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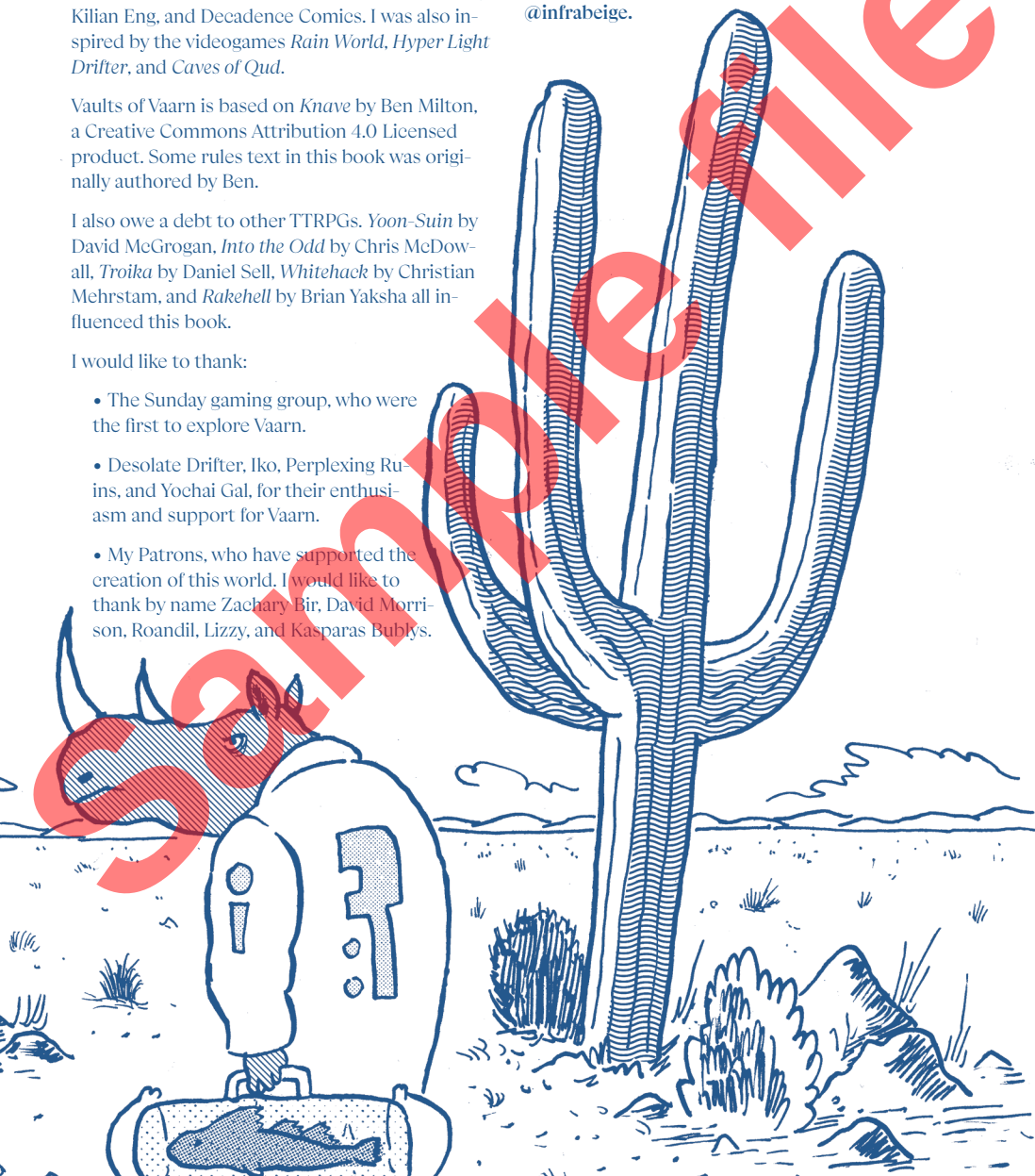
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Extra content, such as play reports and lore, can be found at vaultsofvaarn.com

You can support the creation of the setting, and access bonus material, at patreon.com/vaultsofvaarn.

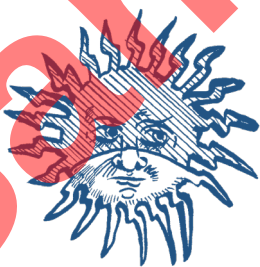
I am also on Twitter:
[@infrabeige](https://twitter.com/infrabeige).



WELCOME TO VAARN

The sun is dying and the wreckage of countless cons litters the parched wastes of Vaarn, the desolate country that common folk call the blue ruin. It is said that these sky-coloured sands hide the graves of the Autarchs; have swallowed the buried arcologies in which the true seed of humankind was preserved through the Great Collapse; conceal forgotten crypts of memory, decaying crystalline lattices of ancient ego-engines upon which the dusk-blue dunes enroach without pity. From the New Hegemony to the south come drifters and dreamers, desecraters of the tech-tombs that lie sunken beneath the azure wastes. Light-years overhead, aurum-sailed ships ply their tender routes between the spheres, and miles below a pilgrim's feet, strange wombs are kindled once more with life undreamed of.

These are the hinterlands, where humanity's great works have fallen to everlasting decay, where machine and animal and fungus think to crown themselves our equal. The phthalosands, where newbeasts hunt proudly with boots upon their hind paws and chromepriests chant unending binary devotions to their nameless synthetic god. Only the desperate or the mad would seek to make a life here, to roam the blue desert in search of the secret VAULTS OF VAARN.



Vaarn is a science-fantasy tabletop RPG setting. It draws inspiration from novels like *Dune*, *Hyperion*, *The Book of the New Sun*, and the graphic novels of Moebius. Vaarn is a surreal and colourful world; a post-apocalyptic, post-human landscape, where the dividing line between flesh and machinery has blurred and the borders between magic, science, and faith have likewise become obscured.

The sun is going out, it is the end of history, and everything that could possibly happen has already happened and faded to dust. No two sources agree on the details of Vaarn's etiolated past, and in truth such debates hold little significance. However, there are some facts that every resident of Vaarn can agree upon:

- Vaarn is a sky-blue desert littered with the ruins of the far future.
- Vaarn is chiefly inhabited by true-kin (non-mutated humans), cacogen (mutated humans), synths (robots), newbeasts (sapient animals), and mycomorphs (fungal revenants).
- The sun is a dying red giant. It won't go out in a human lifetime, but synths have reason to be concerned.
- Vaarn is both archaic and futuristic. Think sword fights inside the wrecked husks of ancient spaceships.
- To the south lies the New Hegemony, a proud, expanding true-kin empire. Theoretically the Hegemony rules Vaarn, but they have little presence besides a few fortified border towns.
- Nanomachines are inside everything, and it's normal to see wild animals with cameras growing out of their flesh or humans with parasitic artificial limbs.
- Nobody can agree on the cause, but there was a Great Collapse, which destroyed most of human civilisation.
- Before the Great Collapse the planet was dominated by the Autarchy, a dictatorship enacted by a dynasty of genetically modified God-kings.
- Before the reign of the Autarchs, the Urth was ruled by AIs called the Titans. Something happened to them and they were overthrown, but the details are lost to history.

Finally, and most importantly, Vaarn is never the same twice. The fall of the dice determines how your version of the setting develops. Readers and players alike are encouraged to make Vaarn their own.

1.1 BASIC RULES

ABILITIES

Each of the six abilities is used in different circumstances:

- **STRENGTH:** Used for melee attacks and saves requiring physical power, like lifting gates, bending bars, etc.
- **DEXTERITY:** Used for ranged attacks and saves requiring poise, speed, and reflexes, like dodging, climbing, sneaking, balancing, etc.
- **CONSTITUTION:** Used for saves to resist poison, sickness, cold, etc. The Constitution bonus is added to healing rolls. A PC's number of item slots is always equal to their Constitution defense.
- **INTELLECT:** Used for saves requiring concentration and precision, such as recalling information, tinkering with machinery, identifying Exotica, etc.
- **PSYCHE:** Used for saves requiring perception and intuition, such as tracking, navigating, searching for hidden doors, communing with psychic beings, etc. PCs add their Psyche bonus to damage dealt by Mystic Gifts.
- **EGO:** Used for saves requiring will-power and charm, such as persuading, deceiving, intimidating, resisting psychic domination, etc.

SAVES

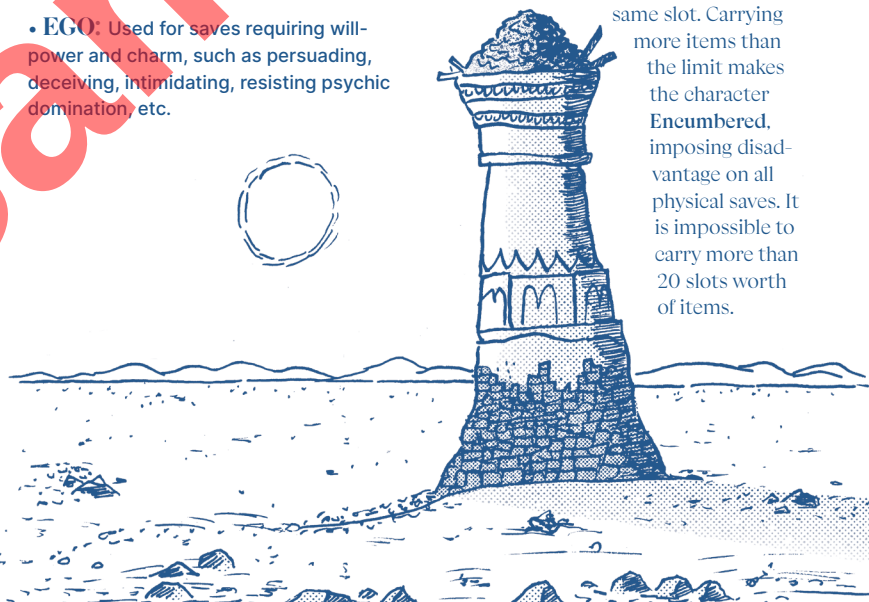
If a character attempts something where the outcome is uncertain and failure has consequences, they make a save: add the bonus of the relevant ability to a d20 roll.

- If the total exceeds 15, the character succeeds. If not, they fail.
- If the save is opposed by another character, then instead of aiming to exceed 15, they must roll a total greater than the opposing character's relevant ability defense score. On a fail, the opposing side succeeds.
- If there are situational factors that make a save significantly easier or harder, the Referee may grant the roll advantage or disadvantage. If a roll has advantage, roll 2d20 and use the better result. If it has disadvantage, roll 2d20 and use the worse.

ITEM SLOTS

PCs have a number of item slots equal to their Constitution defense. Most items, including tools, light weapons, and similar take up 1 slot, whilst heavy or bulky items like armour or medium to heavy weapons will take up more slots. Groups of small items may be bundled into the

same slot. Carrying more items than the limit makes the character **Encumbered**, imposing disadvantage on all physical saves. It is impossible to carry more than 20 slots worth of items.



MYSTIC GIFTS

Vaarn is a world where religion, science, and magic are indistinguishable. Devout faith, mastery of arcane nano-machines, abuse of psychoactive fungus, or mental mutation can grant the mind uncanny influence over the material world. All such powers, abilities, and boons are referred to as

Gifts (see page 22).

- Each Mystic Gift uses **one item slot**; this represents the burden these unnatural powers exert on the body of the wielder.
- Using a Gift costs HP, determined by the Referee once the player describes what they want to accomplish. The baseline cost for using a Gift is **d6 HP**.
- Combat Gifts always hit their target, dealing damage of one dice size higher than the user paid in HP, plus the character's PSY bonus. (Example: paying d6 HP results in a damage of d8 + PSY bonus).
- The same ratio applies when healing an ally using a Gift. Gifts like mind control or force barriers can be used for extended durations. In such cases the character must pay d6 HP for each ten-minute period that the Gift is active.

Mystic Gifts are not earned by gaining levels; they must be hunted for. Sources of new Gifts include consuming psychoactive drugs, brain surgery, training with another psychic, eating another psychic's brain, or meditating in front of a hypergeometric obelisk. The Referee can decide.

WATER

Vaarn has a fluid economy; potable water is one of the most valuable resources in the blue wastelands. Up to three rations of water can be carried in one item slot.

Biological PCs must drink one ration of water every day. Synthetic PCs must imbibe a ration of water weekly, in order to cool their general syntax boards and ego-engines. Failure to do so will result in the character becoming Deprived. If a character is Deprived due to thirst for three days in a row, they will perish.

EXOTICA

Exotica are the strange relics of the many extinct civilizations that preceded your own. Exotica may take the form of weaponry, clothing, tools, or bizarre constructions that are beyond the understanding of mortal minds.

When a new item of Exotica is found, the Referee may ask for an INT save in order to puzzle out what the device does. If the save is failed, it is assumed that the PCs cannot understand the device. They can either have the item appraised at a settlement or use it and hope for the best.

ADVANCEMENT

As PCs adventure in Vaarn, they will grow from novices into seasoned explorers. All new characters start at Level 1 and advance by trading in Exotica at settlements or oases. Trading in an item of Exotica will automatically raise a PC to their next Level. A PC's maximum Level is 10. When a PC Level increases:

- They get three points to allocate to any Abilities of their choosing. Abilities may never be raised higher than 20 /+10.
- They roll a d8 and add the result to their maximum HP.

A single Exotica can only be used to raise the Level of one PC, not the entire party. This will create important decisions for the party, as most likely only one PC will be able to level up at a time. If the Referee wants a faster campaign, have all PCs level up for each Exotica traded, excluding those in the starting equipment.

BARTER

Merchants will usually trade an item slots' worth of goods for similar, putting a premium on rations of water and items of Exotica. There is no set list of prices for goods in Vaarn. The deals characters can strike will depend upon context, the merchant's disposition, and how persuasive they are.