

## **Byzantine Nights**

**Blue**

### **Group Zeta**

**Ingredients: Currency, Memories, Palace**

The Palace is Your World.

Stagnation threatens to bring down its towers.

Chaos threatens to crumble its walls.

The cast-offs rot the floors from below.

And the art of politics and warfare distract from the true danger.

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### Introduction

The Palace is your world. More to the point it is The World. No one you know has ever been outside the palace and tales of the outer battlements are considered by many to be legend. One would suppose that if you were to climb to the top of the highest towers you could see over the walls, but you can't get to the towers from here - and even if you could, you are not allowed to climb them.

### The Setting:

The Palace is incredibly old. Its architecture is highly varied. There are German buttresses with Byzantine onion domes and French gothic detailing. Tile-roofed buildings squat next to heavy stone fortifications. Incan pyramid steps lead up into Asian Pagodas.

The Palace is ruled by the aristocracy who have mastered the teachings of Yoshida, but in practice it is run by the Guilds. The current most powerful guilds are the Holy Order of Lamp Lighters, the Guild of Grapes and Gourds, the Weavers of the Ebon Chord, and the Company of the Changing Waters. The donjons and catacombs beneath the Palace are dominated by those powerful in Kiff. Tales told by parents to scare their children into behaving say that domination by Kiff transforms men into goblins and that those who die with most alignment to the ways of Kiff than the ways of Yoshida may rise as unclean spirits.

After many centuries of unchallenged rule, the aristocracy is gradually losing its influence. Those wise in the way of Yoshida can still dictate general policy or social-political action, but they no longer are capable of implementing these dictates. The people of the Palace still listen to the aristocracy, but they do not always follow their instruction. Generally speaking, those who master Yoshida are more likely to be recognized for advancement or to obtain fame and wealth. The common man can also achieve, become known and or prosperous by excelling at other Humours or through service to the guilds, but they are just not positioned as well to receive notice.

Complicating the political landscape, are adherents to the other Humours. A loosely-organized counter-culture movement led by those who have mastered the Humour of

Currency has a broad-ranging foothold in the halls of the Palace. While their ideas are deemed dangerous by some, their sense of innovation and creativity are breathing life back into the old walls.

Opposed to the adherents of Currency are the masters of Memories. Though not all are priests, these men and women spread the ancient rituals and preach about the old gods. The traditions they hold dear have maintained order in the Palace for centuries, but in modern days they seem unable to support their own weight.

Finally, from below, the goblins and ghouls, those men and women who follow the ways of Kiff and whom some say are transformed by it, have been silently gathering power. They feel they have reached downward long enough, seeking freedom to follow their own practices and now they claw their way upward, disrupting the precious balance above.

The year of the Palace is marked by a series of rest days and festivals, the exact calendar for which is kept by the Holy Order of the Lamp Lighters. Rest days tend to follow a regular and consistent pattern throughout the Palace, while festivals vary by region. Within the Holy Order, conflict between followers of Currency and Memories kept the festivals organic, with certain ancient festivals maintaining their old ways and newer festivals being introduced with each passing year.

#### Where do People Live in the Palace?

It is common for families or other like-minded groups to set-up residence in interconnecting sets of chambers or even low towers. Or rather it should be said it was common for such to occur. It is rare that appropriate regions can be found open for such settlement in the modern era and as such most such residences are quite old and well-established. These established settlements include Guild Halls with dwellings for active guild members without local, permanent dwellings.

For those without ancestral family homes, or for travelers, a series of Hostels is running independently from, but with the collective blessing of, the four Guilds. The Hostels provide food and entertainment to locals and a place for travelers to rest. A common meal served at Hostels is large mushroom steaks and boiled greens, often on a bed of rice noodles. Meat is rare and is eaten only by those of high privilege or on special feast days. Because all Guilds profit from the Hostels, most regions have strict anti-loitering laws.

One of the remaining privileges of the rank that comes from the mastery of Yoshida is the ability to obtain a Traveler's License. Such a license allows camping within areas governed by loitering laws. Strictly speaking, such camping is highly ritualized and mandates specific colors and styles of tenting; but even these requirements are being challenged and stretching in modern society.

## Who are the Guilds?

The Guilds are about actions and duties, and one can find members who support any and all of the Humours in each Guild (though supporters of the Kiff Humour tend to keep this a secret – something they tend to be naturally well-suited to).

The Holy Order of Lamp Lighters are responsible for bringing light to the dark places. They are the keepers of maps and time. The Lamp Lights feel that all passages where they bring light are theirs. Though the traditional form of light is the oil lamp, carefully trimmed according to ritual; there are those among the Order who experiment with metal disks which reflect the natural light of the sun, moon, and stars down through the dark hallways. Yoshida-aligned Lamp Lighters can bring healing with their light; while Kiff Lamp Lighters explore the dark underbelly of the Palace, recording secret caches of treasure for their own use.

The Guild of Grapes and Gourds are responsible for providing food and drink to the rest of the inhabitants of the Palace. They are the keepers of the secrets of preserving food and of brewing wines and ales. The Grapes and Gourds feel that all occupied passages and chambers fall under their keeping. Among the Guild are the masters of the ancient recipes and ceremonies which bring honor to those who bear them witness, as well as, experimental chefs who seek to make new delicacies by turning their back on the traditional things. Yoshida-aligned Grapes and Gourds ensure that hearty stockpiles of food are provided to well-populated chambers and that the pipes of clear water remain flowing. Performance-enhancing and addicting drugs are crafted by Kiff-aligned Guild members.

The Weavers of the Ebon Chord are the bringers of pleasure. They craft fine clothes from material they have woven themselves and they ensure music echoes through the hallways. They are the masters of the festivals and leave territory battles to the other guilds. Memories-aligned Weavers know and teach the ancient songs and weave only cloth whose patterns have stood the test of time. Currency-aligned weavers are constantly experimenting, pushing the boundaries of what is considered 'in good taste' to ultimately enhance the art. Yoshida Weavers use carefully crafted plays and musicals to improve moral and teach lessons, while Kiff Weavers ply their skills to deceive and bilk others.

The Company of the Changing Water claims all of the Palace, above and below, as theirs, but will battle none for it. Should another guild contest their claim, they will simply cease to service the chambers in question. The Company clears away the castoffs and the refuse, but they also recycle the same. Organic matter is placed into plots, that in due time are turned over to the Guild of Grapes and Gourds for use as garden. Bits of metal are melted down and reforged into useful implements. Even bits of stone are used for repair, patching walls or ground up to mortar holes. Memories-aligned Changing Waters follow a very strict time-schedule, pickup up from each chamber in order and always delivering to the proper places. Currency-aligned Waters instead wander about, picking that which seems interesting and squirreling it away until such time as they can invent something new with it. Yoshida-aligned Waters only create useful items from their

collections and nearly always turn over their creations to the less fortunate. Kiff-aligned Company-members are the ones who are blamed when chambers are not serviced, but are also the masters of forging illicit supplies from the castoffs.

## Character Generation

A good starting place in generating a character is choosing a name and concept for your character. Work with your Palace Master and the other players to be certain that there are strong reasons for the characters to interact with one another on a regular and recurring basis. Names and concepts may shift during character generation, but it is very useful to note a name and concept upfront to refer to when making other decisions. Names and concepts can suggest ideas to other players and help forge bonds between characters in a group. In the Palace, names follow patterns from low fantasy or the real world.

Each Character is defined in terms of four Humours: **Currency**, **Memories**, **Yoshida**, and **Kiff**.

**Currency** is the measure of innovation, of the explorer's urge, of the desire to be part of something new. Those with low currency will never leave their homes.

**Memories** is the measure of stability, of the maintainer's urge, of the desire to uphold the traditions of the Palace. Those with low memories are doomed to repeat the errors of the past.

Currency and Memories are opposed.

**Yoshida** is the measure of political standing in the Palace, of adherence to the military and political arts, of the desire to improve the fate of others. Yoshida supports theory over action. Those with low yoshida carry no influence in their world.

**Kiff**, the black humour, is the measure of corruption in one's soul, of the willingness to act on that darkness, of the desire to challenge the essence of the Palace. Those with low kiff do not know the illness of the Palace and thus cannot hope to heal it.

Yoshida and Kiff are opposed.

{Insert a table of suggested titles for various levels of Yoshida.}

Each character possesses traits which will be grouped according to the guilds that hold sway in the Palace: **The Holy Order of Lamp Lighters** (those who bring light to the dark corridors), **The Guild of Grapes and Gourds** (those who bring food and drink to the masses), **The Weavers of the Ebon Chord** (the artisans and musicians of the Palace), and **The Company of the Changing Waters** (those who clean away the rubbish and gather the scraps for reuse).

To create a character to explore the Palace, start by assigning 12 points to your Humours. At least 1 and no more than 5 points should be assigned to each Humour. Being strongly aligned to a Humour can provide you an advantage in conflicts if you are acting in accordance with the Humour; however, there is a risk, as focusing too much on a single Humour can lead to becoming dominated by the Humour.

(Optional Rule: One or more Humours may be set to 0 initially, but this will cripple the characters range of actions and motivations. If you have a Humour set to 0, you cannot act according to that Humour and if you attempt a conflict aligned with that Humour you cannot roll any dice and therefor automatically fail and take a wound.)

The Humours chosen by the players will shape the tone of the local area. The recommendation is that the area be set with Humours opposing the players. For example, if the player characters are strong in Currency and Yoshida, then the local area should be strong in Memories and Kiff. This provides natural conflict for the Palace Master and the players to work with. If the playgroup wants a more harmonious setting, the area can align to the Players' choices one or even both axes (Memories-Currency, Yoshida-Kiff) instead.

One suggestion, particularly for pick-up games of Byzantine Nights, is that the main opposition character has half the totals of the crossed-Humours (rounded up). For example, in one of the playtests, the players' Humour totals were: Currency 9, Memories 8, Yoshida 11, and Kiff 8. The main bad guy for that playtest had Currency 4 (half of 8), Memories 5 (half of 9, rounded up), Yoshida 4, and Kiff 6 (half of 11, rounded up). The high level of Kiff suggested that the main bad guy start to show signs of Kiff-mutation and thus he ended up named simply "The Goblin King". Following this pattern, the primary support characters for the main bad guy have half his Humours rounded up; while the minions have half their Humours rounded up.

Player characters start with 30 points of traits. Before assigning their traits, they should choose their guild membership. All player characters are guild members, if in name only. Guild members loyalties need not be to their guild, and often do not, though they are expected to support the Guild in word, if not in deed when acting as an identified member of their Guild.

Traits are grouped by Guild. Each guild has a set of skills, special equipment, and unique abilities that are available to their members. Except as noted, characters may pick up skills outside of their Guild, but may not take guild-specific equipment or abilities outside of their Guild as traits. All Guilds have the Unique Trait of "Member of ..." followed by the Guild name. This trait provides dice when interacting with other Guild members or acting on "official" Guild business, even if the character has defined the business as such. Guild members need not take this trait, but choosing not to acknowledges that they are lower level members of the Guild or of lesser loyalty.

Though it is easy to imagine that the Guilds are aligned to specific Humours, nothing could be further from the truth. Each guild has members strong (or not) in each of the Humours. It is this diversity of beliefs that has given the Guilds increasing influence even as the actual political power of the aristocracy dwindles.

In general, traits are broadly defined and players are encouraged to interpret them liberally, especially when picking dice for challenges. In cases where playtesting suggested addition clarity was needed, an extended description of the skill or trait is provided.

### Holy Order of Lamp Lighters

Flame Lore – Fire is important to the survival of the Palace. The Holy Order has learned the secret language of fire and can coax flames to do their bidding. At the simplest, this skill acts as a sort of verbal matches, allowing a character to light nearby torches with a word.

Investigation

Kiff Lore

Mapping

Medicine

Teaching of Yoshida

Theology

Time Lore

Wooden Weapons

Navigation\*

Healer\*

Inspiration<sup>(+)</sup> – Lamp Lighters can inspire their allies to greatness, allowing the ally's natural talents to shine even brighter. Reduce the cascade penalty of one or more allies by 1 die. The die protected is equal to the rating of this skill (or the highest die if lower than this skill).

### Guild of Grapes and Gourds

Agriculture

Alchemy

Augury

Brewing

Ceremonies

Curved Blades

Food Lore

Herbalism

Water Mechanics

Craft Drugs\*

Poison\*

Coordination<sup>(+)</sup> – Guild of Grapes members have understanding how groups best work together through the experience of long hours tending and harvesting fields. With this tactical skill, you can draw on allied die pools when making finesse attacks, essentially directing one or more allies to work together or with you on a maneuver. You can only apply this special ability to dice that are less than or equal to this skill.

### Weavers of the Ebon Chord

Art

Athletics

Bard

Communication

Craft Textiles

Disguise  
Larceny  
Stealth  
Throwable Weapons  
Cryptography\*  
Voice\*

Rally Allies<sup>(+)</sup> – Weavers can rally their allies to conflict, enabling them to react more quickly. By using this tactical skill, you can add a number of phantom ones to your allies' dice pools. No more total phantom ones can be added than your rating in this skill. This ones only count for shifting the order of initiative and cannot be used in attacks of any sort.

### Company of the Changing Waters

Accounting  
Armament  
Bargain  
Engineering  
Great Weapons  
Invention  
Recycling  
Repair  
Smith  
Guns\*  
Industry\*

Incent Allies<sup>(+)</sup> – The Company understands what motivates success. With this skill, you can enable your allies (but not yourself) to re-roll dice. The total number of dice that can be re-rolled can be no greater than the rating of this skill. A player must keep the value of the re-rolled die.

Skills marked with an asterisk (\*) or a super-plus <sup>(+)</sup> may only be taken by members of the Guild. When a character uses the skill they are identifiable as a member of the Guild and should be prepared to explain how they are acting in the interest of their Guild.

Asterisk skills (\*) are special abilities. Players with these skills may take one or more free dice at the same level of this skill, but may not more than double their pool in this way. For each die added, the check mark level increases by one for ALL DICE. (By adding one die, you add a check to your Humour if all dice are 2 or lower. By adding five dice, you add a check to your Humour if all dice are 6 or lower.) Additional, free dice cannot be cascaded.

Super-plus skills <sup>(+)</sup> are Tactical Skills and have the additional benefits listed in their descriptions. They must be used in your die pool to use their additional benefits, but can be used as standard dice and to provide their additional benefit. Tactical skills may not be cascaded.

The traits chosen by the player characters determine the relative power of the four guilds in the section of the Palace where the campaign begins. The more points worth of traits

from a particular Guild the players choose, the more powerful that Guild is. The power of the Guild can be used by the Palace Master to design the storylines and opposition, in concept as well as in practice.

In practice, one suggestion is to track the trait spend by players and use the balance to shape the storyline. In a playtest, 44 points were spent on Lamp Lighter traits, 22 points were spent on Changing Water traits, and 11 points each were spent on Grapes and Gourds and Ebon Chord traits. As a result, the first adventure was themed around a slave labor force smithing bronze mirrors for a new mode of lighting the halls of the local region of the Palace.

Equipment:

Characters are assumed to have the equipment they need to perform their basic tasks. They can, however, take special equipment as traits. “Your Father's Sword” or “High Quality Tea Set” would be examples of Trait-worthy equipment.

The Core Mechanic

The nature/goal of your action will determine which Humour governs it (for instance, Memories will govern actions intended to maintain the status quo; Kiff will govern criminal actions). The value of the governing Humour will determine how many dice you can roll. Despite the elements of the conflict being referred to as attacks, conflicts in Byzantine Nights need not be physical. The same mechanic applies to social, political and physical conflicts. The stakes of the conflict should be set before the conflict. The winning side will get their stakes. The stakes should also color an impairments resulting from the conflict.

Traits will have various die sizes assigned to them (d4 to d12). The actual actions will determine which skills are applicable. Players will be allowed and even encouraged to stack traits for an action. If a player/character finds themselves with fewer traits that their Humor will allow, they may cascade one of their chosen traits. By cascading a trait, they take the die size of the trait as purchase, then a second die of one smaller size, then a third of the next smaller size, repeating until the die pool is full or until a d4 is reached. (For example, a d12 may be cascaded into a d12, a d10, a d8, a d6, and a d4.) Cascading does not allow you to take more dice than your Humour would normally allow.

A round lasts as long as it takes for every character to make one attack. Each round, characters act in order of lowest die pool (not the lowest total showing). This is determined by the having the most 1s showing. In case of a tie, compare the number of 2s, etc. A character to run out of dice goes AFTER a character with the same values showing, but more dice. (For example, Player Jay rolls two 1s and a 2. Player Kay rolls three 1s. Player Ess rolls two 1's and two 2's. Kay goes first with three 1s. Ess goes second with two 1s and two 2s. Jay has fewer 1s than Kay and fewer 2s than Ess and thus

goes last.)

For conflicts, each participant will roll their pool of dice and then take turns 'making attacks'. There will be two kinds of attacks - subtle and overt. On a subtle attack, you compare multiple dice against a single die of your opponent seeking to match his value exactly and discarding it. (No rolling after the initial roll). For overt attacks, you use a single die of your own to overwhelm one or more of your opponent's dice with a total value less than or equal to your die value. All of the opponent's dice overwhelmed are discarded - if you discard more than one of his, you also discard your attacking die. You need not overwhelm more than one die if you do not wish to. As the attacker, the only time you discard a die is if you overwhelm more than one of your opponents die. (Note that initiating the conflict does not make you the attacker. Being the attacker is the role of picking which opposing die or dice to eliminate with one or more of your dice.)

A character may split an overt attack against multiple opponents (read: dice pools).

For each exchange, the attacker is responsible for describing their action, keeping in mind the skill or skills providing the dice for the attack, the Honour governing their actions, and the nature of the current attack (subtle or overt). The attacker already knows that this particular exchange will be successful since they are choosing dice from both pools, and thus should describe the successful results of the attack.

Example 1: Subtle attack - your dice show 1, 3, 3, 3, and 6. Your opponent's dice show 5, 8, 8, and 10. You make a subtle attack on his 10 with a 1, 3, and 6. He discards his 10.

Example 2: Overt attack - your opponent's dice show 5, 8, and 8. Your dice show 1, 3, 3, 3, and 6. He makes an overwhelming attack with one of his 8s and overwhelms two of your 3's and your 1. You discard those three dice, but since you discarded more than one die, he also discards his 8.

Example 3: Overt attack - you have a 3 and 6 left. Your opponent has a 5 and an 8. Even if you wanted to, you couldn't make a subtle attack (no total on your dice match any of his dice) so you make an overt attack on his 5 with your 6. He discards his 5, but since he only discards one die, you keep your 6. Looks bad for you as he can use his 8 to pick off your remaining two dice....

The loser of a conflict takes an "Impairment" with a rating equal to the number dice the winner has remaining. (One die remaining equals a d4 impairment, two dice remaining equals a d6, and so forth.) If the winner has more than 5 dice remaining, the loser is incapacitated. The winner defines the Impairment – it might be an actual physical wound, it may be a mar on your reputation, and the like. When multiple characters have contributed to the defeat of another character, only the remaining pool of the character who actually caused the impairment are considered when determining the severity of the impairment. The nature of the Impairment should match the nature and stakes of the conflict.

Impairments may be taken as free dice by your opponent if the conflict is appropriate. Physical wounds play against you in a physical conflict. Reputation wounds can be used against you in social situations. Free dice from impairments do not count against either

side with regard to the total number of dice that can be rolled according to the governing Humour.

If during a conflict, you roll all 1's put a checkmark by the Humour you are governed by for that conflict. At the end of the session, you will count the number of checkmarks to see if the Humour increases.

Specific skill checks, such as stealth checks or climbing checks, are treated as one on one conflicts between individual characters and unique instances of the challenge. (If clever players can figure out how to assist their allies in such a conflict, they may be treated as complex conflicts with multiple characters acting against the challenge.) Such challenges should be treated to have roughly the same number and magnitude of dice as a character of the same level of threat. (Minion-level stealth checks might only roll one or two dice of no more than d8 in size.)

End of the session.

Take each of the following actions in order at the end of the session.

Currency: Living in the present helps you learn from your recent failures.

For each wound you have that is less than your Currency, collect one XP. XP can be traded in for improved skills. An improved skill costs a number of XP equal to the new level and can be improved only one step per session.

Memories: Your tie to the past helps you recover from your failures.

All wounds less than or equal to your Memories are healed before the next session. All other wounds are reduced in rank by one level. (From d12 to d10, d10 to d8, and so forth.)

Humour increase:

Compare the number of checkmarks one each Humour against the level of the opposing Humour. (Currency opposes Memories. Yoshida opposes Kiff.) If you have more checkmarks than the opposing Humour, then the Humour increases by one.

If a Humour increases to 6, the character becomes dominated by the Humour, and will act only in accordance with the Humour. The character becomes a non-player character.

Optional: You can prevent a Humour's increase to 6 by reducing the opposing Humour by 1. You cannot reduce a Humour below 0. If a Humour is reduced to 0, you can no longer act in accordance with that Humour (as if you had created the character with the crippled Humour).

## GM's Advice

Byzantine Nights was designed to allow a lot of flexibility both in terms of types of stories (dungeon-crawls hunting Kiff-fiends to political dramas) and lengths of stories. In general, we recommend planning a story arc as running for four to eight sessions or

scenarios. (In television terms, a story arc should be roughly the length of a mini-series.) Nothing can or should prevent you from longer campaigns or revisiting character. This recommended length is based on the idea that PCs start with a fairly high degree of relative competency and do not necessarily need to spend a lot of time developing their abilities in order to face high-ranking opponents. That said, your mileage may vary.

### Forging a Group

Player groups should be forged around some uniting theme. They could all be members of the same guild, with their initial tasks and adventures essentially assigned by their local guildmaster.

They could also share a philosophical outlook (all have 4 or 5s in a shared Humour) or lack there of (all have 1 or 2s in a shared Humor). In this case, the game is likely to be more psychological or sociological in tone, with them working to support their ideology without becoming prey to it.

Another possibility is that they are united by a common enemy, Kiff-dominated from below makes for a very traditional, dungeon-crawling sort of story; though opposition to agents of another Humour is equally likely to be enjoyable.

### The Other Powers

While the PCs in general are assumed to be some of the most influential, free-willed individuals in the Palace, there are other powers that influence the fate of the Palace and its inhabitants.

### The Silver Empress

The Empress epitomizes the teachings of Yoshida. She is served by four Dukes, one representing each of the current Guilds and a large number of Pawns. The Silver Empress has Yoshida 10, roll d8 for each of her other Humours (applying the lowest roll to her Kiff) and can roll d8 for any skill. Each Duke has Yoshida 8, roll d6 for each of their other Humours (applying the lowest roll to their Kiff) and can roll d10 for any skill in their Guild and d6 for any other skill. Pawns have Yoshida 6, Kiff 0, and roll d4 for their other Humours. If in doubt whether a Pawn has a particular skill, roll 1d6 (1 = d4, 2 = d6, 3 = d8, 4 = d10, 5 = d12, 6 = no skill). They typically have half as many skill points as the PCs.

The Silver Empress and her court spend their days discussing the theory of politics and war. They eagerly debate both the ancient texts and new theories, but are unable to shift their theories into action. Instead, the Empress relies on agents to put her theories to the test. The results of these experiments then feed further discussion. The Empress and her court are largely benevolent in intent, if not in action.

### The Red Cardinal

The Cardinal epitomizes the humour of Memories. He is served by four Bishops, one representing each of the current Guilds and a large number of Monks. The Red Cardinal has Memories 10, roll d8 for each of her other Humours (applying the lowest roll to her Currency) and can roll d8 for any skill. Each Bishop has Memories 8, roll d6 for each of their other Humours (applying the lowest roll to their Currency) and can roll d10 for any skill in their Guild and d6 for any other skill. Monks have Memories 6, Currency 0, and roll d4 for their other Humours. If in doubt whether a Monk has a particular skill, roll 1d6 (1 = d4, 2 = d6, 3 = d8, 4 = d10, 5 = d12, 6 = no skill). They typically have half as many skill points as the PCs.

The Red Cardinal and his college are the keepers of Ritual and Ceremony for the Palace. They see it as the sacred role to crush any efforts to change traditions or to create new rules. The Cardinal and his Cardinals will make use of more free-willed agents to wage war against more revolutionary forces, but will eagerly turn against those agents when the greater threat has been deposed.

### The Bodach Khan

The Khan rules the underworld of the Kiff. He is served by four Ghouls, one representing each of the current Guilds and a large number of Goblins. The Bodach Khan has Kiff 10, roll d8 for each of her other Humours (applying the lowest roll to his Yoshida) and can roll d8 for any skill. Each Ghoul has Kiff 8, roll d6 for each of their other Humours (applying the lowest roll to their Yoshida) and can roll d10 for any skill in their Guild and d6 for any other skill. Goblins have Kiff 6, Yoshida 0, and roll d4 for their other Humours. If in doubt whether a Goblin has a particular skill, roll 1d6 (1 = d4, 2 = d6, 3 = d8, 4 = d10, 5 = d12, 6 = no skill). They typically have half as many skill points as the PCs.

The Bodach Khan and his minions rule the underbelly of the Palace. They continually strive to undermine the Palace and its populace both literally and psychologically. The Khan is clever enough and dishonest enough to mislead potential allies into performing tasks that suit his ultimate goals under the guise of something more benign. The children of the Kiff will not be happy until they rule the Palace above, as well as, the Donjons below.

### The Dust Tiger

The Tiger represents the essence of Currency. She is served by four Sparklers, one representing each of the current Guilds and a large number of Bangers. The Dust Tiger has Currency 10, roll d8 for each of her other Humours (applying the lowest roll to her Memories) and can roll d8 for any skill. Each Sparkler has Currency 8, roll d6 for each of their other Humours (applying the lowest roll to their Memories) and can roll d10 for any skill in their Guild and d6 for any other skill. Bangers have Currency 6, Memories 0, and roll d4 for their other Humours. If in doubt whether a Banger has a particular skill, roll 1d6 (1 = d4, 2 = d6, 3 = d8, 4 = d10, 5 = d12, 6 = no skill). They typically have half as many skill points as the PCs.

The actual existence of the Dust Tiger is only theorized about, as for every story about her

there is a different story about her appearance and personality. From observing known Sparklers, it is postulated that she has no goals other than opposing rules and the status quo merely because it exists. Sparklers and Bangers live in the moment and Sparklers will often use pleasures of the moment to seduce allies to fulfill their whims. If such allies become reliant on a Sparkler, they will be cast aside as too constraining.

What is in the Towers?

The general populace of the Palace is not allowed to climb the tallest towers. Some say that this is to prevent people from knowing what lies beyond the walls (see the next section). While limited access to the towers does help maintain the mystery, this is not the true reason. Just as extreme adherence to the Kiff transforms men and women into ghouls and goblins, extreme adherence to the teachings of Yoshida also has a transformative effect. Rather than becoming creatures of darkness and depravity, the followers of Yoshida become detached, luminous creatures of light and theory. They keep themselves separate largely to not be distracted from their studies and theoretical debates, but also to prevent accidental confusion as to their nature.

What is Beyond the Palace?

Ultimately, what lies beyond the walls of the Palace is up to an individual group or their Palace Master. We have a few suggestions.

- 1) There is no edge. The Palace has expanded to encompass the whole world and if you head far enough in one direction you will ultimately end up back where you began. Of course it would likely take you many lifetimes to make such a trip.
- 2) Beyond the Palace is The Forest. This is a primeval place, darkened by thick foliage above and the path below made treacherous by brambles and vines. Creatures of the various myths of the world dwell in The Forest, waiting to devour the unprepared explorer. That's a game for another time.
- 3) Beyond the walls of the Palace lie the ruins of the world before. Mankind reached for transcendence, but just before achieving that state, mankind tripped. The Palace is an artifact of that near miss with transcendence, created by nano-technology gone mad and powerful artificial intelligences trying to recreate a safer world for their mortal and clearly fallible charges.
- 4) Beyond the Palace are the depths of space. For some reason, someone recreated something resembling human society far from any planet known to that species. Perhaps the Palace is all some great test helping its creators prepare for some greater plot involving Humankind.