

Polaris

Ben's little game about fairy knights
02/01/2005 Version

Welcome to Polaris!

This is a playtest draft. It is not meant to be a final form, but rather an intermediate version to receive comments about. While the newest version is available at the TAO games website www.tao-games.com, please do not circulate this via other mediums.

Here are the things I'm working on right now:
Rewriting and reorganizing the Background section.
The Conflict mechanism is too slow, I think.
Maybe you shouldn't ever lose traits.

If you have any questions, please e-mail me at benlehman@gmail.com, or swing by The Forge at www.indie-rpgs.com and join in the discussion.

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Background

The Knights of the Order of the Stars

Beneath the Guardian, the smoking Mistake festers like a forgotten apology, giving witness of the might and arrogance of your ancestors, just as its demons give witness to the doom of your people.

You are one of the the Knights of the Order of the Stars, also known as the Knights Stellar or simply Knights, an ancient and solemn order, each one sworn to drive back the forces that have shattered your homeland and will eventually consume your people entirely, leaving behind no trace of history, no trace of culture, no trace of the greatest civilization that the world will ever know.

This is the struggle given to you: Take up your starlight sword, purify your heart until it shines like the Guardian, wear only a breathsuit as proof against the cold, and go forth to combat the demonic hordes of the Mistaken. You are alone in the world -- all but abandoned by your family and your people -- but you are guided by the stars and still you struggle on for their sakes.

The struggle will claim your life, if it does not claim your soul. Your fight is as hopeless as a baby crying against the coming of the summertime.

But you will fight it, and in the darkest abyss of doom, you will find humanity, nobility, and even hope.

The stories of these knights, these people, and these monsters are in your hands. They are now your stories, to tell and to treasure.

Shall we begin?

As it Was Before

To understand the nature of your fight, you must understand the world as it is now. And to understand the world as it is now, you must understand how it was before.

Polaris: the Snow Drop City

Under the steady, vigilant light of the pole star, there was once a great city. Built of ice and starlight, its people lived a life of untold bliss and happiness, eating thin delicacies, toasting each other with the twinkling wine of their eternal night sky. The stars spun at their command, and in their citadels they crafted rainbow walls that cast the stars blue and red, and in those places their shadows danced with each other and the starlight. The people, in that time, did not know hunger, did not know age, and did not know fear. Their life was one of love and beauty, and pale lights shining eternal against the deepest shadow, for they were beautiful, and their music was more beautiful, and their queen was the most beautiful of all.

This glorious time was only a single night, but it might also be said to have been eternity. The people, in that age, did not measure time, for they did not yet know fear.

That Golden Rainbow: The Dawn

It was in the reign of King Polaris VII that the sightings first began. At first it was thought to be that sort of gentle madness that strikes the greatest artists, but at times it came to be understood as some sort of regular phenomenon: that subtle rose, like a star blossoming flat and wide, that dappled the horizon, subtle and perhaps easily missed. It reflected new colors -- yellow and green and gold -- inside the rainbow chambers and, because it was new, the people called it beautiful and named it dawn. It became apparent that that subtle, disappearing dawn came at regular times, and so the King, who loved it more than anything, commissioned the construction of the Calendar -- a great mechanical device for the measurement and construction of time. The thrummings, tickings, and clackings of that infernal device filled that halls of Polaris, and for the first time the people knew something that was not beautiful.

At those rare moments of dawn, the king began to hold court in the highest towers, and during those times they did not eat or sleep or even dance, but merely sat motionless and watched that steady, heavy star that suffused the sky. And, perhaps, the dawn was pleased by the king's actions (as much as such a thing could be said to be pleased), for when it came it came brighter, and longer, and soon the king was locked away from his city almost forever, watching that circling, vacant light.

The musicians that saw the dawn would only draw from it a long, hideous scream, but no one paid them any heed. Music was out of style at the court.

Polaris's Bride: The Snow Queen

There were those among the people who were not so trusting of the dawn. Polaris's bride, who was called by some the Snow Queen, was foremost among them. In the secret and darkest hallways of the people, where the malevolent light of the dawn could not reach them, they held their own shadow court, and in that shadow court they spoke of the screechings of the musicians, of the soft and continuous melting that struck the outer reaches of the city, and in that court they swore oaths by the highest star to stop the dawn's fell influence.

And it is in this manner, covering the dark, that the order of the Star Knights was first begun. First among them was the Queen's champion -- Algol -- who wore a starlight sword even at the most formal of occasions, and it was decided that this sword should become their symbol.

It was an Order formed in the oldest tradition, and sanctified with a kiss and, it is said by some, was the root of the Mistake.

The Mistake

It is spurious to consider the Mistake simply a moment in time, just as spurious as to consider the Mistake as simply the festering pillar of smoke that now lies at the pole, or the demons that surge forth from it every dawn. The Mistake identifies the People today as much as the ice, the stars, or the sun, and is as complex as any of them.

The Mistake in History

Many stories are told about the Mistake, its nature, its origins, and its history. Some say that it has always been there -- that the time of Polaris and the stars is simply a myth for children. Others say that it is not there at all -- that it is merely an illusion created by the summer sun. But most say that it was done, and that it was done by the people, and so they must take up the blame for their own destruction.

There are many stories about the Mistake, but no one among the people knows the truth. The histories, if there ever were histories, have been lost and, although the libraries list books on the subject, they are filled only with ashes and not with words.

Some stories say that, as the Queen and Algol drew closer together, they became lovers and, as whatever affection there once was between the King and his Queen melted into nothing, the King grew increasingly paranoid and, eventually, entombed himself and his highest councillors in the highest tower of the city Polaris, where they performed great and terrible rituals to the sun -- things that were not music and were not dances -- and some further speak in hushed whispers about the terrible prices that they paid to the dawn as it burned their blood red, prices paid in skulls, flesh, and still beating hearts.

Some say that, in a devastating assault on the King's dawn cult, the Order of the Stars struck at and destroyed the foul apparatus of the Calendar, leaving only rubble where there were once its intricate gears and springs. Without that machine, the dawn worshippers did not know when their deity might return and, as the darkness wore on, they grew fearful that it would not. The King flew into a mad fit, and declared that they must sacrifice what was most precious to them that the dawn might return. In some twisted sense of altruism or jealousy, he offered up the life of his Queen in service of his

diabolical goal and, would it not for the timely intervention of her champion Algol, would have cut her open upon the remains of his machine. Algol and the King fought on that machine and, as their icicle blood mingled with their beloved Queen upon it, strange alchemies began to emerge.

Some say that the King learned of a certain type of crystal that might magnify the sun, and constructed a great one in his high tower above the Calendar and the city Polaris. Even as the crystal was being built, the Order of the Stars attacked but, as that fearsome battle ensued, the dawn rose up and was transformed by that crystal into the Sun. Terrified by that burning star, all of the People rose up as one to fight against it, but even then they and their city were destroyed by its power.

Some say that the Order of the Stars, in desperation to escape the dawn, dug into the ice, deeper even than the sewers, deeper even than the ancient and abandoned hovels of their ancestors, deep into some terrible realm of water and fire, and there they met with the demons, and led them to the city, for they feared the dawn even more than they feared hell.

Some say that the transformation of the mysterious dawn into the terrible sun is a process as natural as the transformation of sight into music, and that the politics of the time were merely the reactions of an ignorant people to an unknown phenomenon.

In truth, the answer is not known but, in the end, the city was all but destroyed and that smoky Mistake was permanently written beneath the Sentinel Star.

The Mistake in the World

The Mistake, in center of the four remnants is, to most of the people, merely a blight on their beautiful sky, something to be considered in landscaping and window arrangement, for where the heart of the city Polaris once basked beneath the light of the Sentinel Star there is now a great tower of pale smoke leading up to the sky.

To the knights, of course, it represents much more than an aesthetic stain on the landscape -- it is a symbol of their greatest failure, perhaps their greatest sin, and it is also a symbol of the demons that they fight. The Mistake, and the hatred of it, is the center of the Order of the Stars. -- even more than the cities and the people that they love, even more than their star

light swords and their patrons above, even more than the sun that they are sworn to fight. It is the Mistake that beckons them to Crusade, the Mistake that spawns the demons that haunt them, the Mistake that gives them a reason to exist at all.

No one has entered the Mistake and returned in any form but that of a demon, though this does not stop crusading knights from trying.

The Demons

The demons that emerge from the Mistake take on many different forms, and to try to speak of them all is impossible in such a short space. A brief overview will have to suffice, and the intrepid explorer will have to discover the nature of these foul creatures on her own.

Those of Blood and Flesh

These most obvious of demons pour forth from the Mistake every Spring in multifarious and improbable bodies. Most are roughly in the shape of people, although there are those that resemble beasts, or spiders, or shapeless blobs of transparent flesh. Spikes of bone protrude rudely from wounds in their hides, and their teeth are long and yellowed with the marks of meat. Some demons are great monstrous creatures, but yet have muscle and bone like the people. Others are merely skeletal, or blood sculpted into a stable form by some sort of foul will. Some of the more human wear the blood-stained fineries of their prey and others, the less human, wear the skins of those that they have eaten.

These demons shape their blood into weapons, or breath poison, or tear things apart with their claws. To a one, they hunger for the flesh of the People, and will stop at nothing to get it, although some prefer to drink blood, and others to eat bones, and still others only for the beat of hearts. When they are cut, they bleed red, and hot enough to melt ice and burn flesh. Many are mindless, slaving beasts, but others are clever, and some might even be called subtle. They are not opposed to sieges, and they understand stealth, infiltration, and patience.

It is said, amongst the knights, that there are some demons that are more sly than mere warriors -- some that have mastered the art of wearing the skins of the people as disguises, and others have learned to crawl into the

brains of the people and turn their thoughts and wills to the purposes of whatever lurks within the Mistake.

Those of Heart and Soul

But there are more insidious demons, which have no forms at all. Some of them are capable of taking the bodies of individuals amongst the people, whilst others are merely a feeling in the heart, a sinister cast to the light, or the bright color in a sunny rainbow. These demons easily penetrate the remnant fortresses, and manipulate the people within to their own agenda. Although the knights are often resistant to their powers, the other people are far too susceptible, and such a demon is often capable of enormous harm before it is rooted out and destroyed, if it ever is.

Such demons are difficult, though not impossible, to fight. They cannot be cut, even by the starlight swords of the knights, and they are often strong enough to overcome a simple exorcism. Fortunately, each one has a weakness but, unfortunately, each weakness is unique.

These incorporeal demons are often intelligent enough to have their own goals and purposes, and sometimes they have been turned against each other, for they are highly susceptible to each others attack. Sometimes, knights even come to an "understanding" with a Demon of the Heart, and this is often the start of the knight's corruption.

The Solaris Knight and the Ice Maiden

The most terrifying demons within the hoard are not giant, slaving monsters, nor are they the barely noticeable puffs of poisoned wind. The greatest among the demons are not demons at all -- they are people.

Only rarely ever sighted, the Solaris Knight appears to be the chief general among the demons, and greatly respected by their kind. He is one of the people, golden-haired, and he wields a starlight sword that burns bright and hot with the fire of the sun. His blood is so cold that it has frozen into icicles that break through his skin, but for all that he is tall and strong and one of the people. He has been known, at times, to speak with knights, and though he has been driven back and defeated many times, even killed, he returns the same every summer.

The Ice Maiden is even more rarely seen. She is the epitome of beauty

among the people -- thin and silver-haired, with eyes the white color of the guardian. She wanders alone the wasted landscape between the Remnants, and is most often seen from a distance, singing melancholy songs that can only be heard by the saddest of souls. Snow falls from her breath, and her kiss turns the most loving heart to ice.

Some among the knights say that the Solaris Knight and the Ice Maiden are Polaris's Queen and her champion, Algol, turned by the Mistake's cruel irony into servants of the Sun. If you listen to the stories, this makes sense. But the truth is not that simple.

The Solaris Knight and the Ice Maiden are every knight that has ever, frustrated and angry, cast lots against the people, every knight who has ever despaired of his people's faith, every knight who has ever turned to the demons with a corrupt and blackened heart. The Solaris Knight and the Ice Maiden are terrible because they are mighty, yes, but they are all the more terrible because they are the future of every knight who does not perish in battle against them. They are most terrible because, with one look into their eyes, you know that once, a forgotten age ago, they meant well.

4. As it is Now

The world now is a shattered remnant of its former glory, but still some things might be saved.

The People

The people of Polaris are tall, thin, and beautiful. Their hair is pale silver, white, or gold, and their pale skin is so thin that you can see blue veins running through it. Their eyes are pale blue, or pale red, or sometimes, rarely, green or white or purple or black. They are so beautiful that if you saw them, it would stop your heart, and so beautiful that at times they move even themselves to tears. Their speech, when they deign to use it, is like the sound of water freezing, and their anger sounds like the cracking of a glacier. Their tempers tend towards art and music, although they are capable of grand feats of combat and engineering when roused to action.

Each of the families among the People has a patron star, and they are named for that followed, in more formal occasions, by a number, which indicates not line of descent but age among those presently alive. In yet more formal occasions, a list of titles and offices will be given.

The Four Remnants

The majority of the people live in four settlements, each spaced equadistant from each other and the Mistake. Each of these settlements is a single structure -- a great towering citadel of ice, starlight, and crystal -- and each has been rendered into a fortress by the work of the Order. The smooth and winding hallways each lead to great vistas of the open ice, the retiring rooms are befitting in silks both spider and star-woven, and the grand council chambers are homes to ceremonies so beautiful that they call up tears from within the hardest heart. But it is important to remember that each is a shadow of the former glory of Polaris, for in the times of the Capital they were merely the most remote of country neighborhoods, barely even fit to be called part of that great, single City.

The Four Remnants are named Southkeep, Southreach, Tallstar and Southplain. There are important differences between each of them (Southplain, for example, keeps the greatest surviving library of books from the previous age, and Southreach is famous for its music) but these are left

for the individual explorer to discover.

There are roads between the remnants, but they are seldom used by any save the Knights Stellar.

The Neighboring Families

At times, the Knights Stellar will discover other parts of the city that were left somehow intact by the Mistake. Most often, these are abandoned, although they are often left shockingly intact and may yield artifacts and lore from the Night Age. But, sometimes, they are inhabited, and this is much more dangerous for the Knight. Sometimes they people there have become isolated and feral, sometimes they have preserved their own pieces Polaris, sometimes they have been twisted into the worship of demons. Sometimes, there are no people at all, but demons living together in some twisted mockery of civilization.

It is the general policy of the Knights to attempt to rehabilitate these neighborhoods and put them in contact with the remnants. But these settlements are strange, and there are terrible things that go on there. No one amongst the knights would ever question his comrade's choices.

The Southern Nations

Amongst the people, there are whispered tales of foreign nations, located "south of the sky," where the sun is higher and the world is filled with fantastical things such as stones, wheat, and foxes, where brown skinned princes and princesses have magical adventures that always end with happy marriages. Although these stories are clearly mere fairy tales for children, there are those among the people who believe that the torrid south does hold some sort of civilization, citing strange relics found in the ruins of Polaris. Chief among these believers are some members of the Knights Stellar and amongst them there are even those, their hearts perhaps given over entirely to fool's errands, who make grand treks to the south in hope that these alien cities will offer some lore or force of use against the Mistake. These questors are not often seen again, although there are those who wander back sheepish and empty handed, and there are also some who return -- half-starved, half-burnt, and entirely mad -- with mad tales of bizarre people. They are usually ignored by all save the most impressionable, and often pass away of mysterious illnesses.

The foreign cities most often named in legend are: Byzantium, Alert, Long Peace, Hopi, Rome, Mecca, Grail, Ur, End of the Earth and Jerusalem. Each has its own legends associated with it, but they are so diverse and contradictory that the explorer will have to discover them individually and, if there is to be any proof of their existence, it lies in your hands.

5. The Year's Course

Ever since the the construction of the calendar, the people have tracked the interval between the dawns, and have given it the name "year." Now, the year is further subdivided into seasons, and the people sculpt their life around it, for the sun has burned its mark into their hearts and changed their timeless nature.

What the Dawn Sees -- Spring

The coming of spring brings that ancient dawn spinning to the horizon, and the people of the remnants, captivated by its beauty, do nothing but stare out of their lovingly crafted "dawn windows" and watch the golden fire burn the sky. During this time, the remnants are eerily quiet, and no people are about. The only things that move are Knights and Demons.

For, over the winter, the pillar of smoke around the Mistake has grown, and now it belches forth great hordes of demons, rampaging towards the remnants, hungry from their long hibernation. The demons know that, at this time, the people are paralyzed, and so -- rested from the winter -- they invade, slaking themselves on the people's blood and flesh, often slaughtering them as they defenselessly stare out at the dawn's harsh and golden beauty, unaware or simply uncaring of their doom.

This is the time of year that the Order bands together, for all hands are needed for defense of the remnants. They establish siege lines, lay traps against the horde, and do their best to fight against the invasion. This is also, ironically, the time where they function most as a group, and they time where they learn each other's news and experiences. In the dawn, deaths are tallied, dirges sung, and heroes are congratulated, even as the siege is held against the mistaken.

As the years wear on, the Springs are getting shorter. Some knights are grateful for the reprieve, whereas others worry about what this might imply.

What the Sun Sees -- Summer

As the that burning star the people call the Sun leaves the horizon, some of the people begin to stir from their trances, the demon hoards retreat

for a time, and the remnants return to some semblance of society. The people, so caught up in the golden light of the sun, remember nothing of the atrocities that the dawn brought (no matter if the knights remind them or not), and devote their time to the crafting of rainbow rooms to trap the sunlight and sculpt it into gaudy colors. Some of them -- the more motivated -- put on great feasts and balls to commemorate the sun's return. Ostensibly, these are in remembrance of the Mistake, but in all but name they are a celebration of that burning, violent, bloated star. As the sun works higher in the sky, the people hold sumptuous feasts, and clad themselves in red and yellow spider-silks. Courtships begin, and maidens hold the starlight from their suitors in crystal necklaces. At this time, music is played, for the screaming howls that the sun sings to musicians are no longer considered foul.

For the Order, this is a time of travel and questing. The stragglers of the demons armies that were defeated in the spring roam the wastes between the remnants, and the knights sally forth to fight the mistaken and re-establish trade and communication between the remnants. The shifting of the ice during the winter changes the terrain in the wastes, so each Summer maps must be drawn anew, and each summer the terrain is once more unexplored.

In this time, the knights often come to mysterious ruins, and are reunited with friends and acquaintances in other remnants. Demonic attacks in the remnants are largely limited to demons of heart and soul, who will use this social season to corrupt and feed on the unsuspecting people. In the wastes that stretch between the four remnants, of course, there remain many other demons, who pose a threat to both questing knights and the few people who deign to travel..

Each year, the sun rises higher in the sky. It is said by those who are too fond of prophecy that one summer, it shall raise to zenith, and eclipse the pole star, and in that year the people shall finally be overrun. This year, if it ever comes, will be a while yet, and for now, even at the height of midsummer, the sun is only two handspans off the horizon.

What the Smoke Sees -- Autumn

As summer draws to a close, the people of the remnants become listless and unpleasant to each other for, though they shall not speak of it, they are anticipating the orange fire of the the accursed screaming star as it sinks once more from their sight. "The Song of the Return of the Stars" is

played on lightpipes and echoes through the halls of Southreach.

As the sun touches the horizon, the people gather in great conference chambers in the heart of the remnants, windowed on all sides, and watch the slow twirling descent of the demon eye. At this time, disputes are settled in the new manner -- whosever's star first appears in the sky has the victory. After such disputes, hand-fastings are held for lovers and, as the sunset wears on, couples often retire to their personal chambers (although they prefer to watch the beauty of the sunset to any physical pleasure.)

The demons, meanwhile, have been beaten back, and for the knights this is the season of crusade. The knights march on the great, cold, evaporating smoke of the Mistake, rounding up the final scraps of the demonic hoard and driving them back from whence they came. It is at this time that the most zealous of knights will charge into the Mistake itself, bringing the fight to the demons, and be honored in song by his compatriots.

This charge, and especially the return from it, is a somber time for knights, for each time, there are less of them, and each time, the Mistake is closer.

What the Moon Sees -- Winter

As winter comes, the cold is too chilling for travel, and the knights return to their remnants. Among the people, winter is considered the proper time for affairs of state and politics, and the elders and most titled among them make pronouncements for the coming year. At this time, the knights often appeal for more resources and, almost always, are roundly rejected in favor of development of music and the arts, usually on the grounds that any threat from supposed "mistaken" has not been sufficiently proven. In the lower hallways, where the politics is truly played out, alliances are made and broken, deals are made, and people manipulated. Winter is the time when the people are most ruthless towards each other, and assaults and even murders are not unheard of. Knights, as de facto policemen, are often called in to handle such cases.

In a few forgotten rooms, off in ancient spires, a few of the people given to ancient and traditional ways still dance, quietly, with the stars, and sing their gentle songs, but they will not speak of it for the shame of their conservatism.

And outside, underneath the fickle and strange light of that moon that marks where the sun was torn from the sky, the Mistake grows larger, and within it, the demons sleep.

Rules

1) Introduction

Eventually, there will be an introductory text here. But right now, there isn't. Hah! Bite me.

What Play Looks Like

When you play a game of Polaris you are going to get together with three friends and work together to make a story about the Knights of the Order of the Stars, with the background that you just read. Sometimes it'll be that one person is telling a snippet of story and that everyone else is listening and throwing in their own ideas when they've got good ones. Sometimes you'll all be acting out your characters, like an improv show or kids playing make believe. Sometimes, you'll be moving around little tokens and rolling dice, like a board game. Some of the people are going to be making decisions for the main character in the story, and some other people are going to be making her life difficult, and others get to kibbitz on the sidelines. The important thing is that, while you are doing all this, you are making a good story, the kind that makes pretty pictures in your head but also gives you real, meaty characters that make hard decisions that you care about. If it sounds a little weird, it is. People don't often come together to make their own entertainment these days. But that doesn't mean you should and, if I've been doing my job, it is going to be a hell of a lot of fun.

2) Protagonists

Protagonists are the center of the story, the characters that you identify with, who are struck by unusual circumstances and driven to make difficult, often tragic decisions. The dictionary defines Protagonists as both the main characters in a narrative and the initiators of great things. The Protagonists in Polaris will be both of these things, as well as avatars for the players and their main tool of interacting with the world.

A note on other sorts of characters

Stories are made of more than just protagonists. Along the way, there will be people who affect the protagonist in important ways -- lovers, enemies, allies and everything between. These characters, while not as central as the protagonist, still merit notice and attention. They are frequently called Secondary Characters by these rules, sometimes abbreviated to SC.

Also, there are characters who merely show up briefly or in the background, without serious effect on the game. These sorts of characters are often called Minor or Background characters. The line between Secondary and Background characters is transitory and hard to judge -- generally speaking, if you are wondering whether a character is a minor or secondary character, they are a secondary character.

Player Roles

Each protagonist in a game of Polaris is important to the story, and thus, important to all the players. No single player in Polaris controls the protagonist or their story, rather, everyone has their own specific role to play in developing the tale. Each protagonist requires four different types of caretakers and guides. Thus, every player at the table has their own role to play in every protagonist's story. These roles are:

Heart -- The Heart shepherds the Knight as an individual, and guides her through the story. To this end, the Heart governs the opening and closing of scenes, and makes the key decisions for the Protagonist. Further, the Heart bids for the Knight's victory in conflicts, and accepts or denies the temptations offered by other players.

Full Moon-- The Full Moon shepherds the Knight's duties, social roles, and hierarchical relationships. To this end, the Full Moon governs the secondary characters with whom the Protagonist has a rigid social relationship with, like superior officers, squires, senators, employees, etc. Further, the Full Moon offers advice to both the Ice Maiden and the Heart and governs minor male characters. Lastly, the Full Moon works with the New Moon to adjudicate conflicts, and may offer the temptations of Aid, Courage, Despair and Reason.

New Moon-- The New Moon shepherds the Knight's passions, emotions, and personal relationships. To this end, the New Moon governs the secondary characters with whom the Protagonist has a personal relationship with, like lovers, some family members, old friends, etc. Further, the New Moon offers

advice to both the Ice Maiden and the Heart and governs minor female characters. Lastly, the New Moon works with the Full Moon to adjudicate conflicts, and may offer the temptations of Benevolence, Kindness, Sacrifice and Sentimentality.

Ice Maiden-- The Ice Maiden shepherds the demons and forces antagonistic to the Knight's struggle -- even the forces within her own heart. The Ice Maiden governs anything that opposes the Knight, and further bids for the goals of the Demons in conflicts. Further, the Ice Maiden orchestrates the overall conflicts and decisions that the Protagonist is faced with. Also, the Ice Maiden offers the temptations of Ambition, Corruption, Doubt and Foul Understanding.

Note: Some players prefer to call the Ice Maiden the Solaris Knight if the player of the Heart is female.

Values

All protagonists have a set of four Values which describe the knight's steadfastness and resistance to demons in different conflict situations. As the name implies, Values are rated numerically from one to five. Although there are four types of Value, each protagonist will have only three at a time. The values are:

Ice: In general, Ice reflects the strength of the Knight's ties to others. A high number means that the Knight is morally strong when dealing with others, a low number means that the Knight is more easily manipulated by demons in such situations.

Light: In general, Light reflects the strength of the Knight's personal abilities. A high number means that the Knight is morally strong when using his own resources, a low number means that the Knight is more easily manipulated by demons in such situations.

Zeal: Zeal is a measure of the Knight's sense of purpose and connection to the stars, the Knight's drive to save the people and protect them from demons, and generally hatred of the Mistaken. All Protagonists start with a Zeal value, and they will lose it over the course of play. Knights who still have a Zeal value are often called "Novices."

Weariness: Although starting Knights don't have a Weariness attribute,

they will all have one eventually. Over time, the Zeal of the young knights will fade in the face of their impossible struggle, being replaced by angst, weltenschmerz and a sense of inevitability. This is measured by a Weariness value. A knight only ever has Zeal or Weariness, never both or neither. Knights with a Weariness value are called “Veterans.”

Traits

All protagonists also have a set of traits, which are common themes that will come up again and again in the course of their stories and form the basis, means, and ends of the Knight's conflicts. There can be many different types of traits, and they are unique to each protagonist, but they are divided loosely into four different types.

Offices-- Offices represent the roles that a knight takes on in respect to society, particularly others amongst the people. They can express family relations, a literal appointed office, a noble title, a common social role, a reputation or anything else appropriate. The key here is that they determine how the Knight relates to others in a formal social context, and what roles the Knight performs in daily life.

Offices are related to the Ice value.

Example Offices:

Knight of the Order of the Stars
Matriarch of the Yildun
Last Heir of the Kaus Borealis
Keeper of the Leftmost Museum

Fates-- Fates represent the knight's ties to individual things: people, deeds, places, events or even objects. Unlike offices, they are not formal. Rather, they are intensely personal. The key is that they represent ephemeral relationships such as emotions, destinies, or history.

Fates are related to the Ice value.

Example Fates:

Betrayal of the People
Rischia, Maiden of the Midmost Hall
Sir Asmidike VI, Knight of the Stars
Etlitotec, Princess of Spring
Becoming the Greatest Knight
Reuniting the Kaus family

Blessings-- Blessings represent the artifacts and tools that the knight uses to perform her duties. The key to blessings is that they are concrete things that are personal possessions of the knight's.

Blessings are related to the Light value.

Example Blessings:

Starlight Sword

Breathsuit

Loyal Steed

Greater Starlight Weapon

The Call of Home

Memory Crystal

Abilities-- Abilities are just that: things that the knight can do. Whether hidden knowledge, a personal trait of the knight's, a combat technique, or a special talent, they are internal abilities that the knight can call in when in need.

Abilities are related to the Light value.

Example Abilities:

Lore of Demons

Strike from the Shadows

Refined

Musical Prodigy

Protagonist Creation

Before you begin a game of Polaris, the most important and vital step is to create the protagonists. The common mode is to create four protagonists -- one for each player, but if you feel more comfortable with less, try two or even one.

The process of creating a compelling protagonist is difficult and, for Polaris, we've broken it down into eight steps.

Step One: Initial Concept

To begin with, start out protagonist creation by saying "Amongst the People, there was one not like the others, one who still dreamt the song of stars." This is the way of starting the Protagonist's story. Now take some time to talk about this person with the other players -- just the general concept of what the protagonist's will be like is fine for now, although you

can work out more as you go.

Some people start protagonist creation with a firm idea of who this person is and what they are like, even some ideas of where the protagonist's story will go. Some people don't really have any idea at all. Both of these are fine, but be sure to leave room for the other people to have input. In Polaris, no one "owns" a protagonist or a story, so make sure that everyone has their say and is listened to.

Once you're done with your initial discussions, move to the next step.

Step Two: Write Down Values

A starting protagonist has the following values:

Ice: 1

Light: 1

Zeal: 4

Write those down on your character sheet.

Step Three: Initial Traits

All protagonists start with the following traits:

Office: Knight of the Order of the Stars

Fate: A Secondary Character or other Protagonist

Blessing: Starlight Sword

Ability: Lore of Demons

Choose who your relationship is with, and write these traits down on your character sheet.

Step Four: Choose Optional Traits

Now choose or make up two traits of any type. If you need help or can't think of anything, there is a big list of example traits in an appendix at the end of the book. Write these down on your character sheet.

Step Five: Choose a name

Now you need to name this person that you've created. But don't just choose any name! All of the People bear the names of the stars, so choose a star name from the appendix in the back, or a different one if you know one.

Do you have a number after your name? If you do, it means you're from a family because even if you aren't related by blood to people with the same patron star, they are your family. You might want to think about that some, especially since some knights adopt new patron stars upon their knighthood. Also, if your number is low, you're important to the family hierarchy. If your number is I, you're in charge! If you don't have a number, you're probably alone in the world.

Some people, especially those in big families who don't like being called Rigel XCVII or whatever, have an epithet which describes them, like Bold Rigel or Cunning Rigel. Do you have an epithet? If you chose an Attribute as one of your traits in character creation, you could use that.

Step Six: Assign Player Roles

Remember the player roles that we talked about last session? Now is the time that you assign them. Decide who is going to be the Heart for this protagonist. The player sitting to their right is the Full Moon, the next player (across) is the Ice Maiden, and the next player (left) is the New Moon. Make sure that everyone is the Heart for one character, and no more.

{Maybe there should be some ritual here. Perhaps I should formalize the identifying objects and have the heart pass them out to everyone?}

Write down the players on the character sheet.

Step Seven: Generate a Little More Material

See that circle on the character sheet, divided into four different parts? Write the Knight's name in the center, and the Relationship in the appropriate section (Is it mostly emotional? It goes in the New Moon section. Antagonistic? Ice Maiden. And so on.)

Now, write something in the other two sections. This can be a trait from the sheet (especially if its another Fate), some Person you just thought up (family members work great here, 'cause you don't have to think of a new name), a Remnant, an organization, a law that hasn't been passed, another Protagonist. Anything, really. You don't even have to know what it means yet. Just make sure that there is at least one in each box.

Hint: Not sure what section it goes in? Not a problem. Write it near the edge.

Similarly, I like to write things that are like the Knight or friendly to her near the center, and things that are hostile on the edge.

Step Eight: Play!

Your protagonist is all done now. Time to start her story. After everyone is done, say this: "Then, once and all at once, they heard that plaintive plea within the soft and secret music of the spheres. And in that solitary moment they each decided, and drew forth from their hearts a sword of starlight, and resolved to drive back the mistaken, set right the world, and take their rightful places upon the high empyrean."

3) The Structure of a Scene

The basic unit of play in Polaris is a scene. Most people have an intuitive grasp of the extent and duration of a scene, but for those who don't, a scene is centered around a moment in the story where the Protagonist makes one or more important decisions, or faces one or more important obstacles.

The Contents of Scenes

Each scene focuses on one and only one Protagonist. While other Protagonists may be present during that scene, they are treated as Secondary Characters for most purposes, and should not take the focus away from the scene's protagonist.

For the purposes of Polaris play, it is best to cut straight to the meat of the scenes -- the conflict and decisions. Don't dwindle -- start the scene, move towards the climax, and then end it.

Starting and Ending Scenes

At any time that there is not a scene active, any Knight's Heart or Ice Maiden may start a scene by simply saying "and so it was" and briefly describing the situation of the scene.

Example: And so it was that, deep within the Labyrinth, Lord Arcturus came across a familiar face frozen within the icy walls.

If two players want to start a scene, the scene for the knight who most recently had a turn must wait. If two players want to start a scene for the same knight, the scene which would happen first chronologically happens first. If this is unclear, the Ice Maiden has final say.

Either the Heart or the Ice Maiden may end the scene at any time by saying, again, "and so it was..." In general, it is polite to let other players get in a last word if they want to.

Free Play

Most of the time, during a scene, you as players will be doing what the rules refer to as Free Play. What is Free Play? In short, it's just making stuff

up!

During Free Play everyone portrays various characters in the scene and describes the actions of the characters (or acts them out) in a way that moves the scene and story forward. During free play, you can discuss where you want the scene to go, throw out ideas, etc. Unlike improvisational theatre, not everything that is said is binding, and ultimately its up to whomever has governance over that element (see below.)

Governance:

Each player is granted Governance over a specific set of elements within the story. It is their responsibility to work them into the story in interesting ways, dream up possibilities for them, be the final arbiter about what happens to them, and (usually) portray them during free play. Players without governance over a particular element or character should feel free to talk about them during free play, but such talk is considered a suggestion, and must be verified by the player with governance over that character or element. Governance is divided along player roles:

The Heart takes governance over the Protagonist and only the Protagonist. He governs her actions, emotions, and thoughts.

The Full Moon has governance over all people with whom the knight has a dominantly hierarchical or socially-structured relationship with, as well as any minor male characters. Further, the Full Moon works with the New Moon in governing the surroundings and background of the scene.

The New Moon has governance over all people with whom the knight has a dominantly personal or emotional relationship with, as well as any minor female characters. Further, the New Moon works with the Full Moon in governing the surroundings and background of the scene.

The Ice Maiden has governance over the Mistaken and any person who has a primarily antagonistic relationship with the knight. Further, it is her responsibility to organize, in the long-term, in-game conflicts and present the Heart with difficult decisions.

Portrayal

The player who portrays a character states what the character does and says, and generally interacts with the game as if they were that character.

This can range from a more authorial "Sir Rigel takes up his sword and says 'We have fought too hard for Southreach's preservation to have it rot away from within'" to a more direct portrayal in the form of play-acting: *gestures as if lifting up a sword* "We have fought too hard for Southreach's preservation to have it rot away from within."

In general, the player who has governance over a character also portrays the character. However, this is not necessarily so. For instance, if the New Moon does not have governance over any of the in a scene, it is reasonable to expect that she be given a character to portray if one is available. Another situation would be an SC from one knight's story appearing in a different knight's scene -- in this case, the player who usually portrays the character could be allowed to retain control. Any such delegation of portrayal is strictly at the option of the player with governance over the character, and that player does retain governance.

Authority in Odd Situations:

If a Protagonist appears in a second Protagonist's scene, the first Protagonist's Heart retains governance and portrays the character. There are no exceptions to this.

If a Protagonist becomes demonically possessed, that character's Heart still portrays the character and retains governance -- effectively portraying the demon.

In any other situation where it might seem that a Protagonist's heart would not have authority over her character, she still does. The Heart cannot lose authority over her knight except via a Conflict.

Planning, Plotting and Secrets:

Some players like to set out elaborate plots and complicated situations around a character -- things that take more than one scene to resolve. This is great, and it can be a really effective way to play a long-term game of Polaris.

Some players also like to keep chunks of plot secret from the Heart, giving them that "oh, wow" feeling that you might get from an unexpected twist in a novel. This is also great.

By convention, it is the privilege and responsibility of the Ice Maiden to organize this large-scale plotting, assisted by the Moons. The Ice Maiden *must* tell the Moons any secrets she is keeping from the Heart, and the Moons must (without revealing too much) tell the Ice Maiden if anything she is plotting contradicts secrets that she doesn't know about, and suggest changes that make things fit together.

Remember, however much you may have plotted behind the curtain, nothing is true until it is mentioned in game, either in free play or conflict narration.

Conflict

Whenever, during free play, your knight reaches a point where there is some struggle, either internal or external, or some area of doubt, that's a good time to call it a conflict. Conflicts are the dramatic moments on which any good story hinges. All players, but especially the Ice Maiden, should look for ways to drive the knight's story towards conflict.

The mechanics of conflict help determine the outcome of the conflict, the manner in which the conflict is determined, delegate authority over it, and set the scale of the results, but it is up to you, as players, to tie it all together into a story. Make sure to keep your eye on the drama and personal interest throughout the conflict.

Initiation and Discussion

To start a conflict, one of the players at the table simply notes that the situation may call for a conflict. To begin with, they must justify that the situation merits a conflict to the other players, although sometimes (a debate in the Parliamentary Council, say) it is clear that there is a conflict, and this can be skipped.

Once you have established that there is a conflict, take the time to talk about what the Knight might gain from it, what the Knight wants to gain from it, what the Demons want from it, what the Demons might gain, and any other influencing factors of the environment, secondary characters that might be drawn in, or anything else that might effect the outcome. The discussion at this stage does not bind you to a particular outcome -- throw out any and all ideas that you have, and just get them on the table and in everyone's mind.

Trait Bidding --

After the initial discussion, the Ice Maiden and the Heart take turns choosing from traits that might be involved in the conflict. To bid a trait, simply name the trait that you are using, and mark it off on the knight's character sheet. By bidding a trait, you establish that it will be involved in the resolution of the conflict, and also change the knight's chances of success and raise the stakes

of the conflict.

Bidding is restricted by some simple rules. They are:

- 1) The Full and New Moons are the final arbiters of any dispute over trait bidding.
- 2) Either player (the Heart or of the Ice Maiden) may start off the bidding.
- 3) If one player bids, they must wait for a counter-bid before bidding again. If there is no counter bid, the bidding is ended.
- 4) All traits must be appropriate to the conflict and situation, as established in the Initiation and Discussion step. If the trait seems inappropriate, the player who wishes to bid it must justify it to the others at the table, particular the Moons. If the other players decide that the trait is inappropriate, that player may bid another without penalty.
- 5) The same trait may not be bid twice in the same conflict.
- 6) Once a trait is bid in a conflict, it is considered exhausted for the player who bid it, and that player may not bid it again until it has refreshed, either via an experience check, the temptations phase, or some other means.

After you are done with trait bidding, move on to counting stakes and rolling dice.

Counting Stakes

The stakes of a challenge give the degree of its effect on the Knight, those he cares about, and the world at large. The greater number of traits bid in the conflict, the higher the stakes, and the larger the effects. Conflicts that you, as players, care about are more important.

The Stakes Table

Traits	Novice	Veteran	Major SC	Range
0	Minor	Neg.	Minor	Scene / Individual
1	Minor	Minor	Significant	Local
2-3	Significant	Significant	Life-Change	Area / Faction
4-6	Significant	Life-Change	Death	Remnant / Region
7+	Life-Change	Death	Death	Global

How to read it

The first three columns of the stakes table cite the effects on various types of characters -- a Novice Knight, a Veteran Knight, and a Major Secondary Character. Minor Secondary Characters are of no account, as they can be altered or slain by challenges of any magnitude. The types of effects are:

Negligible effects are merely cosmetic, such as a scratch in combat, or a minor embarrassment. They cannot affect traits, and pass quickly.

Minor effects range up to minor wounds, changes of opinion on minor topics, or temporary effects of greater magnitude. Minor effects may include a change to a trait, the addition of a trait, or the destruction of a trait, but these only last until the next time the character rolls a refresh.

Significant effects could be as detrimental as a major injury, a loss in legal proceedings, the passage of a bill outlawing the character, etc. Significant effects can do all that minor effects can do but can also change a single trait permanently.

Life changing effects can affect the character in any manner short of death. Life-Changing effects can have any of the effects of a Significant result and also add in the possibility of adding or subtracting a single trait, or changing two related traits.

Death results are like Life-Changing, but may include the Death of the character at the discretion of the player with authority over that character.

Hint: It is important to note that any conflict can become large, or can turn out to be less consequential, depending on the number of traits bid. Don't let yourself be held back from bidding traits simply because you think "this conflict couldn't be that important." If you want to bid that trait, it is that important!

Calculating the Challenge Value and rolling

The challenge value dictates the chances that the Demons or the Knight will gain from the conflict.

If the last trait bid was a Blessing or an Attribute, the base challenge value is

Light. If it was an Office or a Fate, the base challenge value is Ice.

If the last trait was bid by the Heart, and the Knight is a novice, add the Knight's Zeal value to the challenge value. If the last trait was bid by the Ice Maiden, and the knight is a Veteran, subtract the Knight's Weariness value from the challenge value. You should now have a challenge value between 1 and 5. If it is higher or lower, something is wrong.

Now, roll a single die (a normal six sided die.) If the number is higher than the challenge value, the demons have taken victory in the challenge. If the number is lower than or equal to the challenge value, the knight is victorious.

The Heart's Temptations

After the dice have been rolled, the other player may tempt the Heart with various effects that modify the results of the die roll. Each player has a specific set of temptations that they can offer, each of which has a specific mechanical effect.

Each player may only offer one temptation, and the Heart must accept or decline each one as it is offered. The players must offer the temptations in this order: Ice Maiden, Full Moon, New Moon.

The Temptations of the Ice Maiden's Song

Ambition -- If the Knight has won the challenge, they may gain a trait that the Ice Maiden offers them. The Ice Maiden names the trait before the player makes their decision.

Corruption -- The Ice Maiden may offer the knight a change of one of their traits. The Ice Maiden need not specify which trait will change, or how it will change. Also, the Heart may adjust the stakes of the challenge up or down one category.

Doubt -- The Ice Maiden may offer the Knight the opportunity to take back the challenge. The Stakes are considered as if no traits were bid, and all traits that were bid refresh.

Foul Understanding -- A demon comes to the aid of the Knight's cause. Reroll the dice. If it indicates a win for the demon, the Knight's demon ally has gained victory. Depending on the context, this may also mean a partial

victory for the Knight as well.

If the knight was successful already, they both gain victory, and the Heart may refresh one trait that he bid in the conflict. If the knight was previously unsuccessful, the Ice Maiden may refresh one trait that she bid in the conflict.

The Temptations of the Full Moon's Light --

Aid -- A SC controlled by the Full Moon comes to the aid of the Knight's cause. Reroll the dice. If it indicates a win for the Knight, the Knight's ally has gained victory. Depending on the context, this may also mean a partial victory for the Knight as well.

If the knight was successful already, they both gain victory, and the Heart may refresh one trait that he bid in the conflict. If the knight was previously unsuccessful, the knight must expend an additional trait (it need not apply in the challenge, or feature in narration.)

Courage -- If the Knight has lost the challenge, the Full Moon may offer him the temptation of Courage. The Knight obtains his goals as if he won the challenge, but also takes the maximum personal injury that the stakes require. Further, the stakes are raised by one category.

Despair -- If the Knight loses the challenge, the Full Moon may offer him the option of Despair. The Knight takes no personal effects from the challenge, but the stakes of the challenge for others are increased one category.

Reason -- In any outcome, the Full Moon may offer the Heart the temptation of Reason. The Full Moon may make one factual (non-emotional) statement about what occurred during the conflict (it broke, she hit him), which must be incorporated into the narration. The Heart also refreshes one trait bid in the conflict.

The Temptations of the New Moon's Shadow

Benevolence -- The New Moon may always offer the Knight the temptation of Benevolence from a person, creature or demon. The die is rerolled, and the new results must be abided by. Further, the Knight gains a new trait at the New Moon's Discretion.

Kindness -- A SC controlled by the New Moon comes to the aid of the Knight's cause. Reroll the dice. If it indicates a win for the Knight, the Knight's ally

has gained victory. Depending on the context, this may also mean a partial victory for the Knight as well.

If the knight was successful already, they both gain victory, and the Heart may refresh one trait that he bid in the conflict. If the knight was previously unsuccessful, the knight must expend an additional trait (it need not apply in the challenge, or feature in narration.)

Sacrifice -- The New Moon may offer the Heart the temptation of Sacrifice. The New Moon chooses (and tells the Heart) one trait that the Knight will give up in the course of the conflict. If the Heart agrees, the knight wins the conflict if he had lost it, and further the stakes of the conflict are raised by one.

Sentimentality -- In any outcome, the New Moon may offer the Heart the temptation of Sentimentality. The New Moon introduces one emotion (anger, love, sorrow, etc.) that must be incorporated into the narration. The Heart also refreshes one trait bid in the conflict.

Narration

The narration phase is an awful lot like Free Play -- everyone throws out ideas, portrays their characters, and play progresses in a semi-improvisational manner -- but it differs in several important ways, particularly the presence of a Lead Narrator, and required contents and end.

What must the Narration Contain?

The narration must resolve the conflict in some reasonable way -- even one that opens up new conflicts is fine. All the traits that were bid in the trait bidding scene and, as a general rule, traits bid by the Frost Maiden have ill effect for the Knight, and traits bid by the Heart are beneficial. Finally, the results of the scene must include success for the Knight or the Demons.

There are also limitations on the narration -- the Stakes tell about the possible range of effects, and give some guidelines as to the importance of the challenge. Remember that, until you start narration, nothing has happened in the game world at all -- so narration is a description of the entire conflict, not just its effects.

What does the Lead Narrator do?

While narration is the responsibility of all players, the Lead Narrator is responsible of making sure that scene stays on focus, uses the proper traits,

and moves promptly toward a particular end. To aid in this, the Lead Narrator has final Authority over everyone and everything for the duration of the narration. The tenure of the Lead Narrator is not long, lasting only until the immediate results of the conflict have been played out, but it is important.

There is only one exception to the absolute authority of the lead narrator -- if both Moons together agree that a trait gain, loss, or change is inappropriate, the Lead Narrator cannot do it.

Who is the Lead Narrator?

The Lead Narrator is determined by the results of the die roll.

If the Knight is a Novice, the Lead Narrator is the Heart if the die roll was successful, and the Frost Maiden if the die roll was unsuccessful.

If the Knight is a Veteran, the Lead Narrator is the Ice Maiden if the die roll was successful, and the Heart if the die roll was unsuccessful.

Afterwards

After the conflict is resolved, either say "so it was..." and end the scene there or return to Free Play for a while.

Between Scenes

Polaris is a social game, and as such the time between scenes is just as important, if not more so, as the time during scenes. After a scene has finished up, it is time to go get some juice, go to the bathroom, take a break outside, comment on the story so far, discuss scenes you might want to do, or talk about the bad day you had at the office. For the most part, rules are not given for out of game play, but this is only because they are not necessary, not because out of game play is not important. The chance to discuss the game from an outside perspective, and to socialize amongst the players, is critical.

4) The Structure of a Story

Ultimately, the game of Polaris is about making up stories.

This is a good thing, because stories are interesting. Unfortunately, stories are also difficult to make up. A good story has a likable protagonist, a struggle over things that both the protagonist and the audience cares about, a satisfactory resolution and, further, has personal meaning for those who hear it. None of these things are easy to produce. In fact, they are quite difficult.

Fortunately, you have two allies in producing a satisfying tale whilst playing this game. The first, if I've done my job right as a designers, are the rules of the game. Everything in Polaris, from the traits to the conflict system to the division of governance and especially the rules in this chapter, is focused on helping you, the players, make a good story. But the second, and even greater ally, is yourself.

Humans (and I assume that all people playing this game are humans) are natural storytellers. We do it as part of our nature. Unfortunately for you, the Polaris player, modern adult people are often told that they can't tell stories, that it is immature or irresponsible or the domain, strictly, of professionals. A lot of people wonder if their stories will be too silly, or too depressing, or too strange. Hogwash.

You can tell good stories, and you will. You just need to give yourself permission, and not be afraid. If you have trouble, that's why the rules, especially the rules in this chapter, are here to help you. Don't worry about it.

And have fun.

Using the Diagram

Remember the diagram that you wrote things down on during character creation? It's really big and in the middle of your character sheet, so you can't miss it. That diagram can be used to chart out your entire story. And I'm going to tell you how.

Each player uses the diagram in a different way. It is mostly of use to the Heart and the Ice Maiden, but the Moons should keep in mind their role as advice givers.

The Heart -- The Heart has the main role in developing the diagram, but his role is also relatively simple. Whenever a character, place, or thing comes up in the game that the Heart feels is important, he writes it down on the appropriate place on the sheet -- under Ice Maiden if it is antagonistic to him, Full Moon if the person relates to him in a social or hierarchical way, and

New Moon if the relationship is personal. Also, it is the Heart's responsibility to move things around on the chart as the relationships change.

The Ice Maiden -- The diagram is a great tool for the Ice Maiden to work with in creating conflict for the Protagonist. Since the diagram lists things that are important to the Protagonist and the players, whenever the Ice Maiden needs to introduce a conflict, she can simply pick two or more items from the chart and have them interact in some way. For instance, an antagonist could threaten one of the Knight's personal relationships, or a personal and a hierarchical relationship could come into conflict with each other.

The Moons -- The Moons don't have as much direct influence over the diagram as the Heart or the Ice Maiden, but they still have an important role to play. If, as a Moon, you think the Heart should write down some person or place (especially keep an eye out for people and places under your governance), you should tell the Heart to write it down on the diagram. Likewise, if you think that some person, place or thing hasn't been the focus of enough conflict recently, let the Ice Maiden know so that she can use it.

All Players -- The diagram serves to track the Governance of all the different players -- the Ice Maiden has governance over all things in her section, the Full Moon and New Moon have governance over things listed in their respective sections as well. The circle in the center lists the one thing that the Heart has governance over -- the Protagonist.

Further, the diagram serves as an excellent way to keep track of what has been going on in a story since you last left it. Stories in Polaris take a long time, and it can be easy to forget names and other details. Write them down on the diagram, so you won't forget!

Traits and Scaling

The Knight's traits determine how conflicts are played out, but the number of traits also determines what scale the Knight's conflicts will play out on. A Knight with less traits will tend to have conflicts play out at smaller, interpersonal levels, whereas the conflicts of a Knight with more traits will tend to have far-reaching, dramatic effects.

The general rule for traits is that the number of traits should be kept close to four, plus the sum of the Ice and Light values. The starting character has 6 traits, and the final, Weariness 4 Veteran would have 14. Of course, there will be some fluctuation around these numbers. A good rule of thumb

is that you are fine if you are within one trait of the ideal value, you might want to watch out at two, and if you are three away you should not be adding (or subtracting) more for a while.

Also, note that any new traits gained are considered “exhausted” and may not be used until refreshed. Don’t let temptations take away importance from the Experience Check (below)

The Experience Check

Over time, a knight will learn from his mistakes and become more skilled at combatting the Mistaken. At the same time, however, the knight's initial Zeal will be replaced by an incessant and terrible ennui. These changes form the primary arc of the Polaris story. The Experience Check helps to guide you through this story arc.

When to roll

There are two times in which you will be called upon to make an experience check.

The first is that, after the Knight has lost in a conflict, the Heart may, at his option, roll an experience check to reflect the bitterness of defeat.

Second, during any scene in which the Knight acts in a way that is indicative of hatred of the people, sympathy for the Mistaken, cynicism, or apathy, an experience check must be rolled. Any player can point out that an experience check may be called for. Ultimately, the Ice Maiden determines whether it is warranted or not.

Rolling an experience check

During an experience check, the Heart rolls one die. If the result is equal to or lower than the Knight's Zeal score (or Weariness score, if the knight is a veteran), then the check has yielded an Advance. If the result is greater than the Knight's Zeal or Weariness score, the check has yielded a Refresh.

In the case of a refresh, refresh all of the Knight's traits (for both the Heart and the Ice Maiden) and do nothing else.

In the case of an Advance, add one to either the Knight's Ice Value or Light value. Also, if the Knight is a Novice, subtract one from Knight's Zeal score. If the Knight is a veteran, add one to the Knight's weariness score.

If the advance would place the Protagonist’s trait total below the normal value (sum of Ice+Light), the Heart can request that any other player give the Protagonist a new trait. If, even after the advance, the Protagonist’s

trait total is above par, the Heart must choose and remove one trait.

Zeal 1, Weariness, and Veterans

If and only if the Knight's Zeal score is one and an advance is rolled, special rules apply. First, add one to both Ice and Light values. Secondly, erase the Zeal score entirely and replace it with a Weariness score of one. Lastly, add the Fate of "Betrayal of the People" to the Knight's traits, if he does not already have it.

From now on, the knight is considered a veteran.

Betrayal

As soon as the Protagonist becomes a veteran, the possibility of a conflict that results in his death is opened up. Savvy players will realize this, and struggle to avoid it. But there is also another, more sinister fate that awaits those who are too savvy and live too long in the field of battle without their Zeal to guide them.

If a Veteran with a 4 Weariness rolls an advance, she is overwhelmed by the sorrow of her hopeless struggle and, for whatever reason, joins with the demonic forces to fight against the stars and the People. The Heart, in this case, has the option of starting a final scene which reveals the nature of his fall, during which time the Heart is considered to have all the powers of the Chief Narrator (see the conflict section.) Afterwards, that Knight can no longer be considered a Protagonist -- she has joined the ranks of the Mistaken -- instead she will return as a demonic antagonist for the other characters. Further, when the character returns, the character's old Heart still has governance over her actions. At this point, you might want to make a new Protagonist, or perhaps just take some time to mourn the betrayal of that character before moving on.

Upon Death

When a character dies, it can be a difficult or frustrating thing. Because of this, it is a good idea to take some time to reflect on the Knight and what she achieved, either out of game or in-game. Was her death worthwhile? Was it sacrifice or merely loss? In the end, have the demons been weakened that she lived?

If you like, give each player a chance to frame a short scene which focuses on the effects of the character's death or her life. Afterwards, hang onto the character sheet, and make a new novice Knight to take her place as a Protagonist.

Appendix One: Star Names

Below is a list of star names, grouped by constellation. Any of these could be used for family names in Polaris, and some players will enjoy using the constellations to create famous alliances, rivalries, and thematic ties between the families.

The names are formatted as such:

Primary Name / Alternate Versions : Meaning

Constellations are listed alphabetically. Stars within constellations are listed according to scientific ranking, which is generally brightness.

Andromeda / Andromedae : the daughter of Cassiopeia

Alpheratz / Sirrah : the horse or the navel

Mirach : the loins

Almach : the weasel

Adhil : train of a garment

Antlia / Antliae : the pump

Apus / Apodis : the bird of paradise

Aquarius / Aquarii : the water carrier

Sadal Melik : lucky star of the king

Sadal Suud : luck of lucks

Sadachbia : lucky star of tents

Skat / Scheat / Seat : the shin

Al Bali : the swallower

Ancha : hip-bone

Situla : water jar

Aquila / Aqualae : the eagle

Altair : flying one

Alshain : falcon

Tarazed : plundering falcon

Al Thalimain : the two ostriches (actually two stars)

Ara / Arae : the altar

Choo or Qu : staff

Aries / Arietis : the ram

Hamal : ram

Sheratan : the two signs

Mesarthim : servants

Botein : little belly

Auriga / Aurigae : the charioteer

Capella : she-goat
 Menkalinan : shoulder of him of the reigns
 Prijipati : Lord of Creation
 Maaz : he-goat
 Sadatoni : two young goats
 Kabdhilinan : anklebone of the rein-holder
 Bootes / Bootis : the oxherd
 Arcturus : bear-guard
 Nekkar / Nakkar : cattleman
 Signus : (a bastardized version of Thegius, Medieval Latin from Arabic transliteration of Greek "bootes")
 Mirak / Izar/ Pulcherrima : loins / loincloth
 Muphrid : isolated / lance-bearer's
 Alkalurops : shepherd's crook
 Caelum / Caeli : the graving tool
 Camelopardalis : the giraffe
 Cancer / Cancri : the crab
 Acubens : claw
 Tarf : glance / eye
 Asellus Borealis : northern donkey
 Asellus Australis : southern donkey
 Tegmine : cover
 Canes Venatici / Canum Venaticorum : the hunting dogs
 Cor Caroli : heart of Charles
 Chara : joy
 Canis Major / Canis Majoris : the big dog
 Sirius : scorching
 Mirzam : (unknown meaning)
 Muliphein : two causing dispute / swearing an oath
 Wezen : the weight
 Furud : solitary ones
 Aludra : maidenhood
 Canis Minor / Canis Minoris : the little dog
 Procyon : before the dog
 Gomeisa : the bleary eyed
 Capricornus / Capricorni : the horned goat
 Al Giedi : goat
 Dabih : slaughterer
 Nashira : she who brings good news
 Deneb Algiedi : tail of the goat
 Carina / Carinae : the keel of the Argo

Canopus : Menelaus's helmsman
 Miapacidus : placid waters
 Avior : (unknown meaning, modern)
 Scutulium / Aspidiske : little shield
 Cassiopeia / Cassiopeiae : the wife of Cepheus
 Schedar / Shedir : breast
 Caph : palm
 Tsih / Ci : (whip?)
 Ruchbah / Rukbah : knee
 Segin / Navi : (unknown)
 Achird : (unknown)
 Centaurus / Centauri : the centaur
 Rigel Kentaurus / Rigilkent : foot of the centaur
 Hadar / Agena : unknown
 Muhlifain : unknown
 Menkent : shoulder of the center
 Ke Kuan : cavalry officer
 Cepheus / Cephie : a legendary king
 Alderamin : right forearm
 Alfirk : flock
 Er Rai : shepherd
 Kerhah : blaze
 The Garnet Star
 Cetus / Ceti : the whale or the menace
 Menkar / Menkab : nostril
 Diphda / Deneb Kaitos : frog / tail of Cetus
 Kaffaljdhmah : cut-short hand
 Baten Kaitos : belly of Cetus
 Schemali : northern (branch of the tail)
 Mira : wonderful
 Chamaeleon / Chamaeleontis : the chamaeleon
 Circinus / Circini : a pair of compasses
 Columba / Columbae : the dove
 Phact / Phaet : dove
 Wezn / Wazn : weight
 Zi / Dz : son
 Coma Berenices / Comae Berenices : Bernice's lock of hair
 Corona Australis / Coronae Australis : the southern crown
 Corona Borealis / Coronae Borealis : the northern crown
 Gemma / Alphecca : gem or the broken
 Nusakan : the two series

Corvus / Corvi : the crown / the raven
 Alchibah : tent
 Kraz : ??
 Gienah : wing
 Algorab : raven
 Minkar : beak
 Crater / Crateris : the cup
 Alkes : cup
 Crux / Crucis : the cross
 Acrux : first of the cross
 Mimosa : (name of a plant)
 Gacrux : gamma of the cross
 Cygnus / Cygni : the swan
 Deneb : tail of the hen
 Albireo : iris
 Sadr : breast
 Gienah : wing
 Ruchba : hen's knee
 Azelfafage: tortoise (originally a part of Lyra)
 X-1 : the first discovered black hole (not visible)
 Delphinus / Delphini : the dolphin
 Sualocin : Nicolaus backwards
 Rotanev : Venator backwards
 Deneb or Al Dhanab al Dulfim : tail of the dolphin
 Dorado / Doradus : the goldfish
 Draco / Draconis : the dragon
 Thuban : snake
 Rastaban : head of the snake
 Eltanin : snake (arabic)
 Nodus Secundus / Altais : second knot
 Tyl / Kin Yu : Unknown / Goldfish
 Edasich : hyena
 Giauzar : dragon
 Arrakis : dancer
 Kuma : as last
 Grumium : jaw
 Alsafi : cooking tripod
 Dziban : the two jackals
 Equuleus / Equulei : the little horse
 Kitalpha : part of the horse
 Eridanus / Eridani : the river

Achemar : end of the river
 Cursa : chair / footstool (of Orion)
 Zaurak : boat
 Rana : frog
 Azha : hatching place
 Acamar : end of the river
 Beid : ostrich eggs
 Keid : broken eggshell
 Angetenar : curve of the river
 Fornax / Fornacius : the furnace
 Gemini / Geminorium : the twins
 Castor : beaver / first twin
 Pollux : much wine / second twin
 Almeisan / Alhena : shining / the mark
 Wasat : middle of the sky
 Mebsuta : outstretched
 Mekbuda : pulled in paw
 Propus / Tejat prior : forward foot
 Tejat : foot?
 Grus / Gruis : the crane
 Al Na'ir : the bright
 Al Dhanab : tail
 Hercules / Herculis : a famous hero
 Ras Algethi : head of the kneeling one
 Kornephoros : club-bearer
 Sarin : Unknown
 Massim : wrist
 Marfik : elbow
 Cujam : club
 Horologium / Horologii : the clock
 Hydra / Hydrae : a legendary dragon
 Alphard / Cor Hydrae : solitary / heart of the hydra
 Minhar al Shuja : the snake's nose
 Ukdah : the knot
 Hydrus / Hydri : the water serpent
 Indus / Indi : the Indian
 Al Nair : bright
 Lacerta / Lacertae : the lizard
 Leo / Leonis : the lion
 Regulus / Cor Leonis / Kalb: Heart of the Lion
 Denebola : tail of the lion

Al Gieba : forehead
 Zozma : loincloth
 Ras Elased : head of the lion
 Adhafera : curl of the hair
 Coxa / Chort / Chertan : hip / small rib
 Zi Ceng : second general
 Alterf : glance
 Rasalas : head of the lion
 Leo Minor / Leonis Minoris : the little lion
 Praecipula : principal star
 Lepus / Leporis : the hare
 Arneb : hare
 Nihal : camels drinking
 Libra / Librae : the scales
 Zuben El Genubi : southern claw (of the scorpion)
 Zuben Eschamali : northern claw (of the scorpion)
 Mulu-lizi : man of fire
 Zubenhakrabi / Zubanalakrab: scorpion's claw
 Lupus / Lupi : the wolf
 Men : Unknown
 Lynx : the lynx
 Lyra / Lyrae : the lyre
 Vega : the swooping eagle
 Sheliak or Shelyak : harp
 Sulafat : tortoise
 Aladfar : talons (with Al Athfar)
 Al Athfar : talons (with Aladfar)
 Mensa / Mensae : the table
 Microscopium / Microscopii : the microscope
 Monoceros / Monocerotis : the unicorn
 Musca / Muscae : the fly
 Norma / Normae : the carpenter's level
 Octans / Octanis : the octant
 Ophiuchus / Ophiuchi : the snake holder
 Ras Alhague : head of the snake
 Cheleb / Celbalrai : dog of the shepherd
 Yed Prior : western hand
 Yed Posterior : eastern hand
 Sabik : the preceding
 Marfik : elbow
 Orion / Orionis : the hunter

Betelgeuse : hand of Al-Jazwa
 Rigel : foot
 Bellatrix : warriorress
 Mintaka : belt (west)
 Alnilam : arrangement of pearls (middle of the belt)
 Alnitak : belt (east)
 Na'ir al Saif : bright tip of the sword
 Heka / Meissa : white spot / shining
 Thabit : fixed star
 Pavo / Pavonis : the peacock
 The Peacock Star
 Pegasus / Pegasi : the winged horse
 Markab / Marchab : shoulder
 Scheat : leg
 Algenib : flank
 Enif : nose
 Homam : the high-minded man
 Matar : rain
 Baham : livestock
 Sadabari : lucky star of the excellent one
 Perseus / Persei : the heroic rescuer of Andromeda
 Mirfak / Marfak : elbow
 Algol : the ghoul / the demon star
 Menkib : shoulder
 Atik : shoulder
 Phoenix / Phoenicis : the phoenix
 Ankaa : (a magical bird)
 Pictor / Pictoris : the painter (or the easel)
 Pisces / Piscium : the fish
 Al Reschia / Rischia : rope
 Fum al Samakah : the fish's mouth
 Piscis Austrinus / Piscis Austrini : the southern fish
 Fomalhaut : mouth of the fish
 Puppis / Puppis : the poop deck (of the Argo)
 Naos : ship
 Asmidiske : little shield
 Pyxis / Pyxidis : the box, the compass or the Argo
 Reticulum / Reticuli : the net (or the optical instrument)
 Sagitta / Sagittae : the arrow
 Sagittarius / Sagittarii : the archer
 Rukbat : knee

Mothallah / Caput Trianguli : head of the triangle
 Triangulum Australe / Trianguli Australis : south triangle
 Atria : height of the triangle
 Tucana / Tucanae : the toucan
 Ursa Major / Ursae Majoris : the big bear
 Dubhe / Dubh / Dubb / Alruccabah : bear
 Merak / Mirak : loins
 Phad / Phecda : thigh
 Megrez : insertion point
 Alioth : black horse / black bull
 Mizar : corruption of "Mirak (loins)"
 Alcor : black horse (?)
 Alkaid / Benetnasch : the leader / daughters of bier
 Al Haud : the pond
 Talitha Borealis / Dnoces : third leap of the gazelle
 Talitha Australis : third leap of the gazelle
 Tania Borealis : second leap of the gazelle
 Tania Australis : second leap of the gazelle
 Alula Borealis : first leap of the gazelle
 Alula Australis : first leap of the gazelle
 Muscida: muzzle
 Ursa Minor / Ursae Minoris : the little bear
 Polaris : pole star
 Kochab / Kokab : star
 Pherkab : calf
 Yildun : star
 Vela / Velorum : the sails
 Suhail / Regor : unknown / "Roger" backwards
 Markab : ship
 Suhail : unknown
 Tian Ke : heaven's record
 Virgo / Virginis : the virgin
 Spica / Azimech : ear of wheat
 Zavijava / Alaraph : barker's corner / grape gatherer
 Porrina : (Roman goddess of childbirth)
 Auva : the barker
 Vindemiatrix : vine-harvester (female)
 Heze : unknown
 Zaniah : corner
 Syrma : train of a garment
 Volans / Volantis : the flying fish

Vulpecula / Vulpeculae : the little fox

Appendix 2: Example Traits

Remember that these traits are merely examples, and that you can (and should) think up your own for your own characters.

Example Offices

Knight of the Order of the Stars

Description: The character is a Knight Stellar, called or driven into the service of the stars.

Heart Invokes When: You need to find evidence in an investigation, you use your role as a knight to gain special privilege, you are performing some action characteristic of knights and the order.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: Someone brings up the knight's bad reputation, the terrible doom of the knights confronts you, you discover something terrible about the past of the Order, you are fighting the Frost Maiden or the Solaris Knight.

Special Rules: Automatic Trait

Matriarch of Yildun

Description: The Yildun are a numerous clan, particular influential in the Southreach orchestra, and you are their senior member, due great respect and appreciation. Your name is Yildun I.

Heart Invokes When: Using the support of your family, ordering family members around, taking care of family business, using the prestige of your family name to your advantage.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: You are betrayed by a family member, you have to deal with your family's bad reputation, you have to take care of an irresponsible family member.

Special Rules: None

Sole Heir of Kaus Borealis

Description: You are the only Kaus Borealis left living, the sole heir of the ancient heritage of royal philosophers. Your name is Kaus Borealis, and you do not list a number.

Heart Invokes When: Calling upon the strength of your ancestors, reciting your lineage to impress others with your ability, recalling bits of family history.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: You are alone, without kin in the world, and your solitude is turned against you. Someone brings up a mad relative in conversation. Someone mentions that Kaus Borealis was involved in the construction of the First Calendar.

Special Rules: None

Keeper of the Leftmost Museum

Description: You are, at least in theory, charged with the care and keeping of the priceless artifacts housed within the Leftmost Museum at Tallstar remnant.

Heart Invokes When: Use the mysterious lore of those Dark Age artifacts. Grant or take away access to the Museum. Any conflict that occurs within the Museum. Leverage your position for political favor.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: Your duties distract you. Someone mentions that no one goes to museums in these modern times, anyway. Your underlings are stealing items and replacing them with fakes.

Special Rules: If you are ever stripped of your rank, this trait becomes "Former Keeper of the Leftmost Museum."

Example Fates

Fates are events, actions, people, places or organizations that are tied, irrevocably, into your story.

Betrayal of the People

Description: You are a Knight of the Order of the stars, and your doom lurks closer by the hour -- those amongst you who do not fall in the bloody sieges of spring and the bloodier crusades of autumn will turn against the people, becoming demons yourselves. Once, that fate was long-off and soon forgotten, but now it lurks within your heart and nightmares. The turned faces of friends confront you on the battlefield, and you cannot dare to hope that you will be more valorous.

Invoke When: You are fighting a fallen knight, you are tempted to turn against the people, you are preventing a knight from falling, one amongst the people or the mistaken names your doom.

Special Rules: All knights obtain this trait when they become Veterans.

Relationship with Rischia, Maiden of the Midmost Hall

Description: Rischia, hailed in song and poetry as the greatest beauty of the Sun Age, has had suitors travel two remnants and gift her with priceless rubies merely for the privilege of a moment in her sight. But she cares not for these suitors, wealthy and powerful and handsome as they may be, for she already has found her true love -- you, a common knight. But, although you know she is beautiful and kind, you cannot find it within yourself to love her back, and so your romance lingers, unspoken and rotting, between the two of

you.

Invoke When: Rischia is involved in the conflict -- either she is in danger, or is fighting you, fighting alongside you, or is in some other manner sums up what is at stake.

Special Rules: None

Relationship with Asmidike VI, Your Father

Description: Your father was a knight. Though you never saw him, and only heard tell of his exploits from others in the Order, you always imagined that he was the greatest among the champions and, even as your mother disparaged the Stellars, you came to love them even more through the absent image of your father.

Invoke When: Your father is involved in the conflict -- either he is in danger, or is fighting you, fighting alongside you, or in some other manner sums up what is at stake.

Special Rules: None

Relationship with Etlitotec, the Princess of Spring

Description: Clad in the skins of the people she has slain, wielding a knife of burning obsidian, Etlitotec is a great princess among the demons, the first to emerge from the mistake come springtime, slaughterer of ten thousand people, all victims of her fecund savagery. Plants and flowers sprout behind her as she walks, and while her masks are capable of deception, her true face is always curled into a scream of terrible agony. She has passed among the people from time to time, and in that time has come to know you, just as you have come to know her. Once, you swore that you would rid the ice of her corruption, but as you hunt her, you come to understand her in some sinister manner. And, perhaps, she has also come to understand you and, in your darkest dreams, you fear that she is the only one.

Invoke When: You are fighting Etlitotec, you are tracking her schemes, you are talking to her, she is assisting you, tempting you, or is in some other way sums up what is at stake.

Special Rules: None

The Greatest Knight

Description: It is not enough to be a great warrior, defending your people from the Mistake, and sacrificing yourself for the good of the whole. You must be the best knight, at whatever cost.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: When your abilities as a knight come into question, when you come into conflict with other knights, someone challenges your reputation.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: Your single-minded devotion to perfection gets in the way of what is really at stake.

Special Rules: None

Reunite the Kaus

Description: Torn by ancient but not forgotten feuding, the Kaus families have split into the Borealis, Australius, and Media branches, all of whom violently hate each other. Despite the fact that the Kaus Australius slew all of your clan in a petty power-play, you have nonetheless vowed that, as the last of Kaus Borealis, you will reunite your wayward family, and turn their strength and anger against the Mistaken.

Heart Invokes When: You have an ally for your noble goal, a member of a Kaus family thinks kindly of you for it, you have a good opportunity to achieve your goal.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: Your single-mindedness lends itself to demonic manipulation. You suffer ridicule for your idealism. The members of Kaus Australius oppose your goals.

Special Rules: If this trait is rendered impossible or completed, it may be changed into another drive, preferably an appropriate one. For instance, if you reunited the Kaus family, this could become "Drive: Advance the Kaus family" or "Drive: Hold the family together."

Example Blessings

Blessings are all gifts of stars -- strange artifacts with mysterious powers. Those gifted with them intuitively understand how to use them, but others may not (unless they, also, have the appropriate trait.)

Starlight Sword

Description: A shimmering, transparent sword of starlight appears in your hand whenever you need it (faintly colored red, blue or white). It is perfectly sharp, and sings slightly as it moves. (Some knights keep their swords hung at their belts. No one knows why some knights have permanent swords, and others don't.)

Heart Invokes When: You are fighting something in melee combat, need to cut something, or some other use of a sword.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: The demon you are fighting is immune to your sword, you accidentally hurt a companion with your sword.

Special Rules: Automatic Trait

Breathsuit

Description: A thin, covering jumpsuit with a heavy visor and breathing mask. The food and water stores inside allow you to survive for a long time.

Heart Invokes When: You need to breath in a hostile environment, you need protection against the elements, you need to survive for a long tiem without food.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: The breathsuit has a leak. The ugly image of the mask frightens a would-be ally. The taste of food has become dry and dull to you. You choke suddenly

Special Rules: None

Loyal Steed

Description: You have in your possession of the great steeds of the People, a trained jumper, with long, graceful legs and chitin proof against demon claws. It carries you swiftly over the ice, and fights beside you in battle with terrible claws and mandibles, but most importantly it is a silent, listening companion in your darkest hours.

Heart Invokes When: You need to get somewhere fast. Your steed aids you in battle. A might leap takes you to the top of some ruin. Your steed provides comfort in a long journey

Ice Maiden Invokes When: Your steed needs to hibernate, eat or mate at an inconvenient time. Your steed is distracted. It's armor and visage scare off the more delicate amongst the people. The steed will not obey your commands, and bolts.

Special Rules: None.

Greater Starlight Weapon

Description: Your starlight weapon takes the form of a larger sword, or some other sort of weapon, or is a missile weapon, or is bolts of starlight that you throw from your hands.

Invoke When: As Starlight Sword

Special Rules: If Starlight Sword was bid in the challenge, the other side cannot bid Greater Starlight Weapon.

The Call of Home

Description: A liny contraplion of gem and metal, it contains a miniature star that helps the Knight navigate the treacherous waste

Heart Invokes When: You need to find something in the wilderness, you need to keep up hope

Ice Maiden Invokes When: The star points you towards the Mistake

Special Rules: None

Memory Crystal

Description: Beginning as a clear crystal, it gradually turns blue or red as information is stored in it. It can return the information as text, images (both flat and spatial), or even as a dull, flat speech

Heart Invokes When: Use the crystal to recall something important. Use the crystal as a trick.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: The crystal contains foul things. The crystal contains incriminating information about you. The crystal lies.

Special Rules: None

Example Abilities

Abilities represent capabilities of your character -- things that he, personally can do.

Lore: Demons

Description: You have learned from the Knights about the nature and types of demons, and how to fight them

Heart Invokes When: You recall something about a demonic weakness, and exploit it. You use your lore to diagnose a demonic possession, or perform an exorcism

Ice Maiden Invokes When: Your lore is incorrect, Demons use your knowledge to manipulate you

Special Rules: Automatic Trait

Technique: Strike from the Shadows

Description: You attack from hiding, allowing yourself more time to study your opponent, and so striking more effectively

Heart Invokes When: You are fighting someone, and can use the trick

Ice Maiden Invokes When: your target sees you coming

Special Rules: None

Attribute: Refined

Description: You are, at your core, a refined and distinguished member of the people. You have little taste for the rugged life of the knight, and are capable of appreciating subtleties of music and food that even bypass the artists who create them.

Heart Invokes When: Your recognized refinement brings you social benefit. You notice something subtle about music, food, or art that is an important clue. You refuse a temptation that is not sophisticated.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: You miss something important because of your

refinement. You are placed in an unacceptable situations. You get flustered.
Special Rules: None

Skill: Musician

Description: You are a musician of no mean skill, attuned to the music of the spheres.

Heart Invokes When: The sound of the stars gives you some warning. You play music to impress people. The pure sound of your star-music drives back a demon.

Ice Maiden Invokes When: You are overwhelmed by the screaming of the sun. You must stop to play a song, and are distracted from your task. Your playing ability proves unworthy to the composition that you have chosen to perform

Special Rules: If you bring new music to the session, or make a collection of music for the game, this trait refreshes automatically at the beginning of the session at your discretion. (applies to Frost Maiden and Heart.)