Hespera

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1.1 Edition

Intro

Welcome to Hespera, a narrative, rules-light mini-RPG that takes place four hundred years in the future on a planet of the same name. Hespera is primarily a soft sci-fi game, with slight post-apocalyptic and occult themes.

Theme influences: Infinity (Corvus Belli), Hyperion (the first book), Trigun, and Blood Ceremony (the band, not the movie).

Rules influences: Lasers and Feelings, Mouse Guard, Fate, Dungeon World.

Characters

Characters in Hespera are described by six or seven elements:

- Skills
- Attributes
- Traits and Destiny
- Equipment
- Conditions
- Rites (Witches only)

These skills are summarized below, but are also explained in greater detail in following sections.

Skills

Skills describe the things that your character is good (or bad) at. Skills range from 2 to 4 at start, although they can be increased beyond this in play. When your character attempts to overcome an obstacle, they roll a number of six sided dice (written as Xd, where X is the number of dice rolled). Each individual die that's equal to or lower than the relevant attribute for the skill is considered a success.

Attributes

Your character has two attributes, Might and Will, that range from 1 to 5 (2 to 4 for starting characters). When rolling, attributes determine

how likely each die in the roll is to succeed.

Traits and Destiny

Traits are simple text descriptors that allow you to spend and earn Destiny, this game's narrative metacurrency. Using your traits against yourself gives you Destiny, which you can redeem later to make actions that align with your traits easier.

Equipment

Equipment describes any nonstandard gear your character may have. Equipment provides bonus dice on rolls.

Conditions

Conditions are temporary penalties that make your character less effective. They are almost always gained as part of failing rolls or using Rites.

Rites

Only witches have Rites, which let them increase their attributes on rolls in exchange for taking conditions.

Core Rules

As a mini-RPG, Hespera is more of a conversation with dice than a game. The GM describes the world, and the players describe how their characters respond. When the GM feels like a character's success isn't assured, or if two characters are in opposition to each other, a roll is called for.

When a roll is called for, the GM will tell the players which attribute and skill to roll. If the player is opposed by the GM, the GM will also tell them the target number, which is the number of successes they have to roll to be successful. Target numbers are explained in more

detail below. When two players oppose each other, whoever rolls the most successes wins.

To make a roll, players roll a number of dice equal to the skill the GM chooses, plus the modifiers listed below. Each die that is equal to or less than the relevant attribute is a success, and each die roll is considered completely separately from the others. You might have two dice succeed by rolling low enough and two dice fail by rolling too high. A roll is written as Skill/Attribute, such as Combat/Might. When talking about the specific dice, use their values and add a minus sign to the attribute: Combat/Might becomes 4d/4- (pronounced "four d at four minus") when a character with Might 4 rolls a rank 3 Combat while using superior tools.

Several factors can increase the number of dice you roll. Each applies only once:

- +1d for another player helping
- Special: the helping player rolls this die at their own attribute level
- +1d for an environmental bonus, such as having the high ground during a duel or your debate opponent being sick or tired
- +1d for having superior tools
- +1d per Destiny spent before the roll (see Destiny section)

The difficulty of a task is listed as its target, which is the number of successes required to succeed at it. If your number of successes is lower than the target, you have failed and the GM will impose either a condition or an obstacle (see below). If your number of successes is equal to or greater than the target, you have succeeded. You get what you want, or even a bit more if the GM feels you've rolled well enough.

The starting target for a task depends on its difficulty:

- If the task is easy, the target is **1**
- If the task is average, the target is **2**
- If the task is difficult, the target is **3**

Several factors can increase the target of a task. Like skill factors, target factors only apply once each:

- +1t for another player sabotaging you
- +1t for environmental factors, such as having the low ground during a duel or being tired during a debate
- +1t for lacking the proper tools, such as attempting a field tracheotomy using a plastic butter knife

You might notice that factors that make things more difficult are, on average, twice as effective as factors that make things easier. Life is hard on Hespera, but challenge players and they'll surprise you.

Conditions and Obstacles

When a character fails a roll, the GM imposes either a condition or an obstacle on the player character. To impose a condition, the player writes in a new condition on their character sheet, starting at a level equal to how much the roll was failed by and with an attribute of the GM's choice, but the character gets what they wanted. To impose an obstacle, the GM should reveal some twist or event that doesn't give the character what they wanted, but still provides an interesting change that advances the plot.

Example of Play

Helena the traveling witch wanders into a new town whose sheriff, Richard de Icaza, hates witches. While drinking at the local saloon, Richard says something very untoward about Helena's mother, and she decides that it's time Richard learned that she's not to be fucked with.

> "Alright, that's it! Helena pulls out her knife and lunges towards Richard, in an attempt to shut him up for good!" Helena's player says.

> "Okay, that sounds like a Combat/Might roll, at target 2 because Richard knows his way around bar fights but with +1d for having a knife while he's unarmed," the GM says.

> Helena's player grabs four dice (3d for having 3 ranks in Combat, +1d for her knife) and rolls them, trying to get equal or less than her Might of 3 on each one. She rolls a 1, two 4s, and a 5. "Shit, one success."

> At this point, the GM has a choice. Give Helena a level 1 condition to an attribute of the GM's choice, such as "Might: Roughed Up by the Law," but also grant her her goal of shutting up Richard and consider the matter resolved, or go the obstacle route and up the ante. The GM wants to see where this fight with Richard goes, so she imposes an obstacle.

"So you lunge at Richard with your knife, right? And he looks pretty surprised, but he manages to avoid it. He spins behind you and grabs your arms from behind, putting you in a lock. 'Assaulting the law is a hangable offense in the Reach,' he growls."

Character Creation

Choose a Might and a Will, each between 2 and 4, such that they add up to 6. Then choose four skills to be rank 3 and two other skills to be rank 4. All other skills default to rank 2. Choose two traits. Then choose a name and a signature piece of equipment (subject to GM approval).

If you are a witch, you must have at least rank 3 in Ritual, and may also take Rites in two of the skills offered by your theolith. When choosing traits, at least one of your traits must mention your theolith.

Skills

Starting characters have two rank 4 skills and four rank 3 skills. If the character is a witch, they must take Ritual as either a rank 3 or rank 4 skill.

Skill List

Example uses for skills are listed below the skill name. Example lists are non-exhaustive.

- Athletics
  Might: run, jump, climb, swim

- Combat
  Might: fight, shoot
  Will: lead a battle, analyze a fighting style, fire artillery

- Contacts
  Will: track someone down, find someone with a specific set of skills

- Crafts
  Will: repair a car engine, weave a basket

- Crime
  Might: mug someone, break and enter, pick a lock
  Will: set up a con

- Driving
  Might: ride a horse, drive a car, fly a plane
  Will: diagnose an issue, identify a vehicle

- Education
  Will: know the history of a town, perform medicine

- Perception
  Will: spot something hidden, know when someone is lying

- Persuasion
  Might: intimidate someone
  Will: convince someone to do what you want, broker a deal

- Ritual
  Will: identify a Brand, perform non-Rite services

- Sneaking
  Might: moving silently, hiding yourself

- Subterfuge
  Will: lying, fast talking, disguising

- Survival
  Might: hike a long distance, create shelter
  Will: identify edible plants and animals, predict weather

- Wealth
  Will: purchase something, acquire a loan

Traits

Each character starts with two traits. Traits allow you to spend Destiny on your rolls, if your trait could reasonably help you succeed. They

also allow you to gain Destiny by using the trait against yourself. More details are in the Destiny section.

Whenever you choose a trait, either during character creation or as a part of advancement, you may make up whatever descriptor you want. Traits may be a description of your character's personality, a job description, a description of what they believe about a certain issue, etc. Traits can even be quotes or sayings in your character's voice.

Example Traits

- Anger Issues
- Big Game Hunter
- Bold
- Explorer
- Hard Worker
- Tough
- Warden
- "We must expand north!"
- Witch of the Warrior
- "Haddo guides my hand"

Conditions

During the course of play you character will be stabbed, burned, insulted, mind controlled, or even eaten. This kind of gradual damage (assuming you were able to get un-eaten) is represented by conditions, which track how your character is damaged, how badly, and the effects that has.

Each condition has three qualities to it: its level, its attribute, and its name. The condition's level ranges from one to five, and represents how long it will take to heal. The attribute of a condition tells you which attribute (Might or Will) its penalty applies to. The name of the condition establishes its narrative effects, which might impose further penalties (a GM could rule that climbing with a "Sprained Wrist" will increase its level by one even if you succeed, and of course you can't fight with two handed weapons at all when you have an "Arm in a Sling").

Apart from any potential narrative effects, the mechanical effects of conditions are simple: every time you roll, you take -1 to your attribute for each condition you have with the same attribute type. For example, if you have a Might of 4 and two Might conditions (say, "Sprained Ankle" and "Knife Wound"), your Might is treated as if it was actually 2 until those conditions are healed. A condition's penalty is always -1, regardless of its level.

If you take a condition and it brings its related attribute to zero, you are also taken out of action. You might not necessarily drop unconscious right then and there, but you are unable to take action that requires dice rolls until your attribute is raised at least to a 1. Perhaps you are unconscious, flabbergasted, on bed rest, or demoralized.

Recovery

There are two ways to recover from conditions: naturally, or with assistance. Before either form of recovery can occur, the player must wait until the end of the condition's recovery period (given below). To recover naturally, once the condition's recovery period has ended, the player rolls two dice at whatever attribute the condition is for, without any modifiers from any conditions. Each success reduces the level of the condition by one. To recover with assistance, another character rolls a relevant skill after the end of the recovery period with one helping die from the injured character's Might (for Might conditions) or Will (for Will conditions), and reduces the level of the condition by one for each success. Like other helping dice, the helping die is rolled by the injured character, and since it's a recovery roll the roll is not affected by conditions.

If the condition has not been reduced to zero, wait for another recovery period at the new condition level, then try again.

Level 5 conditions are so serious that they can only be recovered using assisted recovery, and even once recovered they stick around in a healed form as a new trait, added to the character's existing ones. For instance, "Lost Arm" might stick around as "One-armed" or "Robotic limb," while "Catatonic" might stick around as "Shell-shocked."

Level 1 Condition

Might example Strain
Will example Tired, shocked
Recovery Period One hour

Level 2 Condition

Might example Sprain, lacerations
Will example Demoralized, angry
Recovery Period One day

Level 3 Condition

Might example Pulled muscle, deep cuts
Will example Depressed, furious
Recovery Period One week

Level 4 Condition

Might example Broken bone, internal bleeding
Will example Obsessed
Recovery Period One month

Level 5 Condition

Might example Loss of limb
Will example Catatonic
Recovery Period One month, assisted recovery only

Destiny

Destiny is one of those special characteristics that makes player characters player characters, and lets them bend the rules of the world to their whims. Your Destiny is represented by a pool of Destiny points, which you can spend to give yourself benefits. You may also intentionally hamstring yourself in order to gain more.

Each time you use a trait against yourself you gain one Destiny point and add it to your Destiny pool. Each time you use a trait to aid yourself you must spend one Destiny point from your Destiny pool.

Destiny has two uses: you can either spend it before a roll in order to add bonus Destiny dice, you can spend it after a roll to reroll failed dice, or you can do both.

Each Destiny point that you spend before a roll gives you one Destiny die, which we suggest you use a separate color of d6 for. Destiny dice are rolled exactly the same way as normal dice, unless you roll a 1. If you roll a 1 on a Destiny die it not only counts as a success, but it adds another Destiny die to your pool, which you roll immediately. If this die also comes up a 1, you keep it as a success and add another, and so on until no dice come up 1.

If you spend Destiny after a roll, you can take one failed die per Destiny spent, convert it into a Destiny die if it wasn't already, and reroll it. This can only be done once, and you must decide how many dice to reroll, and therefore how much Destiny to spend, before you reroll any of the dice.

You may spend Destiny both before and after a roll to gain both effects. For example, you could spend one Destiny to get a bonus die on the roll, then after you may spend another Destiny to reroll a failure, for a total cost of two Destiny.

You can also always use a trait against yourself to either subtract 1d from whatever roll you're attempting or to justify your character making a bad choice. This choice must be seriously bad, not just something like, "my warrior takes ten extra minutes to get ready today because he has the Cares About His Appearance trait." Instead, your character could miss an important appointment because he's too busy combing his beard or he couldn't find his lipstick (it's the future, anyone can wear lipstick if they want).

Characters begin each scenario (not session) with an amount of Destiny equal to their lowest attribute, unless their Destiny is already higher than that from a prior scenario. For example, a character with Might 2 and Will 4 would start each scenario with 2 Destiny. Witches begin each scenario with one fewer Destiny point than non-witches. Scenarios are explained in more detail in the Advancement section.

Equipment

Equipment has one of three effects: it allows you to roll a skill in the first place (such as requiring a gun to shoot someone), giving you $+1d$ for having superior tools if your tools are of better quality than normal or if they're in a situation where they would be especially useful (such as using a sword in a knife fight), or avoiding the $+1t$ penalty for having inferior tools (having superior tools automatically negates this penalty too). Purchasing equipment requires a successful Wealth roll.

Your character's signature equipment always counts as superior tools when used in applicable situations.

Rites

People who have pledged their lives to a theolith in order to gain access to theolith magic are referred to as witches, warlocks, magicians, etc. For the purposes of the rules, only the term witch is used. Witches must meet the following requirements:

- Have a trait related to their theolith
- Have at some point undergone the ritual to be a servant to a specific theolith
- Permanently reduce starting Destiny by one
- Take the Ritual skill at at least the rank 3

Theolith magic works by adding a new feature called Rites to a skill. Rites can apply to a skill of any rank. When rolling a skill that the character has Rites in, a character may choose to invoke their Rite. When the Rite is invoked, it lets the player make the roll at a higher attribute level than they would normally (maximum 5) at the penalty of taking a condition to that attribute with a level equal to the difference between the new attribute value and their current one, effective just after the roll is resolved.

For example, Helena the traveling witch is in a jail cell after being arrested for assaulting Richard. She wants to convince the guard to let her go, and she invokes her theolith to weave her Persuasion into a subtle spell. The roll is Persuasion/Will, and Helena has a Will of 3. She could therefore take either a level 1 condition and roll as if she had a Will of 4, or a level 2 condition and roll as if she had a Will of 5.

When a character becomes a witch they may choose to take Rites in two skills that their theolith offers Rites in.

NPCs and Wild Animals

Every creature apart from the players is modeled with three attributes: Base Might Target, Base Will Target, and Special Qualities.

Whenever a player and a non-player creature are at odds with each other, look at how the non-player is opposing the player. If they're primarily using their physical nature, the default target for the player character's rolls is set to the Base Might Target. If they're primarily using their mind, the default target for the player character's rolls is set to the Base Will Target. Note that the base target is related to which attribute the creature is using, not the player.

Many creatures also have Special Qualities, which summarize anything unique about the monster. Special Qualities have primarily narrative effect, such as a monster with night vision not being affected by darkness.

Advancement

There are two units of time that are important for advancement: the scenario and the arc.

A scenario is one through three sessions, and covers the introduction and resolution of a single small scale problem. You can think of a scenario as an episode of a TV show, or two or three episodes in a two or three parter. At the end of each scenario, you may choose one of the following:

- Lower a skill by one rank to increase another skill by one rank. Skills cannot be lowered below rank 1 or raised above rank 5
- Swap one trait for another (a witch's theolith trait cannot be removed)
- Change which skills to have Rites in (witches only)

In addition to whatever you chose above, you also recover from all of your conditions at the end of the scenario and refresh Destiny up

to your starting amount. If your Destiny is higher than your starting amount, you keep that instead.

An arc is one through five or so scenarios, and makes up the resolution of a long running problem. You can think of an arc as a season of a TV show. At the end of each arc, you get the normal benefits for ending a scenario as well as the following:

- Raise a skill by one rank, to a maximum of rank 5.
- Optionally increase one attribute by 1 and reduce the other by 1. This is the only way to get a 5 in one attribute (at the cost of having a 1 in the other)

The World

Early History

Four hundred years ago, humankind discovered wormholes. Three hundred years ago, humankind built the Astral Beacon, allowing colonization to far reaches of the galaxy. Two hundred years ago, this planet was discovered and colonization began.

One hundred years ago, Earth was destroyed.

There was no warning before the gamma ray burst hit. In an instant, all life in the Sol System was wiped out. With no one to work it, the Astral Beacon became unusable, separating all human worlds from each other.

At two hundred years old, the colony on Hespera was established well enough to survive the turmoil of being cut off from Earth's supply chain and leadership, but it was a trying time. In Earth High Command's absence, the various cities of Hespera fought over which would govern which. Hespera City, as the old capital, felt that it should rule the planet, but an alliance of mountain towns led by Hephaestus was able stop them in the pass. To this day, Hespera City rules the southern plains, Hephaestus rules the mountains, and each city of the Holdover and the Reach are worlds unto their own.

> Did you know? Hespera's original name as given by explorers was Dusk, in reference to the light-diminishing properties of its thick atmosphere. It's said that the sunni-

est day on Hespera is only as bright as an overcast, stormy day on Earth.

Geography

Human settlement on Hespera can be roughly divided into four different areas: the southern plains, the mountains, Holdover, and the Reach.

The Southern Plains

The southern plains are the southernmost point of East Continent, and were the first areas settled by the humans on Hespera. Hespera City, the largest and oldest city on Hespera, sits on the edge of the southern plains and the ocean, and holds the only functioning spaceport on the entire planet, which it uses to launch communications satellites. Manned space travel is unheard of, since the wormhole gate has been inactive for a century, although there is occasional talk of going to Aegyl and Erythia, Hespera's two moons, if an old ship can be repaired.

The Mountains

The mountains lie north of the plains, and progress in a northeasterly direction. The largest city in the mountains is Hephaestus, which also manages most of the ore and heavy metals that the rest of the human cities need. At its highest the mountains can exceed 8,000m.

Holdover

Holdover, named for Captain Janice Holdover, is the region of lowlands north of the mountains, lying between the mountains to the south and the Reach to the north. Holdover is a small, heavily wooded area of foothills and waterfalls, and is famed both for its beauty and also for the Holdover Night Monster, the largest creature yet discovered on Hespera.

The Reach

The Reach is the most recently settled area of Hespera, and is the least densely populated. Carved out by glaciers millions of years ago, the Reach is a mesh of fjords, islands, and mountains. The waters of the Reach's fjords are incredibly nutrient rich, and the Reach is poised to become the capital region of all fishing on Hespera in a few decades.

The Human Cities

When the colonization ships landed, they brought with them many wonders. Massive combifabs: automated factories and 3d printers the size of city blocks, capable of building anything as long as they had the electricity and raw materials. Clustered supercomputers with the sum total of all humankind's knowledge on hyper long term storage. Communications satellites, air travel, huge mining operations. Most of these are gone now, dead due to lack of parts or manpower, but some remain.

Human technological level, compared to vidgrams from Earth history, would place the generalized technological level at around the equivalent of the late 21st Earth century. The people of Hespera lost much during the chaos of the destruction of Earth, but have recently entered their fifth decade of productive peace.

Life Within the Cities

Within the cities, life continues more or less how it did in the late 21st century. Computers are a bit more rare, and implantable computers are essentially unheard of. Cars also tend to be owned by few people in the cities, who instead favor bicycles or walking. Horses are even occasionally seen, as they're quite a bit cheaper to manufacture than cars and can travel over a wider variety of terrain.

Most towns with at least ten thousand people sprang up around a combifab, and Hespera City and Hephaestus are both home to combifab clusters, which work day and night to produce the goods such massive cities need. Combifabs tend to be powered by geothermal and wind energy, as Hespera's atmosphere absorbing most ultraviolet and visible light puts a damper on solar power. For this reason, many of the major cities are built in active tectonic zones, and suffer frequent earthquakes.

Much was damaged in the wars after Earth fell, and Hespera is down to a few dozen combifabs and only two original ship computers. The ship computers are vital, as not all of their data has been backed up to the paltry computing resources built on Hespera itself.

Life Between the Cities

Train lines and caravan routes tie cities together like strands in a fungus, while walled farmland dots the countryside. Railroad guards sit in armored cabins atop the trains, rifles at the ready.

Off the rail lines, travel occurs in caravans of armored vans. These armored caravans are able to go where the trains cannot, but are more expensive to operate and outfit. The roads between cities also tend to be of very low quality, as the rail lines were a higher priority and have only just now been fully rebuilt.

> Did you know? The longest train route travels unbroken from Hespera City at the southern tip of East Continent all the way up through the Holdover and into the Reach.

Farmland, small villages, and industrial areas that must occur in the wild (such as most mines) present a particularly difficult problem. In these cases, walls make great neighbors and everyone is armed and trained. Dedicated guards are rare in these cases, so everyone is responsible for their own safety.

The World Beyond

Hespera itself is cool, dark, and roughly Venus-sized planet somewhere in the Centaurus Arm of the Milky Way. It orbits its star, simply called Hespera's Sun, at a distance of roughly 1.1 AU. Due to its atmosphere absorbing most ultraviolet and visible light, the environment on Hespera is dark and cool, never being brighter than Earth on an overcast day and rarely being warmer than 35 °C, even at the equator in summer.

Because the atmosphere absorbs visible light and holds onto its thermal energy, Hespera's temperature is fairly stable from season to season and equator to pole, having a variance of only around fifty °C between the coldest recorded temperature of -15 °C and the hottest recorded temperature of 35 °C.

Despite the reduced levels of solar energy hitting the planet, plant life is just as prevalent as it was on Earth due to Hesperan plants using lower spectrum light for photosynthesis. Since they don't use chlorphyll, plants on Hespera have a distinctive bluish green tint.

Megafauna

The atmosphere on Hespera is also high enough in oxygen to support a large variety of megafauna, including komodo beetles (which are as large as a car) and the Holdover Night Monster (a seven meter long bearlike creature). Megafauna is one of the primary reasons that all intercity travel outside of the most civilized regions is handled by train or armored caravan. Humans may live on Hespera, but they do not own it.

> Did you know? There are 25 Earth hours in every 24 Hesperan hours. That means an Earth day is only 96% as long as a Hesperan day.

Flora

Animals aren't the only living creatures on Hespera that come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. The most legendary flora of Hespera is the sulfur tree, sixty meter tall trees with rocklike bark and dirty yellow branches that droop low over geothermal vents and acid pools.

Theoliths

Theoliths are the strangest feature of Hespera by far. They look like massive statues, up to twenty meters tall, popping up out of the ground or coming out of rock faces. Theoliths show no signs of being machined or tool created, and no signs of erosion. They cannot be damaged by any human means. To make matters more mysterious, no signs of civilization have ever been found in the planet's archaeological record.

> Did you know? Theoliths vary widely in shape and size. Their appearance varies from that of wild animals to vaguely humanoid to wild shapes possible only in imagination, and every form in between!

By far the strangest aspect of theoliths is the effect they have on people. For some reason, some people have intense emotional reactions to theoliths and their followers. They seek out that theolith, and join its guardian cult. The guardian cult lives in the vicinity of the theolith, and performs rites around it for their concerns and the general public. Each theolith has a sphere of influence, and its followers perform rituals toward that end.

If the follower of a theolith is found worthy, they undergo a ritual that dedicates their life to that theolith. They ingest a viscous liquid that slowly drips from the form of the theolith (a theolith of battle might drip the liquid out of wounds like blood, while a theolith of plenty might drip the liquid out of a cup), which changes the quality of their blood. After a few days a *brand* of the theolith appears somewhere on their body. A follower who has undergone the ritual is called a witch.

The truth is that their blood becomes inhabited by a creature, distributed cell by cell among their entire bloodstream. This creature is called a brand due to the way it burns a mark specific to the theolith into the witch's body. The brand is an extension of the theolith's mind, and can be petitioned to work supernatural effects within the realm of the theolith's spheres. This is referred to as Rites.

Theoliths do not communicate with their followers and witches through speech, but instead operate by visions and feelings. A witch might understand that their theolith wants something by being shown a vision of themselves doing it, or by having a strong positive emotional reaction when they begin to undertake that action.

NPCs and Creatures

Alot

Base Might Target 3
Base Will Target 2
Special Qualities

- Thick fur
- Horns

The shy and elusive Alot was first discovered high in the mountains above Hephaestus, where it lives a solitary existence of bounding up and down mountains eating shrubs and berries. Alots are the roughly the

size of an ox, but have bearlike limbs that end in claws which, coupled with their horns, make them quite capable of defending themselves. The pelt of an Alot is incredibly warm and covered in thick fur, which makes them prized targets for hunting – when they can be found.

Suggested Obstacles

- Escaping

Duskers

Base Might Target 1
Base Will Target 3
Special Qualities

- Keen ambush instincts
- Burrowing ability
- Pack tactics

When children of the Reach misbehave, the Duskers are who the parents invoke to scare them into obedience. While not physically large or powerful, Duskers are incredible ambush hunters, and are known for their tendency to steal cats, dogs, and occasionally even children from the local farms. Duskers are about the same size as a lynx, but are much wider and flatter, and their fur is a deep purple color that blends in perfectly with the plants of the Reach. The favored strategy of Dusker packs is to have half the group burrow under the ground while the other half chases prey directly to them.

Suggested Obstacles

- Split up the pack into many directions
- Burrow and hide
- Retreat to lay an ambush

Holdover Night Monster

Base Might Target 4
Base Will Target 2
Special Qualities

- Night vision
- 20cm long claws
- Infrared-masking coat

Of all the megafauna encountered on Hespera, the Holdover Night Monster is by far the most lethal. Seven meters long and shaped roughly like a bear, with gigantic claws, large eyes, and vicious cutting teeth, Holdover Night Monsters are not to be fucked with. Holdover Night Monsters were first discovered in the Holdover where the mountains split to allow the plains of the south to meet the Reach, stalking among the giant sulfur trees. Many a farmhold has been found in the morning, gates torn asunder and nothing but blood and bullet holes to remember the inhabitants by.

Suggested Obstacles

- Ripping something apart
- Tracking prey

Komodo Beetle

Base Might Target 3
Base Will Target 1
Special Qualities

- Incredibly resilient carapace

A huge carnivorous beetle the size of a landcar with a two meter long curved horn. Komodo beetles are known for their appetite and aggression, and are more than strong enough to flip over an armored van. Some hardened train guards have even reported seeing two working together to flip train cars in order to get to the cargo inside.

Suggested Obstacles

- Knocking something over
- Trampling/crushing something

Strigan Bloodbeast

Base Might Target 2
Base Will Target 1
Special Qualities

- Rapid regeneration
- Blood draining
- Barbed claws

Strigan bloodbeasts, hyena-sized hairless creatures with hooked proboscis and barbed claws, were one of the first creatures encountered in Hespera, as they roamed the plains around Hespera City in packs, hunting the local creatures. Bloodbeasts are not picky in what they'll target as they hunt, and frequently the only thing left of their targets is a completely desiccated husk. Bloodbeasts are also known for their enhanced regenerative abilities, which enable them to heal from all but the most grievous wounds in minutes. Before Earth fell they were captured in huge numbers to send to medical and biology schools as research subjects, but with the loss of the Astral Beacon their numbers have rebounded and they've begun to transform from pest to threat.

Suggested Obstacles

- Latching on to something
- Draining blood

Theobyte

Base Might Target As base creature
Base Will Target 3
Special Qualities

- Minor theolith brand

Not every theolith is found unguarded. Sometimes a theolith will choose an animal that wanders into its radius to be a witch, and will bless it with a minor brand. The animals then perform some duty for the theolith, such as guarding it or retrieving items from the nearby area. No one knows yet why some theoliths create theobytes, but it does seem to be relegated to small or weak theoliths that have few to no human witches.

Suggested Obstacles

- Befuddle with an illusion
- Grow stronger with Rites
- Act on their theolith's will

Theoliths

Haddo

Rites Offered Contacts, Subterfuge, Persuasion
Symbol A circle pierced through with a line

Haddo was the first active theolith found on Hespera, twenty-four years after the initial colonization. Haddo is in a small seacave on the southern coast of East Continent, and is jealously guarded by a secretive cult. Between Haddo blessing its witches with limited powers of mind control and the rumors that local youth are sacrificed as part of their rituals, the cult of Haddo finds itself the most frequently banned of all the active cults. Even cities that don't ban general witchcraft frequently ban Haddo worship.

The Harvest

Rites Offered Empathy, Perception, Survival
Symbol Two lines, crossed near their end, as of a grapevine support

The Harvest was found at the top of a particularly fertile mountain valley where the mountains meet the Holdover, and is easily the most worshiped theolith to date, with almost a thousand followers and over a hundred witches. Its physical form is an awe-inspiring seventeen meters tall, and is represented as an Alot standing on its hind legs and holding out a bowl filled with carvings of fruits. Witches of the Harvest are considered an amazing boon in frontier towns, and are frequently on the municipal payroll.

The Hunter

Rites Offered Perception, Sneaking, Survival
Symbol A spear

The Hunter is the most recently discovered theolith, found two years ago on a mountaintop in the Reach. Not much is known about the Hunter yet, apart from its love of spears and that its witches are consummate ambushers. Physicists in the Samantha Lagat University in Hephaestus have been attempting to get a witch of the Hunter research subject for two years in order to further their research in optics and detection, but so far none have come forward.

The Merchant

Rites Offered Contacts, Persuasion, Wealth
Symbol A necklace of beads

The Merchant was discovered early in Hespera colony's history, at the confluence of the two major rivers that carve their way through the southern plains. The Merchant's physical form is roughly three meters tall, humanoid, and bedecked in carvings of jewels, shells, and beads. Witches of the Merchant are known for their shrewd negotiating skills and knack for finding that they have just a little more money than they remember, but many other traders refuse to do business with witches of the Merchant, claiming that the Merchant's powers are tantamount to cheating at best, and mind control at worst.

The Obelisk

Rites Offered Athletics, Combat, Perception
Symbol A great shield

The Obelisk, found a hundred years ago in the volcanic mountains around Hephaestus, takes the form of a large obelisk shaped warrior, kitted out in full armor and wielding a shield nearly as large as it is. Witches of the Obelisk are known for their physical prowess and skill on the battlefield, making them highly prized as train guards.

The Wind

Rites Offered Athletics, Sneaking, Survival
Symbol Two horizontal lines

Of all the major theoliths, the Wind is the one whose influence is hardest to measure. Its core tenet is to wander and explore, meeting new people and seeing new places, so its followers are all but impossible to count. Estimates range as low as a dozen witches and a hundred followers to over seventy witches and six hundred followers. None but the Wind knows for sure. The Wind is located on the top of a lone mountain, jutting up from the southern plains, and takes the form of a native birdlike creature riding on a swirl of air.