOCIETIES

Admission to Elseridge Academy is wholly inclusive. So long as a young spellcaster shows some aptitude for magic, the school will freely offer them a chance to study at the edge of the world. A great many students, however, won't realize until too late that their opportunities at Elseridge and beyond will be severely limited unless they are a member of one of the school's elite "secret societies." A handful of these exclusive clubs have existed for centuries, and each has their own culture and traditions.

Many of these secret societies are decidedly less secret than the designation might imply. "Secret" mostly just means that Elseridge's administration ignores the organizations altogether. For whatever reason, the trust has determined that disregarding secret societies better serves the school's mission. In practice, this means secret societies are allowed to bend rules that would otherwise put students in hot water.

Elseridge's secret societies range from mysterious and cult-like to casual and purely social. Some are themed around arcane sub-fields (necromancy, oneiromancy, eldritch channeling) while others are pre-professional, heritage-centric, or a hodgepodge of overlapping practices and themes.

THE HARITAMA SOCIETY

The most exclusive and controversial organization at Elseridge Academy is the Haritama Society. Former fellows of the society have gone on to found mage guilds, construct colossal towers, command legions of undead, protect the world from great evils, poison kings and queens, unleash and cure epidemics, start and end wars, and consort with unfathomable forces to unknown ends. Members of the Haritama Society are sworn to secrecy re-

garding their order, but a handful of details have leaked to the general student body over the years.

There is no sole defining feature that links fellows within the Haritama Society beyond a thirst for power. Some graduates leverage their alumni network to gain positions in royal courts, while others use the powers they've gained through the organization as a springboard into a lifetime of adventuring and good works. Many fellows simply disappear after they graduate, undoubtedly pursuing paths of even greater secrecy and arcane intrigue.



THE HARITAMA SOCIETY REVEALED

PLEDGING. During midwind break, the society taps roughly twenty first-year students to pledge the society. These students will spend the next semester accomplishing outrageous magical tasks across campus and beyond. Many tasks are dangerous, some are immoral, and few are ever publicly revealed. Those who succeed without failing their classes or disappointing the elder fellows will be granted permanent membership into the society.

PATRONS. Fellows of the Haritama Society go on to procure positions throughout Hjass that bestow conventional power and wealth. However, fellows are also aided by otherworldly patrons that grant boons to their spellcasting, secrets of the cosmos, and tempting bargains that might take them far beyond Hjass. The nature of these patrons is unknown, but they are confirmed to be neither Gods nor men, and they almost certainly call some other realm of existence home.

HEADQUARTERS. The Haritama Society only ever meets in secret. Since there is no magnificent building on campus to house the order, most suspect that they either meet in a warded pocket dimension or a veiled base out in the salt flats. Additionally, the Haritama Society maintains secure and luxurious lodges all across Hjass that fellows can use as they please.





REDEXUS THE EXALTED

RANK: Patron of the Haritama Society

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Channeling the will of his master

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: An ever-morphing polyedron

HERITAGE: Unknown

The overwhelming majority of Elseridge students will never meet or even hear of Redexus (he/him). He is a being that only makes himself known to members of the Haritama Society, and even then, he typically only introduces himself to those fellows who show the most promise. When he introduces himself to one of the fellows, it is always to grant a boon and make a request. He has his aims, and he knows what the fellows want. He grants them arcane power, and he expects them to fulfill his needs in return.

Redexus is not from this world, and he is cagey when over-eager fellows try to pry into his origins. Should fellows prove themselves, however, Redexus will slowly reveal a handful of secrets.

- ★ Redexus's master is known as Adann. Adann is an Ori-manus, one of 27 beings born at the dawn of time with

the power to gradually and subtly reshape the fundamental laws of magic and the universe.

- ★ Adann rules over a world of bountiful magic known as Haritama. This world is not Redexus's home.
- ★ Adann hopes to carefully spread his influence across Hjass, and he has tapped Redexus (one of many such Exalted acolytes) to assist in this aim.
- ★ Should the fellows work to advance Adann's inscrutable goals, Redexus will bless them with heightened magic and otherwise unobtainable interstellar resources.

More than anything, Redexus hopes to maintain an air of mystery. He does not want the members of the Haritama Society to understand what it means for them to advance his master's plans. Behind his veil of secrecy, Redexus is little more than an overtired middle manager. He has been granted incredible gifts, but he is forced to spend most of his efforts corraling comparatively weak mages while his master schemes from his pleasure palace in a distant realm. Redexus is getting antsy, and an antsy Exalted is prone to make mistakes.

BOUNDER MOROZ

RANK: Fourth-year Translocation student, president of the Haritama Society

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Magic nullification

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Seven floating caltrops that encircle his head

HERITAGE: Human, from a family that fled the accursed village Sootwyn Barrow

Bounder (he/him) is moderately social, a good student, and an above average Scramble Shard rascal. He is mild-mannered and keeps a pristinely organized schedule. He briefly dated star Cosmology student Agana Tuile but has otherwise struck out with members of the opposite sex. No one outside of his organization would ever guess that he is also the president of the Haritama Society and an unrepentant vassal of an interstellar infiltrator.

More than most, Bounder knows the risks of dangerous magic. His family had the foresight to flee from the now forsaken Sootwyn Barrow when they realized unspeakable darkness would soon envelop the village. And yet, Bounder is happy to pursue his calculated gamble. He is well aware that Redexus the Exalted is not to be trusted, but he



is also confident in his own ability to keep the eldritch lord appeased while pursuing his own goals.

Bounder wants to save his blighted village. He wants to master the gifts that Redexus has promised, tackle some trivial tasks on behalf of this *clearly* malevolent “Adann” character, and then he wants to scramble

to undo the cataclysm that stole his childhood away. Unfortunately, Bounder has grossly underestimated both the threat that his patron poses and the complexity of the magic at work back in Sootwyn Barrow. If he tries to lead the Haritama Society, keep Redexus happy, and redeem his home without additional aid, he is certain to fail.

D8 OTHER SECRET SOCIETIES

- 1 **The Court Magic League.** A pre-professional organization of Elseridge students hoping to pursue careers as court mages upon graduation. Serious and political, these fellows are all about networking and professional advancement. Mixers and meet-ups are only ever strategic.
- 2 **Six of One.** A secret society for students who hate secret societies. They constantly throw parties and pull harmless pranks. Frustratingly, they are subject to greater administrative oversight than their unambiguously conniving peers.
- 3 **Früggund’s Fallen.** A society comprising devotees of the God of entropy. Curiously, the group primarily consists of artsy iconoclasts rather than religious zealots, and less than half of their fellows are students of Divinity.
- 4 **Horns and Tails.** This society only admits students with so-called “monstrous” heritage. Any student at Elseridge knows that such a descriptor is both offensive and unscientific, but prejudices remain, and Horns and Tails hopes to provide support for those subjected to such intolerance.
- 5 **The Unity.** A group dedicated to the practice of necromancy. Though historically an unambiguously villainous society, they have been working to reshape their image by embracing so-called “ethical necromancy.”



COURT MAGIC LEAGUE



HORNS AND TAILS



FRUGGUND'S FALLEN

D8 OTHER SECRET SOCIETIES

- 6 **The Salt Shapers.** A cult through and through. They practice a pseudo-magic predicated on the notion that carving massive geoglyphs in the salt flats might do *something*. All evidence suggests that it does not.
- 7 **The Little Wingroots.** Wannabe adventurers. Every fellow hopes to someday join the Wingroot League, a legendary team of heroes known across Hjass. They keep busy by embarking on minor quests across Elseridge campus and the surrounding environs.
- 8 **Heaven's Crypt.** The only secret society that charges its fellows outrageous dues. This is the de facto "rich kid" club. They host marvelous galas aboard airships that dock just off of campus, but they don't allow in anyone they deem to be of "lesser birth."

USING SECRET SOCIETIES IN A CAMPAIGN

Secret societies can act as either a welcoming team for the party (akin to an "adventurers' guild" in other settings) or as an opposing faction. Your party may find a great group of allies in one secret society while ignoring all others. Alternatively, they might pledge a society during the first year only to find out that they reject everything the society stands for. Finally, they might decide all secret societies are lame and/or nefarious. Because of the spectacular resources afforded by these societies, members and their patrons are often prime candidates for villains throughout your campaigns.

If you prefer to mechanize favor in your campaigns, you can also treat each secret society as a distinct faction. As the party's deeds shape life at Elseridge, some societies may court them while others oppose their work.

FORT EXOGENOUS



Many of the most dangerous mages in Hjass are those that graduate with spellmarks from Elseridge Academy while fully embroiled in the arcane politics of the school's more insidious secret societies. However, there is an altogether separate category of spellcasters that all Elseridge students and graduates ought to fear: those who somehow pledge a secret society while *not* enrolled at the academy. Occasionally, these are Elseridge dropouts who choose to stay committed to their chosen families. More often, however, they are students who never attended Elseridge in the first place. They were drawn to the edge of the word by powerful, otherworldly forces for the sole purpose of training in secret and forging fellowships with promising young spellcasters.

Mages often first discover a proclivity for magic due to the influence of an outside entity. A fledgling wizard finds they have a knack for starting fires after be-friending an ifrit. A pious child encounters an angelic emissary and soon after demonstrates a gift for healing. A street urchin

forms a covenant with a fae inter-loper as a means to gain enchanting power over gullible marks. In each instance, a magically potent being bequeaths an aliquot of their power to a third-party, and in each instance, there is at least some expectation of reciprocity.

For decades, a number of extradimensional entities—Exalted beings like Redexus, though some serving different immortal masters—have carefully guided many such young spellcasters to a fort in the salt flats a dozen miles from Elseridge. This fort is enchanted such that only those who *know it is there* will see it. Only those who the Exalted elect to usher toward the fort ever discover the mysterious castle hidden in plain sight.¹ There, they train, hidden from the prying eyes of Elseridge's moralizing professors. These “untainted” warlocks can learn forbidden magicks directly from their chosen masters, all while consorting with equally furtive allies among the secret societies at Elseridge Academy.

Fort Exogenous is a hotbed of treacherous magical activity.

[1] Of course, there is technically a possibility that someone will randomly walk into the fort while wandering, though the odds of stumbling into this *particular* enclave within the endless, unvarying salt flats is slim to none.



Scores of spellcasters practice reckless spellcasting in the service of their untrustworthy benefactors. Some are simply wayward youngsters who feel this is the only way to hone their craft. Others are vile to the core, intent on bringing about some otherworldly mayhem if they believe it will please the Exalted.

FORT EXOGENOUS'S ARCHITECTURE

Most Exalted cannot step foot on Hjass. Ancient magi placed powerful wards across the entire realm, thereby preventing *direct* influence from the most foul interlopers. The Exalted have, nevertheless, infiltrated Hjass by way of their terrestrial apprentices. It was their followers who built Fort Exogenous, based on meticulous instructions delivered by way of dreams. As such, Fort Exogenous incorporates a number of alien and surreal designs, wholly distinct from Elseridge's elegant and simple geometries. The nuanced mathematics and aesthetics that define Fort Exogenous lack precedence among either the worlds of men or of fairy tales.

The above-ground portion of the fort is primarily utilitarian: dormitories for supplicants, kitchens, practice rooms, and common spaces for collaborations with visiting Elseridge students. Below the fort, in

chambers hewn from ancient compacted salt, Fort Exogenous hosts queerer halls. There are rooms that allow for communion with creatures in noncontiguous realms, ritual circles built for unholy magicks, and bottomless pits that give way to the void of space.

KAZELLA EMBRIK

RANK: Favored pupil of Nimi the Exalted

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Time travel

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A plain wooden staff tipped with a glass prism speckled with stardust

HERITAGE: Human, from the dungeons deep below the court of Tokaren

The life of Kazella Embrik (she/her) has been one of nonstop magically-induced misery. She was adopted by the crazed wizard Tannister Sel-Alassen, Elseridge graduate and court mage for the King of Tokaren. Tannister treated Kazella worse than dirt. The young girl was malnourished, lonely, and worked to the bone, all in the service of the wicked mage's vile experiments. For years, Kazella blamed Tannister for her misery, but to hate the man was insufficient. She grew to hate the world that made Tannister, and, above all else, the school that gave him power.

When Kazella was offered a covenant with a powerful and attentive creature from beyond the stars, she accepted in a heartbeat. With the help of her new master's magical gifts, Kazella fled her home, traveled to Fort Exogenous, and began to train. Her master—the enigmatic Nimi the Exalted—has honed in on Kazella's deepest wishes. Kazella does not wish for oblivion, but for the world to be remade anew

without the stain of Elseridge Academy and Tannister Sel-Alassen. Thus, she practices magic that would be forbidden at the nearby school. Kazella is near to unlocking the secret to traveling backward in time.

It is perhaps ironic that the spellcaster who hates Elseridge the most is something of a star student herself. Nimi and the other Exalted are overjoyed with her progress. It seems entirely



possible that the troubled mage might actually succeed in her quest. If she does, Elseridge will be unwritten from history, and the Exalted will have a much easier time infiltrating Hjass.

Kazella has few friends at Fort Exogenous. She does not play nice with the other warlocks. As with so many traumatized mages, Kazella poses a nontrivial risk to those around her, but it is abundantly clear that what she needs more than anything is to *heal*. Unmaking Elseridge will not mend her broken spirit, but cultivating meaningful relationships with other mages that have had harrowing experiences of their own just might. It will be hard enough for the party of adventurers to break into Fort Exogenous. Can they also break through to Kazella Embrik?

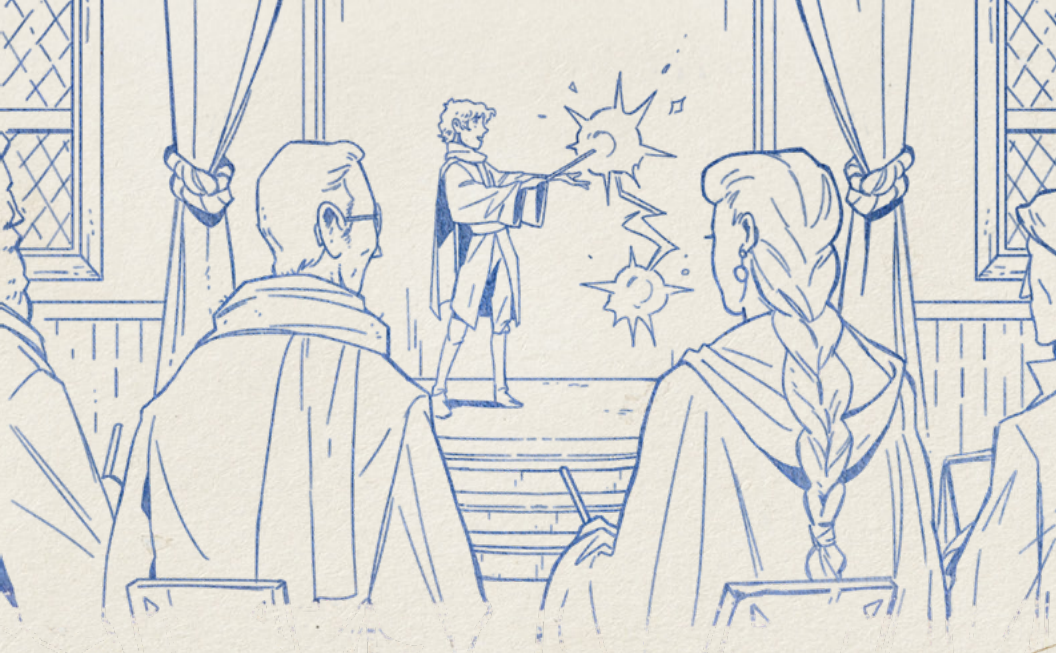
GM NOTE

Kazella is a potential primary antagonist for your campaigns. She has an understandable motive, great power, and a dangerous dungeon to call home. She can also be defeated either through combat or with empathy. Confronting an enemy by meeting them on their terms can be just as satisfying as a lengthy, climactic boss battle. Importantly, Kazella's backstory is traumatic. Before grappling with narrative themes of childhood abuse, consider the needs of your friends. Don't introduce plot beats that will upset your players, and make sure you have safety tools in place.

ARCANE THESIS

The last task that students need to accomplish before they graduate is the completion of their arcane thesis. During their final semester, they only take one class (a mastery-level magic course). The rest of their academic responsibilities revolve around the creation of a new spell, device, or similar magical process. They workshop the creation of a unique form of arcana with various tutors and peers throughout the semester before unveiling their opus in front of a jury of professors during starfall of their fourth year. After demonstrating their new creation, the jury will ask questions to break down the student's process, understand the inner working of the magic, and confirm that the student *actually* knows what they're doing (e.g., to confirm they didn't just stumble into some new version of casting starbolt or whatever).

Despite the rigid structure of an Elseridge education, most departments allow for an impressive diversity of arcane theses. Some students will create a brand new spell, while others will tweak the specifics of an existing spell. It is also acceptable to:

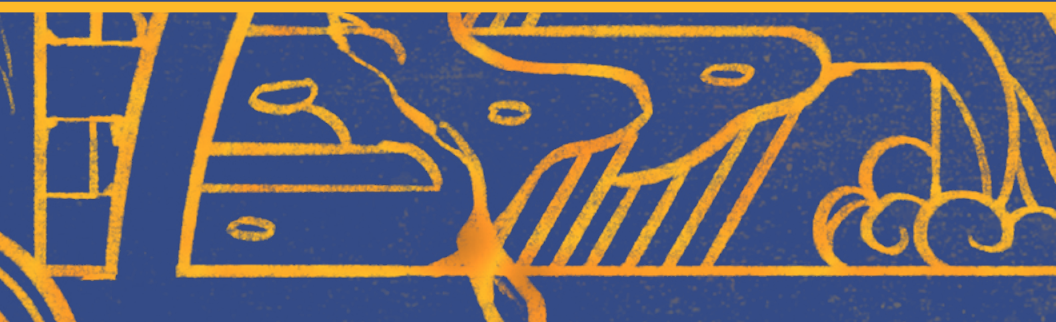


- ✦ Craft an arcane item (most commonly for alchemists)
- ✦ Brew an original potion (for druids or alchemists)
- ✦ Recontextualize an existing spell
- ✦ Perform an existing spell via innovative means (common for harmonists)
- ✦ Devise a new means of counteracting an existing spell

Completing an arcane thesis is no easy task. Learning the magic of the old masters is a wholly different skill set than creating new magic. As such, the juries that assess arcane theses must be incredibly rigorous. It is all too common for students to unleash new magic that may have unforeseen consequences. Much of the reason that Elseridge Academy's trust *requires* students to complete an arcane thesis is so that Hjass's top mages can monitor the progress of new spells and prepare for dangerous outcomes.

GM NOTE

Assuming your Elseridge campaign concludes toward the end of the party's fourth year, you should feel free to allow your players to tweak the mechanics of your RPG system to allow for the use of their arcane theses. For example, if your alchemist wants to build some kooky item for their thesis, *let them use* that item for the culmination of the campaign. The whole point of the arcane thesis is to give your players a chance to get creative and put their stamp on the magic of your world. Even if their creations end up a bit complicated, overpowered, or silly, do your best to work with your party to figure out a balanced way to *mechanicalize* their ideas.





VI

THE OLD MAGIC



THE FUNDAMENTAL FORCES OF THE UNIVERSE

A wrinkled wizard in tattered robes summons a ball of flame and hurls it at a menacing beast. A mysterious court mage twists fate ever so slightly to increase the chance that the queen bears a son. A captive magus commands a being of swirling winds to protect a column of soldiers from a hail of arrows.

The Old Magic is arcana that taps into fundamental essences. Usually, scholars enumerate the classical four elements, but modern practitioners often rely on alternative conceptualizations. A mage may focus on fire, water, earth, and air, or they may instead tug at fate, life-force, and belief. The nature of the elements is not important. What matters is that a mage of the Old Magic is manipulating these fundamental forces directly with no intermediary.

SAMPLE OLD MAGIC COURSES

Intro to Pyromancy

Applied Pyromancy

Pyromantic Mastery

Survey of the
Elements

Wards Against
the Elements

Offensive Ice
and Lightning

Radical Uses
for Earth

Mastery of Air

Elemental
Combinatoriality

Elemental
Manipulation

Elemental
Survival Skills

Alternative
Elemental Con-
ceptualizations

Understanding
Elementals

Elemental
Summoning

Elemental
Commands

Intro to Chance
and Fate

Influencing Chance

Mastery of Fate:
Domination
of Destiny

Probabilistic
Boons and Banes

Fire, Water, Chance,
and Causality

OLD MAGIC PROFESSORS

ARCHMAGE SEVENTA OOLBUS

RANK: Archmage of the College of the Old Magic

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Influencing fate

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A sandalwood spindle spun with golden yarn

HERITAGE: Human, allegedly born near the edge of world over 3,000 years ago

Seventa Oolbus (sher/her) is undoubtedly the oldest member of the faculty. If she is to be believed, she helped Salma Sahrou to found the academy, however Archmage Oolbus will be quick to admit that her memory is shoddy at best and outright rebellious at worst. For better or worse, Oolbus has wielded her fate-twisting magic for ages, nudging the academy toward peace and prestige. Though her effects on the school's fate is notoriously difficult to measure, some diviners claim to have seen visions of an Elseridge in shambles without Oolbus's influence.



It is through fate-twisting magic that Archmage Oolbus has managed to live as long as she has. In lieu of life-extending potions or divine wards, she has simply woven spells to consistently cheat death. As such, she has not been able to resist or reverse the effects of aging... Anyone who sees her will admit that she does, in fact, look to be 3,000 years old. Nevertheless, she still manages to lead the College of the Old Magic as its archmage while teaching a couple courses each semester. Archmage Oolbus is loopy, but kind. She gets easily confused, but she is still an undisputed master of probabilistic manipulation and a respected, if unconventional, pedagogue.



ARBERN BERDUNGUM

RANK: Professor in the College of the Old Magic

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Summoning and commanding earth elementals

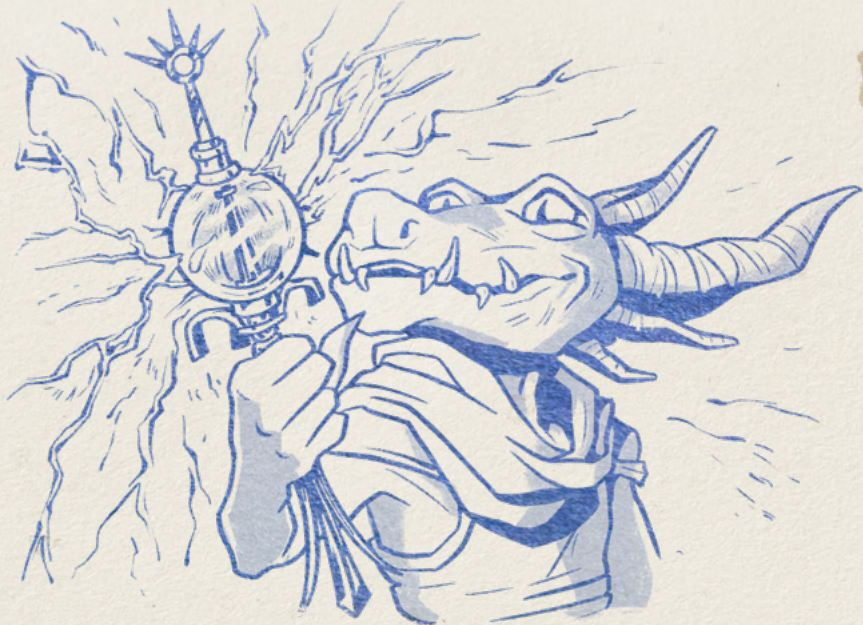
ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A gnarled oaken staff

HERITAGE: Dwarf, from a now-abandoned mining community in the temperate forests of Wemboren

New students often confuse golemetry—the practice of creating animated assistants via Alchemy—with the summoning of elementals. Golems are programmable automatons, beings of law and substance. Elementals, conversely, are forces incarnate, beings of impulse and ener-

gy. Arbern Berdungum (he/him) learned this lesson the hard way when he summoned his first elemental, an uncontrollable stony maelstrom that killed his family and nearly destroyed his town.

Like founder Salma Sahrou, Professor Berdungum discovered the danger of magic, the risks of an untrained or irresponsible sorcerer. Now, he is among the most stoic and measured professors at Elseridge. He does not believe that *anyone* needs to toy with elemental magic, but he knows that some mages will anyway, and so he does best to instill in them a fear and respect of untamed powers. He can't bring his family back, but he can make sure young mages know better than to flippantly unleash powers they don't understand.



STREE'G

RANK: Assistant Professor in the College of the Old Magic

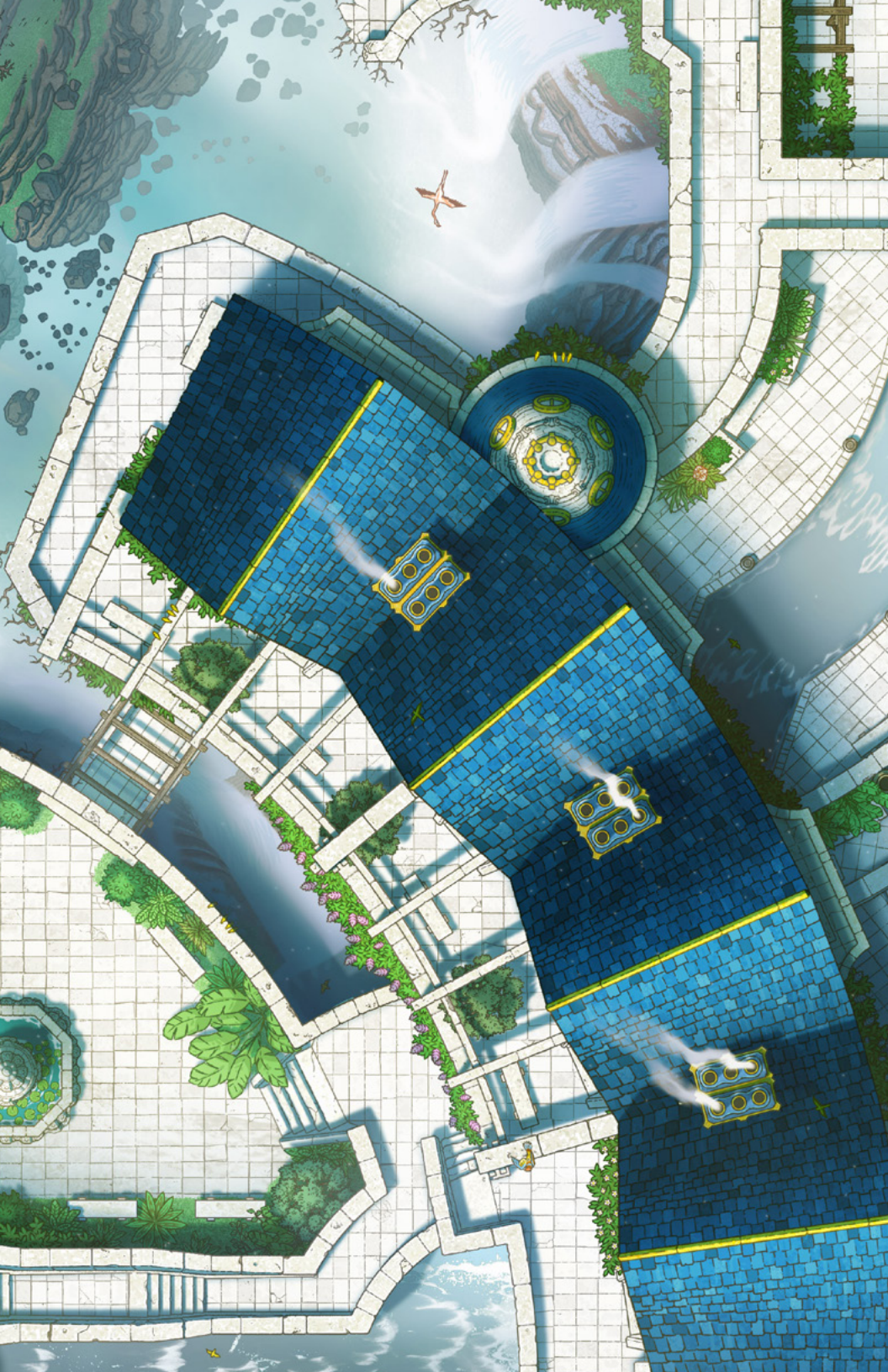
ACADEMIC FOCUS: Conjuring and manipulating lightning

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A wrought iron "staff" he stole off a belfry as a child

HERITAGE: Kobold, from the city streets of Delvisaport

Stree'g (he/him) is a recent Elseridge graduate, a lightning magic savant who was plucked from the slums as a child. Stree'g is an astoundingly powerful mage; records from the College of Cosmology suggest that Stree'g's maximum total arcane output is among the highest ever recorded. He can deploy massive cracks of electricity, redirect bolts from arcane turrets, and stand in the direct line of a lightning bolt without being harmed.

Unfortunately, the young professor is not yet an excellent teacher. He is enthusiastic and inspiring, but his lack of organization often leaves students bewildered. What's more, he feels that his efforts at Elseridge are wasted; he *should* be using his magic to threaten corrupt governments and help the downtrodden. He doesn't exactly know how that would work, but he suspects there must be a way to wield his comically lethal magic in a way that will actually increase welfare for the common folk. He'll often digress during lectures on elemental manipulation, instead delivering meandering rants about the importance of converting magical power into political influence. Some among the faculty worry that he is inadvertently advocating for political violence... In private, Stree'g would say they are only wrong in characterizing it as "inadvertent."





OLD MAGIC STUDENTS

GERHART MOURN

RANK: Fourth-year Old Magic student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Void manipulation

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A black ribbon that stains Gerhart's hand

HERITAGE: Human, from the tainted city of Gulchreach

One of the most accomplished students within the college, Gerhart Mourn (he/him) has already made impressive headway on his arcane thesis. The brooding twenty-something has discovered what may be a brand new manipulable force within the Old Magic, an element he calls "void." Gerhart has spent the bet-

ter part of his education studying this mysterious force, eschewing typical Elseridge pursuits like "having fun" or "doing mischief." Gerhart spent his journey year on a solo adventure, a practice usually discouraged by faculty. He proved the naysayers wrong, however, when he returned to campus with a slew of fabled artifacts he claims to have stolen from the dreaded gulch witches.

Curiously, Gerhart spends almost as much time working with priests of the God of entropy in the College of Divinity as he does with the Old Magic faculty. This has led some professors to doubt whether Gerhart is truly wielding the Old Magic in the first place. Perhaps, instead, he is channeling magic bestowed by the god of entropy. Gerhart takes this skepticism in stride; after all, he considers himself far above his pathetic professors. They do not yet understand true power.



LEESEE BELLEEZEE

RANK: Second-year Old Magic student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Ice magic

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A silver circlet with agate cabochons that forms a crystalline lattice during spellcasting

HERITAGE: Half-elf, from the desert city of Thazz

There are few elves remaining in Hjass,¹ and those rare few cling to what's left of their culture. Leese (she/her), a half-elf, inherited a set of elven heirlooms from her great-grandmother but only discovered the arcane potential in these treasures when she became a young adult. As soon as she showed signs of magical competency, she was whisked away to Elseridge. Despite the

year of academy training under her belt, Leese remains reliant on her great-grandmother's circlet to cast even the simplest spell. This dependency is a continuous source of embarrassment and anxiety.

Nevertheless, Leese has made the best of her situation. She is active in countless extracurriculars, serving as the captain of her Scramble Shard team and the cheeriest extrovert to regularly practice rituals with the Coven of the Occult. She studies hard and always volunteers first for arcane experiments. More than anything, Leese wants to feel worthy of her ancestral gifts, and she hopes that someday she can be just as powerful without them.

[1] Hjass's isolated elven population was all but wiped out in a poorly documented massacre some 150 years ago.



CORA MIROS

RANK: First-year Old Magic student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Undecided

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A plain wand made from cherry wood

HERITAGE: Human, from the cosmopolitan city of Chiuseppoli

Cora (she/her) grew up with her mother because her father Larico is an Alchemy professor at Elseridge. Throughout Cora's early years, she barely saw her father, and when they did reconvene for holidays, Papa Larico would only ever inquire about Cora's pre-alchemical studies.

Cora deeply resents her father and his rigid expectations. As such, when she finally arrived at the *Hexacoil* on her first day at Elseridge, she proudly walked through the Old Magic gate, in proud defiance of her father's expectations.

Cora does not yet know what she wants to study, but she knows she wants nothing to do with Alchemy or the skeevy brown-nosers that suck up to her father. Her interest in magic is wholly her own and not some family obligation she has to follow just to gain her father's affection. Cora will do anything to prove her independence, even if that means harnessing the powers of fate and fire to unclear ends.



OLD MAGIC

POINTS OF INTEREST

FOUR POOLS

Many Old Magic incantations are easy to cast with plentiful access to essential elements. As such, the school keeps a room on campus known as the Four Pools well stocked with sand, water, simmering coals, and swirling vapors. Students may visit the Four Pools to practice their elemental spells, and tutors from the college are often on-hand to assist should someone botch an elemental summoning spell.

FOUNDER'S LITHOGLYPH

This round block of marble is inscribed with glyphs allegedly etched by Elseridge founder Salma Sahrou. Unfortunately, no one can read the glyphs. Some surmise that the text is a warning that can only be read by interdimensional travelers. In either case, the quad surrounding the lithoglyph is one of the more popular hangout spots for students of the Old Magic.

THE LOOKOUT

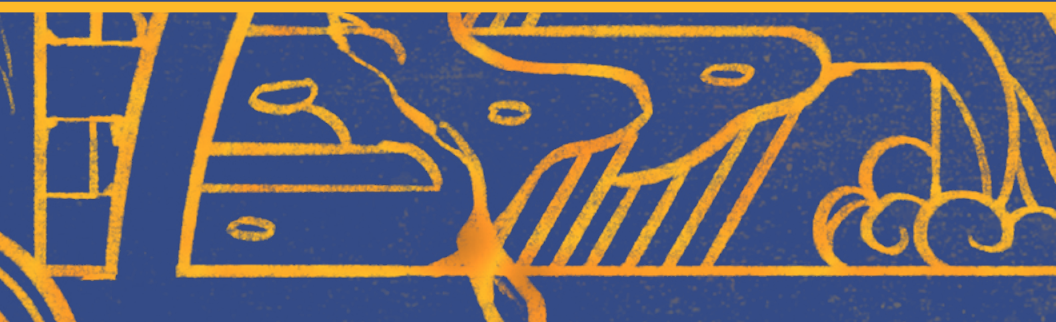
The Old Magic is the most consistently lethal form of arcana. As such, maximizing safety during training and evaluation is the college's highest priority. When students and professors must practice elemental invocations, they will often do so in the lookout, a tower with one open wall facing the void. Professors will demonstrate pyromantic blasts or sprays of icy shards that dissipate out into the emptiness of space, and students will practice conjuring similar effects with little risk of collateral damage.

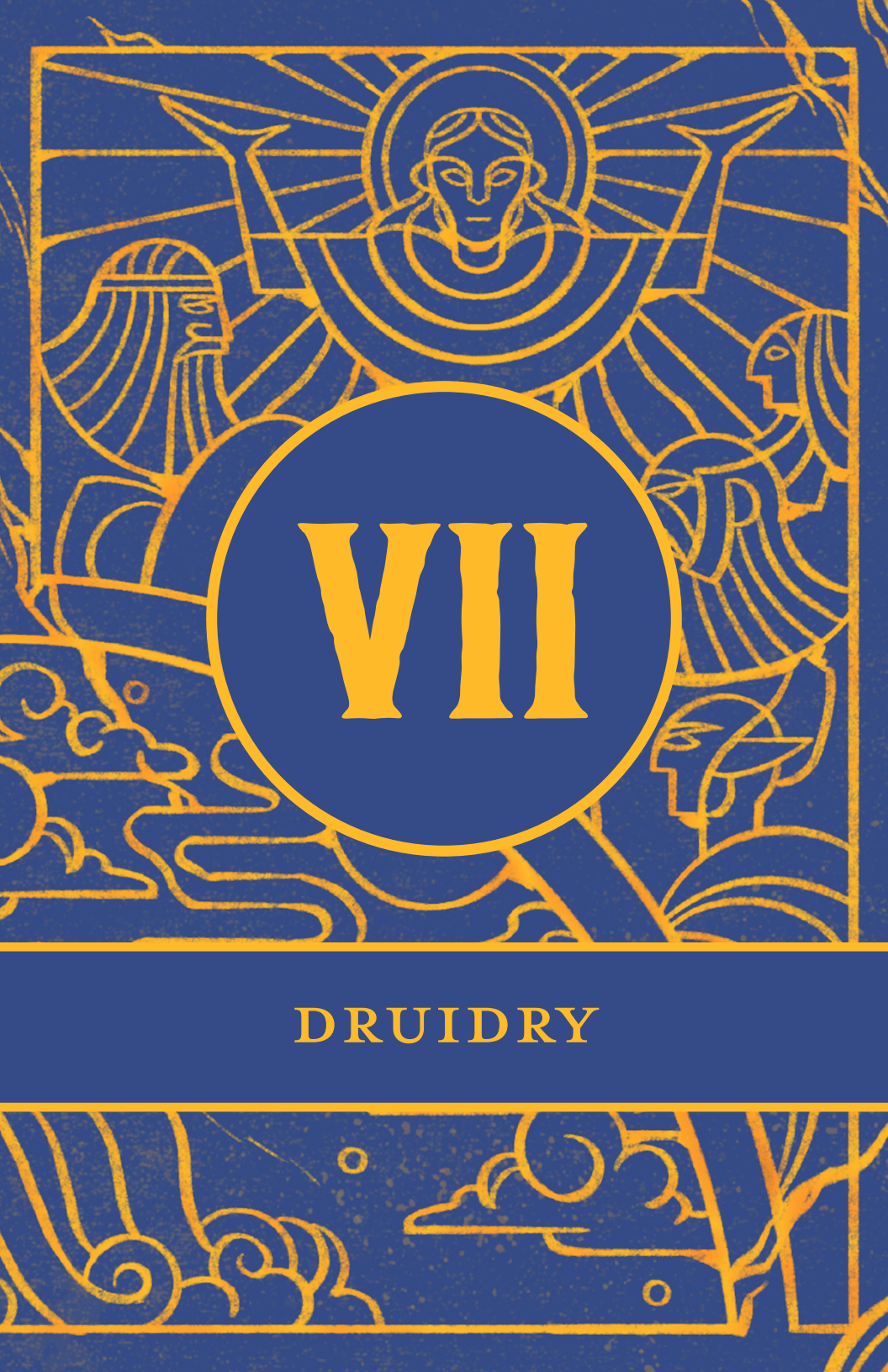
THE PROBABILITRIX

Evaluating students on their ability to influence fate is notoriously difficult. Most examinations are conducted in the Probabilitrix, a sort of magically dampened gambling hall. Students must demonstrate that they have command over fate with statistically improbable sequences of dice rolls, drawn cards, or roulette spins. Needless to say, the Probabilitrix is also a common location for recreation and parties, and it's home to the school's chankla club.

D10 OLD MAGIC RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 Professor Allafew, an elemental generalist, recently suffered debilitating injuries from steam burns. The administration is considering allowing void mage Gerhart Mourn to teach the remainder of Allafew's classes for the semester.
- 2 Elementals are never meant to intersect with the physical realm for long, but one of Professor Stree's lightning elementals has been buzzing around campus for almost a week now, and no one knows what to do about it.
- 3 A few Old Magic students are trying to intimidate a dragon with harmless but dazzling ice magic. They believe the dragon will lead them to her treasure hoard. The dragon is clearly just young and afraid, and she likely has no hoard to speak of.
- 4 Dozens of orbs, rods, and staves have gone missing throughout the college, and the only lead anyone has to go on is that all of the arcane implements were metal. Could the thief be manipulating magnetic forces?
- 5 Archmage Oolbus suddenly announced that all students would be required to take Advanced Fate Wards this semester. She seemed frantic during the announcement, and none of the other professors have been willing to discuss the matter.
- 6 A bona fide genie is visiting campus to teach a series of guest lectures on wind magic. He will also offer three exceptional students the opportunity to study with him one-on-one, so long as they promise not to make any wishes.
- 7 A new student has been accused of burning a book of elemental spells. He claims that his roommate tricked him into doing so with a mind-altering spell. The Old Magic faculty must decide the fate of the two alleged rule breakers.
- 8 Many students of the Old Magic elect to claim an ember of the Forge God's flame—a mystic eternal fire far to the south—during their journey year, but rumors suggest the professors tend to coals from the magic fire in a secret hearth not far away along the cliffside.
- 9 The King of Tokaren has announced that he'll soon be employing a large cohort of elemental mages to bolster his army for some upcoming "diplomatic exercises." Many students are jumping at the career opportunity, but others question the king's ethics.
- 10 The Druidry and Old Magic faculty have been bickering lately, as a newly published study indicates that their magics are, in fact, synonymous. If this were proven, the dramatically dichotomous colleges might be forced to merge.





VII

DRUIDRY

THE PRIMAL FORCES OF NATURE

A wandering shaman pounds a staff covered in cobwebs and instantly revitalizes a field of tainted grain. A wild man lets out a guttural howl, and scores of beasts emerge from the forest to fight back against advancing colonizers. An eccentric scout parts the rain clouds and peers through the eyes of a hawk.

Druidry is unique in that its source of power is the same as the target of its power. Druids gain their magic from nature, and they almost always use that power to manipulate nature. Most druids respect the sanctity of the natural world; after all, the intrinsic magic of a healthy ecosystem gives rise to a druid's influence. However, some hope to use the powers of druidic magic to dominate or reshape the world. They may view an untouched environment as imperfect without their influence, or, conversely, they may see humanity as a wicked force wholly divorced from the serenity of the natural world.

SAMPLE DRUIDRY COURSES

Intro to Agricultural Magic	Commanding Fauna	Salves, Curatives, and Tinctures for Non-Alchemists
Case Studies in Agricultural Influence	Bonding with Fauna	
Agricultural Mastery	Survey of Arcane Creatures	Herbalistic Mastery
Intro to Weather Manipulation	Survey of Arcane Plants and Fungi	Nature Spirit Communion
Summoning Storms	Transforming Terrain	Familiar Cooperation
Environmental Wards	Floral Manipulation	Ley Lines, Monoliths, and Geoglyphs
Speaking to Fauna	Intro to Herbalism	Primal Sensing

GM NOTE

In many tabletop systems, druids have the ability to transform into animals. While this is not a canonical element of Elseridge druids, you can easily add a few courses related to shapeshifting.

DRUIDRY PROFESSORS

ARCHDRUID JORAMUND KOW

RANK: Archdruid of the College of Druidry

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Spirit and beast communion

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A forked twig he almost never uses

HERITAGE: Human, from the deep woods of the Geldri Forest

A powerful druid knows that the most powerful magic is often the simplest. Joramund^[1] (he/him) mastered countless intricate spells in his earlier years, but he has found the most strength and peace from his soft-spoken bonds with nature spirits and with his bear companion Loggir. After all, a druid who can rely on his allies from the natural world rarely has to cast a spell. Why ensnare a foe in vines when your best friend—a 1,200-pound grizzly bear—can simply pin them to the ground?

Joramund has a hard exterior. He is a stern and serious man with high expectations for his

students, and he is equally rigid when it comes to academic politics. He will not let insidious elements tear Elseridge apart, nor will he back down from his druidic values in the face of a rapidly modernizing Hjass. Nevertheless, students who become close with Joramund will occasionally see glimpses of his laidback side. When the grumpy druid shares a meal with Loggir or whispers a dirty joke to the spirit of a waterfall, he may just be revealing his true self.



[1] While most professors expect students to refer to them as “Professor Such-and-Such,” druids and some harmonists instead prefer for students to use their first names.



ERIVICE YANSEEN

RANK: Professor in the College of Druidry

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Agricultural Magic

ARCANE IMPLEMENT:

Comfortable leather gardening gloves

HERITAGE: Human, from the urban heart of Tokaren



When Erivice (she/her) was a student at Elseridge, she began her studies as an alchemist. She believed she could make great machines powered by runes and arcane fuel that would revolutionize farming, bolstering crop yields and thereby feeding all of her home kingdom's starving masses. After years of floundering in the program, she transferred to the College of Druidry and prospered. The answers were here all along; with a greater understanding of the environment and a careful hand in manipulating it, one could perform agricultural miracles.

Erivice is far from the typical druid in the college. She is not mystical, and she prefers the comforts that urban life provides. Still, she has fully embraced the magic of druidry, and a few of her signature spells—namely *fast fallow* and *seed burrow*—have indeed helped magically-gifted farmers in their work. Erivice does not plan to stop innovating, even though some of her fellow faculty members believe she may be veering too far into the realm of “environmental perversion.” If that’s what it takes to keep people fed, though, she is happy to twist the environment to her aims as needed.



TAYÀ OF BLUE AND GREEN

RANK: Professor in the College of Druidry

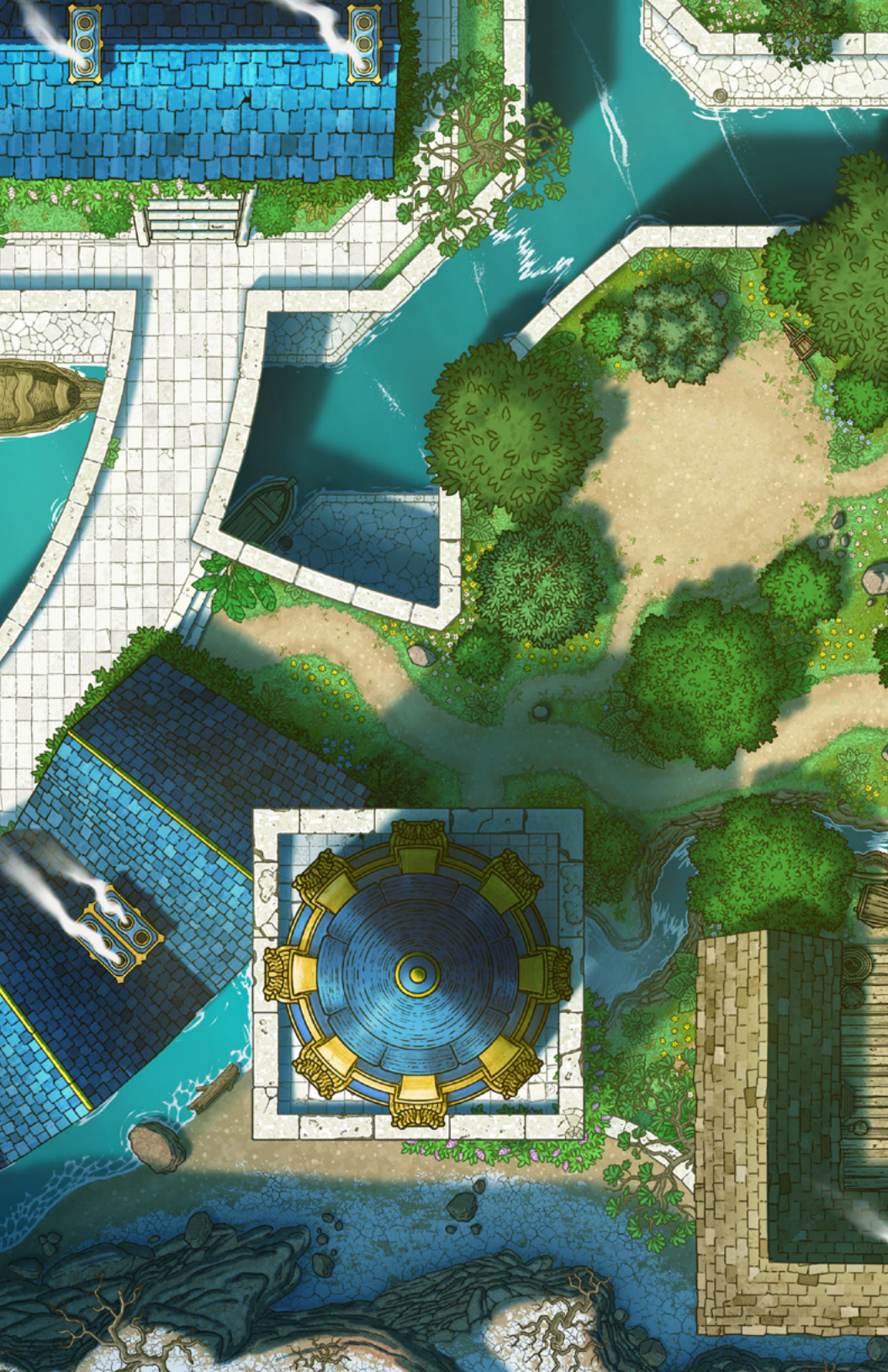
ACADEMIC FOCUS: Herbalism and Weather Manipulation

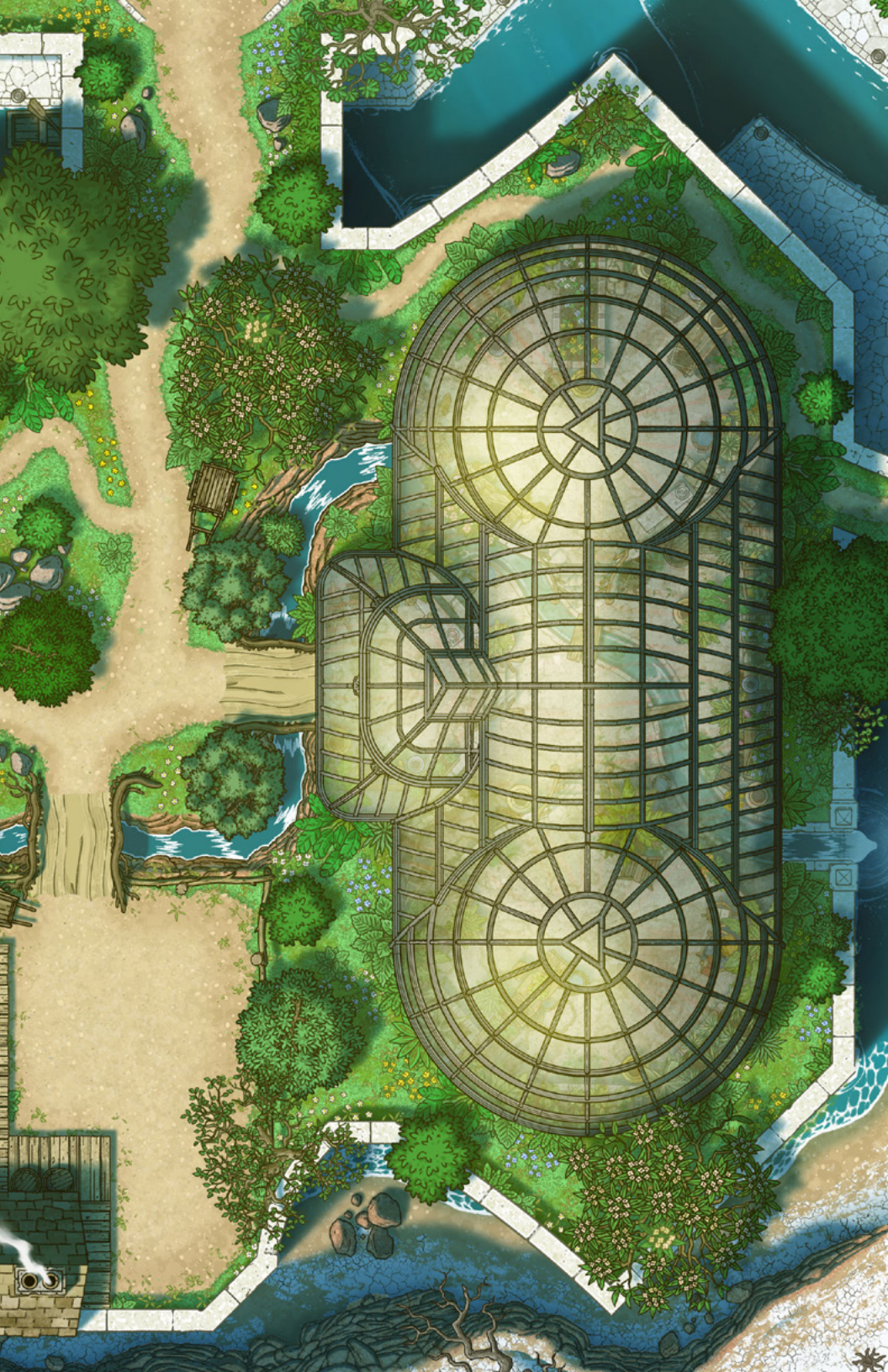
ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A stretch of hempen twine wrapped around various pieces of driftwood

HERITAGE: Turtlefolk, from a mysterious island in the uncharted Vutmarin Seas

One must assume that there is an entire civilization of turtlefolk somewhere in the distant Vutmarin Seas, but Tayà (she/her) is the only such creature to have ever stepped foot on Elseridge campus. She claims that “no two people in the seas are alike,” but no one is sure whether that means she’s the only turtle-person, or whether that’s just Tayà being profound and metaphorical as usual.

Tayà is the quintessential druid, a mystical old dreamer who prefers the company of plants to people. She is in charge of both the college’s greenhouse and the Tower of Terrains, so any Druidry student will inevitably spend quite a bit of time with her even if they do not take her classes. Tayà regularly shares unusual secrets when she’s deep in her horticultural work, musings about the nature of the world, the sentiments of spirits, or far-off mystical locales that few Elseridge students would dare explore. Those in need of inspiration for a journey year quest would be wise to keep their ears open when Tayà of Blue and Green is near.







DRUIDRY STUDENTS

FWEN SHAYNARY

RANK: Fourth-year Druidry student

ACADEMIC FOCUS:

Environmental manipulation

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A satchel of dried herbs

HERITAGE: Centaur, from the grassy plains of Billoheil



Fwen (she/her) is an excellent druid, to be sure, but few associate her with her countless academic successes. Instead, most students hear the name “Fwen Shaynary” and shudder. She is a druid who has taken her love of the natural world to its logical extreme, engaging in revolutionary acts of borderline ecoterrorism before she has even graduated. Though she usually performs her now legendary rebellious outbursts during fluxum break, she will occasionally dismantle an alchemical engine or kidnap the son of a logging magnate without leaving Elseridge's campus.

Needless to say, Fwen has drawn the ire of both world governments and Elseridge's Disciplinary Order. Despite constant setbacks, Fwen has yet to be



arrested for more than a week or so, and she has narrowly avoided expulsion on at least three occasions. This is due in part to Archdruid Joramund Kow's influence; Fwen is one of his favorite students, and he will not see her removed from the college, regardless of her radical politics.

Fwen takes Elseridge's mission statement to heart. She believes her extremely political action is exactly the behavior founder Salma Sahrou would have encouraged.



RELEDANOYA “REL” ILSTON

RANK: Second-year Druidry student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Fauna of the edge of the world

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A disgusting clump of sunburnt algae

HERITAGE: Human, from the small hamlet of Estiloc

For as long as they can remember, Rel (they/them) has been fascinated by the weird animals they read about roaming the salt flats at the edge of the world. They had seen all manner of unusual swamp creatures in the endless bogs near home, but they just couldn't wrap their head around the fact that some beasts were still able to survive in this most alien environment. As such, Rel was overjoyed when they started manifesting druidic magic in their teens.

Rel is one of the heads of Elseridge's Animal Caretakers, and they are constantly petitioning the Druidry faculty to adopt even more unique creatures from the lands just outside the school's grounds. Perhaps surprisingly, most faculty members do not consider the local fauna to be a top priority; the creatures are so rare and isolated that knowledge of them hardly seems useful for druids who will move back south after graduating. Thus, Rel has taken matters into her own hands, frequently sneaking off campus to study and bond with salt crabs, psychic newts, and even the occasional friendly dragon.



URDORIK

RANK: First-year Druidry student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Channeling natural fonts of power

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: An orb of polished petrified wood

HERITAGE: Minotaur, created by wicked druids in the shadowy corners of the Geldri Forest

Urdorik (he/him) can innately sense and suss out places of profound druidic magic. This is almost certainly a side-effect of his unusual birth. The minotaur was coaxed from the earth itself by a league of ill-intentioned druids, themselves channeling magic via ley lines surging through their ancestral forest. Urdorik's "family" wanted to control him, forcing him to do their bidding, much as they control countless beasts. Luckily, Urdorik turned their magic against them and fled the Geldri Forest once and for all.

Urdorik found his way to Elseridge, where he has begun honing his innate ability to perceive and manipulate flows of druidic magic. To little surprise, he already routinely butts heads with the archdruid and other professors of so-called "beast bonding." Urdorik does not believe druids *ought* to wield spells that influence animals. After all, those very same powers were once used to control him. Does Elseridge not have strict rules against mind-alteration? Or does that only apply to the "greater races" of Hjass?



DRUIDRY POINTS OF INTEREST

THE GREENHOUSE

Most coursework related to arcane plants occurs in Elseridge's Greenhouse. The glass of this great structure is tinted to keep out harmful cosmic rays, and the entire space is under constant atmospheric manipulation to keep the temperamental plants healthy. While these plants are invaluable for druidic study, the greenhouse also provides the academy's chefs with fresh herbs, alchemists with natural reagents, and the Animal Caretakers with plenty of treats for their fickle wards.

THE PENS

Druids work with animals, and most animals cannot survive on their own in the wastes beyond Elseridge's campus. As such, the academy's animals live in the college's pens. Inside, students will find beasts bonded with faculty members or accomplished students, arcane creatures currently critical for research projects, and rescued animals that were found inexplicably languishing near campus.² These pens also act as the headquarters for the college's Animal Caretakers, an extracurricular club that tends to the school's animal population.

- [2] The academy's druids have discovered increasing numbers of animals near to campus with unexplained origins. Faculty are completely perplexed as to how a dozen alligators, a great blue heron, and herd of alpacas found their way to the edge of the world.



THE TOWER OF TERRAINS

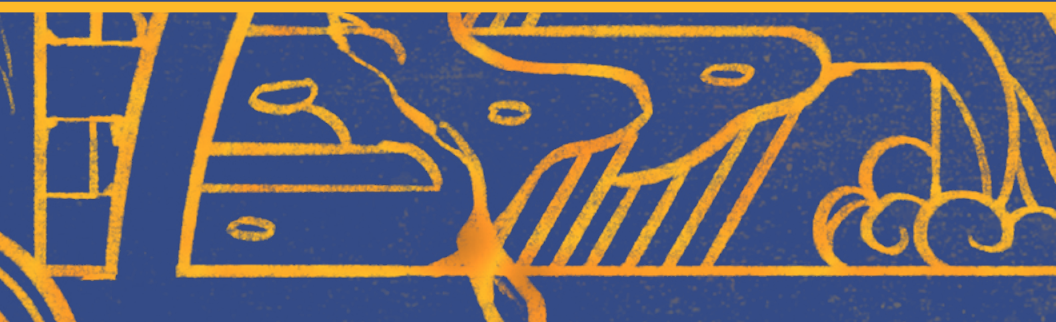
Many druidic studies are terrain-dependent; after all, one can't practice commanding swampy vines without access to an appropriately overgrown bog. The college's answer for this is the Tower of Terrains, a slender structure featuring a different biome on each level. Though each floor is small, this tower allows for students to practice environmental manipulation in a wide variety of climates and simulated ecosystems without leaving campus.

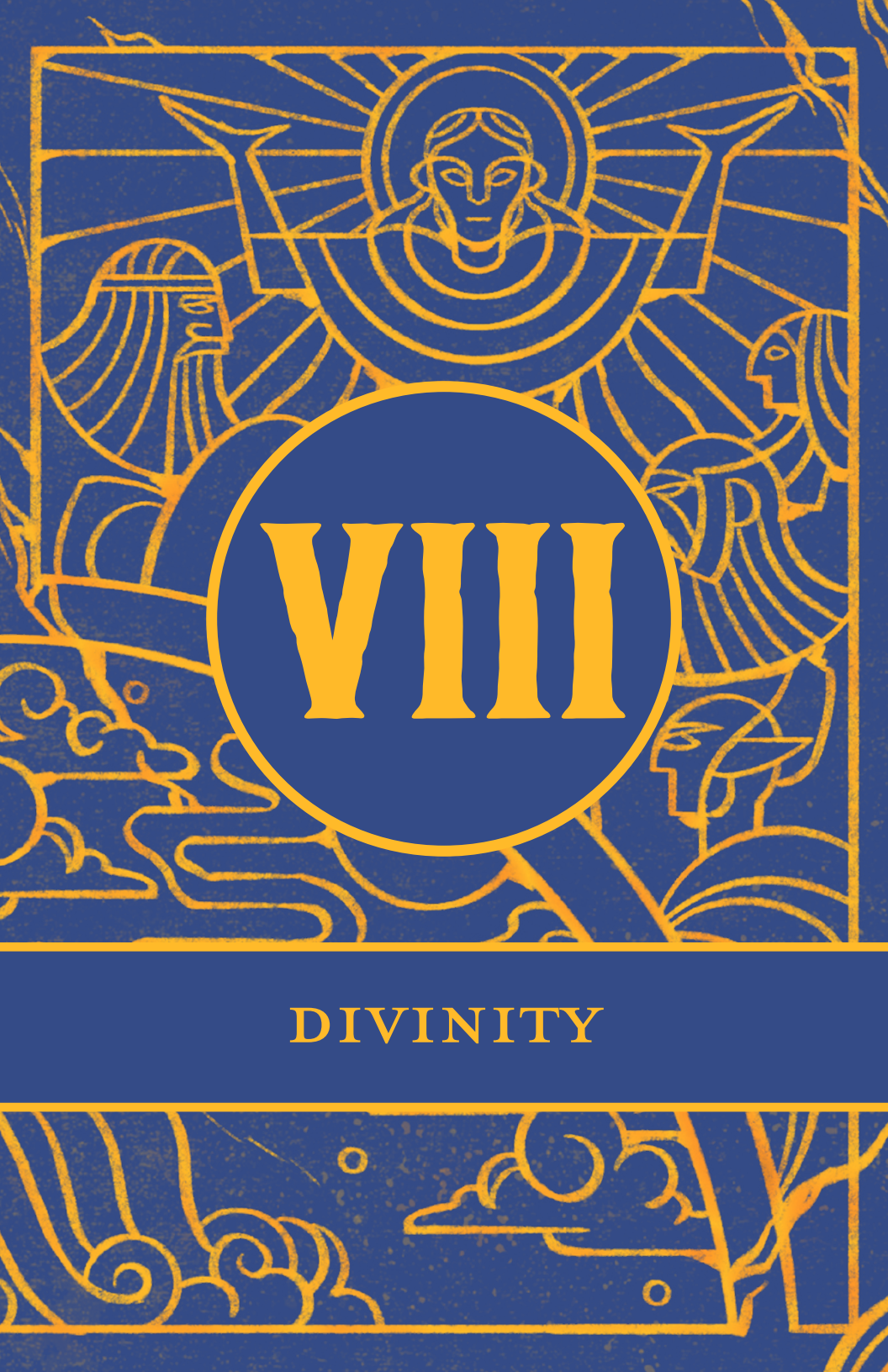
AERSYR'S COPSE

There are few proper *groves* on campus; even after millennia of subtle environmental manipulation, the grounds around Elseridge are not ideal for large trees. Aersyr's Copse is the best the academy can muster, a small cluster of trees allegedly blessed by Elseridge's first druidic faculty member, the great Aersyr Worldtorn. Legend suggests the ancient archdruid is responsible for much of the verdant terrain at the edge of the world. Today, the copse is a place of respite for druids to refocus their attention away from their studies and back toward the splendor of the natural world.

D10 DRUIDRY RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 The banquet hall chefs claim that scores of organized raccoons have been robbing food from the pantries. Clearly one of the druids is responsible, but who? And what are they doing with all of that food?
- 2 Usually, lightwind is a season of surprisingly temperate weather at the edge of the world. However, freak storms are becoming a normal occurrence. Some druids think that the faculty ought to be protecting the school by manipulating the weather; others think that their meddling is responsible for the storms in the first place.
- 3 The controversial Haritama Society have typically looked down on druids and only ever allowed a small handful into their order. However, they have begun aggressively recruiting the new batch of first-year students. Why have their priorities suddenly shifted?
- 4 Vallyn Tor'muth, a professor of beast studies, is organizing a month-long field trip into the salty wastes beyond campus. Any students who attend will be excused from their other classes for the duration.
- 5 The *Fluxum Shard*, long believed to thrum with uniquely cosmic magic, may in fact be a powerful font of druidic magic as well. Some of the Druidry faculty wants to harness this power, but they worry about coming into conflict with Elseridge's cosmologists.
- 6 The feline familiar of a long-dead Druidry professor has just re-emerged on campus. The cat claims his master is still alive, and that Elseridge's administration lied about his death.
- 7 Minor nature spirits are ubiquitous, but greater spirits are harder to find. Allegedly, a great being known as the Soul of North inhabits a cave among the cliffs below Elseridge.
- 8 Erivice Yanseen has just unveiled a new spell that would allow druids to produce unprecedented crop yields in the salt flats beyond campus. On one hand, this would be an incredible boon for the academy. On the other hand, some believe Elseridge mages should avoid tampering with the delicate ecosystem at the edge of the world.
- 9 Archdruid Joramund needs the assistance of a dragon. Normally, he would approach one of the noble northern beasts himself, but a recent injury leaves him bedridden. He will begrudgingly ask the party to escort a dragon to campus on his behalf.
- 10 Necromancy students have requested that Tayà of Blue and Green begin cultivating bleeding reeds in the greenhouse. This swamp grass produces blood-like sap that can be used in unholy rituals. The students claim that harvesting this sap for spellcasting is more ethical than using blood, but Tayà refuses to cultivate the "tainted grass."





VIII

DIVINITY



THE POWER OF THE GODS

A friar performs a holy ritual to bless a barrel of mead and, in so doing, invigorates the heroes resting at his abbey. A warrior monk whispers a mystic mantra and punches a troll with the might of a God. A spiritual leader asks her deity for guidance, and thus, she leads her people through their darkest hour with the knowledge that her counsel is divinely inspired.

Divinity is a theoretically endless font of power. If even one of the Gods of Hjass's pantheon is truly omnipotent, then there is no limit to what strength and abilities one could gain through faith. In general, many magical effects one might evoke through other means are also possible by channeling the divine. However, any holy spellcaster is limited by the nature of their faith. Most spellcasters are limited by the arcane purview of their chosen deity.

SAMPLE DIVINITY COURSES

Basic Remedy Spells	Mastery of Divine Insight	Invigoration, Inspira- tion, and Inoculation
Mending, Regeneration, and Rejuvenation	Wards Against Evil	Conceptualizations of the Soul
Miraculous Healing	Wards Against Ambiguous Threats	Ensoulng, Desoul- ing, and Resoulng
Divine Summons	Wards Against Extradimensional Entities	Ethical Necromancy
Divine Divination	Wards Against the Self	Intro to Divine Channelng
Survey of Divine Realms	Auras and Emanations	Harnessng Tempered Godhood
Survey of Angelic and Demonic Minions		Mastery of Divine Strength

GM NOTE

In all likelihood, your campaign setting already has a pre-established hierarchy of Gods. As such, we won't describe Gods with specificity in this borough guide. If you'd like to learn about the canonical Borough Bound pantheon, you can access *The Divine Triple Trinity* supplement from our Patreon.

DIVINITY PROFESSORS

ARCHHERALD DESDIMA INCIPIENT IV

RANK: Archherald of the College of Divinity

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Communion and prophecy

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A blessed chalice filled with smoky nectar

HERITAGE: Pomeranian kennelborn, from the liturgical microstate of Tholossia

Archherald Desdima Incipient IV (she/her) leads the College of Divinity with clarity of heart and mind. Despite her impossibly cheery demeanor, she is a champion of the God of entropy. While most followers of this notably dark deity trend toward acts of malice and disorder, the archherald instead leverages her communion to ensure that she avoids any and all such woeful destinies. Desdima slurps deeply from her chalice, receives horrific visions of avoidable entropic fates, and then does what she can to steer Elseridge instead toward alternative prosperous futures. Why the God of the void continues to share ominous visions with such a contrary vessel is anyone's guess.



Many in the College of Cosmology harbor a deep disdain for Archherald Desdima. They consider augury and divination more trustworthy when coaxed from the stars as opposed to unambiguously sinister Gods. Desdima remains undaunted. Her boundless enthusiasm is a guiding beacon for her entire college. Ethical tribulations are unavoidable when instructing dozens of adherents from rival faiths and incompatible ideologies, but Archherald Desdima Incipient IV always seems to find just the right compromise to keep her faculty and her students satisfied. Perhaps this skill, too, is the result of her nightmarish prophecies.



ANDRUS TARK

RANK: Professor in the College of Divinity

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Holy barriers and auras

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A teak thimble

HERITAGE: Rungal, from the mystic jungles of Urthoon

While many Elseridge professors are stern or taciturn, Professor Tark (he/him) is merely sad. He used to swing through the trees of his home village, defending his clan from copious threats in the dangerous rainforest. He called upon his God to ward and empower his friends and families, and his God answered. Professor Tark—then just “Andrus”—taught a genera-

tion of young rungals to perform similar holy feats, and eventually, his young protégés replaced him as the rightful protectors of the clan. With no one left to teach, Andrus trekked to Elseridge to find a new purpose.

Ten years later, Professor Tark has found that teaching snotty students gives him little satisfaction. Young spellcasters have no respect for the potency of invigorating auras or protective wards despite the countless courses offered to teach such skills. Those few who do respect the precautionary arts invariably end up serving as bodyguards for businessmen or frontline mages in hopeless conquests. Perhaps there is simply no need for an old-fashioned protector among Elseridge’s fine faculty.



LANA ORDUMEN

RANK: Professor in the College of Divinity

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Ethical necromancy and alternative agriculture

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A seemingly mundane shepherd's crook

HERITAGE: Human, from the wealthy duchy of Borgmirik

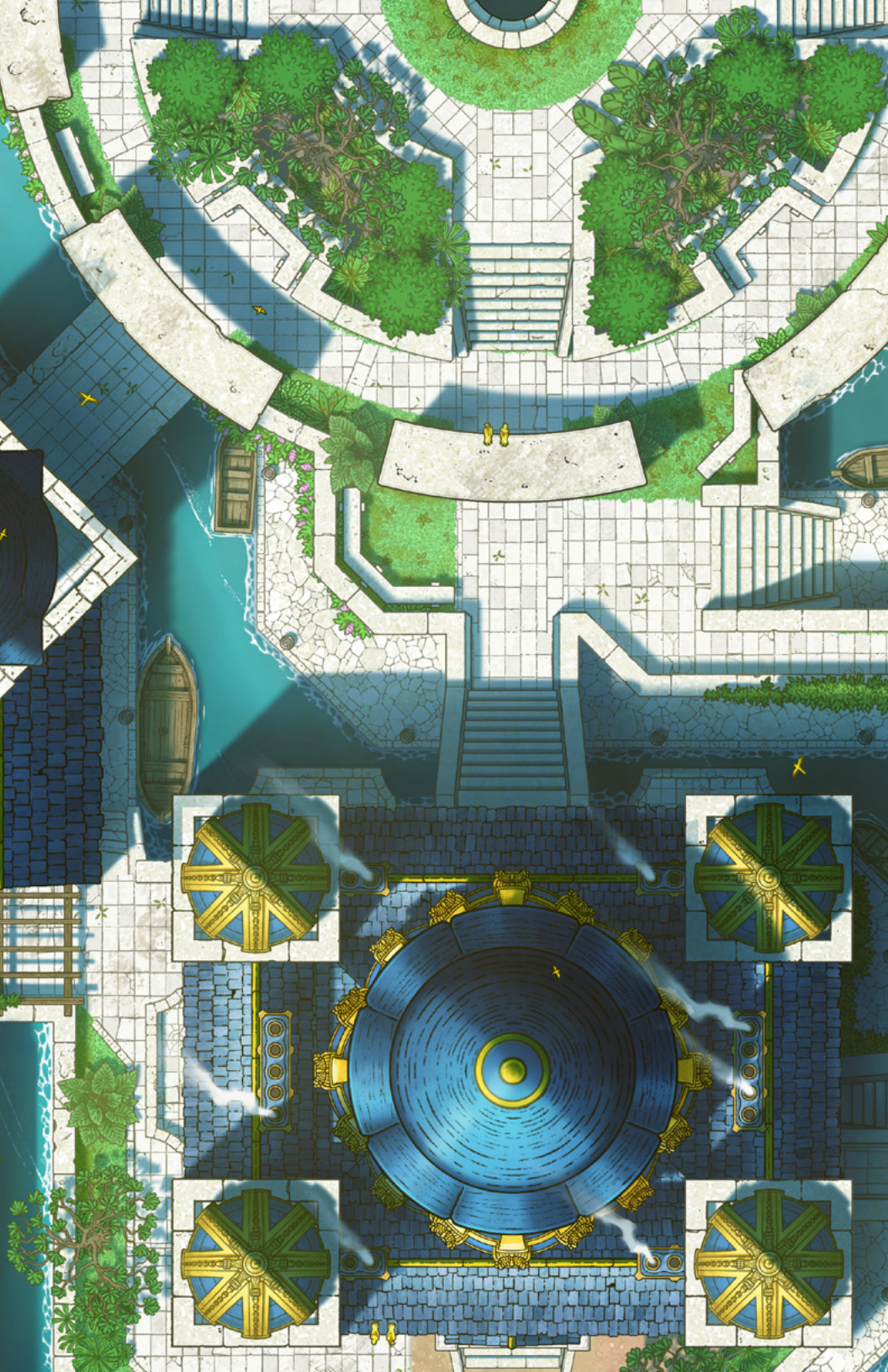
Professor Lana Ordumen (she/her) is one of Hjass's preeminent necromantic agronomists. In lieu of relying on indentured servants or underpaid workers, Ordumen operates farms with undead labor. She raises corpses of free

citizens who have donated their bodies for use in necromantic agriculture and then uses her newly animated servants to tend to farms.¹ Though this practice is not yet widely accepted across Hjass, many cultures are warming to the notion that undead labor may not be half as immoral as it sounds.

Professor Ordumen may practice an art associated with wicked deeds, but her idiosyncratic use of such magic is proof that what matters is not the tool but the end result. Necromancy is a valid use of divine magic, and perhaps spellcasters ought to think more about the consequences of their faith and not merely the connotations.

[1] Unsurprisingly, many of Professor Ordumen's necromantic agriculture classes are cross-listed with the College of Druidry.







DIVINITY STUDENTS

PHEEBUS GLELLY

RANK: Fourth-year Divinity student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Divine healing

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A bronze censer

HERITAGE: Halfling, from a family of itinerant preachers



Unlike most large schools, Elseridge Academy does not have a dedicated nurse or medical office. Instead, students and professors can sign up to act as volunteer physicians who visit sick or injured students as needed. Most such volunteers come from the College of Alchemy, but the most accomplished medic at Elseridge is Pheebus Glelly (she/her). To be sure, Pheebus *is* a talented healer, proficient in a wide array of mending and rejuvenation spells. That said, most students request her aid for a completely separate reason: she tells the dirtiest jokes of anyone on campus.

More than one ailing student has sustained additional injuries from laughing so hard at one of Pheebus's racy one-liners while engulfed in holy incense. Some students fake injuries just so they can hear Pheebus's newest collection of gags and sordid comedy routines. Pheebus knows that her unexpectedly profane humor is half the reason that students call on her, but she doesn't mind. Her divine healing may be potent, but laughter is the best medicine.

GM NOTE

While most RPGs hand-wave the process of recovering health, you may consider exploring healing processes in more depth for Elseridge campaigns. Maybe after one character sustains grievous injuries, they must miss classes for a few days while recuperating, or perhaps they must call upon one of the school's healers for aid.



KALIVA ZAG WESSIK

RANK: Second-year Divinity student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Life-draining and soul corruption

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A human skull that Kaliva claims she found

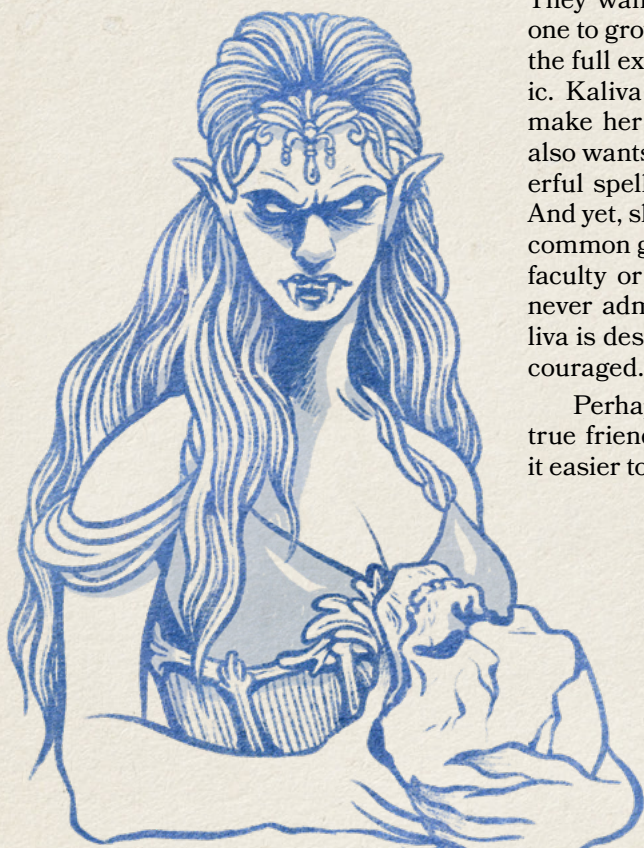
HERITAGE: Vampire, from the nightmare realm of Duul-Bahst

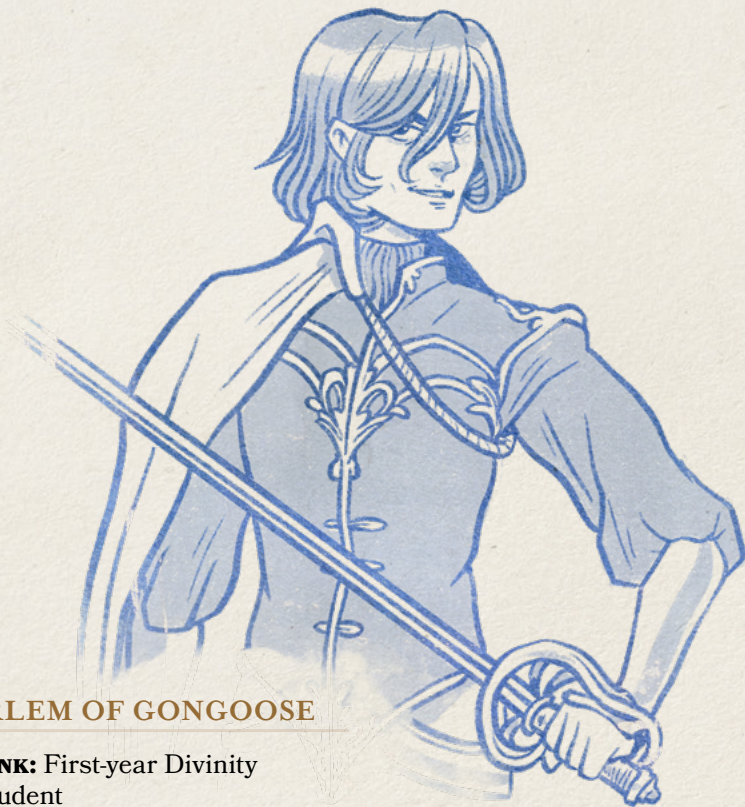
Elseridge Academy absolutely does not discriminate, but every once in a while, a student tests the limits of their welcoming attitude. Kaliva zag Wessik (she/her) is a vampire who claims to

channel the magic of some terrible blood God. Kaliva has thus far demonstrated no ability to wield magic that is at all helpful in any context beyond killing and defiling mortals. The only spells she has been able to master during her tenure have been horrific blood rituals, deadly sorcerous bursts, and forbidden enfeebling techniques. She has made no friends and pesters her dormmates to no end. It seems there is simply nothing that Elseridge can offer her.

This is as disappointing to Kaliva as it is to the college's faculty. The young vampire came to Elseridge at her coven's behest. They wanted their beloved little one to grow in power and explore the full extent of her unholy magic. Kaliva desperately wishes to make her family proud, and she also wants to befriend other powerful spellcasters along the way. And yet, she has failed to find any common ground with Elseridge's faculty or her peers. She would never admit it to a soul, but Kaliva is desperately lonely and discouraged.

Perhaps if she made some true friends, she might also find it easier to harness other magics.





ERLEM OF GONGOOSE

RANK: First-year Divinity student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Blessed swordplay

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A holy rapier, consecrated by the High Priest of Tokaren

HERITAGE: Human, from the Tokaren royal line

Erlem of Gongoose (he/him) is an impressive duelist. Of course, it's hard *not* to be with all of the assistance he has received as a prince of the greatest kingdom in Hjass. As Tokaren royalty, he is allegedly blessed with an ounce of divinity. Erlem *supposes* that he feels a bit divine. Still, this innate godly magic has always felt more or less ancillary compared to the power that money and monarchy afford him.

As a third son, Erlem has little chance of inheriting the throne, so his responsibility is to bring glory to his family through other means. He took it upon himself to hone his arcane combat prowess. Countless famed holy knights got their start at Elseridge, so Erlem figured he could follow in that legacy... or whatever. Truth be told, he feels out of his depth. The whole “nondiscrimination” mission at Elseridge necessarily means that he’s surrounded by commoners, and he has no access to the team of tutors who taught him back in Tokaren. Perhaps this whole “academia” experiment was one grand mistake.



DIVINITY POINTS OF INTEREST

THE UNIVERSAL SANCTUM

Divine magic is easier to practice when students feel comfortable. For most divine spellcasters, that means wielding godly power in a place of worship. Of course, Elseridge can't have a unique church for every possible faith in Hjass. Instead, the Universal Sanctum is a maximally multi-faith cathedral, with numerous vestibules, nooks, shrines, and altars meant to facilitate any form of worship. Students may practice inspired sermons, redemptive baptisms, or simulated exorcisms whenever they feel the need. Inevitably, some students find uses for the Universal

Sanctum that are decidedly unholy; a handful of these practices go against the righteous mission statement of Elseridge, but just as many are acceptable extracurricular occult exercises.

ADOMIA LIBRARY

Named after High Priest Chen-sis Adomia—an Elseridge graduate, generous donor, and ally of the Tokaren royal line—Adomia Library is the College of Divinity's primary library. While the Colleges of the Old Magic and Druidry rely on notably few total books scattered across offices and classrooms, the College of Divinity requires an exhaustive body of texts from faiths across



the realm. As one might expect, the academy does not discriminate with regard to its collections. There are as many texts devoted to popular faiths as tomes praising demonic lords or manuals detailing spells of unhallowing and defiling.

TEMERITY SQUARE



Faiths that promote timidity or cowardice are uncommon in any realm. As such, while the College of Divinity tries not to alienate practitioners of any faith, the administrators felt comfortable naming the contest arena after the virtue of boldness. Temerity Square is where holy knights pit godly might against godly might. Truly, there are few famous paladins who *haven't* won a tournament in Temerity Square. While the dueling arena is most commonly reserved for divinely inspired swordfighters, it is also occasionally used by scholars of the Old Magic looking to settle some pointless debate about the merits of various elements.

SALMA'S WELL

Wells hold religious significance in faiths across Hjass, often associated with time and memory. Accordingly, the well at the center of campus is dedicated to Elseridge founder Salma Sahrou. Legend purports that the well actually predates the construction of the

campus and thus Salma's arrival in the Hjass of yore. If this is true, that would make the well over 3,000 years old, suggesting that people were living at the edge of the world even before the need for a remote magic school. In either case, Salma's Well sits directly at the heart of campus and links the themes of many colleges—enchanted waters are crucial arcane components for the Colleges of the Old Magic, Druidry, Divinity, and Alchemy.

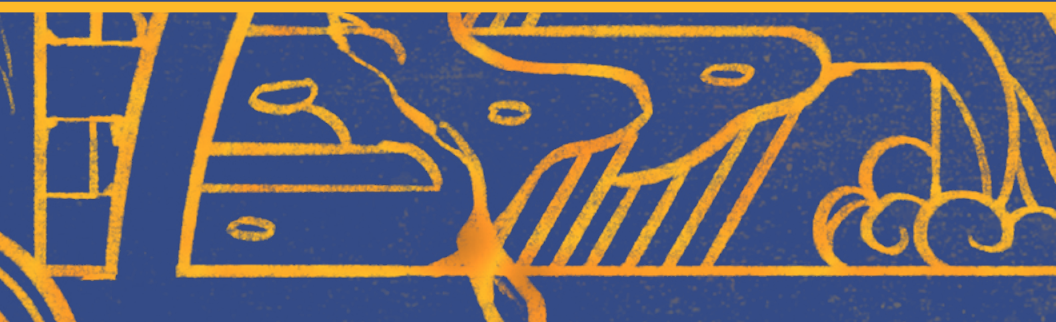
THE SACROSANCT ATRIUM

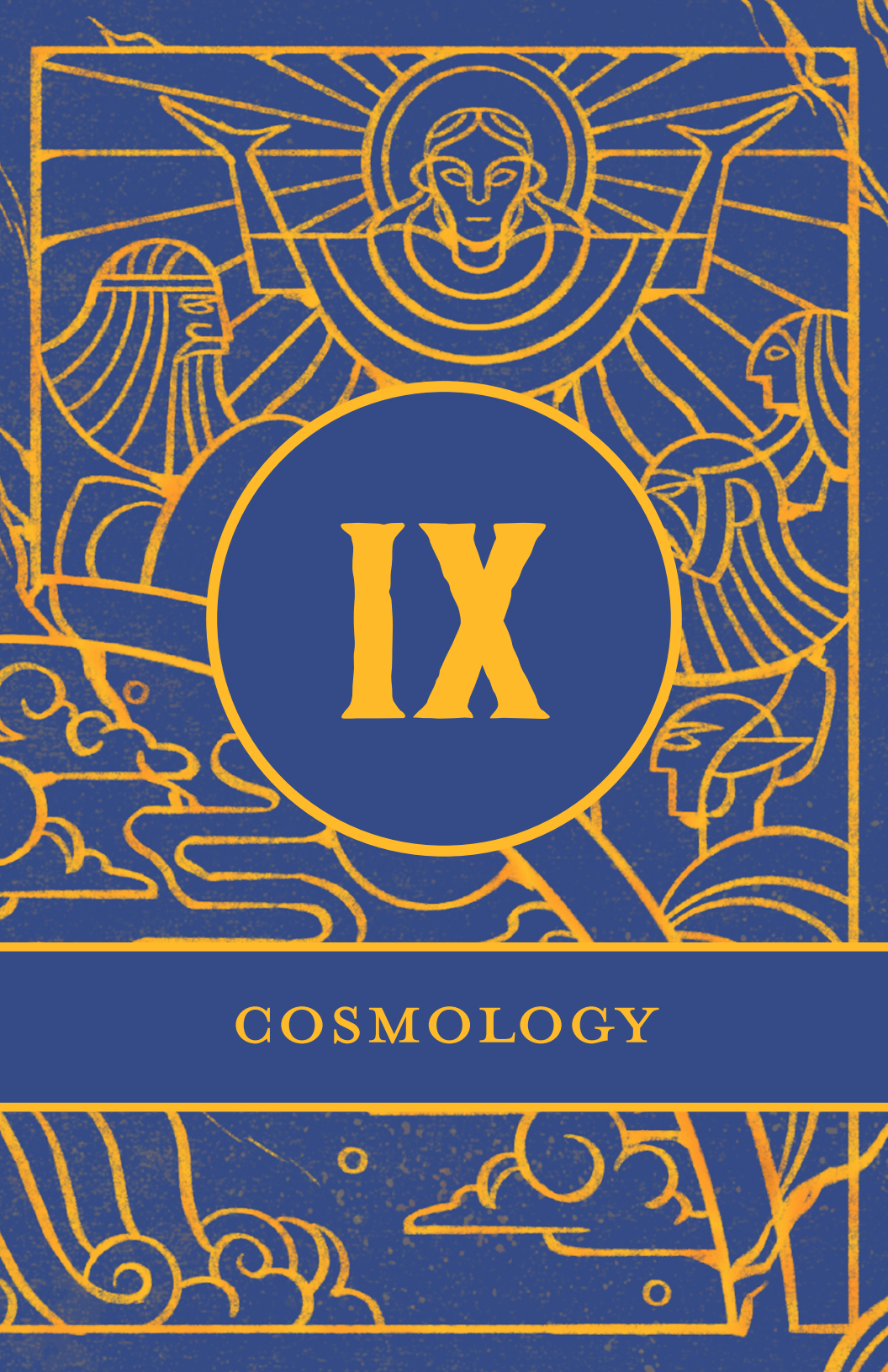
Considered by some to be the heart of Elseridge campus, the Sacrosanct Atrium is a majestic entryway that connects the central quad to Temerity Square. Within the atrium, sunlight and starlight feed a holy garden of houseplants. Harmonists perform peaceful fugues on harp or organ. Students study their notes before exams or nap on comfortable divans. While it lies within the College of Divinity's campus, the Sacrosanct Atrium is for everyone.



D10 DIVINITY RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 The so-called “divine realms” are almost certainly real, and there have always been rumors that the College of Divinity maintains persistent portals to these heavenly domains. Two questions linger: where are they? And how did someone create these interdimensional gates?
- 2 The Divinity faculty usually cooperates surprisingly well despite their divergent faiths. However, an imminent holy war in the southlands threatens to ignite a conflict between the leaders of the college.
- 3 Increasingly, students of Divinity are prioritizing combat magic. Those more interested in divination and healing tend to be drawn to the Colleges of Cosmology and Alchemy, respectively. The archherald does not want her department to become a glorified military school. Is this an inevitable fate for the college?
- 4 Dee’go, an alleged demigod, keeps delivering unwanted visions to students trying to commune with their deities. She continuously dangles an impressive array of powers in front of potential devotees but has yet to bestow any duped converts with a single gift. The college wants her “dealt with,” and they will not elaborate on what they mean.
- 5 Students have begun regularly trekking to a bizarre monolith in the salt flats. They attest that this basalt obelisk heightens their divine magic. Is there truth to this notion? Or is their faith simply magnified because they *believe* the monolith has power?
- 6 Professor Shweevis, an expert in divine healing, claims she can imperfectly revive Elseridge founder Salma Sahrou if she gains access to a suitable corpse. A contingent of concerned students rebel against this sacrilege and call for Professor Shweevis’s immediate dismissal.
- 7 A trio of failing first-year students recently aced their exams after receiving precognitive blessings from a fourth-year Divinity student. Some professors have dubbed this cheating, while others say that pursuing magical solutions for magical exams is well within their rights.
- 8 Fundamentalists among the student body hope to make a pilgrimage to Wrong Campus in an effort to put dozens of wandering souls to rest. Their efforts are noble, but travel to Wrong Campus is still strictly forbidden by the academy’s administration.
- 9 The High Priest of Tokaren has offered a blessed sword to whoever wins this year’s tournament in Temerity Square, but there’s a catch: the winner must swear fealty to the Tokaren throne.
- 10 A cadre of dwarven students believe Adomia Library contains literature that is inexcusably dangerous. They hope to relocate these wicked tomes to Vyndurvoht, the accursed book vault. The archherald needs to tread carefully to avoid disrespecting dwarven customs.





IX

COSMOLOGY



THE MYSTIC ENERGY OF STARS AND SPACE

A reclusive philosopher summons a luminous bubble to protect an observatory from would-be interlopers. A somnolent explorer awakens starry motes, illuminating a musty cave for their adventuring party. A kooky seer traces arcane maps before making an outlandish proclamation of events soon to come.

Cosmology is simultaneously the most mathematical and the most mystical of arcane arts. Proficient practitioners are experts of both elliptic geometry and improvisatory occultism; one part advanced science, one part esoteric art. The fundamental assumption at play is that stars, comets, and other astral bodies possess unique magical properties, and that mages can tap into this power with a steady balance of research and mysticism. Inevitably, cosmologists are maligned both for their overemphasis of abstruse academia as well as their reliance on seemingly unteachable and instinctual magic.



SAMPLE COSMOLOGY COURSES

Intro to Astral Geometries	Intro to Light Manipulation	Celestial Cartography
Occult Geometries and Non-Euclidean Arcana	Intro to Umbral Manipulation	Sextants, Astrolabes, and Armillary Spheres
Extradimensional Mathematics	Penumbra and Half-Light	Contextual Rituals: Alignments and Eclipses
Mastery of Geometric Arcana	Hard-Light Conjunction	Interstellar Communication
Practical Applications of Starbolts	Mastery of Light and Shadow	Survey of Cosmic Energies
Offensive Applications of Starbolts	Cosmological Divination	Harnessing and Channeling Cosmic Energies
	Farseeing	
	Intro to Telescopy	

COSMOLOGY PROFESSORS

ARCHSEER GIMBALL SINQA

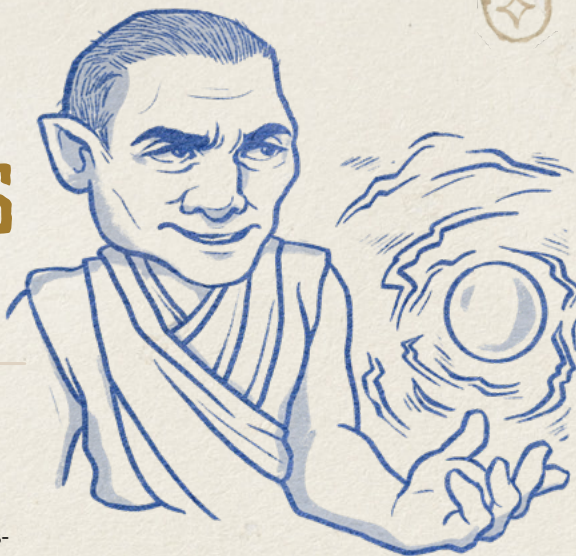
RANK: Archseer of the College of Cosmology

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Cosmic radiation

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A supposedly accursed hematite orb

HERITAGE: Gnome, from a family of notable academics based in the desert city of Thazz

Cosmology is overwhelmingly seen as an “innocuous” art by most. Divination is an imperfect science, and few give much mind to the influence of interstellar beings or energies. Even violent applications of cosmological magic are perceived as less objectionable than analogs from other schools.¹ As such, it was surprising to everyone when Gimball Sinqa (he/him), master of radiation manipulation, took the helm of the college. His magic is not just violent but horrific in its deadly applications. By channeling his geometric will via his dark orb, Archseer Sinqa can



redirect cosmic radiation however he chooses; while he *can* use these powers to help protect Elseridge from interstellar rays, he can also fry enemies alive with sickening inefficiency.

None of this would be alarming if Archseer Sinqa were an unambiguously virtuous academic. Unfortunately, his ties to the meddlesome Haritama Society leave many dubious of his intentions. There is no doubt that Sinqa is a talented mage; after all, he is the son of The Amber Sculptress, the former headmaster of Elseridge Academy. The question in everyone’s minds, however, is whether Sinqa may have decidedly ignoble goals. Sinqa seems to have won over most of the Cosmology faculty, but his peers in other colleges remain unconvinced, and plenty of students dread his classes, practical though they may be.

[1] There is an unusual misconception that starbolts are unlikely to be lethal. On the contrary, a well-placed starbolt blast is almost guaranteed to pierce flesh, bones, and organ tissue.



HULDA RAGNI

RANK: Professor in the College of Cosmology

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Light conjuration

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A bottle of svjell ink and a stack of parchment

HERITAGE: Dwarf, from the forbidden library mesa of Vyndurvoht

Professor Hulda Ragni (she/her) lost her sight at a young age after gazing upon a maddening text in her home of Vyndurvoht. It is ironic, then, that she possesses such mastery over light. Using only ink and paper—the customary arcane implements of her order of dwarven mages—Hulda can summon and congeal light into countless useful forms: bridg-

es, ladders, and a walking stick that rarely leaves her hand. Each of these items exists somewhere between real and decidedly *non-physical*; she can conjure a hammer and use it to pound a nail, but she can also reach through that hammer as though it were merely an illusion. This degree of control is exceedingly difficult to achieve, but that doesn't stop countless students from taking Professor Ragni's classes. Every young duelist wants to be able to summon a sword of pure light to their offhand.

Hulda lost her eyesight in that tragedy years ago, but she also suffered more complex trauma. She is, at least in part, “cursed,” though the nature of this arcane effect is not fully understood.² She is prone to seizures and unsettling out-of-body experiences. As such, her own order wanted her locked away in the bottom floor of their library. Hulda fled Vyndurvoht and has claimed asylum at Elseridge ever since. She was an excellent student and has earned her rank among the faculty. While some have offered to help cleanse the young professor of her ailment, Hulda brushes them away, opting instead to embrace her unusual magical affliction.

[2] One could perhaps study the curse by reading the same book that inflicted it, but none have been brave enough to attempt such a dangerous task.



WEE GYÖRGY

RANK: Assistant Professor in the College of Cosmology

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Telescopy

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: The Elseridge Prime Observatory

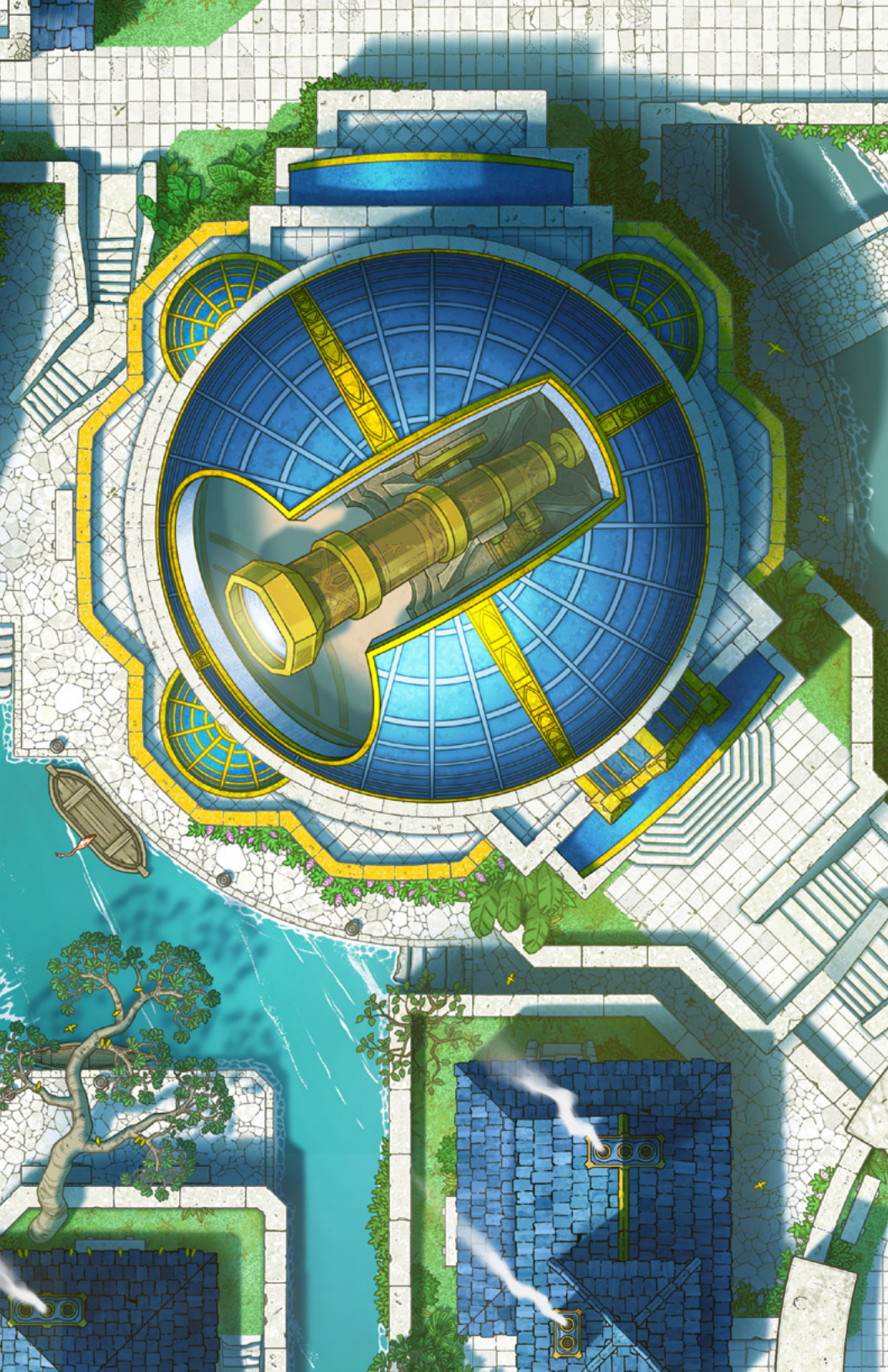
HERITAGE: Human, from the cosmopolitan city of Chiuseppoli

György (he/him) or “Wee György” as most call him, is a recent hire in the College of Cosmology. When the previous director of the telescopy program suddenly disappeared, the rest of the faculty had to quickly find a replacement. Recent graduate Wee György had yet to figure out what to do with his spellmark, so he was offered a position in the Prime

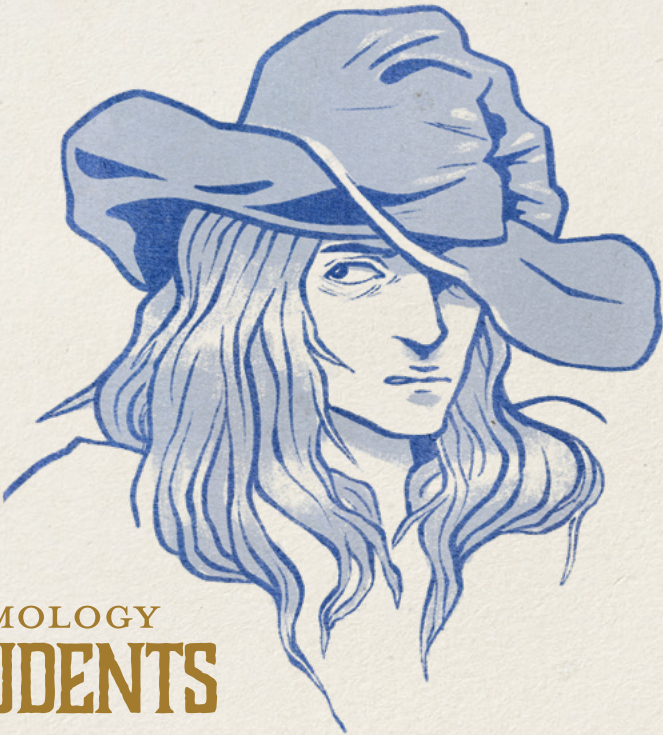
Observatory. Now, Wee György spends his days at the helm of one of Hjass’s most advanced pieces of cosmological technology. He is overwhelmed and handling the pressure *poorly*.

Unlike most young professors at Elseridge, Wee György is not among the most competent practitioners in his field. However, what he lacks in confidence, he more than makes up for in deference. When the other professors need Wee György to pick up some slack, he never says no. Some suspect his obsequious nature is the entire reason the college hired him in the first place... perhaps the archseer plans to take advantage of the eager scholar.









COSMOLOGY STUDENTS

AGANA TUILE

RANK: Fourth-year Cosmology student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Divination

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A sextant and set of star charts

HERITAGE: Human, from the outer boroughs of Delvisaport

Agana (she/her) plans to spend the entirety of her fourth and final year at Elseridge locked away in the Prime Observatory. Quite simply: she can no longer handle the inundation of requests she has received from various traders and merchants from across Hjass who want her to help them

formulate foolproof business plans. Agana's ability to precisely divine future events is well known in business communities, but Agana couldn't care less about profits and losses or all this nonsense about "the economy." When she does use her magic for frivolous matters, she does so to predict the outcome of Scramble Shard matches.

Agana is shy and often distracted. Her work is *theoretical* useful, but close to purposeless in practice. She wears big baggy robes and sleeps 12 hours a night. She is a gifted scholar, and she is entirely checked out. Agana Tuile is the quintessential Cosmology student.



BRUNQÉ OZARINE

RANK: Second-year Cosmology student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Arcane geometries

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: An ornate brass astrolabe

HERITAGE: Gnome, from a small coastal village in eastern Wemboren

The gap between Brunqué's (he/him) magical aptitude and his academic standing is staggering. The awkward young cosmologist is a mathematical savant who easily synthesizes complex geometric proofs with the esoteric rituals frequently used in astral magic. The only problem is that he never does his damn home-

work. Brunqué is always too busy hanging out with the nerds from RADIO, Elseridge's interstellar outreach club. Brunqué regularly skips class so he can fiddle with dials on some obtuse apparatus, hoping to make contact with beings far across the freesphere. Thus, his sleep schedule is a mess, and his grades continue to suffer.

Normally, a student like Brunqué would receive one stern talking-to and then face disciplinary action. Brunqué's situation, however, is unique. Archseer Gimball Sinqa has an unusual fondness for Brunqué and repeatedly steps in on his behalf. Clearly, the archseer wants something from Brunqué... but what?



ZIKKI

RANK: First-year Cosmology student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Light and shadow manipulation

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A wooden stick with a tiny glass bead affixed to its point

HERITAGE: Goblin, from a migratory clan traveling across the vast Belvix Steppe

Zikki (they/them) is exceptionally talented at making stuff glow. They simply point their “magic stick” and scream as loud as possible, and whatever they point at begins to glow as bright as the brightest torch. Unfortunately, Zikki’s clan is a decidedly sneaky crew of goblins that typically opts to circumvent confrontations by avoiding notice altogether. Screaming and making random objects sparkle and gleam is rarely a useful stealth tactic.

As such, Zikki must now train to hone their ability to manipulate *shadow* as well light.

Like many first-year students, Zikki has shown incredible promise; their innate facility with light-based magic exceeds that of many studied cosmologists. The question that remains is whether they will become a competent and well-rounded spellcaster, and whether they will find responsible and fulfilling applications for that magic. Sure, Zikki could become some sort of lighthouse mechanic, but the gregarious goblin is unlikely to find deep satisfaction from such work. For now, Zikki just wants to make some friends and finally figure out how to make their stick spit out a bit of inky darkness. Perhaps Old Magic student Gerhardt Mourn could become a mentor figure for the young and impressionable goblin...



COSMOLOGY POINTS OF INTEREST

ELSERIDGE ACADEMY PRIME OBSERVATORY

Much cosmological magic relies upon precisely and frequently updated charts of astral phenomena. As such, the Elseridge Academy Prime Observatory serves as the academic hub for the entire college. Within, celestial cartographers take precise readings, and geometers predict orbits. Lecturers teach students how to wield complex apparatuses, and light mages fine-tune mirrors and lenses.

THE INSTITUTIONAL MEMORIPLEX

Deep beneath the Prime Observatory, the College of Cos-

mology maintains a library of records concerning Elseridge Academy itself. Within the bowels of the school, ledgers and codices enumerate past budgets, student enrollment figures, and grade allocations. As the College of Cosmology is responsible for maintaining these records, it is decidedly off-limits to any but the faculty and staff of the department. Thus, if one really wanted to look into Headmaster Brongor's disciplinary record as a student, one would have to either join the Cosmology faculty or else sneak into the labyrinthine basement library.

ULDUZI HALL

Many of Elseridge's General Education courses are overseen by the Cosmology faculty, and so the largest single lecture hall in the school is part of the college's campus. Ulduzi Hall allows for

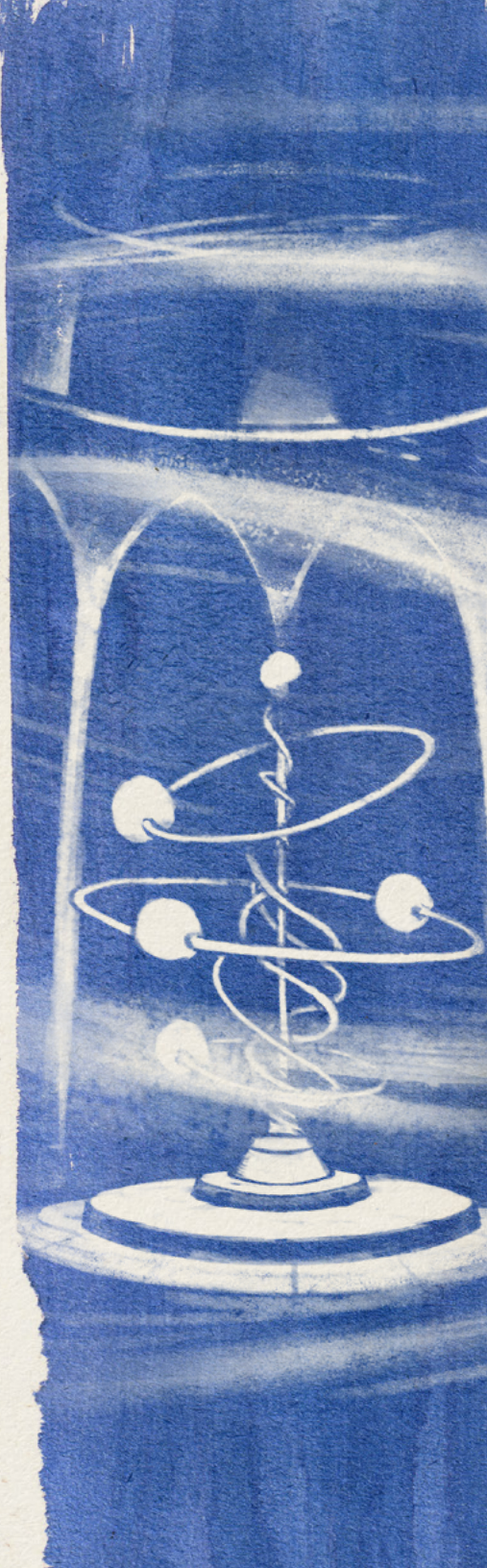


some 120 students to study in stately elegance, owing to the fabulous decorations donated by former students. Unfortunately, all of the sculptures and murals in the world couldn't keep Ulduzi Hall from retaining its awful reputation as an academic building where students experience nought but misery. Indeed, the course Runes and Glyphs for Non-Alchemists taught in the great lecture hall may be responsible for more Elseridge dropouts than any other cause but grievous injury.

THE ENSWIRLERY

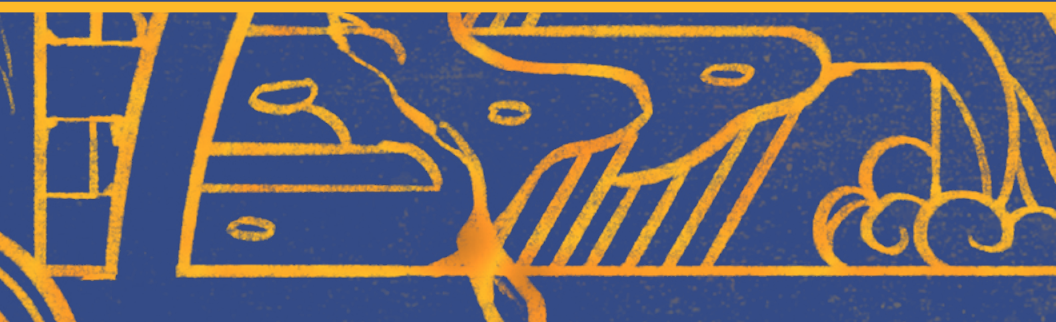


For better or worse, a number of complex cosmological spells and rituals require nearby interstellar energies as a form of wave-particle input. Of course, the college also has an incentive to keep these energies *far, far away* from Elseridge. As a compromise, the Cosmology faculty established the Enswirlery, a chamber that keeps active cosmic energies in a sort of radioactive centrifuge. When students need to practice energy manipulation, they enter the Enswirlery and attempt to wrest control of the perpetually churning forces. To keep such dangerous energy active at all times on campus is, to be sure, an outrageous risk, and so the Cosmology faculty always makes a point to downplay the frequent injuries incurred by students and faculty alike within.



D10 COSMOLOGY RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 The former director of the Prime Observatory, an aged halfling named Puri-ous Brunost, has suddenly re-emerged after his mysterious disappearance. He claims Archseer Sinqa magically banished him to a nightmare realm.
- 2 A hitherto unidentified comet lights up the night sky. Despite painstaking records, not a single Elseridge cosmologist foresaw this comet's trajectory. Is the comet a portent of events to come? Or is it merely evidence that the celestial charts are still incomplete?
- 3 Concerned students have demanded the Cosmology faculty reveal statistics about accidents and deaths within the department. They argue the college should not control both the most dangerous space on the campus—the Enswirlery—and *also* the ledgers of institutional records.
- 4 Cosmology students always get priority when requesting access to the Prime Observatory, but scores of Alchemy students have been clogging the schedule lately. Why might they be hogging the great telescope?
- 5 Cosmology students are more extracurricularly active than their peers. Virtually every student is enrolled in RADIO, the Coven of the Occult, Chankla Club, and the Puzzle Team. Most faculty would prefer if their students spent more time on school work instead of “their little clubs.”
- 6 Most cosmological magic operates under the assumption that light is light, and darkness is just the absence of light. New experiments suggest that an element called “void” might be a unique form of magically distinct darkness. Cosmologists are scrambling to comprehend the ramifications of this discovery.
- 7 The *Fluxum Shard* has begun to emit an unusual cosmic aura. The Cosmology faculty cannot guarantee that these vapors are harmless, and thus they've suggested that Elseridge cancel Scramble Shard for the season. Unless someone can prove that the aura is safe, the iconic sport may be indefinitely postponed.
- 8 Thousands of flamingos have suddenly descended upon Ulduzui Hall. For now, classes are canceled while professors attempt to shoo them away. Students are rejoicing, but some wonder why the flamingos are so attracted to the seemingly mundane lecture hall.
- 9 Students from the College of Cosmology, typically nerdy and insular, won't stop requesting access to the Prime Observatory for the sole purpose of hosting massive parties. The faculty have yet to step in, perhaps because they're glad to see young cosmologists engaging in Elseridge social life.
- 10 A league of prominent wizards have arrived on campus to request that no one take celestial measurements for one single night. They will not explain why, and the college is reluctant to agree. Something nefarious is taking place... but what?





ALCHEMY





THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SYMBOLS AND STRUCTURES

An urbane chemist brews invigorating potions by the barrel but sells them by the thimbleful. An arcane blacksmith applies a final round of enchantments to the cavalry's polearms the night before a climactic battle. A court mage's apprentice subtly tweaks the runes on a stony golem in the hopes of avoiding a second catastrophe.

Alchemy, as a practice of crafting and mixing, is as old as Hjass. Brewing beer, alloying metals, or extracting tinctures can all be considered low-level forms of Alchemy.¹ As a distinct discipline of magic, however, Alchemy is considerably newer. Legendary artifacts were once constructed by insular magi operating more on instinct than expertise. Today, research and experimentation has resulted in a codification of interlocking alchemical procedures. What was once esoteric and mystical has been rendered systematized and eminently *knowable*. To practice complex Alchemy, a mage needs only a deft hand, rare resources, and a deep understanding of underlying arcane processes.

SAMPLE ALCHEMY COURSES

Intro to Potions	Offensive Enchantments	Golem Initiation
Practical Brewing Techniques	Defensive Enchantments	Survey of Golemic Forms
Concocting Liquid Curatives	Properties of Imbued Materials	Reprogramming Golem Behavior
Survey of Non-Liquid Curatives	Arcane Batteries	Golemic Mastery
Debilitating Potions	Transmutation	Runes and Glyphs
Common Poisons and Their Antidotes	Disenchantments and Arcane Purging	Nontraditional Symbology
Mastery of Potions	Enchanting Mastery	

[1] Increasingly, experts understand magic to be an extension of mundane phenomena. Higher-level magic is simply the world operating with increased complexity. Schools of magic are lenses through which thinkers understand the mechanics of existence.

ALCHEMY PROFESSORS

ARCHMAKER STOLGRI REGRA

RANK: Archmaker of the College of Alchemy

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Phase transition

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: An azurite encrusted syringe

HERITAGE: Dwarf, from the temperate *mountain* delf of Kolbrig

Few professors at Elseridge are as unassuming as Archmaker Regra (she/her). Her youthful skin and casual comportment often cause students to mistake her for a peer. Unlike many professors the archmaker does not mind remaining incognito. She has no ego and no desire to be held up on a pedestal. It is only when students see Regra meeting with visiting kings or generals that they realize the extent of her fame and renown. As the visionary alchemist behind the “*blimpification*” movement, Archmaker Stolgri Regra is responsible for countless military victories and trade revolutions over the past few decades.

Regra’s research concerns phases of matter. She discovered that with the proper application of



volatile substances, a liquid can be transformed into gas or back again with no associated change in heat or pressure. This has been a transformative development in military science and supply chain engineering. Vats of liquids can be transported with ease by simply converting them to gas, harnessing them within a balloon, and towing them to the intended location. No need for carts filled with ale, supply lines carrying fresh water, or even alchemists preparing curative potions on the spot. Now, any liquid you could possibly need can float weightlessly across entire kingdoms.

Does “*blimpification*” mean the world is more connected than ever? Of course. Does it mean armies have fewer obstacles to waging war? Absolutely. An unintended consequence, but one that makes the Archmaker’s work at Elseridge all the more important.







LARICO MIROS

RANK: Professor in the College of Alchemy

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Imbued materials

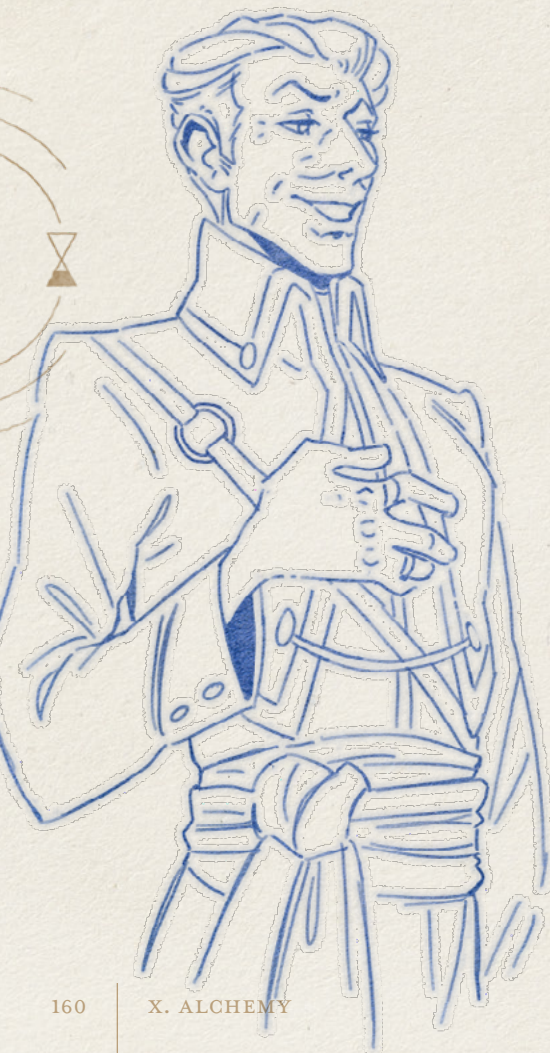
ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A vintage arcanometer

HERITAGE: Human, from the cosmopolitan city of Chiuseppoli

Students who hope to secure excellent employment after receiving their spellmarks cozy up to Professor Larico Miros (he/him). Larico has connections in the business world across Hjass. He is friends with ancient magi, associates with shipping magnates, and penpals with government officials. He is not what one would call a gregarious man, but a great many people rely on his expertise, and so his network grows.

Professor Miros is an expert in gauging the intrinsic arcane properties of a substance. When a new ore, goop, or vapor is discovered somewhere within the five corners of Hjass, Professor Miros is often the one to determine just how potent or mundane the substance may be. Naturally, this makes him an excellent friend to rely upon when prospecting, adventuring, or determining lands worth seizing. Lately, however, Larico has been distracted by the presence of his rebellious daughter Cora, a first-year student in the College of the Old Magic.

Professor Miros is aware of his shortcomings as a father, and he's trying his best to make up for lost time. Unfortunately, he is blind to the fact that Cora has already moved on. There is nothing that Larico can do that will make his daughter forgive him, and when he finally realizes that, it will destroy him.





NERYS PICODON

RANK: Professor in the College of Alchemy

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Alternative golemetry

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Twelve liquid-filled glyph-inscribers

HERITAGE: Halfling, from the peaceful hillside outside of Gulchreach

To animate the inanimate without ensouling it is perhaps the most precise of magical sciences taught at Elseridge. Golemety is *not* art; there are strict rules for how glyphs and runes imbue materials with motion and volition. And yet, the practice of advanced golemety is yet nascent. For every loyal servant, there is an errant stoneman that refuses calls to reason. Nerys Picodon (she/her), a young professor in the College of Alchemy, believes that the material substance of golems explain much of this variance.

Nerys practices a poorly understood subfield known as “alternative golemety.” Essentially, Nerys makes golems out of strange substances: golems made of loose sand, congealed fat, or twirled strands of paper. Nerys believes that the interaction between animating glyphs and the intrinsic magic of the ma-

terial world renders each golem unique, and tireless research will be required to catalog all possible interactions. Unfortunately, Nerys is a bit flippant with regard to safety measures, and her idiosyncratic golems often cause trouble across campus. If Nerys doesn’t reign in her dangerous research, she may find the thin ice she stands upon starting to crack.





ALCHEMY STUDENTS

GREYEN ICHTHYUS

RANK: Fourth-year Alchemy student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Enchanting weapons

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A palm wood cask

HERITAGE: Stonetouched, from deep beneath the Carbrum Mountains



Stolid Greyen (he/him) is well-liked by just about everyone at Elseridge. He is a champion Scramble Shard honer, a star student, and an attentive listener. If anything, he is proof that earnest enthusiasm and dependability will earn a student more friends than the more common entrepreneurial fervor found among Alchemy students. To be sure, Greyen *does* intend to venture off into the world of arcane industry after graduation, but he has not engaged in the odious networking schemes of many of his peers. Instead, he has focused on being a good pal and honing his craft.

Greyen learned years ago that the purest gems form as a result of time and ideal circumstances. He has applied this philosophy to his unique method of item enchantment. In lieu of employing glyphs, blessings, or complex alloys, Greyen simply “ages” any tools or weapons that he intends to fortify. By placing a sword in a cask filled with the right alchemical ingredients, Greyen can apply any number of reliable enchantments, dependable magic from a dependable fellow.

GM NOTE

Alchemy can encompass any mode of arcane fabrication. Get creative with how your NPCs enchant and transmute!



SWILLARD PANCREAL

RANK: Second-year Alchemy student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Potions of golemic control

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Beakers and a small-scale cattail wand

HERITAGE: Human, from the Pancreal Estate in northern Blothria

There is a hope among many that advances in Alchemy will make Hjass a happier and healthier place for all. Potions will cure diseases, golems will perform dangerous labor, and enchantments will preserve tools and keepsakes. To use Alchemy for prosocial outcomes is an explicit goal of the college. However, many young students pursue Alchemy for different goals altogether.

Swillard Pancreal (he/him) will one day inherit his father's nascent manufacturing empire, and when he does, he hopes to use Alchemy to replace the the entire workforce.

Swillard will brew potions that allow golems to work double time. Valuable alchemical resources will be redirected from healers and into potions with the sole function of transforming golems

into more efficient laborers. Hundreds will lose employment, and curative shortages are almost guaranteed. But what does Swillard care? His family will only become richer.

Swillard is a staunch capitalist, and he is not above using his wealth to his advantage. If he dislikes a classmate, he'll spend his limitless gold to make their life hell.





REECHY RANSACK

RANK: First-year Alchemy student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Ancient runes

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A leviathan bone chisel

HERITAGE: Gulch witch, from the dark canyons in lands uncharted

Gulch witches are famous for their magical prowess, but most choose to study among their kin in pockets of the world outsiders rarely see. Reechy (she/her), however, happily accepted her summons to Elseridge. It is not so much that she rejects the careful insularity of her kin, but rather that her own curiosity superseded her respect for cultural customs. Reechy is the first gulch witch in many years to attend Elseridge Academy, and she is intent on striking a balance between the ways of her people and the expectations of Elseridge.

For now, Reechy is failing at this goal. She has quickly shed her veil of mystery and is embracing all of the social joys of Elseridge, partying and participating in extracurriculars like she's Miss School Spirit. She is honing her alchemical prowess and has already repeatedly divulged secrets of the gulch witches that she had sworn to keep closely guarded. Worst of all, she has begun dipping her toes into the dangerous world of casual romance. Reechy is thrilled that she has managed to fit in so well, but she worries that her kin will not welcome her back with open arms after graduation.





ALCHEMY

POINTS OF INTEREST

LABS

Alchemy requires far more dedicated tools and material inputs than other schools of magic. Reagents, vials, sieves, and ladles are not so easily conjured, and students are rarely expected to bring their own. Instead, most alchemical work—that is: both classwork, examinations, and longterm projects—occur in the dedicated Alchemy labs.

THE ARCANES FORGE

Few Elseridge students dream of becoming mundane blacksmiths upon graduation. Nevertheless, many Alchemy classes require access to both metals and extreme heat. Basic smithing expertise is expected of those who specialize in enchantments or certain golemic forms. Within the arcane forge, students can craft any necessary tools they need. A dedicated hot shop gives students easy access to glassblowing facilities as well.

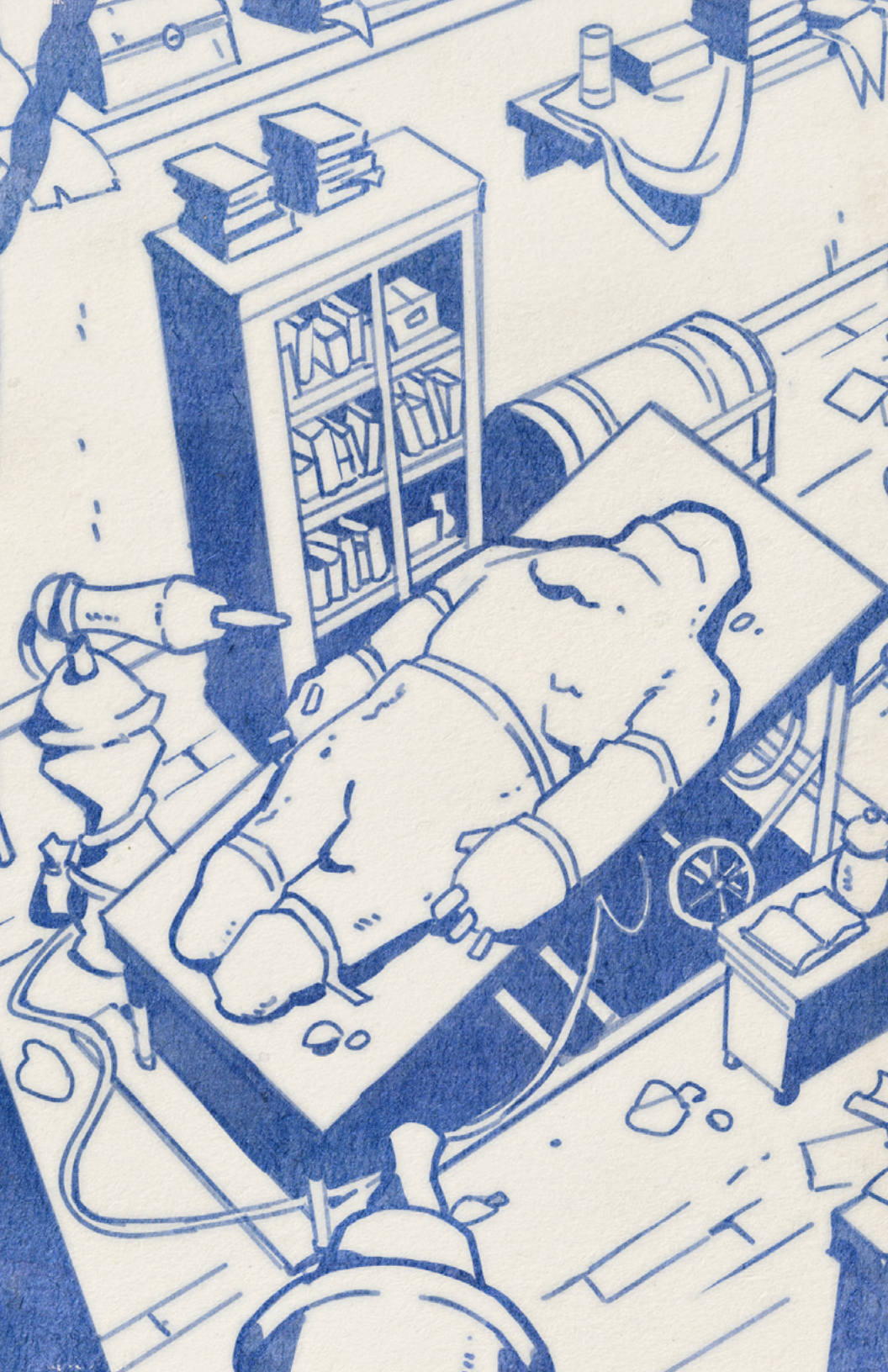
THE ANIMATION CHAMBER

Initiating a golem often requires a massive influx of energy. Sometimes that energy can

be harnessed from the cosmos or a lightning strike, and sometimes it must be imbued with unconventional arcane fuels. For sufficiently advanced golems, students and faculty can take advantage of the Animation Chamber, a room filled with apparatuses used specifically to help bring the semblance of life to newly programmed golems.

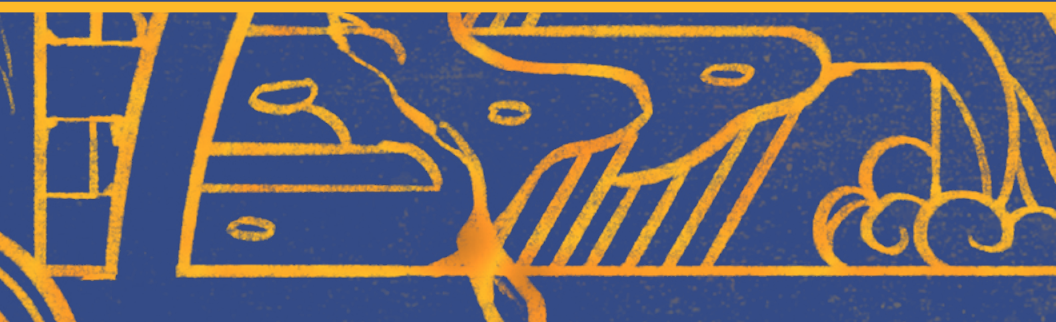
NIGHTWORM'S POOL

The College of Alchemy generates an incredible amount of refuse, a combination of slag, inanimate golems, failed potions, and alchemical runoff. Usually, the safest way to dispose of this waste is by dumping it all into Nightworm's Pool. This tank is perpetually under the watch of its namesake caretaker, the skeletal wizard Nightworm (he/him). After a lifetime of magical misdeeds, Nightworm had an alleged "profound change of heart." For his self-chosen penance, he dedicates his arcane efforts to slowly purging his muck-filled pool of any and all lingering magical effects. He knows that he can never render the deep well truly inert, but it is his Sisyphean mission to purify the waste as much as he can.



d10 ALCHEMY RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 The “Elixir of Life” is the theoretical endpoint of alchemical research, a potion of unfathomable magical complexity. No one expected such an elixir to be within reach of mages for at least a thousand years, but one of the Alchemy faculty has just made a discovery that could drastically shorten that timeline.
- 2 The College of Alchemy has a strict rule against commanding golems to build other golems, but professors are cagey whenever asked what prompted such a rule.
- 3 Each year, one arcane thesis from the College of Alchemy—usually a potion or enchanted item—is displayed in a place of honor within the Hall of Marvels. To earn such a distinction would be the crowning achievement for a graduating alchemist.
- 4 Druidry students have extracted a newly discovered poison from the glands of a sea serpent. The Alchemy faculty have decided to hold a contest to see which student can be the first to synthesize an antidote.
- 5 Historically, many Elseridge alchemists have pursued internships at potion manufactories or arcane workshops for their journey year quests. While this helps secure employment after graduation, Elseridge’s trust has just decided to forbid the practice. Alchemy students are, unsurprisingly, outraged.
- 6 Scramble Shard tactics have become monotonous ever since alchemists perfected the recipe for enchanting anti-gravity slippers. Most claim the rules need to forbid the use of such footwear, but detractors suggest that weaker teams simply need to find new innovations to keep up.
- 7 Student activists are protesting the waste within the Alchemy labs. They fear that excessive alchemical experimentation is contributing to a realm-wide shortage of curative reagents.
- 8 Nightworm has never explained the nature of his sudden transformation from villainous mage to dutiful custodian, and some suspect that he still pursues nefarious aims. Perhaps some enterprising students could learn more about Nightworm by befriending or—instead—spying on him.
- 9 The College of Alchemy has a bullying problems. Many alchemists are competitive, and they are disproportionately the product of spoiled upbringings. Archmaker Regra wants a handful of student volunteers to stand up to the college’s most egregious bullies.
- 10 Recent reagent shortages have resulted in the market flooding with snake oil, a phenomenon that hurts the reputation of all alchemists. It just so happens many of those potions are concocted right here at Elseridge...





XI

TRANSLOCATION



THE RADICAL MANIPULATION OF TIME AND SPACE

A gifted thief gracefully teleports directly into a bank vault before stowing unfathomable quantities of gold into a portable pocket dimension. An enchanted duelist untethers himself from temporal limitations, thereby increasing his functional speed tenfold. A sailing mage tugs at gravity and gently coaxes her ship out of the waves and into the sky.

Translocation is the revolutionary frontier of academic magic. Direct manipulation of spacetime was once believed to be only a rare side-effect of other forms of magic—after all, translocators are not the very first mages to teleport—and not a power that mages could harness directly. Recent breakthroughs, however, allow for a creative spellcaster to edit a fragment of physical reality. For now, Translocation remains far more art than science, as its specific arcane mechanics are orders of magnitude more complex than those of Alchemy or Cosmology. A young translocator can only learn so much; eventually, they just have to *feel* it.



SAMPLE TRANSLOCATION COURSE

Introduction to Spacetime Mechanics	Extradimensional Teleportation	Localized Time Dilation
Unlearning the Laws of Physics	Group Teleportation	Pausing Time for the Self
Feeling the Strings of the Universe	Gateways and Pocket Dimensions	Pausing Time for Others
Re-Raveling Broken Physics	Mastery of Teleportation	Mastery of Time Manipulation
Short-Range Teleportation	Compression and Expansion	Constructing Non-Euclidean Spaces
Long-Range Teleportation	Gravitational Manipulation	Extradimensional Perception
	Levitation and Flight	
	Introduction to Time Manipulation	

TRANSLOCATION PROFESSORS

ARCHWALKER OODI PALOMIR

RANK: Archwalker of the School of Translocation

ACADEMIC FOCUS:
Interdepartmental
Translocation

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Twin
wands, both braided with hemp

HERITAGE: Human, from the
trading hub of Uthribex

Anyone who claims to completely understand how Translocation magic actually works is undoubtedly a liar. Manipulating time, gravity, and space is obtuse, and dedicated study of this magic is only a few decades old. The bounds of the practice are yet unknown, as are its links to other forms of spellcasting.

Archwalker Oodi Palomir (they/them) has made a career out of poking at these lingering questions. In lieu of honing one particular subset of spells, Oodi has spent thirty years collaborating with experts from other schools of magic, seeing just what might be possible with the right mixture of methods and mindsets. How does starlight function in a pocket dimension? What if a potion sud-

denly became 1,000 times denser? If a fire elemental gets caught in a time loop, does its energy ever fade? The archwalker knows that Translocation is more art than science, but sometimes stellar art is the result of experimentation and unlikely partnerships. Is that not the very spirit of the arcane vanguard?

Oodi hopes to cultivate this love of creativity and collaboration among their students. Unfortunately, the nature of Elseridge's curriculum often stifles interdepartmental teamwork, and the college's track record of cataclysmic accidents might push students toward safer applications of their craft.



VEY ALLOMUK

RANK: Professor of Translocation

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Extradimensional storage

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: An ethereal kukri

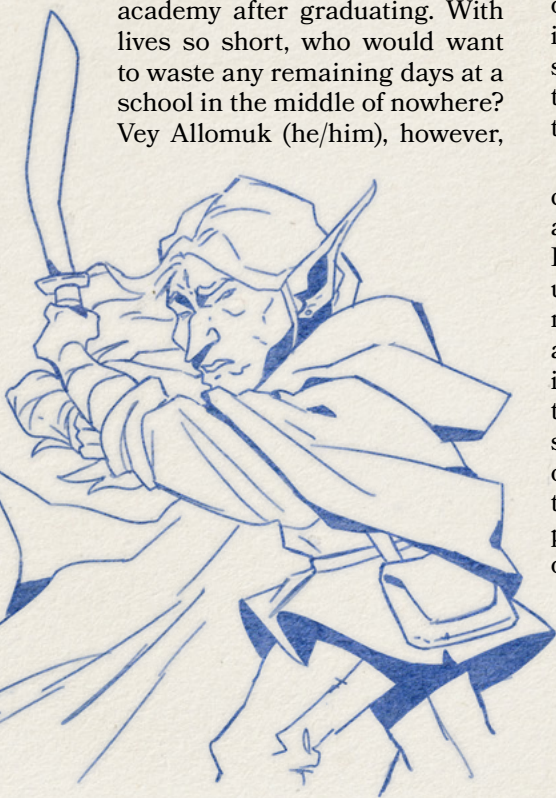
HERITAGE: Chesskæl, from the ancient capital of Relvizziej

Short-lived chesskæl learn incredibly quickly but only have a short window during which to exercise any chosen mastery. Few of their kind who study at Elseridge choose to stay at the academy after graduating. With lives so short, who would want to waste any remaining days at a school in the middle of nowhere? Vey Allomuk (he/him), however,

has chosen do just that.

Professor Allomuk is a master of conjuring cozy extradimensional spaces accessible via permanent gateways. These quaint pocket dimensions are perfect hideaways, miniature customizable paradises. Instead of selling these pocket dimensions to royals or magnates, Professor Allomuk decided to share his expertise with the students at Elseridge. Unsurprisingly, students have found this skill difficult to master. Tearing a gap in reality is hard enough, but asserting what must exist on the other side via magical fiat is nigh impossible. Nevertheless, Vey is slowly discovering the best practices for imparting this wisdom to his students.

Many question why Vey decided to forgo a life of luxury as an extradimensional architect for Hjass's wealthy. He claims to value education above all else, but many suspect that his motives are more self-serving. Of course, it is widely known that Elseridge's trust provides Vey an undisclosed stipend to assist them in "hazardous or confidential storage solutions." Perhaps Vey is being compensated quite handsomely for one or more particularly sensitive assignments. Alternatively, perhaps Vey is collaborating with less savory elements from within Elseridge's ranks.



ZYLBRISK

RANK: Visiting lecturer of Translocation

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Time manipulation (and shapeshifting)

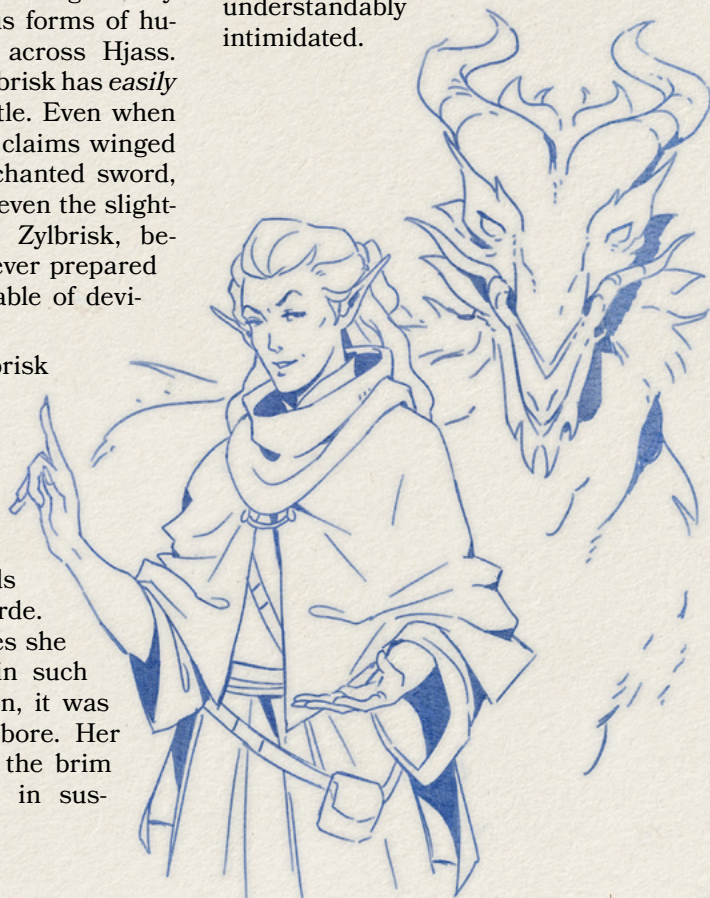
ARCANE IMPLEMENT: None

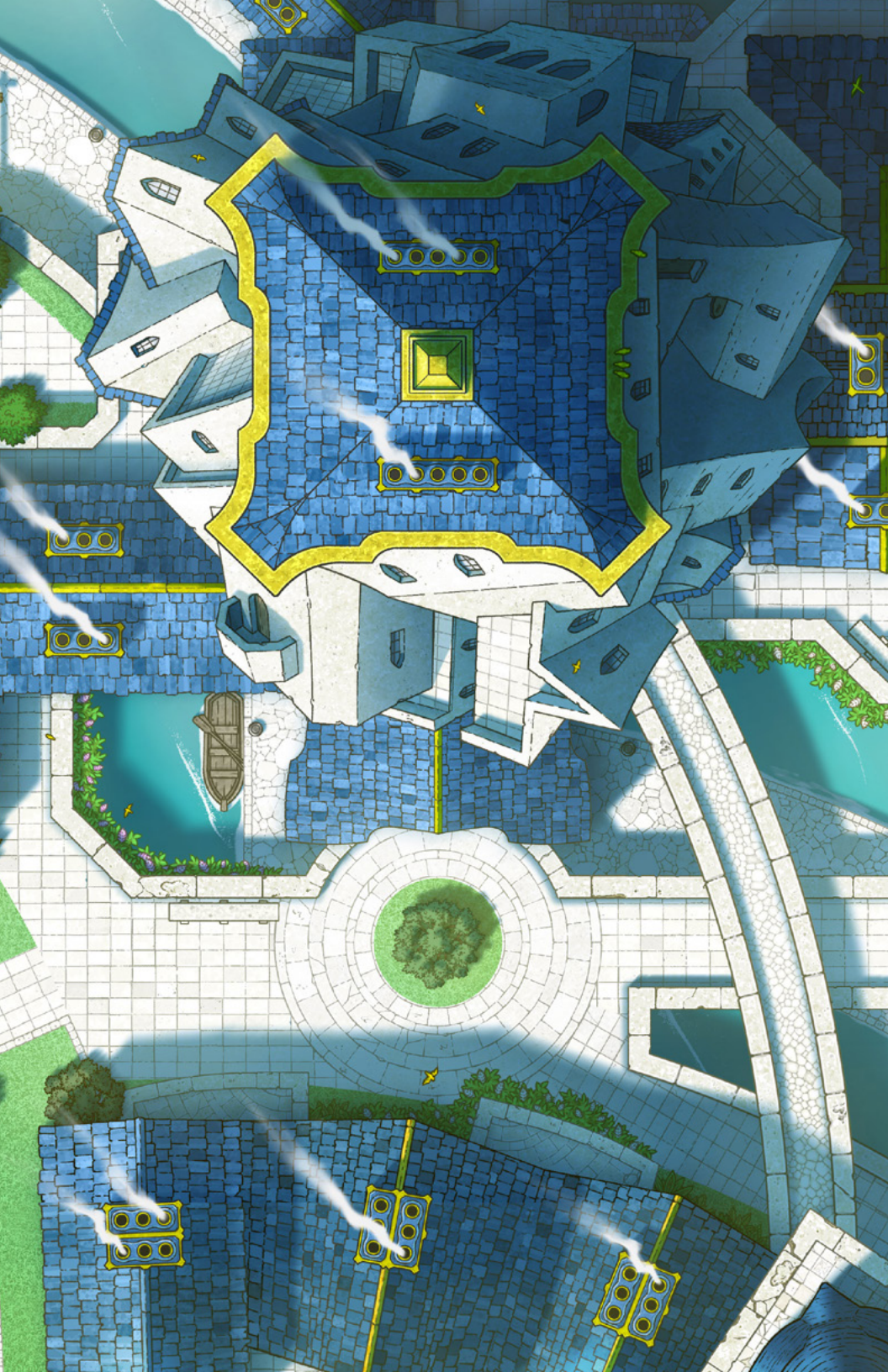
HERITAGE: Dragon, from a sky palace with a secret name

Zylbrisk (she/her) is a dragon. A *true* dragon. She lives in the clouds, possesses a tremendous treasure horde, and generally scorns the various forms of humanity that live across Hjass. For centuries, Zylbrisk has *easily* defended her castle. Even when a legendary hero claims winged boots and an enchanted sword, none have posed even the slightest challenge to Zylbrisk, because they are never prepared for a dragon capable of devious spells.

Any time Zylbrisk confronts some wannabe hero, she freezes them in time, transforming them into a fleshy statue. She then adds the hero to her horde. The first few times she dispatched foes in such an elegant fashion, it was fun! Now, it's a bore. Her horde is filled to the brim with adventurers in sus-

pended animation. Thus, Zylbrisk has taken it upon herself to teach a single cohort of Elseridge students how to ward themselves against such time manipulation. During classes, she dons the appearance of an attractive young elven woman, but as soon as her lecture is finished, she re-assumes her draconic state and soars back up to her sky palace. Many students are thrilled to have the opportunity to take a class taught by a dragon, but some are understandably intimidated.







TRANSLOCATION STUDENTS

JOACHIM HORRESKIEW

RANK: Fourth-year
Translocation Student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Anti-gravity

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A
varnished staff tipped with
thorianite

HERITAGE: Human, from the
regressive metropolis of
Livisted

Joachim (he/him) was not permitted to use magic as a child. In his home of Livisted, any form of spellcasting is seen as inexcusable devilry. When Joachim discovered he had a gift for gravity manipulation, he had to hide it from his family, his teachers, and the morality agents that stalked the city streets. What luck, then, that professors from the College of Cosmology regularly monitor Hjass for gravitational disturbances. They noticed unusual activity in Livisted, tipped off Elseridge's admission counselors, and ultimately rescued Joachim from his hopeless situation.

Joachim has blossomed at Elseridge. He is no longer the shy, repressed, introvert he had been, but a spontaneous, cre-

ative, and exuberant mage. He performs his hallmark anti-gravity spells with aplomb, lifting larger and larger objects into the sky with each passing semester. This will undoubtedly prove a valuable skill in a range of fields, but Joachim would rather forego the offers he has received from industrialists and military recruiters. If the school will have him, Joachim would love to join the faculty here at Elseridge and give back to the school that freed him from a life of secrecy and shame.



THE LAVENDER WEAVER

RANK: Second-year
Translocation student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Group
teleportation

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Dozens of
gemstones painfully imbedded
in her skin

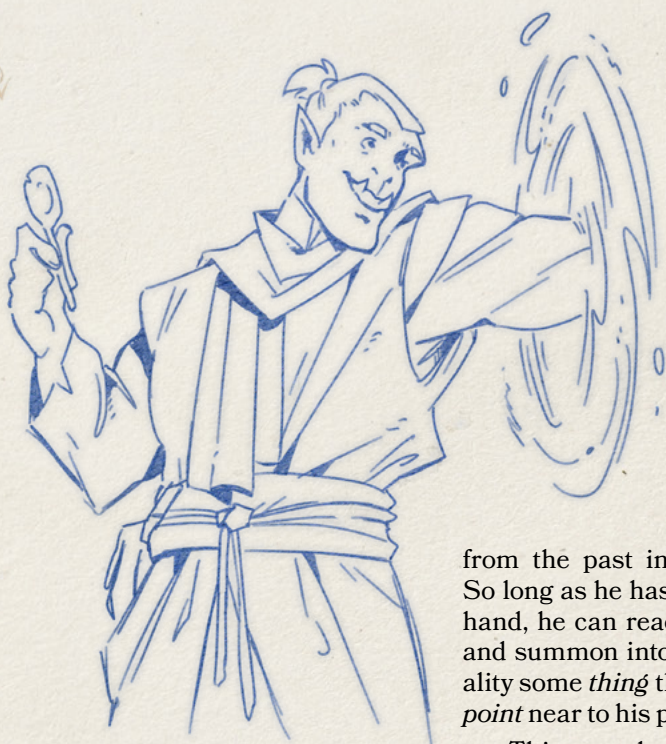
HERITAGE: Half-gnome, from an
oasis village a day's hike from
Thazz (allegedly)

The Lavender Weaver (she/her) is a distant relative of former headmaster The Amber Sculptress, and she does not let anyone forget it. In case the naming convention alone didn't give it away, she also regularly dines with the Amber Sculptress's son, archseer Gimball Sinqa, her second cousin once removed, or some such. The Lavender Weaver—or “Lav” as her friends call her—tries her hardest to cultivate an air of mystery. The multicolored gems protruding from her skin certainly add to this effect, as does her tendency to speak in clunky riddles and wear costumes that can only be described as quasi-villainous.

The truth is, however, that Lav had supportive parents, attended an expensive boarding school, and was raised under completely non-mystical circumstances. Hell, her given name is Catherine. Lav, however, cannot accept this. She wants to devel-



op a mythos, a legend, an aura of fear and wonder. Accordingly, she pledged the Haritama Society and dedicates most of her time toward their ambiguously nefarious operations. She has befriended only a select few trouble-makers and subversive mavericks. Lav is almost certainly going to attempt some truly wicked deed during her upcoming journey year. All of this is in service to developing a notorious reputation. For whatever reason, Lav—or “Catherine”—will never be content to just learn magic and make good friends. She must become a villain.



CLEM OZIGEG

RANK: First-year Translocation student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Past-retrieval

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Any mundane spoon

HERITAGE: Orc, from a protected tribe living in occupied Tokaren land

Going backward in time is forbidden! This seems like it ought to be a prohibition with no ambiguity. Unfortunately, the increasingly complex magic studied in the College of Translocation has introduced a number of tricky edge cases. Clem Ozigeg (he/him) specializes in a particular form of questionable chronomancy shenanigans: he can yank objects

from the past into the present. So long as he has a spoon in one hand, he can reach out his hand and summon into his current reality some *thing* that was *at some point* near to his present location.

This sounds like an incredible boon. After all, one could explore ancient ruins and retrieve intact artifacts without any of the complications of digging or restoration. Unfortunately, as with so many first-year students, Clem has yet to master this ability. He will occasionally grab objects of some use or significance, but he is far more likely to grab food. He reaches into the past and brings forth some primitive wheel of cheese, shriveled lemon, or bowl of tepid stew. Inevitably, he always takes a bite. His orcish constitution can handle just about anything, and his curiosity inevitably gets the best of him. At some point, he hopes to gain a bit more agency over his magic, but for now, he's happy to rob the past of their snacks.

TRANSLOCATION POINTS OF INTEREST

STATEMENT HALL

Translocation remains a chaotic form of magic, but translocational spellcasting today is still *overwhelmingly* more reliable than in the early years of its practice. Soon after the construction of the department's campus, a young practitioner—whose name has remained anonymous—conjured a complex web of arcane gateways that swallowed a then yet unnamed academic building. These gateways folded the structure into itself, emitting towers and vestibules at strange angles, transforming the building into a tangled knot of academic infrastructure.

The Translocation faculty did not write up the guilty student for disciplinary action. In fact, they were so impressed with the magical act that they immediately gave the student a perfect grade for the semester. They dubbed the newly twisted building "Statement Hall," as it stands as a perfect statement of Translocation's power and creative potential. To this day, many



of the college's iconic courses are taught within the tangled hallways and classrooms of the building.

Unfortunately, the gateways that warped the shape of the original academic building did not alter the gravity in the resultant jumble. This has made furnishing and traversing Statement Hall complicated at best. A student looking for their classroom might open a door only to find themselves slipping down a 45° angle in a classroom with custom-made chairs nailed to the floors.



CHAMBER OF ZEROS



Many translocational spells assume some degree of “neutrality” in the environment. For example, it is easier to manipulate time if one assumes that the target of one’s spell is already flowing at a steady pace. Thus, mages prefer to practice and experiment with such magic in a controlled space. The Chamber of Zeros is exactly that, a room with no gravity, a steady time-stream, and rigidly fortified geometry.¹ Inevitably, this perfectly neutral environment is regularly warped through magical interference, and so student volunteers must stop by and tweak the physical characteristics back to their initial conditions every few hours. Typically, this space is reserved for schoolwork, but students also regularly sneak into the Chamber of Zeros to relax and float around in zero-g.

FUN TERRACE

Anyone is allowed to step onto Fun Terrace, but most do not want to. Due to yet another translocational accident, Fun Terrace is permanently enchanted such that anyone standing on it experiences time twice as quickly. After all, time flies when you’re having

fun—hence the name. A student who stands on the arcane tiles for one minute will find that two minutes have passed in the outside world. This has precisely one benefit: there is no better place to kill time. Students who are desperate to hear back from a job application or to discover the results of an ongoing experiment might choose to nap, study, or sit nervously on the terrace as they watch the world rush by around them.

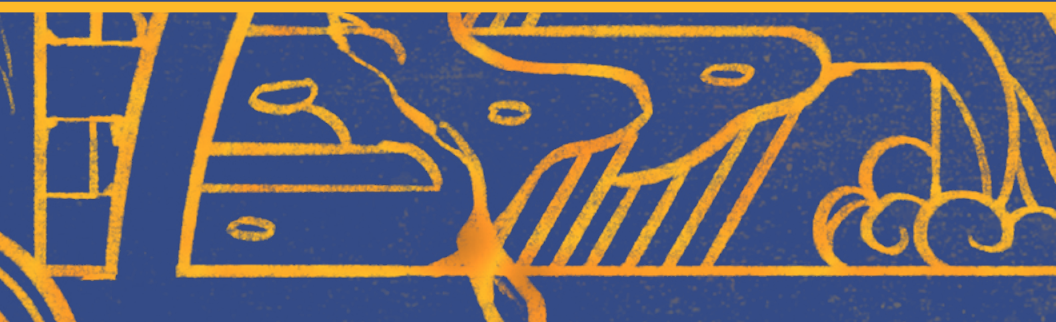
VANGUARD BRIDGE

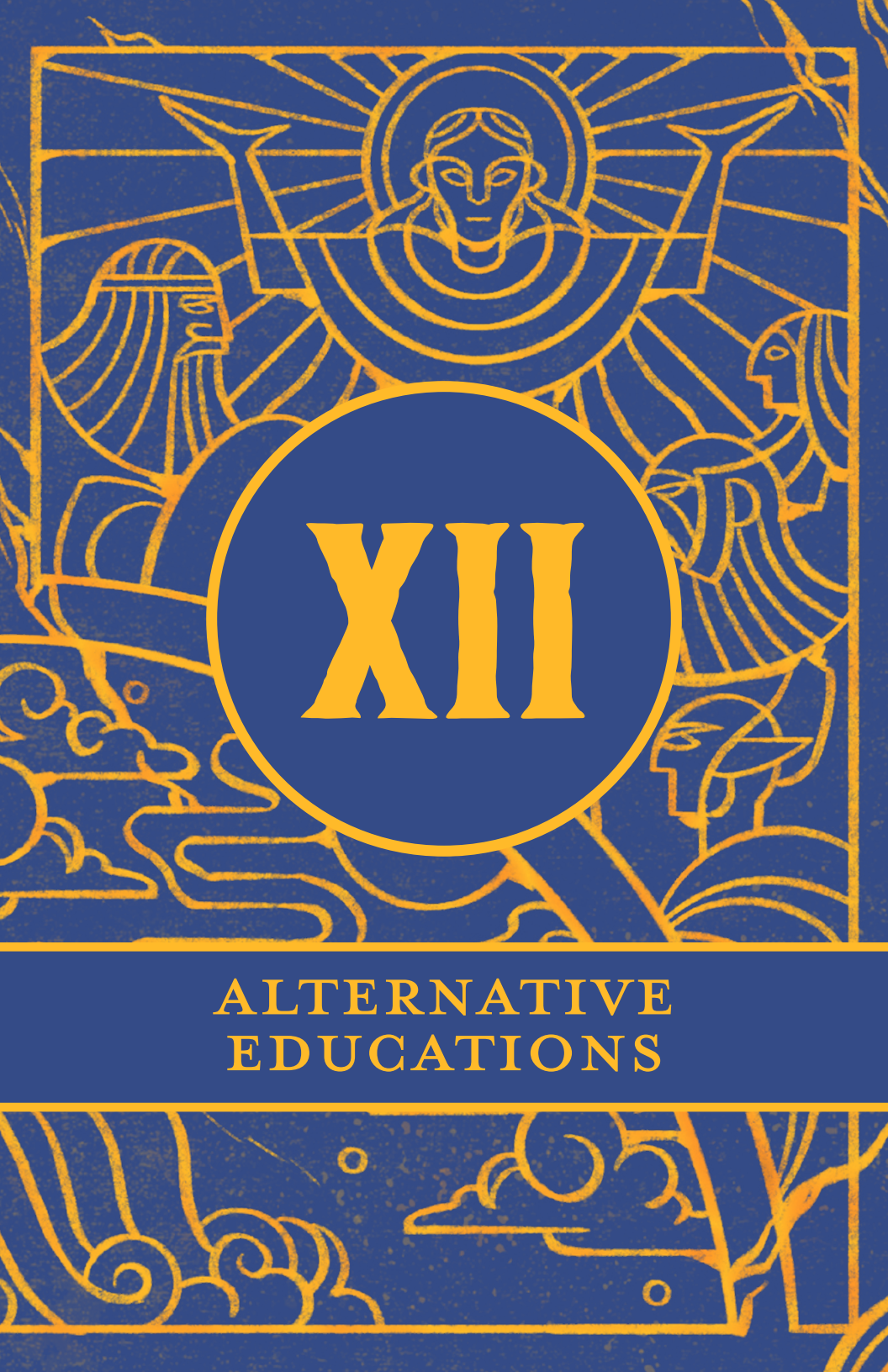
The Colleges of Alchemy and Translocation maintain a close relationship, despite the dichotomous approaches practiced by the two sets of mages. To symbolize this mutual respect, a bridge connects a set of Alchemy classrooms with Statement Hall. The stone bridge was built with the same magic that powers the *Hexacoil*, thus it floats above the rest of campus with no supports whatsoever. It’s a subtle architectural trick, but one that is hard to replicate. Students who take the upper-level class “Levitation and Flight” are asked to hypothesize how the builders achieved such an effect.

[1] That is, there is a guarantee of no invisible portals or gateways, nor of subtle spatial distortions.

D10 TRANSLLOCATION RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 Translocational magic can allow a spellcaster to go back in time. This is forbidden, but many suspect that the college is hiding portals within their halls that could send a naughty student into the past. If these rumors are true, shouldn't the faculty go to extreme lengths to close such portals?
- 2 Archwalker Oodi Palomir hopes to expand the floorplan of their college, but the academy's trust has no current plans to increase the total acreage of the campus. As a compromise, the archwalker proposed an academic building that floats *above* the campus. The trust views such plans as unjustifiably dangerous.
- 3 There is ample evidence that ancient magi could teleport. In fact, many seemingly unrelated temples across Hjass are connected via permanent portals. Did these magi know translocational secrets that could advance present research?
- 4 The rate of extradimensional interlopers warping onto Elseridge's campus has increased dramatically since the founding of the College of Translocation. Most are innocuous explorers, but a handful have wreaked havoc before disappearing.
- 5 Despite the power and flexibility of translocational magic, many graduates find it difficult to secure meaningful employment beyond acting as teleportational chauffeurs. The faculty wants to start a PR campaign across Hjass to promote the value and reliability of their magic.
- 6 The College of Cosmology desperately wants translocators to limit their use of gravity magic, as such distortions invalidate countless cosmological measurements.
- 7 Fourth-year translocator Kamori Jain, vice-president of the Coven of the Occult, has recently opened up a temporary gateway to one of many hells. Weirdly, there is no rule against this.
- 8 Translocators are in high-demand for journey year quests. Every party of adventurers benefits from working with an ally who can teleport the whole group past locked doors or across endless plains. Of course, more Translocation magic also often translates to more comical mishaps.
- 9 There's a new fad among translocators: "shimmering." Students will perform overlapping spells to make their bodies subtly teleport back and forth a few inches while also slightly distorting themselves in time. It is unsettling to behold and the only purpose is to "look cool."
- 10 A number of students have received a mysterious recruitment letter stamped with a geometric eye. The letter offers employment that will take students across the "freesphere" while putting their translocational capabilities to the ultimate test. To accept the summons, one must seek a dwarf named Fyr Berylfor in the accursed library mesa Vyndurvoht.





XII

ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATIONS

ARCANOLOGY: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO MAGIC



A community leader provides expert testimony defending an alleged murderous wizard, thereby proving the accused's innocence. An archaeologist discovers an ancient ritual site and calls into question prevailing histories of magic in Hjass. An educator well-versed in the pedagogy of magic inspires a generation of novice sorcerers to pursue advanced degrees in the magical arts.

Arcanologists are the unsung heroes of Elseridge Academy. Few students of arcanology ever produce remarkable magical feats of their own, but their dogged research has formed the backbone of many schools of magic nonetheless. Arcanology is a maximally interdisciplinary field of study, combining philosophy, history, linguistics, and various social sciences. Thus, those who receive a spellmark in arcanology from Elseridge are often polymaths: fluent in numerous languages, published in diverse journals, and expert enough to pursue careers in law, government, academia, medicine, or—very occasionally—adventuring.

ARCANOLOGY CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Like every other student, arcanology students are expected to take three courses every semester. Typically, they take far more General Education courses, but they are also encouraged to take courses listed in at least four different colleges during their studies. During their third year, they must pursue a journey year quest like traditional students.

During their final year, in lieu of completing an arcane thesis, arcanology students must write an arcanology dissertation. These lengthy research papers usually explore a hyper-specific topic in extreme detail. An arcanology dissertation will almost always concern magic in some capacity, but rarely will the research require the student to perform anything beyond a novice-level spell. Instead the research is entirely academic in focus, representing the culmination of a student's studies at Elseridge

ARCANOLOGY PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS

GRESH MANY-EYED

RANK: Coordinator of the Arcanology track

ACADEMIC FOCUS: The history of interspecies politics

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A basic pine wand used for simple light spells

HERITAGE: Troll, from the undeveloped southeastern taiga

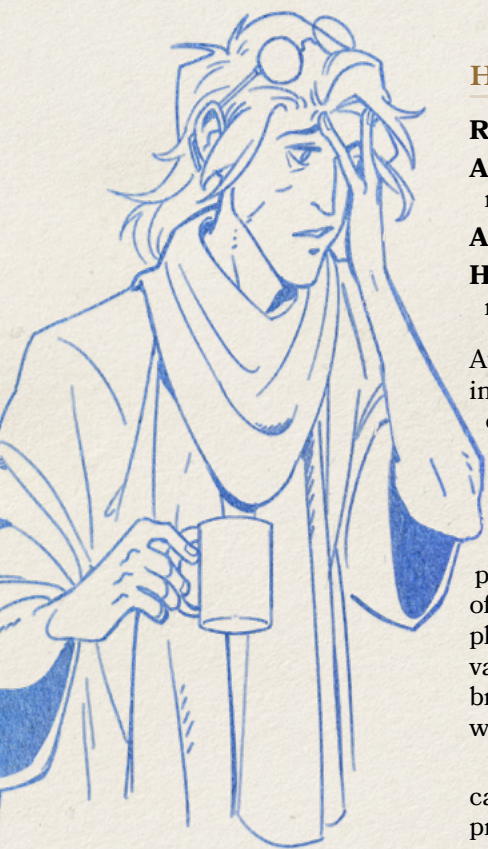
Gresh Many-Eyed (he/him) is one of very few trolls at Elseridge. Few members of his species are magically adept, and even fewer pursue any formal education. In fact, scant few trolls ever learn to read. As a child, Gresh assumed this was some fundamental fact of trollhood. As he grew older, he learned of long-decayed trollish empires, laws controlling troll reproduction, and humankind's subjugation of his people. It was not some fundamental fact of trollhood that so few of Gresh's kin became wise sages, but a dark and complex history of oppression.



Thus, Gresh Many-Eyed vowed to study and to teach. He wants the diverse peoples of Hjass to understand the ways in which grand misdeeds of the past cast shadows into the present. Today, he helps his Arcanology students to always consider the intersection of heritage, faith, politics, history, and magic in the hopes that they might one day prevent future wrongs. The first step to securing a just future is reckoning with the sins of the past.







HANS FITCH-DEGELBURG

RANK: Fourth-year Arcanology student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Comparative meta-mythological arcano-semiotics

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Coffee and ink

HERITAGE: Human, from an orphanage near Borgmirik

At some point, Hans (he/him) was an incredible student. He took four or five classes every semester and aced them all. He devoured tome after tome, sleeping at the library more often than in his own dorm room. Though he only ever achieved a middling proficiency in casting spells—a touch of Translocation magic—his efforts in philosophy and metaphysics were unrivaled. What’s more, most professors, librarians, and other students agreed he was a pretty friendly guy.

Then, Hans started work on his arcanology dissertation. He felt immense pressure to produce a groundbreaking work of meta-magical theory, something that would disrupt arcanological research for decades. The more he works, the more complex his work becomes. As his work hours grow longer, progress becomes increasingly incremental. Hans isn’t sure he can even describe what it is he’s working on anymore. It’s definitely interdisciplinary, and it’s definitely complex, but the work has become so mired in obtuse theory and esoteric reasoning that it has escaped the bounds of what any mere mortal would describe as “sensical.” Hans is no longer the man he once was. Now, he is just caffeine and stress.

GM NOTE

Arcanology is a great field of study for player characters that fulfill nonmagical archetypes (knights, rogues, or faces). This allows such characters to pursue studies at Elseridge without winding up in a college that has nothing to do with their areas of expertise. They can study a broad liberal arts curriculum that doesn’t require access to magic that likely won’t be a part of their character kit.

SHAWNA MALAVENTI

RANK: Second-year Arcanology student

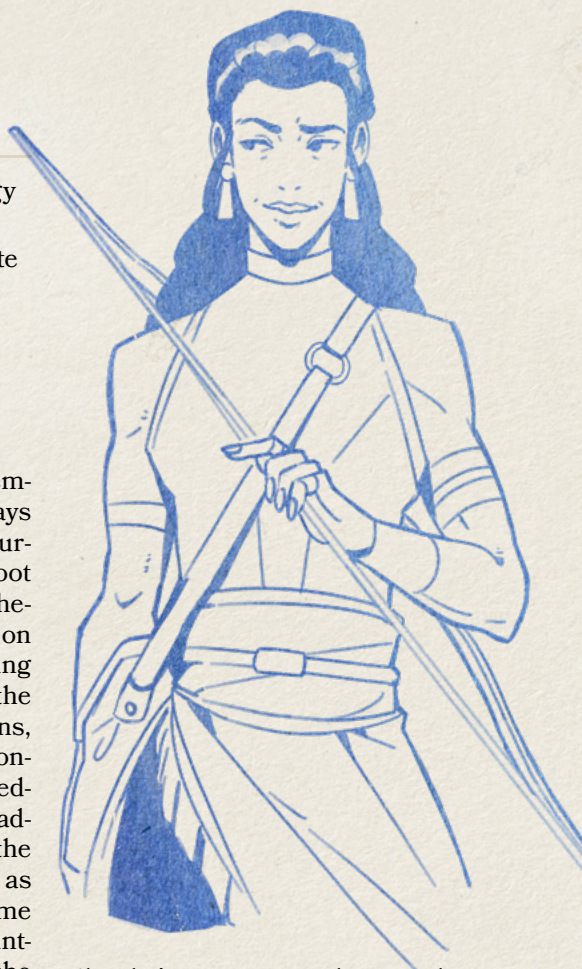
ACADEMIC FOCUS: Intermediate Elvish

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: A shortbow (nonmagical)

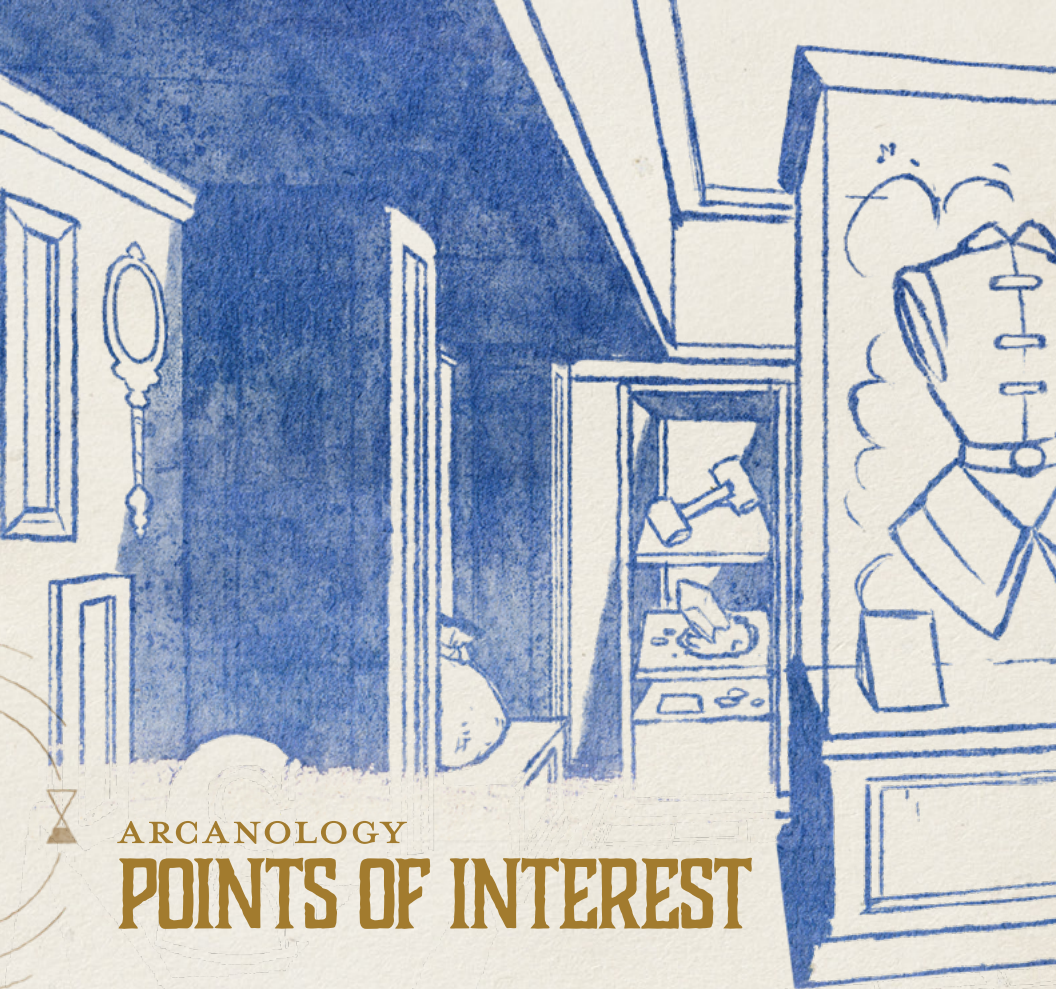
HERITAGE: Human, from the tropical village of Giirungi

For as long as she can remember, Shawna (she/her) has always wanted to join the elite adventuring party known as the Wingroot League. Those legendary heroes have protected the realm on countless occasions, defeating demonic threats, plumbing the depths of forgotten dungeons, and unraveling shocking conspiracies. They are undoubtedly Hjass's most epic band of adventurers, and Shawna had the great fortune of meeting them as they passed through her home village. She told them she wanted to join their ranks, that she could prove herself with her exceptional marksmanship. They chuckled and said that if she gets her spellmark from Elseridge, they might consider it. So, off to Elseridge Shawna went.

Importantly, Shawna has no capacity for magic. None. She faked proficiency during her admission interview using a few cheap doodads she bought at the market. She also cheats on all of her practical exams. Luck-



ily, she's *pretty sure* she can eke by for just a couple more years if she focuses entirely on taking Gen Ed classes. At this point, Shawna has no idea if the Wingroot League even meant what they said, but she's determined to see this through one way or another. She has found support and competition among her friends in the Little Wingroots, a secret society of Elseridge students who all hope to follow in the league's footsteps.



ARCANOLOGY POINTS OF INTEREST

THE HALL OF MARVELS

When a practitioner of magic comes into possession of a legendary magical artifact, they are likely to wield that artifact until their dying day or until it is stolen. This is true of itinerant magics and Elseridge graduates alike. However, on select occasions, the academy receives a donation, either from a student who has just completed their arcane thesis or a wealthy benefactor. Unless the magical item is needed for use in

a specific class or facility, it usually finds its way into the Hall of Marvels.

In a sense, the Hall of Marvels is like a museum. Students can freely wander the various floors while ogling orbs, chalices, and amulets, though many of these items are, predictably, not terribly interesting when inactive. Placards describe what each item can do, but that's not enough to make the Hall of Marvels satisfying to peruse. How-



ever, once a student has reached their fourth-year, they can petition the docents for temporary access to an item that pertains to their arcane thesis. Many students carefully select their arcane thesis so as to justify a need to test out a given item that has caught their eye.

THE REFERENCE SECTION

Students of other colleges hear of “the Reference Section” and immediately assume it’s the most boring place on campus. That’s the point. The Arcanology professors don’t want ev-

eryone to know about this zany and invaluable resource. The Reference Section houses dozens of *memory splinters*, imbued shards of glass that contain portions of deceased sages’ memories. If a student touches one of these shards, they can interact with a ghostly facsimile of the relevant sage. So long as the sage is willing, the student can freely ask questions. The Reference Section is intended to act as an aid for coursework, but it’s way more fun to suss out long-forgotten rumors or to just gossip with quirky academics who have been dead for hundreds of years.

D6 ARCANOLOGY RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 Headmaster Brongor is sick of the disputes between the Colleges of Alchemy and Druidry regarding so-called “single-ingredient curatives.” Druids claim that they require no brewing, and thus fall under their purview. Alchemists claim that any sort of potion is a form of Alchemy. The headmaster wants an arcanologist to help decide which party is in the right.
- 2 Famed archaeologist Grismar Toldth has come to campus to deliver a series of lectures. Many Arcanology students find Toldth’s “archaeology” to be little more than brazen looting of foreign lands. Gresh Many-Eyed wants to avoid causing a scandal.
- 3 The Hall of Marvels has allowed a preserved whale mandible to remain ignored in a storage closet for over a year. A recent revelation suggests that the mandible is, in fact, an unorthodox spell tome encoded with an invisible script. The museum’s docents would be indebted to any student who could reveal and then translate the text.
- 4 The Puzzle Team—which largely consists of Arcanology students—has decided to swap places with one of Elseridge’s finest Scramble Shard teams. The logic fiends think they’ll fare better at the aggressive sport than the proven athletes will at solving Slabomir Tektov’s head-scratching puzzles.
- 5 Cosmology student Brunqué Ozarine has stolen a *memory splinter* from the Reference Section. He undoubtedly wants to bug the ghostly sage for insights that might help him calibrate his RADIO apparatus. The Arcanology faculty need that *memory splinter* back.
- 6 A recent investigation suggests that as many as 50% of all Arcanology students have *no capacity for magic whatsoever*. Curiously, many faculty members don’t seem to care. Elseridge might be a magic school, but does it really matter if a bunch of philosophy and history nerds can shoot starbolts or whatever?

HARMONY:

AN AESTHETIC APPROACH TO MAGIC

A piper improvises an enchanting melody to coax a band of bandits out of their hideaway. A whirling swordsman performs an intricate dance to magically fortify his armor in advance of a dragon's attack. A poet rhythmically intones an ancient ode, a secret passphrase guaranteed to crack any lock, be it physical or arcane.

Harmony is magic invoked through the practice of art. In the public consciousness, Harmony is solely the domain of bards strumming enchanted tunes on lutes or lyres. In practice, a wide range of practitioners invoke Harmony for their magic, some without even realizing it. Painters, architects, novelists, and "mere" artisans like cobblers, potters, or coopers tug at the magical strings that bind the world, producing diverse magical effects through the sheer act of creation.

HARMONY CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Students of Harmony have similar curricular requirements to their peers. They take three courses per semester, head off on a journey year quest, and complete an arcane thesis. The differences are as follows:

- ✦ For the first four semesters, harmonists must take lessons with one of Elseridge's many harmonic tutors. These lessons count toward their course requirements.
- ✦ Harmony students may take classes from any college they wish, so long as they're capable of performing relevant magic via their Harmony.
- ✦ Harmony students must take the course Aesthetics of Arcana.

ON MIND-ALTERATION

Harmonists must be particularly careful not to break Elseridge's rule against altering minds. Many applications of Harmony involve bewitching or enchanting those who behold the art in question. Any spell that has the power to fundamentally change minds is forbidden, but Elseridge explicitly allows harmonic magic that solely *heightens* moods or emotions. A harmonist may freely inspire their companions or coax a confession from an already guilt-ridden criminal.

HARMONY PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS

MWAN EHROBI

RANK: Coordinator of the Harmony track

ACADEMIC FOCUS:
Transformation

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Maple dulcian (akin to a bassoon)

HERITAGE: Human, from the Vutmarin coast

Mwan Ehrobi (she/her) rejects the term “bard.” She is not a composer, she is not a storyteller, and she certainly serves no lordly patron. Instead, Mwan considers herself a channeler. The universe thrums with energy, and she merely acts as its vessel, expressing the will of eternity through her dulcian. And though Mwan has no desire to fight against the soul of all creation, she is more than happy to nudge it through her music, thereby reshaping reality to suit her needs.

Through harmonic magic, Mwan can transmute matter, twisting rope into knots, swapping water for nectar, and soothing her own ailing joints and muscles. She does not “enchant,” but transform. By tapping into



the frequencies that connect all matter, Mwan can celebrate existence *while also* rewriting its very nature. This, she believes, is the heart of all magic. One must first bow to the unknowable, all-powerful forces, and then one must let these forces into one's heart. Only then can one poke and prod at the essence of all things. Is this not the purest of magics?



NASMANI CORFADDU

RANK: Second-year Harmony student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Spell mimicry

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: Easel and palette

HERITAGE: Half-Genie, from the arid mountain peaks near Lumbrisi

Creativity is highly valued in Lumbrisi, home of Nasmani Corfaddu (she/her). Most of the city's residents count at least one or two genies among their ancestors, and thus they are hardy and long-lived. Aesthetic concerns are paramount, and Nasmani became an accomplished painter at a young age. It wasn't until she attempted to paint a portrait of her city's seer that she came to properly understand the nature of her gift. By capturing the likeness of another spellcaster, Nasmani can recreate the effects of her subject's magic. Once she has committed

the casting of a spell to memory, she can perfectly replicate it with enough time and enough paint.

Nasmani has proven rather troublesome for Elseridge's faculty. It is not clear that she "understands" any of the fundamentals of magic. Some professors have even decried her method as shameless plagiarism. Nasmani, however, doesn't see it that way. She is channeling the magic of Harmony just like her classmates. To put it simply: there is art to her art. To fully capture the essence of one her subjects, she must—in some way—deeply *know* them. And isn't "connection" what Elseridge is all about?

CARROWAY DIPTHEW

RANK: First-year Harmony student

ACADEMIC FOCUS: Telekinesis

ARCANE IMPLEMENT: His body

HERITAGE: Human, from the urban heart of Delvisaport

Carroway (he/him) comes from a long-line of professional dancers. For generations, his family has entertained the wealthy residents of Delvisaport in ballets, private ceremonies, and grand parades. Carroway's training began early and constantly resulted in disaster. Every class he took ended up with his teacher flung across the room or windows inexplicably shattered. After consulting with sages and healers, his parents eventually determined that Carroway was performing telekinetic magic through the powers of dance. For fear of tarnishing their own reputation through Carroway's embarrassing condition, they sent him to Elseridge post-haste.

Carroway is younger than other first-year students and far less comfortable with his own powerful magic. He knows that performing even simple ballet steps will result in telekinetic pushes and pulls that can severely injure those around him. As such, he tries to dance as little as possible. And yet, he yearns to dance, and he knows that only by mastering this magic will he ever be able to graduate from Elseridge and return to his family. That does not make the prospect of flinging his tutor through a wall any less daunting.



HARMONY

POINTS OF INTEREST

ELSERIDGE AMPHITHEATER

As far as the Elseridge trust is concerned, the aesthetic value of harmonic magic is irrelevant. All that matters is that students strumming lutes or reciting poetry can pass their coursework and exit the academy as respectable mages. Most harmonists feel quite differently. The art is the point, and art is meant to be shared. The Elseridge Amphitheater is the site of all great harmonic performances: the unveiling of new arcane theses, ranked sonic duels, or recitals from student-led ensembles.

The Elseridge Amphitheater is also where guest lecturers speak or where visiting harmonists conduct master classes. Its arcane lighting and magnificent acoustic are among Elseridge Academy's more understated infrastructural marvels. Separately, since the room is only rarely in use—during scheduled rehearsals or performances—it is also a prime location for dalliances between secret lovers or clandestine meetings of mysterious organizations. It is not unusual to walk into the amphitheater only

to witness a pair of nervous first-year students making out or the Haritama Society conducting an impromptu planning session.

STUDIOS

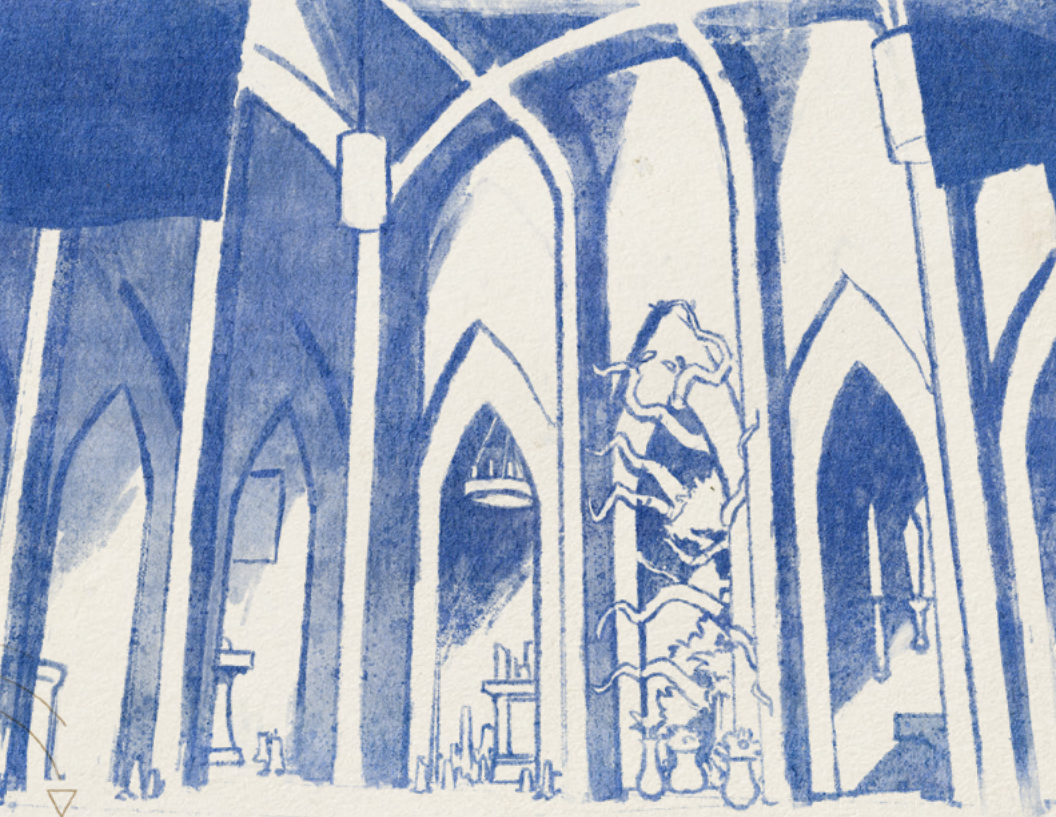
Most Harmony students need dedicated spaces to hone their craft. Much as Divinity students perform their best magic in the Universal Sanctum and Old Magic students draw on the elements of Four Pools, harmonists head to Elseridge's studios to practice. A wide variety of studios are available: soundproofed rooms with music stands, bright dance studios with smooth wooden floors, and workshops stocked with paints, clay, and charcoal. Regardless of a student's art, they are likely to find a dedicated space perfectly suited to their arcane needs.

Anyone is free to use these studios, but the Harmony administrators give their own students priority. Ultimately, most Harmony students can practice their art elsewhere and only use the dedicated studios when they absolutely must.

D6 HARMONY RUMORS AND PLOT HOOKS

- 1 Arcanology student Myerdin Tink has accused his roommate, harmonist Freygir Rumthud, of cheering him up after a recent breakup. Myerdin wanted to wallow in lovesickness, and he suspects Freygir used some harmonic trickery to alter his mind. Is this *really* worth punishing? And can Myerdin prove that Freygir's encouragement was magical in nature?
- 2 A newly discovered harmonic technique allows writers to imbue portions of their soul into specially crafted scrolls. Harmonists on campus can't wait to test out this novel spellcraft, but scholars across campus urge caution. There are profound risks whenever mages elect to partition their souls.
- 3 A mysterious temple in the southlands is sealed with a harmonic lock that can only be opened by a potent duet spell. Professor Lirdgid is holding auditions to determine which student will accompany her to the temple door.
- 4 Most arcane sheet music is kept in the arts library near the amphitheater, but some suggest that scores for dangerous harmonic magic have been hidden away in the Institutional Memoriplex deep beneath the Prime Observatory.
- 5 A bizarre and nonsensical mantra has infected the minds of a dozen Harmony students. This repetitive chant ceaselessly loops through their thoughts and cannot be ignored. The contagious mantra only seems to affect harmonists. Is this the work of some dark orator? Or is it some sort of psychoactive infection? In either case, is there a cure?
- 6 For years, a deep interstellar resonance has interfered with harmonic magic during the season of fluxum. Mwan Ehrobi wants a team of students to stay on campus during break to investigate and—if possible—dispel the malevolent cosmic influence.





APPENDIX A:

THE DIVINE TRIPLE TRINITY

NINE GODS, ENDLESSLY SHUFFLED

Most peoples of Hjass pray to some subset of Gods known across many realms as the divine triple trinity. These nine Gods are grouped into three smaller subsets organized by themes of excess, moderation, and abstinence. Different cultures give preference to some Gods over others, deny the existence of one or more Gods, or conceptualize certain Gods as multiple avatars or splinter deities. Regardless, most scholars of comparative religion acknowledge that a canonical form of the triple trinity serves as the basis for almost all major faiths across Hjass.



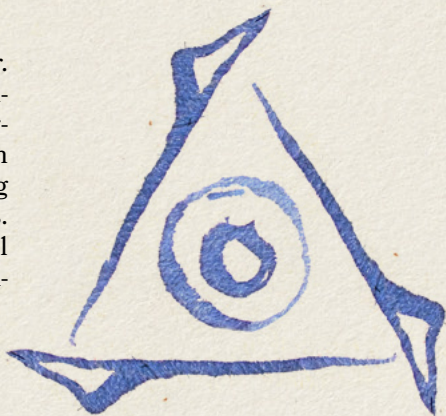
THE GODS OF EXCESS

WYNKEN is the God of creation, often depicted as a dwarf ablaze with fiery excitement. In many creation myths, Wynken brought forth the entire universe, not out of the goodness of His heart but out of an incomprehensibly manic need to create endlessly. Wynken is associated with fire, industry, and creativity.



BLYNKA is the God of the wilds. Most cultures depict Her as a feral hag, naked and crazed. She is the embodiment of an unrestrained free spirit, and whether that is seen as a positive or a negative depends largely upon the culture in question. Blynka is associated with storms, gold, and fury.

NOD is the God of glory and war. Nod sometimes appears in religious art as an empty suit of armor, but They also appear as an unthinking automaton, a crashing tsunami, or a cloud of spearheads. Nod is associated with martial might, glory, inevitability, and conquest.



THE GODS OF MODERATION

ARKUS is the God of light and shadow. Depictions of Arkus are typically humble and mysterious; most frequently, He is described as a hooded figure, easily mistaken for a mortal. Polytheistic faiths almost never give primacy to Arkus. Arkus is associated with chance, the stars, harmony, and love.



VELA is the God of truth and lies. Legalistic cultures often depict Vela as a colossal winged magister, though there is irony in this respectful presentation. After all, Vela knows of truth and lies but also speaks both truth and lies; insofar as She is the God of justice, She is also the God of injustice. Vela is associated with wisdom, strategy, and secrets.



THAELLA is the God of past and future. Inexplicably, all cultures across H^jass¹ depict Her as a shapeshifting woman sitting by a well, transforming endlessly from baby to old woman to child to mother and back again. Some believe Thaella knows all that ever was or will be; others believe that She watches over souls before and after they experience life as mortal beings. Thaella is associated with birth, death, and memory.



[1] And, for that matter, beyond H^jass

THE GODS OF ABSTINENCE

Foss is the God of inaction. They are depicted as a haunting mannequin, a featureless, glowing humanoid without a face. Foss is the God of ascetics, a being that represents either the virtues or follies of silence and restraint. Foss is associated with rest, patience, and acceptance.



NIRUTSUKA is the God of tranquility. In all cultures, Nirutsuka is depicted as a peaceful being whose head is replaced with something, either a raindrop, snowflake, flower, or other icon of nature. While Blynka is the God of the wild and ferocious side of nature, Nirutsuka instead represents the serene balance of the untouched environment. Nirutsuka is associated with calmness, healing, and beauty.



FRÜGGUND is the God of entropy. While most depict Früggrund as a titanic, snowy moose, cultures in warmer climates might conceive of Him as a sandy camel or a salty steppebeast. Crucially, Früggrund is not the God of death but rather of the absence of life, inasmuch as that distinction matters. Früggrund is associated with winter, chaos, and impermanence.



APPENDIX B:

STRUCTURING PLAY

The fundamental challenge when crafting adventures in a magic school is how to structure play. It is not feasible to roleplay every single class period and extracurricular obligation every single day. It is also a wasted opportunity to completely skip those aspects; your players *want* to feel like actual students, especially because the contrast between the “mundane” parts of a magic school and the exciting adventure makes narrative climaxes all the more fulfilling.

The question, then, is how to structure your playtime such that players get to experience a satisfying combination of classroom scenes, non-academic social encounters, extracurricular engagements, and campus hijinks in between dedicated adventure arcs. In this appendix, we will provide a few examples of mechanics that will help you to organize your playtime, weaving together narrative elements in a way that avoids ruining the pace of your campaigns.

THE FOCUS FORMAT

Each week of the school year—20 weeks of 9 days in Hjass, but that’s wholly flexible—consists of some combination of classes, extracurriculars, and socializing. Most of that happens in the background. However, at the start of each week, you ask each of your players how they would like to “focus” their time. They can choose either one of their courses, one of their extracurriculars, a certain NPC they want to bond with, or some other priority they may have that lies outside the central adventure focus. You then roleplay a scene related to this priority, ensuring that the player receives some narra-

tive or mechanical boon based on their decision.

EXAMPLES. One player might state that they want to focus on their pyromantic studies. You roleplay a classroom scene in which the student has a breakthrough in their command of fire magic. They receive a small but permanent mechanical buff to one of their fire spells, or maybe their deepened understanding of fire magic reveals an important clue about the primary antagonist of the campaign.

Another player says they want to deepen their friendship with an NPC. You ask the player how they want to do so, and your

player responds that they ought to sneak into an Alchemy lab late at night. You roleplay a scene in which the two students (and the rest of the party, should they choose to join) get up to some mischief. The friendship deepens, and now your player's character can call on that NPC if they need a favor.

Your third player declares that they want to focus on training for their upcoming sonic duel. You roleplay a practice session with the player's sonic dueling team. Your player might receive some mechanical advantage during a final climactic sonic duel of the school year, they might deepen friendships with the rest of the ensemble, or they might gain access to a new musical spell. You can decide this for them or make the choice of boon a conversation with the players.

PROS AND CONS. The primary advantages of the Focus Format are that your players gain agency with regard to how they prioritize their time, and you're likely to roleplay a wide variety of academic scenarios over the course of a school year. Each player is also guaranteed to get at least some "screen time."

The downsides are that you have little sway in directing the narrative forward, and that the

total amount of time dedicated to roleplaying seemingly trivial scenes can easily snowball.

TWEAKS. You don't need to employ the Focus Format every single week. 20 weeks multiplied by 3 to 5 players might just be too many scenes. You can switch to once per month, or just give the players the choice to use the Focus Format whenever you complete a more sizable chunk of the primary narrative.

You can also ask the players to select one option as a group, roleplaying ensemble scenes that determine what the entire party prioritized each period instead.

TIPS. The scenes that you roleplay do not need to be long, and the buffs and boons you dole out do not need to be significant. In many instances, you may not even need to have full conversations in-character. Your player can just narrate how they spend their time ("I head to the library to focus on studying during all of my free hours") and then you give a simple benefit that is at least partially related to their activity ("In addition to preparing for the exam, you learn that the wand you found last session may have once belonged to the witch you saw sneaking out of your friend's dorm room").

AN ALTERNATE APPROACH

When designing tabletop campaigns set at a magic school, you have to wrestle with one fundamental tension: the need to offer opportunities to engage with the mechanics of your RPG and the need to explore the quotidian experiences of the player characters. While we offered one solution for this in the Focus Format (see above), that structure has numerous drawbacks and may not suit the pacing or theming of your campaign. Another option is the Event Scene Format.

EVENT SCENE FORMAT



As the GM, you predetermine a scene in which your players will participate for a given session. A scene always combines some noteworthy event with some otherwise typical magic school activity. In most instances, a scene will start with a bit of freeform roleplaying as your players settle into their characters. Partway through the session, some incident will add tension to the scene. At this point, the players must solve some problem, confront some enemy, or otherwise grapple with the central conflict you've established.

A campaign, thus, becomes a string of scenes that trace the arc of a school year while always prioritizing the most important

events. Some scenes take place in classrooms, while others relate to extracurriculars or social events. "Downtime" (that is, any time during which students are attending normal classes, studying, or hanging with friends) gets mostly hand-waved.

Example. The party begins a session in a classroom during their second year. Their professor is giving a tutorial regarding ancient rituals. The party answers a few questions but mostly goofs off in the back of the classroom. The professor asks one party member to team up with a rival student for a practical exercise. The rival student uses this opportunity to summon an otherworldly monstrosity into the classroom. The professor is knocked unconscious, and thus, it is the party's responsibility to slay or banish the monster.

The next session begins a few weeks later. Their professor has recovered from their injuries but misremembers the event, blaming the party instead for the incident. Now, the party must defend themselves in front of the Disciplinary Order. During the hearing, the party notices their rival spying on them via oracular magic. They track down the rival after making their arguments, eventually discovering a hidden lair the rival has occupied in the salt flats.

In a later session, the party is sharing drinks at Other Leg. One of their friends walks in and says that the rival has just left for a multi-day field trip. The friend suggests that the party use this opportunity to explore the rival's lair. Investigating the strange hideout involves stealth, combat, and puzzle-solving. Eventually, the party gleans some secrets about the rival which will undoubtedly motivate future sessions.

Pros and Cons. The primary benefit of the Event Scene Format is that you can carefully curate the experience. By pre-determining the scenes in which your players will participate, you can dictate the exact pacing of your campaign. Additionally, each scene is guaranteed to showcase some aspect of student life while also providing opportunities for mechanical engagement.

There are three drawbacks to this format. First and foremost, you limit your players's agency to affect the pacing and focus of the story. Next, you will spend less time exploring the more mundane aspects of school life, as only the most eventful moments will receive any attention. Finally, this will likely require additional preparation time, as you have to care-

fully concoct scenarios that will give your players opportunities to explore their daily lives while advancing your curated plot.

Tweaks. If your players just want to jump into the important events, you can always start *in medias res*. There's no explicit need to start each scene with mundane events.

You don't have to do exactly one scene per session. A session might consist of multiple scenes, or one scene might take two or more sessions.

As a change of pace, you can intersperse occasional "downtime sessions" during which your players engage in more mundane tasks. You can also dedicate time between sessions to downtime, roleplaying basic study sessions or long-term projects in a text chat.

Tips. The Event Scene Format works best when the focus of your campaign is *either* extremely episodic or densely plot-focused. If your campaign is episodic, it's fitting to focus on funny scenarios each session or, alternatively, relatively disconnected encounters to test your players' tactical prowess. If you are trying to tell a single complex narrative, the Event Scene Format allows you to delicately direct the story without getting sidetracked.

A THIRD OPTION

The first two options we've presented for structuring play (the Focus Format and the Event Scene Format) assume that you will want to run campaigns at Elseridge that span great lengths of time. They presume that your campaign will jump ahead periodically to significant points in the story, and that a campaign will explore the full extent of an Elseridge education. Another option is to instead run an entire campaign that spans a mere matter of day or weeks instead of years.

THE SINGULAR ADVENTURE FORMAT

After an introductory session during which you establish the setting and your players present their characters, your first proper session begins with some inciting incident at any point during an Elseridge education. This event thrusts the party into one ceaseless adventure that will encompass the entirety of the campaign. The party can choose to continue following their schedule (i.e., attending classes and doing homework as usual), or they may elect to forego this tedium as they are pulled further into their momentous quest.

In many ways, the Singular Adventure Format is closer in structure to more traditional ta-

bletop campaigns. There is *usually* no assumption that adventurers are spending most of their time working mundane jobs or attending classes. Most campaigns concern some grand plot that takes, at most, a few weeks to uncover and resolve. You can absolutely run such adventures at Elseridge, so long as you are okay with sacrificing some of the narrative benefits of a campaign that spans the entirety of an Elseridge tenure.

Examples. Before the start of your campaign, you inform your players that they will be playing second-year Elseridge Academy students, and that they should prepare a bit of backstory for their characters including minor details about their first year at the school (the names of friends, the classes they took, etc). During your session zero, your players share what they've come up with and collaborate to generate a few shared plot beats, such as how they became friends.

During the first session of play, an interstellar cabal of mages arrives at Elseridge and announces that the academy is under new leadership. The leader of the cabal proclaims that any student who refuses to swear fealty will be erased from reality. With the guidance of a favorite professor, the adventurers start planning a means to overthrow the invading mages.

The stage is now a set for a nonstop adventure. Subsequent sessions revolve around the players forming a resistance within the school, delving into the academy's secret dungeons to uncover hidden defenses, and ultimately fighting back against the mages. Even if some aspects of school are still "business as usual," the party must focus instead on the greater threat. The adventure takes at least 20 or so sessions to complete, but comprises no more than a few weeks of in-game time.

Pros and Cons. The Singular Adventure Format eliminates complications that arise from trying to insert a broader adventure into a lengthy Elseridge education. You don't need to figure out how to insert downtime because there *is* no downtime. You don't need to keep track of grades or extracurricular attendance. There is no friction between the day-to-day life of the party and the adventure that occupies their focus. Every session directly advances the plot. You can focus solely on stringing together important plot beats without bending over backwards to find time to explore quotidian life.

That advantage is also the format's greatest drawback. For many players, the mundanity is

central to the appeal of a magic school setting. What you gain in tight pacing and focused storytelling, you may lose in richness of roleplaying. Additionally, you miss out on narrativizing mechanical advancement. It feels natural for players to periodically level up while spending years at a magic school. Conversely, it might feel strange to progress from level 1 to the equivalent of an archmage just by doing one lengthy quest.

Tweaks. In lieu of one big adventure, you might instead prefer to think of a campaign as a series of "adventure arcs." Perhaps there is one central mystery during the first year of studies followed by a heftier quest that expands on those consequences the following year. In between the action-heavy segments, your players engage in some light downtime roleplaying.

It's possible to salvage many of the benefits of the magic school setting with occasional breaks in structure. Use a flashback to show how Elseridge life was different before the inciting incident, or periodically return to a sense of normalcy before once again ramping up the narrative pressure.

If you want to run a contained adventure at Elseridge, you should also consider a campaign in which your players don't play as students. Maybe they're professors rooting out corruption, maybe they're spies impersonating students, or maybe they're just regular-old adventurers who come to Elseridge for completely non-academic reasons.

Tips. The Singular Adventure Format is easily deployed for shorter campaign (i.e. *not* multiyear campaigns that explore

the full power spectrum of your RPG). Shorter campaign don't need lots of downtime, and they benefit more from tighter pacing. The format is also perfect for players that are interested in the *aesthetic* of the magic school setting but not necessarily its prototypical *narrative beats*. An ancient academy filled with magical secrets and a giant cast of weirdo NPCs is awesome even if your friends don't feel like spending years of real time roleplaying as students studying for exams and whatnot.

