



Shadow World



PLAYER GUIDE

THE WORLD

BY TERRY KEVIN AMTHOR

Sample file

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PLAYER GUIDE

THE WORLD

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ABOUT THE COVER

This is where we'd normally talk about the cover illustration and explain the story behind it but it's not necessary in this case as the story excerpt is the opening text in Section 1 - The Introduction.

A close up on the deck of the skyship is on the back cover featuring the Loremaster Luronen Moje himself.



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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

Luronen Moje joined the Navigator on the foredeck of the skyship. Sulfean appeared young to Moje's trained eye even for an Elven Navigator, and indeed Sulfean was barely out of his teens; somewhat of a prodigy. But Luronen had little time to muse upon the selection processes of Navigators, as the reason for his summons to the deck became clear. Dead ahead of the Emerian Princess, the cloudy sky had turned the unnatural, luminous green which could only herald the approach of one of Kulthea's greatest terrors: a flowstorm.

"I see we have a problem." Moje said without taking his eyes from the eerie phenomenon before them.

"Indeed," answered Sulfean tonelessly. "It formed about five minutes ago; the shock waves are already extending more than five miles."

The two men stood impassively watching the gathering storm while the crew of the Princess wrestled with the flapping sails and fought her air-rudder. Moje cast out a tentative spell to gauge the power of the storm, only to feel the Essænce torn from him, sucked into the magical vortex.

"Perhaps we should jump now, before the storm intensifies." Moje suggested mildly.

Sulfean peered through his sextant-like Compass and adjusted a jeweled screw. "Too late."

A moment later there was a brilliant flash from the area ahead, and knives of iridescent lightning stabbed down from the sky to the earth. The green clouds swirled into a monstrous funnel, twisting like a great screw towards the ground. The sky went dark; the sun seemed to go out as everything was lit only by this luminous green tornado, laced with forks of lightning. Then the winds

reached them.

The skyship trembled and began to list to starboard, her structure creaking ominously. Both men staggered but regained their balance as the craft slewed about in a strangely majestic spin, drawn towards the Essænce vortex.

Ignoring the wind tearing at his clothes and flowing hair, Sulfean carefully replaced his Compass in its padded leather pouch. Moje fought to control his own flapping cloak in this sudden gale, while the Navigator turned to face the storm.

The captain of the Princess rushed up to the two men, clutching at his cap. He still had his composure, but it was clear that even he was frightened by this monstrous storm. "Sirs," he shouted over the rising winds, "I realize you are not responsible for rescuing us from such as this, but any assistance would be much appreciated."

Sulfean continued to stare forward, eyes glazed, his knuckles white on the balustrade. Moje doubted he even noticed the captain.

"Captain Renian, I believe that the Navigator is even now doing his best to divert our course from a disastrous collision with this storm. However, I fear that even his powers will be of no avail against such a powerful flowstorm. I suggest you attempt to steer to starboard and make preparations to jettison the Xenium keel in order to attempt an emergency ground landing."

The captain was horrified. "That'll wreck my ship!"

Moje cocked an eyebrow. "Our alternative is quite likely to be caught in a Flow Vortex, in which case we will surely be destroyed... or worse."

What is Shadow World? Shadow World is a high-fantasy setting published as a complete setting for the Rolemaster system in the late 1980's by Iron Crown Enterprise (ICE) and written primarily by Terry Amthor. Shadow World incorporated earlier published works by ICE such as Vog Mur and new material has continued to be published for it by, at various points, ICE, Eidolon Studios, and Guild Companion Publications. On this world of Kulthea there are more than a dozen continents although the vast majority of material written has been for the large middle continent of Emer and its neighbor to the north, Jaiman.

This guide to Shadow World is the first in a series of publications intended for players rather than Gamemasters (although it will be useful for them as well!) Shadow World is rich in history and flavor but as a Gamemaster (GM) it can often be overwhelming just deciding where to start and what information to convey to players to help them with ideas for characters and backgrounds. This Player Guide is intended to give players general information on the Shadow World setting, while future publications will focus on specific continents and will contain cultural and regional information and maps.

It is an impossible task to make a player guide that is completely suitable for all campaigns. Therefore it is important that the GM establish what information is and is not available to the players. The guide was written to contain only general information that adds depth and flavor to the world, and "spoilers" have been avoided.

LORE SKILLS

Just because information is contained in this guide does not mean that a character will know that information. This guide is meant to give an overview of the setting and will no doubt discuss aspects and regions of the world that some characters will know nothing about. Indeed, most peasantry and citizens of Shadow World will know very little, especially of things beyond the borders of their own local region. Each section given in the Guide contains a minimum of information. Characters may know none of it, some of it, all of it, or even above and beyond what is presented.

The guide is broken into different topics that can have in-game academic skills (lores, sciences, etc) associated with them. Actual skill sets will vary based on the Gamemaster, gaming system and rule set used, so a modest list of skills is presented in Table 1 to cover the areas in this Guide. The GM may use a more extensive skill set where these generalized lore skills are broken down into multiple skills, in which case each skill will just cover a smaller area.



The Tower of Vour was the site of an ancient battle - only the dead remain now.

Craig 2010

TABLE 1: ACADEMIC SKILLS FOR SHADOW WORLD

SKILL	DESCRIPTION
Astronomy	Knowledge of constellations, planets, and astronomical events.
Essænce Lore	Knowledge about the flows of Essænce and their effects as well as the division of magical realms and spell-casting. (Alternate skills: Essænce Lore, Spell Lore, Lore for each realm)
Geography	Geography includes continental-scale geography and general trends in ecology. Learning to higher ranks is difficult due to a dearth of information and teachers. Local geography is covered by Region Lore (Alternate skills: World Ecology, Flora Lore, Fauna Lore)
History (localized)	More extensive history of a region beyond the limited knowledge covered by the Region Lore skill. Basic skill grants knowledge in world history (Section 8). Also represents local history for areas where local regions are known via the Region Lore skill. (Alternate Skills: World History, 'each region' History)
Materials Lore	Knowledge of physical materials occurring on Kulthea such as building stone, gems, and metals. Includes values of materials as well as their uses (though not crafting ability.) Metal alloys are also covered by this lore (Alternate Skills: Stone Lore, Gem Lore, Metal Lore)
Region Lore	Each specific region is its own skill. General information about a region that includes geography, cultures, flora and fauna as well as a limited local history. The region size will vary but will generally be about 100,000 square miles (~300 x 300 miles). The specific regional areas will be described in each continent player guide. (Alternate skills: Region Lore, Culture Lore, Flora Lore, Fauna Lore)
Religion Lore (localized)	Knowledge of religions and their practices. Usually a character will have a single religion as a major focus, but nearly all also study and become aware of other religions as well. (Alternate skills: each specific religion or group or religions).

Localized Skills—Some skills only apply to a specific regional area and the GM may use a separate skill for each region (e.g. History—Rhakhaan). An alternative way is to leave the localized skill as a single skill but use the character's Region Lore skills to determine what regions the localized skill is useful for. For example, the effective skill ranks for knowing about herbs in Tanara can be found by using the lesser of the skills ranks in 'Herb Lore' and 'Region Lore—Tanara.'

KNOWLEDGE TIERS

To help in gauging what a character may know about the world, Knowledge Tiers are provided at the beginning of each topic. The Knowledge Tiers will give a brief overview of what a character could

be expected to know given a certain knowledge level in an applicable skill. These Tiers are only intended as a guide; Gamemasters may alter them based on their own version of Shadow World and determine that characters know more or less than what is given here. The tier levels and their general descriptions are given in Table 2.

The description in the knowledge tiers only describes probable knowledge. The actual knowledge and recall will vary per the GM and sometimes will be determined by a roll. In these cases the Knowledge Tiers can be used in reverse. The GM will determine a difficulty based on the Tier of information as given in Table 2. The skill ranks and difficulty levels provided can be used with Rolemaster™ or HARP™.

TABLE 2: KNOWLEDGE TIERS

TIER	DESCRIPTION	EARTH EQUIVALENT	SKILL RANK	DIFFICULTY
Novice	Introductory knowledge with details on a few topics.	Grade School, Jr. High School	1-5	Routine, Easy
Student	Good understanding and recall of all major topic areas, as well as basic details.	High School	6-10	Light, Medium
Scholar	Mastery and recall of all important aspects of topic, plus many finer details in most areas.	College Undergraduate (BS, BA)	11-15	Hard, Very Hard
Expert	Ability to form multiple complex inferences, create accurate analogies, and form connections to other subject matters.	Graduate level college (MS, MA)	16-20	Extremely Hard, Sheer Folly
Sage	Complete understanding and knowledge of obscure and uncommon parts of subject matter.	Post-Graduate (Doctoral)	21+	Absurd

SECTION 2

OVERVIEW

Books are the substances of History, the vessel of Understanding, the teacher of Wisdom. They hold the Past so we may know the Present and comprehend the Future."

—Creed of the Nomikos Scribes

The world of Kulthea, The Shadow World, is an ancient world of powerful magic, real deities, and shades of grey between good and evil. The world is home to hundreds—or perhaps thousands—of cultures that run the spectrum of technology from Old Stone Age through Late Renaissance, although Iron Age predominates. Creatures both fantastic and horrible call the Shadow World home and keep it wondrous...and dangerous. Invisible flows of magical energy, the Essænce, cross the world interfering with travel but also providing power to those who can manipulate it.

The intelligent races living on the world are diverse and varied. Most are isolated from each other by barriers: mountain ranges, broad seas, and the invisible walls of Essænce. Cultures are thus frequently unaware of each others' existence. As one might expect, geographical knowledge varies tremendously, depending on the environment, education and location of the inhabitant concerned. Your average man-on-the-street in the city of Sel-kai knows far more about politics of a kingdom a thousand miles away than a peasant ten miles distant. In general, though, it is important to keep in mind that on Kulthea communication travels only as fast as it can be hand-carried. While a Navigator could be hired to transport a courier (they will not carry messages themselves) that method



The Observatory of Ordye Mur.

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