

Khymir

The Role-Playing Game

By

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Acknowledgements

No one can undertake a massive effort such as **Khymir** without a tremendous amount of help.

Playtesters

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Others

Khymir

The Role-Playing Game

1 Introduction

Thank you for reading **Khymir**! It has been in the making for fifteen years. If you enjoy the role-playing game (RPG) then we encourage you to read some of Mark E. Rogers novels set in the same world as Khymir. (You can buy these from www.buybooksontheweb.com.)

1.1 What Makes Khymir Special?

There are plenty of RPGs on the market, and there are even more settings for those RPGs. This section explores what makes **Khymir** unique. Both the setting and the game mechanics offer excellent chances for role playing.

1.1.1. Setting

Khymir takes place in the city of Khymir¹ and its environs in the world of Thorgon Karrelssa. This is the world where Mark E. Rogers' books, *Zorachus*, *the Nightmare of God*, and the Blood of the Lamb series are set. Thorgon Karrelssa is founded on a blend of: gritty fantasy, logic, philosophy, and theology. Thorgon Karrelssa has its own Satan, Tschonbog, and its own messiah, Esaju. The people of Thorgon Karrelssa are stronger and more dexterous than their counterparts on Earth. They can also work magic, because "the Fall" occurred in the second generation. (More to come about this later.) God is real and omnipresent in Thorgon Karrelssa, and **Khymir** reflects this.

Warning: Khymir is an adult setting that deals with mature themes.

1.1.2. Encouraging Heroic Behavior

The core premise of **Khymir** is that the players are controlling the actions of *heroes* or *heroines*. The city of Khymir is no place for the feint of heart or the weak. The game system reflects this. Taking risks is an integral part of the game. The players determine how much risk their characters are willing to take. Heroic actions are suitably rewarded.

1.2. Overview of the City of the Gaming World

1.2.1. The World

Cosmology: In the beginning there was El-Sharaj, the One, and with Him, the Spell, as yet unuttered; and when He pronounced this word at last, the angels took their being, so that they might fashion all the realms that the He had imagined. Each world was the work of its own angelic host, differing from the rest not only in

¹ Throughout the gaming system we will be drawing a distinction between **Khymir**, the role playing game, and Khymir the city, the setting for the RPG. We will always **bold Khymir** when we are referring to the RPG.

conception, but enactment, for the angels worked freely in accordance with their own natures, each a genus unto himself. But with all of this, certain themes recurred, some hateful. By its very nature, creation was contingent; contingency was imperfection; imperfection bred rebellion; some angels became devils. In one world, very like our own, the archangel Athtar came to despise what he had been charged to make; and he seduced many of the angels that served him, and led them in a great rebellion, to force the One to repudiate physical creation. When this revolt met with the only success it could, Athtar turned his mangled wrath upon his own garden, and struggled to twist the first man and woman, and turn them against God. But in this he failed, and with their sons and daughters as well; death did not come into that world until the fourth generation; and so, like as that world was to ours, its people went down a very different path. Human will and intellect were not darkened to the same degree; the effects of the fall spread unevenly through subsequent generations. Connections between mind and body remained stronger; was more resistant to wounds and disease. And powers that vanished in our world with Adam and Eve were passed on, studied and harnessed. Thus it was that when God and Athtar pursued their conflict among mortal men, the points were made with magic as well as the sword.

The World: Thorgon Karrelssa is roughly earth-like climate wise. The city of Khymir is located near the arctic circle of Thorgon Karrelssa. Khymir is protected from the elements through the protective magics of the Black Priests of Tschonbog. To the north, the savage Kraeghul live. There are powerfully built barbarians, able to stand the bitter cold and harsh life style of the far north. Much of the world was ocean, but there was a single vast continent, Thorgon Karrelssa (see map). The first civilization, that of the Amorites, developed along the banks of the Gura river; not long afterwards, on the other side of the continent, a wholly original culture developed among the Han, the forebears of the Chin and Sung. Between the Amorites and the Han lay an immense expanse of desert and steppe, home to savage nomads who would erupt from time to time to attack their civilized neighbors.

1.2.2. The Races

The Kadjafim: By the time of the events described in Zancharthus and Zorachus, Amorites had become Kadjafim, and their culture cross-fertilized with that of the Achaeans, who lived on islands in the Western ocean; a strict monotheism, heavily informed by Achaean philosophy, had become the sole religion. Urguz nomads from the steppe had conquered the Kadjafi lands, only to absorb the culture of their vanquished foes; most of their officials (notably the celebrated Jagutai Jen Shian) were educated by

Kadjafim, Malochians, Kragehul: Along the Northern border of the Kadjafi lands ran the Andohar mountains, of which the Achaean islands were the westernmost spur; this range marked divide between the descendants of the Amorites and pale-skinned barbarians who spoke a very different language. One such group were the Tarchans, whose land was bounded on the west by the great sea, to the north by the Utgard range, and to the east by the Spine, the southern continuation of the range which was called the Mountains of Muspellheim in the north. East of the Spine lived the Malochians, who were infamous for their powerful, if primitive sorcery. The rocky coastlands north of the Utgards were inhabited by the Kragehul, bold pirates who were the scourge of their neighbors to the south.

1.2.3. Mother Khymir

Near the tip of Muspellheim was the city of Khymir, mightiest in the world. Some say she was the conceived by Athtar himself, as an argument against matter, and particularly human flesh. But whatever the Great Tyrant's role, it is known that she was founded by Malochian exiles, some of whom were priests of Athtar, or, as he was known in Malochan, Tchernobog(see Orders). Rounding the northern cape of the peninsula, the refugees had decided to winter on a mountain shelf overlooking the sea. Shortly after their arrival, the priest of Tchernobog, claiming inspiration from their deity, discovered a rich vein of gold in the mountains.

Basic Economy: Trade was swiftly established with the exiles' homeland, and soon after, the Achaean city-states and the Kadjafim. Despite the risks, particularly along the pirate-infested eastern coast of Muspellheim, a brisk traffic developed, convoys sailing north with food, slaves, and raw materials, returning with gold. A gigantic settlement soon took shape on the mountain-shelf.

Ongoing Decay: The city itself, however, was impregnable atop its shelf; and the gold never ran out. Sometimes the Khymirians withheld it to prevent a glut, but whenever the lodes were played out, new ones were discovered, sometimes in mines that were thought with good reason to be exhausted. This peculiarity was remarked upon; the Priests of Tchernobog hinted that their lord was responsible. But even if this was the case, no one was troubled. For the ruling classes there was permanent luxury and unbridled decadence; for the poor, there were the doles, and drugs, and bloodletting in the circuses, and the excitement of rampaging unopposed through the streets in huge gangs, thug armies whose rite of passage was the burning out of one eye. The homes of the rich became fortresses, or were located in protected areas(see the Enclave) by day the streets were dangerous, by night, lethal. Garbage a half-mile deep filled chasms where the ground had collapsed over catacombs; pornographic statues and friezes were everywhere, mirroring the abominations that were being performed in mansions, ramshackle tenements, and alleys, or all too often, out in the open for everyone to see.

Gods and Goddesses: At that time, most religious Khymirians, whose number was dwindling steadily, worshipped the Malochian pantheon, at the head of which was the Sky-god, Father Ziu (Kragehul Tiw, Tarchan Two.) There were also various gods that had been imported from other countries, most notably Tsa Terrathu the Double Goddess, the ancient Amorite patroness of Lust. Given the depravity of the Khymirians, (and the possibility that she was an aspect of Athtar herself) it was, perhaps, inevitable that she would be the last deity (beside Tchernobog) to retain a following in the city. Some time between the fall of Zancharthus and the return of Zorachus, the Sisterhood vanished under circumstances which are unclear.

The Great Ban Sorcery: When the Khymirian senate, made up of the nobles and the chief merchants, commissioned the city's wizards to wall out Winter forever. A great assembly of sorcerers labored long and hard to achieve this end, sacrificing multitudes of slaves; in the end, a perpetual damp heat descended over the city and her environs. The spirits of the land rose in anger, but their wrath was walled out behind an invisible magical barrier; and they could only rage and rumble impotently, lifting up huge thunder-clouds, to threaten the unnatural city. In order to compensate for the lack of rain, great aqueducts were built, and mountain rivers diverted into them, down into the city.

Bloodfruit: But as the population swelled, food became a problem; importation and fishing proved insufficient. Sorcery provided a solution when the Priests of Tchernobog, claiming that they wished to demonstrate the grotesquerie of bodily appetites, conjured the first Bloodfruit plants; single growths, nourished by the blood of

firstborn children or slaves, could feed entire households. But the food was bland; and so it came to be that much gold was traded for spices from the south.

Population: When word of gold reached the south, fortune-hunters flocked to Khymir to try their hand. But the trade was already firmly in the grip of a few men, who ultimately became the patriarchs of the Khymirian nobility; most of the immigrants wound up as mere laborers, but some became merchants, importing goods from the south, and made great fortunes. Others lived off doles granted by the nobles and the merchants. The city's wealth also drew large numbers of sorcerers, who protected the rich and powerful from other wizards, and catered to jaded appetites by conjuring strange creatures; skilled workmen arrived by the thousands, and hundreds of thousands of slaves were imported.

Politics: Centuries passed. The Senate lost its authority; violence replaced debate. Periods of anarchy were followed by military rule. Aristocratic generals, most notably Lazark of the Golden Mail, established enough control over the city to mount several campaigns of conquest outside the walls, using mercenary armies; the Kragehul were driven far to the south. But the Khymirians had grown too soft by this time to colonize these territories, and in a relatively short period of time, the Kragehul reclaimed them.

Factions at the time of Zancharthus: Following the decline of the generals, two main factions held power. The nobles held sway over the northern side of the city, where most of the gold mines were located, while the Merchants, who had organized themselves into a Guild, controlled the south. Aligned with the Nobles were the Priests of Tchernobog, whom the Guild opposed with mercenary sorcerers, and acted in close concert with the Sockets. But presently the nobles were supplanted by their Priestly allies, even though they retained their titles and wealth; after playing the main role in putting down a particularly savage water-riot, the Priests made themselves the true masters of the north, and proceeded to try and eliminate the other cults in the city.

Factions at the time of Zorachus: When Mandaman Zorachus came back to the city of his birth, the Merchant's Guild still existed, but one of his first acts as High Priest of Tchernobog was to crush it utterly, appropriating its properties, surviving wizards, and troops. From that point on, the only organized opposition to the cult of the Black God was to be found in the Foreign Quarter, whose inhabitants were besieged and soon slaughtered. Utilizing internal passports, ubiquitous spies, and and terror of the most ruthless sort, Zorachus imposed an absolute dictatorship, unequalled in the history of Thorgon Karrelssa – the regimes of the Amorite Saathranim paled in comparison.

1.2.4. Places of Note in Khymir

Mountains, Islands, Caves, Glaciers: The mountains of northern Muspellheim were largely composed of granites, schists, and basalts; some of the gold deposits are the product of crystallization through water condensation in granites adjoining liquid rock, while others were magmatic, having crystallized directly in hardening lava---such was the origin of the gold veins in the Spire of the Shark, a towering volcanic chimney rising from the sea several miles of the coast of Khymir several miles off the coast of Khymir. Far beneath the city the stone was honeycombed with tunnels where ancient lava-streams flowed down to the sea; one such cave, opening on the chasm to the city's south, became the lair of The Devil's Rake(see bestiary), an enormous spider set by the renegade priest Dessicatorius to block shipping into Khymir. Deeper than the tunnels are lakes of still-liquid stone, one of which is said to contain a colossal living idol, half-sunk in the lava. North and east

of the city, beyond the thunder-barrier, were great glaciers; one of these was the source of Lake Pharantus, whose water descended to the city in a series of channels and aqueducts.

The Catacombs: Beneath the city but above the lava-tunnels were many levels of catacombs, chiselled from the stone, where literally millions of Khymirian dead were interred over a thousand years, in pits, niches, sarcophagi, and elaborate tombs. So riddled with these passages was the shelf beneath Khymir that immense swaths of ground collapsed, forming huge fissures that filled up with garbage over the years; one such crack was known as the Cleft(also the Offal Slash, and glutted Cunt) and formed the northern boundary of Socket Territory. The lowest levels of the catacombs were prowled by creatures from the lava tunnels beneath; known as the Shreeth(see Bestiary) they were pre-human inhabitants of Muspellheim, and offered sacrifices to the idol in the molten lake.

Monuments and Temples: Khymir was full of statuary, much of it on a grand scale, some of it purely decorative; but there were also monuments to popular figures, and statues of gods. There were many temples, almost all of them in a state of acute disrepair as Khymir neared its end; covered with scabrous growths, scores of elaborate facades three hundred feet high and more leaned out over the square known as Dead God place. Most of the temples still in use were used by foreigners in their Quarter; but there were exceptions, notably the garrison-temples maintained by the Priests of Tchernobog, and the great shrine of Tsa Terrathu, in Guild Territory. After the destruction of the Goddess's temple, a new and lesser temple was set up in a huge abandoned brothel donated by a Guildsman.

Fortresses: Such is the violent nature of life in Khymir that all mansions and palaces in Khymir served as fortresses as well; but there were also purely military installations. In the unlikely event of an attack from the sea (and up the mile-high cliffs) walls lined the Western side of the mountain-shelf, set with battlements and towers; this waste of treasure, ingenuity and cut stone was commissioned by the nobles to give employment to the mob, although the parapets were an excellent place to watch the sun set over the thunderheads. Other fortifications, such as the bastion that warded the ends of the bridge south into Kragehul territory, were more practical. There were many garrisons throughout the city, and a large priestly stronghold brooded over the quays in the underground harbor; a priestly fort called Bone-in-The Throat guarded the upper terminus of the harbor lift. There were numerous Guild barracks in the southern part of the city, and a series of Guild and priestly fortresses faced off along Boundary Road.

Banicpal Khezach and The Retreat Mightiest: Of Khymir's strongholds, the largest man-made structure in the city, indeed, in Thorgon Karrelssa, was Banipal Khezach, the Black Tower, Tchernobog's paramount shrine, begun under the High Priest Serrator Dessicatorius and completed during the regime of Thagranichus Ordog . One last fortress deserves mention: north of the city, where Lucre Street spiralled high up into the mountains, stood a tower fashioned from five separate blades of stone; this was the Retreat, where Dessicatorius housed his huge spider-menagerie, and plotted the demolition of Khymir and her waterless resurrection.

Arenas: Even more important than the dole to the Khymirian mob was a constant succession of bloody games, where gladiators fought beasts and each other in battles of varying scale and complexity, and condemned men and slaves were dispatched in the most gruesome ways imaginable. There were a number of arenas, but the largest was the Aranthian Amphitheatre, or Palace of Blood, which was so huge that its pit, when flooded, could accomodate battles between four trireme galleys. After the accession of Mancdaman Zancharthus to the High Priesthood, the amphitheatre became the scene of spectacular combats involving gigantic demon-gladiators.

The Chasm and the Harbor: Access to and from the sea could only be gained through Khymir's underground harbor, whose ceiling was lit with a star-chart of glowing gemstones; a tunnel, navigable at low tide, led to a steep-walled chasm that opens on the ocean. One section of this chasm, called the Double Elbow, became the hunting ground of the Devil's Rake, when Dessicatorius employed the spider to choke off shipping into the city.

The Foreign Quarter: A great ramp led from the harbor up into the city; surrounding the ramphead was the Foreign Quarter, probably the safest area of Khymir. Eager to preserve good relations with the dignitaries and merchants who kept houses there, the Guild made sure that crime and strife are kept to a minimum; foreigners were decidedly less given to violence and cruelty than native Khymirians.

The Welt: On the outskirts of the Foreign Quarter was The Welt, Khymir's chief slave-trading district, where human chattel of every kind could be purchased. Slaves intended for sexual use were sold in an area called The Feast, which was divided into smaller areas where different tastes were catered to; Gladiators were traded in Butcher's Row, where houses specializing in fighting-men maintained training facilities and arenas of their own.

The Warren: Undoubtably the most dangerous part of the city, the Warren was a huge slum on the southern side of the Cleft; a labyrinth of rotting tenements, it was divided between the Right and Left Sockets, two gangs who, taking turns with each other, regularly left their stronghold over natural bridges that span the Cleft, and looted neighborhoods outside the Warren, with the acquiescence of the Guild.

The Enclave: On a lofty outcropping that rose out of the southern part of the Warren, a collection of palatial Mansions belonging to the Chief Guildsmen; even though the mere sight of the slum beneath was screened off by tall trees, and the stench held at bay by the magic of Guild wizards, the Merchants rejoiced in their proximity to such horrible poverty, secure in the knowledge that their stronghold was surrounded by ten thousand Sockets, whose games and dole depended fully on the largesse of the Guild.

1.3. Quick Overview of the Mechanics

Khymir uses dice rolls to resolve the outcome of uncertain situations in concert with GM (GM) judgement. The GM is the ultimate authority in determining the outcome of any action in the game.

Characters have five *basic aspects* and six *derived aspects*. The five basic aspects are: **physical, discipline, mental, charm, and favor**. Physical, discipline, and mental are used to generate the derived aspects. The *derived aspects* are: **brawn, endurance, resistance, logic, intelligence, and quickness**.

The aspects are used to generate *talents*. Talents are proclivities that a character has toward successfully performing a wide variety of related *skills*. For example, one talent is **stealth**. Included skills would be **hide** and **sneak**.

Most actions are resolved using the skills. Raw skill totals are added with situational modifiers to produce *potentials*.

Potentials are pitted against *challenges*. Challenges are the trials and obstacles facing the characters. Challenges are described either as dice roll totals (like four six sided dice, 4D6), a raw score (like 14), or as a combination (like 7 + 2D6). Examples of the number and type of dice available are included in the following table.

Potential	Possible Dice Combinations
7	2D6
8	D6 + D8
9	D6 + D10
9	2D8
10	D8 + D10
11	2D10
14	4D6
15	3D6 + D8

We can use this table to construct dice roll totals or combinations of dice roll totals and raw scores for any challenge total from seven on up.

Example

If we use the challenge value of 25 then there are several ways of describing that value. One description is a pure dice roll, $25 = 10 + 15 = (D8 + D10) + (3D6 + D8) = 3D6 + 2D8 + D10$. We could also describe the potential of 25 as $14 + 2D10$. Another description is $25 = 18 + 2D6$. We can also leave 25 as a raw number, 25. There are many more.

Note: Quick Start – just substitute 2D6 for every seven points of the potential, e.g., 7 potential = 2D6, 14 potential = 4D6, etc.

*Throughout the rules, you will find italicized portions labeled “Quick Start.” These are designed to allow you to begin playing **Khymir** now and add detail where you like after gaining experience with the basics.*

We refer to the resolution of a skill test or a potential versus challenge as a *contest*.

Contests are resolved either as straight comparison of the raw scores, a comparison of dice roll totals, or a combination of the two. The player or GM decides how much risk their characters are willing to take. The GM or player can determine whether he will resolve the contest using either the raw score, as a dice roll, or as a combination of them. The GM always reveals the nature of the challenge before the player chooses how he will resolve the contest.

Example

Shufengee is trying to cross a river. The GM decides that the river is a challenge of value 11. Shufengee adds up the appropriate skills and modifiers and ends up with a raw score of 10. Shufengee has several options. He can decline to cross the river. He can elect to resolve the contest using his 10 and automatically fail. Shufengee can choose to roll 2D6 and add three.

Most of the time, skills are improved *through failure under conditions of risk*. To improve a skill in this way, the character must fail *the base potential of a skill divided by three*.

Example

If Shufengee has a base potential of 26 in swimming then he would have to fail $26/3 = 8$ times before he would be able to make a skill improvement roll.

2. Character Generation

This section addresses generating a character's non-magical defining capabilities, special abilities and flaws. Magical skills and capabilities are addressed under "the Magical Arts" section below.

Note: Quick Start – use the character templates in the Quick Start Character Templates (section 4.8).

2.1 Orders

The first building block of character generation is the character's Order. The Order refers to the ethnicity, religion, and customs that form the basis of the character's view of the world. Order determines the types of skills, magic, and resources that the character has access to. Orders include: Sharajnaghim, Black Anarites, White Anarites, Khymirian Priests, Khymirian Merchants, Elementalists, Kragel, and Khanite.

The GM will aid the player in choosing an appropriate Order for the character based on the campaign that the GM has planned.

2.2 Aspects

The character's key spiritual and physical traits are called *aspects*. The five basic aspects are: **physical, discipline, mental, charm, and favor**. Physical, discipline, and mental are used to generate the derived aspects. The *derived aspects* are: **brawn, endurance, resistance, logic, intelligence, and quickness**.

Physical refers to the character's body and such things as how strong is the character. A weight lifter or ice hockey player would have a high physical score. The physical score also determines how quickly the character regenerates magical energy points.

Discipline refers to how well structured a character's mental processes are and how well the character is able to resist temptations. A chess grand master would have a high discipline as well as a high-level monk.

Mental refers to how well developed a character's nervous system is and relates to pure mental functions such as intelligence as well as physically related tasks such as reaction time. A college professor would have a high mental score.

Charm is the character's innate ability to engender lust or positive regard in other characters. A highly charismatic or beautiful person would have high charm scores.

Favor is a measure of a character's innate, untrained magical ability.