

# Empire

A *Reversed Engineer* Game

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With Character Sheet by

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## **Who are the characters?**

They are the twice blooded, born of a mortal woman and the divine essence of two creator gods. Possessing phenomenal power, yet unable to reach homeostasis due to the ever conflicting drives imparted by his or her Day Father and Night Father, the twice-blooded eke a tenuous existence out of the troubled land.

## **Day and Night**

In this land there are two great forces that govern everything, even the gods. Day is the drive to the exterior, to interact with the world outside of the mind in dynamic and novel ways. Night is the search inward, contemplating the mysteries that are hidden when looked at too closely.

Day and Night exist more or less equally in all creatures, shaping their reactions and guiding them toward meaningful interaction with existence.

No, not all creatures. The gods deal with Day and Night a bit differently. During the hours governed by the sun, they are completely ruled by their Day aspect; in the moon's hours, their Night aspect gets free reign.

What happens when such blindingly pure essences merge within a mortal, constantly swirling around but refusing to interact peacefully? That would be you, another one who the standard rules fail to cover.

## **What do the characters do?**

The Benevolent Khan has offended the gods, driving their divine blessing from the sprawling Khurid Empire. The golden age is at an end, but the worst has not yet arrived. It does not have to.

When the gods left, they took with them everything of which they were proud, thinking to leave humanity to their own devices.

You were an embarrassment to the family.

There are those out there worse than you, however. Others of your breed have fallen to the battle that rages within them, visiting grief and bloodshed on the outside world. There are also abominations, results of your fathers' darker passions.

Are you compelled to protect this land that your fathers abandoned? Without their guidance it could become something new and conducive to the higher functions of life.

You could be a hero, turning the distrust of those who fear your strength into awe. Perhaps you could even attract the attention of one of your fathers, get him to smile.

## **How do I make a character?**

1. Select a Day Father, a Night Father, and a mother.
2. Assign skill specialties.
3. Select a mount and one ability for said mount.
4. Decide your status among the Inner Circle and Those Who Taketh.

It began with your mother. She was a strong woman, the pride of all who knew her. While she may not have had a face that could launch a thousand raiding parties, she was a paragon member of her people. Tell me about your mother. From whence did she hail?

### **The Yon Frontier**

When the Khurid Empire ceased to expand, its armies found themselves at the Yon Frontier. Its inhabitants proved tougher to subjugate than any foe that even the oldest of the horde could remember. After many battles wherein the Yon tribes utilized their fire-breathing equilisks with shocking precision, neither side was able to emerge as the clear victor.

Unable to progress but unwilling to return home in defeat, the Benevolent Khan urged his horde to fight ever on. The stalemate continued for many years, lending furrowed battlefields and the shells of temporary earthworks to the already craggy region.

Outside of the Benevolent Khan's immediate zone of control, the great horde became ever more disenchanted with their orders of domination. Step by tiny step, cessations of hostilities and peace accords began to arise. These days, much of the frontier is populated by Empire soldiers, nominally acting on protectorate duties, and their Yon families.

A twice blooded whose mother came from the Yon Frontier has the following starting statistics: Combat (Day) 2, Riding (Night) 1, Athletics (Night) 1.

Available mounts from the region are equilisks and warhorses.

### **Odval Dur, the Imperial City**

After the Benevolent Khan marched from his city of alabaster and bronze, his great city fell to the mercy of the advisors who were left behind. Each one thought only of himself, squandering the great treasury in displays of wild opulence.

At the city's center, the august Tower of the Sun languishes in incompleteness. Once a testament to the Benevolent Khan's dedication to the gods, construction halted when the golden age reached its end.

A twice blooded whose mother came from Odval Dur has the following starting statistics: Courtship (Day) 2, Empathy (Day) 1, Husbandry (Night) 1.

Available mounts from the region are the mysterious mindmount and the friendly companion steed.

### **The Windborne Steppe**

Except for the occasional ever-distant city of towering spirals and expertly formed domes, most of the Khurid Empire exists in the form of the Windborne Steppe.

Tribes of horse-based nomads call this wild scrubland their home, refusing to abandon the traditions of their ancestors to the increasingly consolidated cities. It is from these tribes that the bulk of the Benevolent Khan's horde arises.

A twice blooded whose mother came from the Windborne Plains has the following starting statistics: Riding (Night) 2, Husbandry (Night) 1, Empathy (Day) 1.

Available mounts from this region are the flighty steppe-runner and the warhorse.

### **Valley of the Oracles**

At the southern edge of the Windborne Steppe, nestled between a rift in the side of a soaring mountain range, hides the site where the Benevolent Khan learned of the world before this one that the gods had destroyed.

It is perhaps this reason why the gods held such a fondness for the ritualistically purified maidens that tended to the valley's temperate glens and shrines. For such a small valley, a large number of twice-blooded sprung from this holy site.

A twice blooded whose mother came from the Valley of the Oracles has the following starting statistics: Empathy (Day) 2, Scavenging (Night) 1, Riding (Night) 1.

Available mounts from this region are the aptly named cloud charger and the companion steed.

### **Shurentse, the Barge City**

In the midst of the Windborne Steepe flows the River Hu. It stretches the length of the Empire, starting past the Yon Frontier and running past Odval Dur into the sea.

There are many settlements along the River Hu, but only one upon it: Shurentse. Built on the backs of rafts bearing brightly colored sails, the Barge City moves with the seasons and along the financial currents of passing caravans. Its people are honest fisherfolk and unapologetic rogues, for the most part.

A twice blooded whose mother came from Shurentse has the following starting statistics: Boating (Night) 2, Combat (Day) 1, Trade (Day) 1.

Available mounts from this region are the stocky pony and the aquatic hippocampus.

At two points, several years ago, your mother had life-changing encounters with gods masked to pass unrecognized in the world of men. One of them visited her openly in the daytime, the other under the cover of night. The first was your Day Father, the second your Night Father. It is because of them that you are twice blooded, outside of the world.

## **Godfathers**

### **Khur, the Sovereign**

Before this world there was another, full of wickedness. It displeased Khur, so he turned from his brothers and sisters and crafted this land.

He is both the Benevolent Khan, delighting in taking the rough materials of chaos and working them into a more wonderful empire and He Who Judges. He guides and protects those who hold authority over others.

A child of Khur has the following statistics: Fear 1, Fate 2, Ferocity 1, Riding (Night) 1, and Combat (Day) 1.

The fate of those imperfectly begotten by his wisdom is to fail in an important decision and displease the people, inciting disharmony.

### **Baried, the Lifesinger**

In his joy, Baried granted life to those who were deserving and took it from those who faltered.

Under the light of the day, Baried celebrates rebirth and fertility in the Primordial Ode. As the sun sets, his tempo slows to express the Profound Mystery of Death. It is said that the old and the sick displease Baried in their failure to remain healthy, so he shifts his joy to new lives more deserving of the attention.

A child of Baried has the following statistics: Fear 3, Fate 1, Ferocity 0, Husbandry (Night) 1, and Courtship (Day) 1.

The fate of those imperfectly begotten by his seed is a state imperfectly between life and death. Either side would be a welcome home to the crippled child of Baried.

### **Raza, the Horseman**

It was Raza who looked down upon Khur's vast plain and felt pity for its inhabitants. The distance between tribes meant that they would rarely converge. The predators were strong of sinew and fleet of foot. Raza gave us his steed.

Raza's face under the sun is that of the Culture-Bringer. It is because of his sacrifice that communication between the cities is possible. In domesticating the horse, man has gained greater access to his family. These gifts are not to be taken for granted, however. The Lone Rider reminds his people of the allure of the steppe and the alienating appeal that direct communion with its contents brings.

A child of Raza has the following statistics: Fear 2, Fate 0, Ferocity 2, Riding (Night) 1, and Empathy (Day) 1.

The fate of those imperfectly begotten by his guidance is to become devoted to an unending task. While potentially beneficial to others, the son of Raza will never experience joy from its completion.

### **Hounta, Skylord**

While the others discussed the new world, Hounta looked down from his perch on high and smiled. Winds cooled the land.

Hounta is present in the windstorm that topples cities. He is the cutting snow, cold as spears. He is baking under the wan moon. He is in the calm that is before, after, and throughout the plains. He is the Divine Storm and the Blessed Silence.

A child of Hounta has the following statistics: Fear 1, Fate 0, Ferocity 3, Husbandry (Night) 1, and Empathy (Day) 1.

The fate of those imperfectly begotten by his will is to fall under the sway of the winds. These unfortunate souls cycle between periods of great, agonizing ferocity and fugue-like detachment that defines their existence.

### **Maki, He of the People**

After all was done, Maki spoke. He felt a deep guilt for what had transpired before, and wished to provide us with succor.

Unlike the others, Maki appeared unmasked in our cities and along our caravan routes. He taught us guile as the Tradesman, discovering precious metals and their uses. When

our enemies came he led us in survival, leading them to curse him as the Desert Rat. Now even kind Maki has abandoned us. Despair, my family!

A child of Maki has the following statistics: Fear 1, Fate 2, Ferocity 1, Scavenging (Night) 1, and Combat (Day) 1.

The fate of those imperfectly begotten by his artifice is to cause grievous harm upon a cherished individual. Although not necessarily deadly, this always creates an insurmountable rift between the two.

## **Mounts**

As befits the role as an outcast, each twice blooded has a mount chosen from the land of his or her mother.

Generally, the mounts do not participate in combat. Some may have abilities that allow it or additions to their master's combat abilities. This is to preserve the heroic flavor – a pony can kick, but it's not likely to kick an abomination of nature hard enough to cause interesting effects.

The Day Mount and the Night Mount are physically the same animal. However, their close proximity to the moods of their masters causes several subtle changes over a 24-hour cycle.

During the day, a mount is more fiery and difficult to control. It infers a –2 penalty to all Riding and Husbandry checks during this time, but gains +1 to its Power and Speed.

The Night Mount's eyes bear a troublesome gleam. Some call it eerie, while others spend hours puzzling over what secrets are contained within. For the purpose of statistic computation, the Night Mount's stats are the baseline.

A mount's Soul statistic is one reason why they are so important to their masters. Through communion with the beast, the twice blooded is able to reaffirm his or her attachment to the mortal world and everyday humanity. Every significant adventure period, the mount is able to remove a number of points from a twice blooded's Self pool equal to the Soul statistic.

**Cloud Charger:** Soul 1, Power 3, Speed 3

**Clouddance:** The ability that gives the Cloud Charger its name. The Cloud Charger can move at its normal speed along clouds of dust, fog, or even the condensation from a roaring waterfall.

**Companion Steed:** Soul 3, Power 2, Speed 2

**Empathic Bond:** Bred for its easy-going, calmative nature, the companion steed is naturally able to share its emotions with its master. This allows the master to ascertain the location and condition of his mount at all times.

**Hippocampus:** Soul 1, Power 4, Speed 2

**Be As The Fish:** When in a body of water large enough to contain it, the Hippocampus prefers to be in its natural form: its front hooves become more flexible and web like while its rear legs are replaced with a large, fishy tail. The hippocampus can move through water at its base speed.

**Equilisk:** Soul 0, Power 4, Speed 4

**Breath Flame:** When fighting in close proximity to his equilisk, the mount's master may add +2 to all combat rolls.

**Mindmount:** Soul 1, Power 2, Speed 4

**Daydream:** During the day, the mindmount's Day characteristics are transformed to an ostentatious degree. Motes of sparkling sunlight replace its mane, and its hooves echo with the roar of an army. While riding a daydream, the master can gain one point of Fate and receive the benefits of two.

**Nightmare:** During the night, the mindmount's Night characteristics are transformed to an ostentatious degree. Its mane is replaced by faded pall of obscuring fog, and its hooves resound with a silence that devours sound. While riding a daydream, the master can gain one point of Fear and receive the benefits of two.

**Pony:** Soul 2, Power 3, Speed 2

**Sturdy:** Once per day, the pony's master can negate the unfortunate effects of failing a skill roll (but not the increase in the lowest Self pool) while mounted.

**Friendly:** Everybody likes ponies. The master receives +2 to Courtship rolls when his pony is around.

**Steppe-Runner:** Soul 1, Power 2, Speed 5

**Stupid:** Those who are not the Steppe-Runner's master gain a -2 to influence it through Husbandry or Riding.

**Warhorse:** Soul 1, Power 4, Speed 2

**Fighter:** When the warhorse's master spends a point of Ferocity, the emotional lashing whips his mount to match the frenzy. This causes the point of Ferocity gain to act as if two were gained instead.

## Status

The Inner Circle and Those Who Taketh are the single-blooded children of a god and a mortal who chose to remain behind while the other wonders of creation were snatched from humanity's grasp. Many of them felt stronger connections to their human backgrounds, despite their imperfect understanding of mortality. Others stayed for reasons of pride. A small amount decided to remain and guide humans, whether they wanted the help or not.

The Inner Circle consists of single-blooded ones who were begotten by a Day aspected god. They will actively hunt those whose goals displease them, and bombastically assist those whose goals stay in line.

Those Who Taketh are the single-blooded ones who sprung from a Night aspected god and a mortal. Named by their Dayblooded cousins, The Debased have not yet decided on a unified plan for staying in the Empire. As such their aid is less expansive in scope, but less constricting in nature.

The line on the character sheet corresponding with the name of the group explains how the group reacts to the character as a whole. The additional lines provide space for the names of individual members and the reason why they stayed in the Empire.

## Mechanics

Whenever a character wishes to interact with his surroundings in a fashion where failure would be of dramatic interest, he must roll a skill check.

Skill checks are rolled on 1d12. The character's skill ranking is added to this result. If the task relates to the skill specialty, add another +2. If the skill is being used during a period when its primary aspect is not present, add a -2 penalty. If the end result is equal to or over 7, the action is a success.

If the action fails, the GM (with player input, of course) describes what sort of unpleasentries fall upon the character. Furthermore, the player gains a point in their lowest Self pool as their godly nature rebels against this mediocrity.

In the event of two or more parties acting against each other, the highest roll is a success. If no rolls are over 7, or both rolls are equal, the parties have engaged in a stalemate or both failed depending on the circumstances.

For the purpose of skill checks, mounts and abominations use their **soul, power, speed,** and **ability** scores.

## The Self Pools

The Self pools are the players' patriarchal heritage, the ability to exist on a stage above that of mere humanity.

**Fear** is the aura of command that cannot be ignored. As the Fear pool increases, mortal minds confronted with this nimbus of control scream out until they can take no more. When a character's Fear pool reaches ten, he has become so alien to the mortal world that those not of the gods are unable to stand him. Unless protected by the agony of hermitry, he will soon face a fatal encounter with a violent and untrusting mob.

A character may gain a point in his Fear pool to automatically succeed at a task that could be benefited by fear or respect.

**Fate** is the ability to succeed at a pre-determined task. For each of the twice-blooded this corresponds to the interests of their fathers. As the Fate pool increases, the character will find the tragedy of being imperfectly conceived intensified into an unavoidable, personal tragedy. When the Fate pool reaches ten, the GM chooses one of the tragic legacies of the character's fathers and visits it upon the fated one.

A character may gain a point in his Fate pool to automatically succeed at a task that could be influenced by one of his fathers' domains.

**Ferocity** is rebellion against the fate of being twice-blooded, but also subservience to the inner battle. As the Ferocity pool increases, the character becomes more violent and unpredictable during daily activities. When the Ferocity pool reaches ten, the character has been consumed by rage and despair, shattering his mind completely.

A character may gain a point in his Ferocity pool to externalize his inner battle and automatically succeed at a combat task.

## Opposing Self Pools

If a Self pool's automatic success is employed against another with divine parentage (abominations, twice-blooded, Sisters and Brothers, or the Debased), the targeted party may choose to enter a **contest of will** to overcome the success with a victory of his own.

This is accomplished by announcing a greater bid of Self points. The initial character may then challenge the bid with one of his own. This process continues until all parties choose not to raise the bid any further. All Self pools involved are raised by a number of points equal to the bidder's stake, and the high bid receives the automatic success.

## Skills

All skills with at least one rank receive a specialty. These are narrowly defined situations at which your character excels.

Most of the skills are self-explanatory. Two exceptions are Empathy and Husbandry. Empathy is the social skill for dealing with humans; Husbandry is the skill for dealing with animals – unless it is for riding purposes. Then Riding is used.

The blank lines under the provided skills are for other skills that may arise in the course of play.

## Abominations

Abominations are the outright failures that the gods left behind when they abandoned the Empire. They are as small as a disease with esoteric symptoms and as large as a beast that tears the hills while it hunts for the flesh of man. Greek and Roman monsters are good starts, but make them bigger and stranger for added zest.

Abominations are formed from the same statistics as mounts: **soul, power, speed, and abilities.**

Being of the gods, abominations also have their own form of Self pools. For the purposes of this edition of the game, these can only be used to resist “one-shot kills” by twice-blooded and raise the stakes.

The generic abomination has three points available to bid in each Self pool.

A violent abomination that is equal in skill to a character will have power a little higher than their combat skill.