Backgrounds

Your Background represents your life before becoming an adventurer. It provides skill proficiencies, tool or language proficiencies, starting equipment, and a unique feature reflecting your past experiences. Crucially, it also establishes your initial Reputation with certain factions and often suggests alignment tendencies.

When choosing a background, consider:

* **What changed?** Why did you leave your previous life?
* **How did you gain your skills?** Where did your class training come from?
* **How does your past influence your Reputation and Alignment?**
* **What connections or enemies did you make?**

Below are sample backgrounds common in Aethel. Feel free to use these as inspiration or work with your Game Master (GM) to create a custom background that fits your character concept, ensuring it integrates with Aethel's Reputation and Alignment systems.

1. Aethel City Guard Veteran

*"I've walked the Wall and kept the peace. Now, the threats are bigger than petty thieves."*

You served in the City Guard of Aethel, the sprawling metropolis at the heart of the known world. You've dealt with everything from back-alley brawls to organized crime, and perhaps even glimpsed the darker threats lurking beneath the city's surface. You understand the chain of command, the city's layout, and the pulse of its streets.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Athletics, Insight
* **Tool Proficiencies:** One type of gaming set, Vehicles (Land)
* **Equipment:** A piece of your old uniform (e.g., a dented helmet or worn insignia), a map of Aethel's main districts, a set of common clothes, manacles, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Watchman's Eye:** You are adept at noticing suspicious behavior and navigating urban environments. You gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to spot trouble within city limits and on checks made to navigate or find locations within Aethel. Your time in the Guard grants you **Neutral starting Reputation** with Aethel authorities and **Liked starting Reputation** among the city's common folk.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Lawful (Good, Neutral, or Evil), reflecting adherence to rules, though experiences may have pushed you towards Neutrality or cynicism.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I'm always scanning crowds for potential threats.
  2. I address everyone as 'citizen' out of habit.
  3. I know the best (and worst) taverns in every district.
  4. I believe in following orders, even questionable ones.
  5. I have a cynical view of authority after seeing its flaws.
  6. I uphold the law rigidly, sometimes to my detriment.
  7. I miss the camaraderie of the Guard barracks.
  8. I'm haunted by a case I couldn't solve or a mistake I made.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Order:** The law is paramount to prevent society collapsing into chaos. (Lawful)
  2. **Protection:** My duty is to shield the innocent from harm. (Good)
  3. **Community:** A city is its people; we must look out for each other. (Good/Neutral)
  4. **Pragmatism:** Do what needs to be done to keep the peace, even if it bends the rules. (Neutral)
  5. **Power:** Authority exists to be wielded; I seek to climb the ranks. (Evil/Lawful)
  6. **Survival:** In the end, you look out for yourself and your partners. (Neutral/Evil)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. My former Watch Captain mentored me, and I owe them my loyalty.
  2. I'm searching for a corrupt official who betrayed the Guard.
  3. I protect the neighborhood I grew up in.
  4. A specific law or code is sacrosanct to me.
  5. I fight for the memory of a fallen comrade.
  6. My family still lives in Aethel, and I send money home.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I'm overly suspicious of everyone.
  2. I follow the letter of the law, ignoring the spirit.
  3. I'm haunted by the things I've seen and sometimes drink to forget.
  4. I took a bribe once and live in fear of exposure.
  5. I trust authority figures too readily.
  6. I sometimes use excessive force to solve problems.

2. Rift Scarred Survivor

*"The world tore open, and I fell through the cracks. Came back changed."*

You were present during a Rift event – one of the chaotic tears in reality that plague Aethel. You may have been pulled into another plane, witnessed horrors beyond comprehension, or simply been caught in the crossfire of raw magical energy. You survived, but the experience left indelible marks, both physical and mental.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Survival, Arcana
* **Languages:** One Exotic language (Abyssal, Celestial, Primordial, or Deep Speech, reflecting the Rift's nature)
* **Equipment:** A strange trinket from the other side (e.g., a shard of obsidian that hums faintly, a feather that never gets dirty), a tattered map of a place that doesn't exist on Aethel, a set of traveler's clothes, an amulet to ward off bad luck, and 5 gp.
* **Feature: Planar Sense:** Your exposure to other realities grants you advantage on saving throws against being frightened or charmed by aberrations, celestials, elementals, fey, or fiends. Additionally, you have **Neutral starting Reputation** with scholars of the planes but **Disliked starting Reputation** with mundane authorities who distrust Rift survivors.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Chaotic (Good, Neutral, or Evil), as the experience shattered previous beliefs and societal norms.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I am jumpy and easily startled by loud noises or sudden movements.
  2. I see parallels between Aethel and the other worlds I glimpsed.
  3. I collect strange objects, hoping one might be useful.
  4. I speak in metaphors drawn from my Rift experience.
  5. I have recurring nightmares about what I saw.
  6. I am fascinated by magic, especially planar or chaotic magic.
  7. I trust my instincts above all else; logic failed me in the Rift.
  8. I maintain a facade of calm, hiding deep-seated fear.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Discovery:** There are truths hidden beyond our reality, and I must find them. (Chaotic/Neutral)
  2. **Survival:** I endured the impossible; I can endure anything. (Any)
  3. **Protection:** I must prevent others from suffering what I did. (Good)
  4. **Power:** The Rift showed me true power; I will attain it. (Evil)
  5. **Balance:** All planes have their place; we must respect the boundaries. (Neutral/Lawful)
  6. **Freedom:** No chains, physical or planar, will hold me again. (Chaotic)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I search for someone else who went through the Rift with me.
  2. I seek to close the Rifts or understand their origin.
  3. An entity from the Rift still haunts or guides me.
  4. I owe my survival to a specific place or person back in Aethel.
  5. I carry an item that must be returned to its plane of origin.
  6. My family believes I died in the Rift; I must find them.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I am convinced I'm still partially in another reality.
  2. I am reckless, believing I've already faced the worst.
  3. I distrust all forms of authority; they couldn't protect me.
  4. I am obsessed with finding a way back to the place I saw.
  5. I sometimes manifest minor, uncontrolled planar effects.
  6. I push others away, fearing they'll be harmed by my connection to the Rifts.

3. Disgraced Noble Scion

*"My name opened doors. Then it slammed them shut. Now, I make my own way."*

You hail from a noble family, accustomed to privilege and influence. However, scandal, betrayal, political maneuvering, or your own actions led to your disgrace. You might be disowned, exiled, or simply stripped of your titles and wealth. Now you must navigate the world without the safety net of your birthright.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** History, Persuasion
* **Tool Proficiencies:** One type of gaming set
* **Languages:** One of your choice
* **Equipment:** A set of fine clothes (perhaps slightly worn), a signet ring bearing a tarnished or altered family crest, a letter detailing your disgrace (or a forged letter proclaiming your innocence), and a purse containing 25 gp (perhaps the last of your inheritance).
* **Feature: Lingering Influence:** Though disgraced, some still recognize your family name or former status. Once per week, you can attempt to leverage your past connections to gain an audience with a minor official, secure information, or receive temporary lodging, though this may attract unwanted attention or reinforce your **Disliked starting Reputation** among the established nobility. You have **Neutral starting Reputation** with the underworld or revolutionary groups who oppose the nobility.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Varies greatly. Could be Lawful, seeking to restore honor; Chaotic, rebelling against the system; Evil, seeking revenge; or Neutral, simply trying to survive.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I cling to the etiquette and manners of my upbringing.
  2. I secretly enjoy the freedom from noble responsibilities.
  3. I constantly try to prove my worth beyond my family name.
  4. I have expensive tastes I can no longer afford.
  5. I am bitter and cynical about the nobility.
  6. I drop names and hint at my former status frequently.
  7. I am fiercely protective of the few allies I have left.
  8. I assess everyone based on their potential usefulness to me.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Redemption:** I will clear my name and restore my family's honor. (Lawful/Good)
  2. **Independence:** I will succeed on my own merits, without relying on birthright. (Chaotic/Any)
  3. **Justice:** The system that condemned me is corrupt and must be reformed. (Good/Chaotic)
  4. **Power:** I will regain influence, no matter the cost. (Evil)
  5. **Equality:** Nobility is meaningless; true worth lies in actions. (Neutral/Good)
  6. **Wealth:** Money is the only true power; I will acquire it. (Evil/Neutral)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I am loyal to a family member who still believes in me.
  2. I seek vengeance against the rival who orchestrated my downfall.
  3. I must protect a secret that could destroy my family entirely.
  4. I am determined to reclaim my ancestral lands or title.
  5. I owe a debt to a commoner who helped me after my fall from grace.
  6. I am secretly in love with someone my family would never approve of.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I am arrogant and look down on common folk.
  2. I am haunted by the scandal that led to my disgrace.
  3. I trust no one, believing everyone has ulterior motives.
  4. I am prone to gambling or extravagance, trying to maintain appearances.
  5. I will betray others to regain my status.
  6. I secretly believe I deserved my disgrace.

4. Wildling Herbalist

*"The forest taught me more about life and death than any city scholar ever could."*

You grew up in the untamed wilds bordering Aethel, learning the secrets of plants, beasts, and survival far from civilization. You might have been part of a secluded tribe, apprenticed to a reclusive druid, or simply learned to fend for yourself amidst the dangers of nature. Your knowledge of natural remedies is extensive, and you understand the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Nature, Medicine
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Herbalism kit
* **Languages:** Sylvan or Primordial (choose one)
* **Equipment:** An herbalism kit, a staff carved with natural symbols, a collection of dried herbs and rare flowers, a set of common clothes made from animal hides, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp.
* **Feature: Natural Remedy:** You can identify most mundane and magical plants with ease and know their potential uses. During a long rest, you can gather natural components (if available in the environment) to create one Potion of Healing (basic) or an antitoxin without expending gold. This knowledge grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with Druidic circles and isolated wildling communities, but **Disliked starting Reputation** with alchemists guilds who see you as competition.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Neutral (Good or True), reflecting a focus on balance, nature, or survival. Chaotic tendencies are also common.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I prefer the company of animals to people.
  2. I see omens and portents in the natural world.
  3. I am patient and observant, like a hunter stalking prey.
  4. I speak plainly and distrust fancy words.
  5. I am uncomfortable in crowded cities.
  6. I have a deep respect for the cycle of life and death.
  7. I collect natural curiosities like feathers, stones, and bones.
  8. I hum or whistle tunes learned from the wind and birdsong.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Balance:** Nature thrives on equilibrium; we must not upset it. (Neutral)
  2. **Life:** All living things deserve respect and protection. (Good)
  3. **Purity:** The natural world is pure; civilization corrupts. (Neutral/Chaotic)
  4. **Survival:** The fittest survive; that is the only law that matters. (Neutral/Evil)
  5. **Freedom:** Like the wild beasts, I will not be caged or tamed. (Chaotic)
  6. **Knowledge:** The secrets held by the oldest trees and deepest caves are worth seeking. (Any)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I protect a specific sacred grove or ancient animal.
  2. My tribe or mentor entrusted me with a vital task.
  3. I seek a rare plant needed to cure a disease afflicting my home.
  4. I was raised by wild creatures and feel a kinship with them.
  5. An unnatural blight threatens my homeland, and I must stop it.
  6. I search for ancient ruins spoken of in tribal legends.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I am suspicious of civilization and its comforts.
  2. I sometimes value animal life more than humanoid life.
  3. I am fiercely independent and resist taking orders.
  4. I hoard natural remedies, unwilling to share freely.
  5. I hold grudges like a long winter.
  6. I sometimes experiment with dangerous plants or toxins.

5. Guild Artisan Dropout

*"The Guild demanded perfection. Adventure demands survival. I prefer the latter."*

You were once an apprentice or journeyman in one of Aethel’s powerful artisan guilds – perhaps a blacksmith, weaver, scribe, or mason. You learned a valuable trade and the ways of commerce, but the rigid structure, endless demands, or internal politics of the guild didn’t suit you. You left, seeking freedom, excitement, or perhaps fleeing guild sanctions.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Insight, Persuasion
* **Tool Proficiencies:** One type of artisan's tools
* **Languages:** One of your choice
* **Equipment:** A set of artisan's tools you managed to keep, a sample of your best work (now perhaps used for mundane tasks), a letter of resignation (or expulsion) from your guild, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 15 gp.
* **Feature: Trade Secret:** You retain knowledge of your former craft and the business practices of guilds. You can identify quality craftsmanship in items related to your former trade, potentially spotting fakes or assessing true value. You also know how to navigate guild bureaucracy or find contacts within the artisan community, though your departure means you have **Disliked starting Reputation** with your former guild but **Neutral starting Reputation** with rival guilds or independent artisans.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Chaotic (Neutral or Good), reflecting a desire for independence or a rejection of rigid rules. Lawful alignments are possible if you left due to perceived corruption.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I judge everything by its craftsmanship and utility.
  2. I haggle relentlessly, even when unnecessary.
  3. I miss the structure of the guild sometimes.
  4. I take immense pride in my skills, even if I don't practice them often.
  5. I am always looking for a new angle or business opportunity.
  6. I criticize shoddy work whenever I see it.
  7. I enjoy working with my hands, even just tinkering.
  8. I value practicality and efficiency above all else.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Creativity:** I need the freedom to create without restrictions. (Chaotic)
  2. **Quality:** Whatever I do, I do it well and take pride in the result. (Any)
  3. **Community:** Guilds have flaws, but cooperation makes us stronger. (Lawful/Good)
  4. **Wealth:** My skills are valuable, and I intend to profit from them. (Neutral/Evil)
  5. **Independence:** I am my own master; no guild dictates my life. (Chaotic)
  6. **Discovery:** There's more to the world than workshops and ledgers. (Any)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. My former master taught me everything; I owe them a debt.
  2. I seek to create a masterpiece that will make my name legendary.
  3. I left the guild to protect a fellow artisan from unfair treatment.
  4. A rival guild member sabotaged my career; I seek redress.
  5. I carry a unique tool or design passed down through my apprenticeship.
  6. I aim to start my own independent workshop someday.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I am overly critical of others' work.
  2. I cut corners when I think I can get away with it.
  3. I am secretly jealous of those still thriving within the guild system.
  4. I obsess over minor details, losing sight of the bigger picture.
  5. I sometimes sell secrets or techniques learned from my guild.
  6. I find it hard to trust partners or collaborators.

6. Seeker of the Lost Pantheon

*"They say the old gods are dead or forgotten. I hear their whispers still."*

You are driven by a quest to uncover the truths behind Aethel's Lost Pantheon – deities worshiped in ages past but now largely forgotten or suppressed. You might be a scholar deciphering ancient texts, an archaeologist exploring forgotten ruins, or someone who received a divine vision or cryptic prophecy related to these lost gods.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Religion, History
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Calligrapher's supplies or Cartographer's tools (choose one)
* **Languages:** Two of your choice (often ancient or obscure ones)
* **Equipment:** A rubbing from an ancient tablet, a book of fragmented myths, a holy symbol of a forgotten deity (perhaps self-made), a set of common clothes, incense, and 10 gp.
* **Feature: Whispers of the Past:** Your research into forgotten lore gives you occasional insights. When encountering ancient ruins, symbols, or texts related to Aethel's history (pre-dating the current dominant faiths), you have advantage on Intelligence checks (History, Religion, Arcana) to decipher their meaning or context. Your quest grants you **Neutral starting Reputation** with mainstream religious orders (who may view you with suspicion) but **Liked starting Reputation** with fringe historians, hidden cults, or communities that secretly maintain old traditions.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Any, though often Neutral or Chaotic, as the quest involves challenging established dogma. The nature of the lost gods sought might influence alignment (e.g., seeking a benevolent lost god vs. a malevolent one).

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I interpret everything as a potential clue or sign from the lost gods.
  2. I am fascinated by ruins, relics, and ancient history.
  3. I speak cryptically, often quoting fragmented prophecies.
  4. I am deeply skeptical of current religious institutions.
  5. I meticulously document all my findings.
  6. I am driven and sometimes obsessive in my quest.
  7. I see the influence of the lost gods in everyday events.
  8. I am cautious about sharing my research, fearing persecution.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Truth:** History must be uncovered, regardless of the consequences. (Any)
  2. **Restoration:** The old ways were better; they must be brought back. (Lawful/Neutral)
  3. **Knowledge:** Understanding the past is key to understanding the present. (Neutral)
  4. **Power:** The lost gods hold power that I can claim. (Evil)
  5. **Guidance:** The lost gods offer wisdom the current pantheon lacks. (Good/Neutral)
  6. **Freedom:** Uncovering forbidden knowledge is an act of liberation. (Chaotic)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I follow visions or dreams sent by a specific lost entity.
  2. My family was persecuted for worshiping the old gods.
  3. I seek a specific artifact or temple of the Lost Pantheon.
  4. My mentor disappeared while researching the same topic.
  5. I believe I am the chosen vessel or prophet of a lost god.
  6. A powerful organization seeks to suppress the knowledge I uncover.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I dismiss evidence that contradicts my theories.
  2. I endanger myself and others by exploring dangerous ruins.
  3. I trust ancient texts more than living people.
  4. I am paranoid that agents of the current faiths are watching me.
  5. I sometimes perform strange rituals related to my research.
  6. My quest for knowledge overrides concerns for safety or morality.

7. Marked Fugitive

*"I wasn't born with power. I stole it, and they want it back."*

You carry something you were never meant to have: a relic, a secret, a stolen spell, or a divine fragment. You're branded, cursed, or watched. Whether by mistake, theft, or fate, you are now hunted by factions that believe your existence is a violation.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Stealth, Arcana
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Thieves' Tools
* **Languages:** One obscure or factional language (e.g., Celestial, Infernal, Forgotten Script)
* **Equipment:** Broken manacle, false identity papers, hidden mark or scar, 10 gp in mixed coin
* **Feature: Echo of the Stolen:** You carry a fragment of forbidden power. Once per long rest, you may replicate a 1st-level spell you've seen cast (must have been cast within the last hour, and you must have line of sight when it was cast). It uses your Charisma and can only be used if it fits your class spell list or mystery. After using this, your brand glows faintly, potentially alerting your pursuers. This power grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with underground resistance movements but **Hated starting Reputation** with the faction you stole from.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Chaotic (any), reflecting rebellion against established power structures, though Neutral is common for those who stumbled into their situation.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I constantly look over my shoulder and trust no one.
  2. I hide my true nature behind elaborate lies and false personas.
  3. I am drawn to forbidden knowledge and dangerous artifacts.
  4. I believe my theft was justified or even destined.
  5. I have nightmares about what I stole and what it might do.
  6. I am fascinated by my own growing powers.
  7. I use humor to mask my constant fear.
  8. I am paranoid about magical detection or scrying.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Liberation:** Power should not be hoarded by the few. (Chaotic/Good)
  2. **Destiny:** I was meant to possess this power, regardless of the cost. (Any)
  3. **Revenge:** Those who hunt me will suffer for their persecution. (Evil)
  4. **Protection:** I must keep what I've taken from falling into worse hands. (Good)
  5. **Knowledge:** Understanding what I've stolen is worth any risk. (Neutral)
  6. **Survival:** I'll do whatever it takes to stay free and alive. (Neutral/Evil)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. Someone sacrificed themselves to help me escape with my stolen power.
  2. I stole my power to save someone I love.
  3. I'm searching for others like me who carry fragments of the same power.
  4. A mysterious benefactor guided me to take what I did.
  5. I must return to the scene of my theft to understand what truly happened.
  6. I've sworn to use my stolen power only for a specific purpose.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I am reckless with my stolen power, not fully understanding its consequences.
  2. I trust no one, even potential allies.
  3. I am tempted to steal more forbidden knowledge or items.
  4. I sometimes lose control of my power when emotional.
  5. I believe everyone is secretly after what I possess.
  6. I am willing to sacrifice others to maintain my freedom.

8. Expedition Cartographer

*"Every unexplored region is just a blank page waiting for my pen."*

You've made your living mapping the unknown territories of Aethel, accompanying merchants, nobles, or previous adventuring parties. Your skills with compass and quill have proven invaluable in charting dangerous terrain, identifying safe passages, and documenting discoveries. Now, you seek to explore regions no cartographer has ever recorded.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Survival, Investigation
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Cartographer's tools, Navigator's tools
* **Equipment:** A set of cartographer's tools, several blank parchments, a collection of partially completed maps, a compass, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Trailblazer:** You have an excellent memory for maps and geography. You can always recall the general layout of terrain, settlements, and other features you've seen or studied. When in wilderness environments, you can identify the safest route forward, potential hazards, and prime camping locations. Your professional reputation grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with merchant guilds and explorers' societies but **Neutral starting Reputation** with indigenous tribes wary of outsiders mapping their territories.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Neutral (any), reflecting a focus on objective documentation and exploration rather than moral crusades.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I speak in geographical metaphors and references.
  2. I'm constantly sketching my surroundings.
  3. I collect local stories about landmarks and terrain features.
  4. I prefer precision and accuracy in all things.
  5. I'm fascinated by how different cultures navigate and understand their environments.
  6. I mark my path habitually, even in urban settings.
  7. I'm most comfortable when I know exactly where I am.
  8. I'm drawn to high vantage points to survey the landscape.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Discovery:** The unknown must be made known. (Any)
  2. **Accuracy:** A map is only as good as its details; precision saves lives. (Lawful)
  3. **Knowledge:** Maps are power; they reveal the world's secrets. (Neutral)
  4. **Beauty:** I capture not just the land but its essence in my work. (Good)
  5. **Profit:** Rare maps of dangerous regions fetch high prices. (Neutral/Evil)
  6. **Freedom:** To chart one's own course is the ultimate liberty. (Chaotic)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. My mentor disappeared while mapping a particular region; I seek to find them.
  2. I created a flawed map that led to disaster; I must atone.
  3. I seek to complete a comprehensive atlas of Aethel.
  4. I protect a map to a location of great significance or danger.
  5. My family has been cartographers for generations; I uphold the tradition.
  6. I was commissioned to map a specific region by a mysterious patron.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I become obsessive about filling in blank spaces on maps.
  2. I take unnecessary risks to reach unmapped areas.
  3. I hoard my discoveries, reluctant to share them freely.
  4. I trust my maps more than my eyes sometimes.
  5. I'm dismissive of "primitive" navigation methods.
  6. I'm terrified of becoming lost.

9. Arcane Academy Dropout

*"They taught rules. I wanted power. We disagreed."*

You studied at one of Aethel's prestigious arcane academies but left before graduation. Perhaps you were expelled for dangerous experimentation, quit due to restrictive policies, or fled after witnessing something disturbing. Whatever the case, you've taken your partial magical education and chosen a different path.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Arcana, History
* **Languages:** Two of your choice
* **Equipment:** A spellbook or arcane focus (perhaps damaged or modified), a letter of expulsion or resignation, a set of common clothes, a student's robe, and a pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Theoretical Knowledge:** Despite your incomplete education, you retain substantial theoretical knowledge. You have advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks related to identifying magical effects, traditions, or items, even if you can't replicate them yourself. Your academic background grants you **Disliked starting Reputation** with formal arcane institutions but **Neutral starting Reputation** with independent mages and magical researchers who value unorthodox thinking.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Chaotic (any), reflecting a rejection of academic constraints, though Neutral is common for those who simply found academy life unsuitable.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I quote magical theories and texts inappropriately.
  2. I'm defensive about my incomplete education.
  3. I experiment with magic in potentially dangerous ways.
  4. I use academic jargon to sound more knowledgeable.
  5. I'm fascinated by magical phenomena and constantly analyze them.
  6. I keep extensive notes on magical theories and observations.
  7. I'm dismissive of "by-the-book" spellcasters.
  8. I have nightmares about a magical accident from my academy days.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Innovation:** Magic must evolve beyond dusty traditions. (Chaotic)
  2. **Power:** Academic restrictions only limit potential; true power comes from breaking boundaries. (Evil/Neutral)
  3. **Understanding:** I seek to truly understand magic, not just memorize spells. (Neutral)
  4. **Protection:** Magic must be used responsibly, which the academies don't always teach. (Good)
  5. **Freedom:** Each mage must find their own path to power. (Chaotic)
  6. **Balance:** Neither reckless experimentation nor rigid tradition serves magic well. (Neutral)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I still correspond with a sympathetic professor or fellow student.
  2. I stole a valuable book or artifact when I left the academy.
  3. I seek to prove my theories that were rejected by the academy.
  4. I protect a magical secret I discovered during my studies.
  5. I was betrayed by a fellow student who now holds a position of power.
  6. I seek to establish a new, more progressive magical institution.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I overestimate my magical abilities.
  2. I'm bitter and resentful toward successful academy graduates.
  3. I take dangerous shortcuts in magical practice.
  4. I'm obsessed with a particular magical theory or effect.
  5. I keep secrets from my companions about my magical experiments.
  6. I'm drawn to forbidden magic despite the risks.

10. Cult Escapee

*"I've seen behind the veil. Some truths are best forgotten."*

You were once part of a secretive cult dedicated to dark powers, forbidden knowledge, or apocalyptic prophecies. Whether you were born into it, joined willingly, or were coerced, you eventually broke free. Now you live with the memories of what you witnessed and the fear of being reclaimed by your former "family."

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Religion, Deception
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Disguise kit
* **Languages:** One exotic language (often Abyssal, Infernal, or Deep Speech)
* **Equipment:** A cult symbol (defaced or hidden), a disguise kit, a journal containing cult teachings (perhaps with your own critical notes), a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 5 gp.
* **Feature: Dark Insights:** Your exposure to forbidden rituals and entities grants you advantage on Intelligence (Religion) checks related to dark cults, eldritch entities, or occult practices. You can also recognize cult symbols, coded language, and recruitment tactics. Your past grants you **Hated starting Reputation** with your former cult and **Disliked starting Reputation** with religious authorities who may suspect your past, but **Liked starting Reputation** with groups that actively oppose cults.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Good or Neutral (any), reflecting a rejection of the cult's typically Evil practices, though some may retain Chaotic tendencies from their indoctrination.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I am suspicious of charismatic leaders and organized religion.
  2. I have recurring nightmares about cult rituals I witnessed.
  3. I find comfort in strict routines that help me feel in control.
  4. I am overly concerned with proving I've rejected my past.
  5. I speak cryptically about the "truths" I learned in the cult.
  6. I am protective of those who seem vulnerable to manipulation.
  7. I flinch at certain sounds, words, or symbols that trigger memories.
  8. I am drawn to study the very things I fear, to better understand them.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Redemption:** I must atone for actions I performed while in the cult. (Good)
  2. **Freedom:** No one should be mentally or spiritually enslaved as I was. (Chaotic/Good)
  3. **Truth:** The lies that ensnared me must be exposed. (Any)
  4. **Protection:** I must prevent others from falling victim to cults. (Good)
  5. **Knowledge:** Understanding dark forces is necessary to combat them. (Neutral)
  6. **Vengeance:** The cult leaders will pay for what they did to me and others. (Evil/Neutral)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I escaped with another cult member who depends on me.
  2. I left family members behind who I hope to someday rescue.
  3. Someone helped me escape, and I owe them my life.
  4. I possess information that could destroy the cult if revealed properly.
  5. I seek others who escaped the same cult for mutual protection.
  6. I was rescued by a religious order I now feel indebted to.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I sometimes hear the "call" of the entities my cult worshipped.
  2. I keep secrets from my companions out of habit and paranoia.
  3. I use cult techniques to manipulate others when it serves me.
  4. I am drawn to objects, spells, or places related to my cult experiences.
  5. I see cult influence in coincidences and unrelated events.
  6. I have trouble forming close relationships due to trust issues.

11. Planar Merchant

*"The best deals cross worlds, not just borders."*

You've made your living trading goods between planes or dealing in items with extraplanar origins. Perhaps you worked with a licensed planar trading company, operated as an independent smuggler of exotic wares, or served as a broker connecting buyers with otherworldly sellers. Your experience has given you unique insights into the multiverse's economies and dangers.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Persuasion, Arcana
* **Tool Proficiencies:** One type of artisan's tools or gaming set
* **Languages:** Two of your choice
* **Equipment:** A small trinket from another plane (a coin, gem, or curiosity), a ledger of contacts and transactions, a set of fine clothes, merchant's scales, and a pouch containing 20 gp.
* **Feature: Planar Connections:** You maintain a network of extraplanar contacts. Once per week, you can attempt to acquire a rare item with planar origins or properties (subject to GM approval and appropriate costs), or gain information about planar phenomena or entities. Your business dealings grant you **Liked starting Reputation** with planar trading guilds but **Disliked starting Reputation** with planar customs authorities who suspect you of smuggling.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Neutral (any), reflecting a focus on commerce rather than ideology, though the dangerous nature of planar trade often pushes toward Chaotic.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I pepper my speech with phrases from other planes.
  2. I evaluate everything I see in terms of its trade value.
  3. I'm fascinated by the cultural differences between planes.
  4. I have a story about a deal gone wrong for every occasion.
  5. I collect small trinkets from every plane I visit.
  6. I'm always looking for the angle in any situation.
  7. I maintain a calm demeanor even in the strangest circumstances.
  8. I'm suspicious of deals that seem too good to be true.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Exchange:** Fair trade benefits all parties and builds bridges between worlds. (Good)
  2. **Wealth:** The multiverse is full of riches for those bold enough to seek them. (Neutral)
  3. **Knowledge:** Every transaction teaches me something new about the planes. (Any)
  4. **Freedom:** Borders and planar boundaries are meant to be crossed. (Chaotic)
  5. **Power:** Control of rare resources grants influence across multiple worlds. (Evil)
  6. **Balance:** The flow of goods between planes must be regulated to prevent catastrophe. (Lawful)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I owe a debt to an extraplanar entity who helped establish my business.
  2. I seek a legendary market said to exist at the crossroads of all planes.
  3. My family's legacy depends on my success in the planar trade.
  4. I was cheated by a planar being, and I seek to reclaim what's mine.
  5. I protect the secret of a stable portal that gives me a trading advantage.
  6. I'm building a collection of the rarest item from each plane of existence.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I've sold things I shouldn't have to people who shouldn't have them.
  2. I'm addicted to the thrill of making dangerous deals.
  3. I believe everything has a price, even things that shouldn't.
  4. I've made promises to multiple extraplanar patrons that conflict with each other.
  5. I'm overly paranoid about customs officials and planar authorities.
  6. I can't resist acquiring a truly exotic item, regardless of the cost or risk.

12. Battlefield Medic

*"I've seen what war does. Now I patch up those who fight other battles."*

You served as a healer during one of Aethel's many conflicts, tending to the wounded and dying on blood-soaked battlefields. You've developed nerves of steel, quick hands, and an intimate knowledge of trauma and recovery. Now you bring those skills to the adventuring life, whether seeking redemption, escape from memories, or new ways to help others.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Medicine, Insight
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Healer's kit, Herbalism kit
* **Equipment:** A healer's kit, a bloodstained bandana or token from your service, a journal containing medical notes and sketches, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Trauma Response:** Your battlefield experience has honed your emergency medical skills. When you use a healer's kit to stabilize a dying creature, they regain 1 hit point immediately. Additionally, you can identify the nature and severity of injuries at a glance. Your service grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with veterans of the conflict you served in but **Neutral starting Reputation** with those who fought on the opposing side.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Good (any), reflecting a desire to heal and protect, though the horrors of war may have pushed some toward Neutral or even Evil alignments.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I remain calm in crisis situations.
  2. I use dark humor to cope with traumatic memories.
  3. I'm blunt about injuries and chances of survival.
  4. I'm protective of my medical supplies and equipment.
  5. I have a ritual or prayer I perform before treating serious injuries.
  6. I collect small tokens from those I've saved.
  7. I can sleep anywhere, through almost anything.
  8. I instinctively assess everyone I meet for signs of injury or illness.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Compassion:** All deserve care, regardless of faction or background. (Good)
  2. **Neutrality:** A healer must stand apart from conflicts to serve all in need. (Neutral)
  3. **Preservation:** Life must be protected and preserved at all costs. (Good)
  4. **Knowledge:** Understanding injury and disease is the path to conquering them. (Neutral)
  5. **Redemption:** I heal others to atone for those I couldn't save. (Any)
  6. **Triage:** When resources are limited, save those who can be saved. (Lawful)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I search for a soldier I failed to save, haunted by their memory.
  2. I carry the dog tags or tokens of those who died under my care.
  3. The commander who recognized my skills saved my life; I owe them everything.
  4. I seek to establish field hospitals in conflict zones.
  5. I'm developing new medical techniques based on battlefield experience.
  6. I protect a secret about what really happened during a famous battle.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I have flashbacks to battlefield trauma when triggered by certain sights or sounds.
  2. I self-medicate to numb painful memories.
  3. I've become desensitized to suffering.
  4. I blame myself for deaths that weren't my fault.
  5. I trust my medical judgment over all other opinions.
  6. I sometimes see patients as problems to solve rather than people.

13. Dimensional Refugee

*"My world is gone. This one must survive."*

You are not originally from Aethel but from another plane, dimension, or timeline that was destroyed or became uninhabitable. You arrived through a portal, rift, or cosmic accident, and now must adapt to a world with different rules, cultures, and sometimes even physical laws. You might be the last of your kind or one of several refugees scattered across this new reality.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Survival, History (of your original world)
* **Languages:** Two of your choice
* **Equipment:** A strange device or artifact from your home world (possibly non-functional in Aethel), clothing of unusual design or material, a journal where you record differences between worlds, and a pouch containing 5 gp.
* **Feature: Otherworldly Perspective:** Your unique background gives you insights others lack. You have advantage on Intelligence checks related to identifying extraplanar phenomena, and your different perspective sometimes allows you to suggest unconventional solutions to problems. Your alien nature grants you **Neutral starting Reputation** with most Aethel natives but **Liked starting Reputation** with scholars of the multiverse and others with planar experience.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Any, though often shaped by the nature of your home world and the circumstances of its loss.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I compare everything to how it was in my world.
  2. I misunderstand common cultural references and customs.
  3. I'm fascinated by technologies or magics that didn't exist in my world.
  4. I collect items that remind me of home.
  5. I sometimes slip into my native language or accent when emotional.
  6. I have unusual habits or mannerisms from my original culture.
  7. I'm overly cautious about signs that might indicate this world is also in danger.
  8. I try too hard to fit in, often overcompensating.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Preservation:** I must preserve the memory and knowledge of my lost world. (Any)
  2. **Warning:** I must prevent this world from suffering the same fate as mine. (Good)
  3. **Adaptation:** The past is gone; I must embrace this new reality fully. (Neutral)
  4. **Restoration:** I will find a way to restore or return to my world. (Any)
  5. **Integration:** I can bring the best of my world to improve this one. (Good)
  6. **Survival:** Having lost everything once, I will do anything to survive here. (Neutral/Evil)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I search for others from my world who might have survived.
  2. I protect an artifact that contains crucial knowledge from my world.
  3. I've adopted a local who reminds me of someone I lost.
  4. I've sworn to defeat the entity or force that destroyed my home.
  5. I seek to understand the connection between my world and this one.
  6. I've found a place or community here that feels almost like home.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I refuse to accept that my old world is truly gone.
  2. I judge this world harshly against my own.
  3. I keep secrets about my true origins, fearing rejection or worse.
  4. I'm paranoid about signs and omens that remind me of my world's end.
  5. I have difficulty forming attachments, fearing I'll lose everything again.
  6. I sometimes resent natives of this world for having what I lost.

14. Relic Hunter

*"History isn't dead. It's just waiting to be unearthed, and sometimes it bites back."*

You make your living discovering, identifying, and sometimes selling ancient artifacts and relics. You might be a scholarly archaeologist, a profit-driven treasure hunter, or something in between. Your pursuits have taken you to forgotten ruins, lost temples, and dangerous dungeons across Aethel, always in search of the next great find.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** History, Investigation
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Cartographer's tools or Thieves' tools (choose one)
* **Languages:** One of your choice
* **Equipment:** A small, authentic relic (perhaps your first find), a reference book on ancient civilizations, a magnifying glass, a set of traveler's clothes, and a pouch containing 15 gp.
* **Feature: Relic Lore:** You can accurately identify the culture, approximate age, and potential significance of ancient artifacts with a successful Intelligence (History) check. You also have a network of contacts interested in buying, selling, or studying such items. Your profession grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with museums and collectors but **Disliked starting Reputation** with indigenous peoples or religious orders who view your work as desecration.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Any, though often shaped by motivation, scholarly Relic Hunters tend toward Lawful or Neutral, while profit-driven ones may lean Chaotic or even Evil if they disregard the cultural significance of their finds.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I can't resist examining any ancient object I encounter.
  2. I bore people with lectures about historical minutiae.
  3. I believe every legend has a kernel of truth.
  4. I'm methodical and careful in my work, documenting everything.
  5. I have a signature item or lucky charm I always bring on expeditions.
  6. I can estimate the value of an artifact at a glance.
  7. I collect maps and rumors of undiscovered sites.
  8. I have a healthy respect for the traps and curses that protect ancient treasures.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Preservation:** These artifacts must be protected for future generations. (Good)
  2. **Knowledge:** The true value of relics is in what they teach us. (Neutral)
  3. **Wealth:** Ancient treasures are meant to make me rich. (Evil/Neutral)
  4. **Discovery:** Uncovering the unknown is its own reward. (Any)
  5. **Restoration:** Artifacts should be returned to their rightful cultures. (Lawful)
  6. **Adventure:** The thrill of the hunt is what drives me. (Chaotic)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I seek a legendary artifact mentioned in ancient texts.
  2. My mentor disappeared on an expedition, and I search for clues to their fate.
  3. I aim to restore the lost legacy of my ancestors.
  4. I'm building a private collection of artifacts from a specific civilization.
  5. I owe a debt to a patron who funds my expeditions.
  6. I protect a secret about a major historical discovery.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I sometimes prioritize valuable finds over the safety of my companions.
  2. I've been known to "borrow" artifacts from museums or private collections.
  3. I've accidentally awakened ancient curses or entities more than once.
  4. I embellish my discoveries to make them seem more significant.
  5. I'm obsessed with a particular civilization or type of artifact.
  6. I rush my work when I sense a valuable find is near.

15. Corruption Survivor

*"The darkness touched me. I lived. Now I hunt what lurks in the shadows."*

You were exposed to a corrupting force, be it a demonic incursion, a plague of undeath, or the influence of an eldritch entity. Unlike most, you survived the experience, though not without scars both physical and psychological. Now you possess unique insights into corruption's nature and a driving purpose to combat similar threats.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Religion, Insight
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Herbalism kit
* **Languages:** One exotic language (often Abyssal, Infernal, or Deep Speech)
* **Equipment:** A holy symbol or protective charm, a vial of purified water, a journal documenting your experience and recovery, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Corruption Sense:** You can sense strong sources of corruption (undead, fiends, or cursed objects) within 60 feet, though you cannot pinpoint their exact location without further investigation. You have advantage on saving throws against diseases and the corrupting effects of undead or fiends. Your experience grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with cleansing orders and purification cults but **Disliked starting Reputation** with those who study or harness corruption.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Good (any), driven by the desire to protect others from what you experienced, though some survivors become Neutral or even Evil if the corruption altered their worldview.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I compulsively cleanse myself and my surroundings.
  2. I can sense impending danger and become agitated before others notice anything.
  3. I have vivid, prophetic nightmares about corruption spreading.
  4. I am overly protective of those who show any signs of vulnerability.
  5. I speak in whispers when discussing corruption or darkness.
  6. I carry tokens of purity (salt, silver, holy water) at all times.
  7. I have a physical tic or tremor that worsens near sources of corruption.
  8. I find beauty in small, pure things that others might overlook.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Purification:** The world must be cleansed of corruption wherever it lurks. (Good)
  2. **Vigilance:** Evil never rests, so neither can I. (Lawful)
  3. **Understanding:** To fight corruption, we must understand it without succumbing. (Neutral)
  4. **Vengeance:** Those who spread corruption will suffer as I have suffered. (Evil)
  5. **Protection:** No one else should endure what I survived. (Good)
  6. **Balance:** Light and darkness exist in all things, even me. (Neutral)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I protect a community that took me in during my recovery.
  2. I seek the source of the corruption that affected me.
  3. I lost someone to corruption and fight in their memory.
  4. I follow the guidance of the entity or person who helped cleanse me.
  5. I search for others like me who survived corruption.
  6. I carry a remnant of corruption within me that I must keep contained.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I see corruption even where it doesn't exist.
  2. I take extreme measures to purify perceived threats.
  3. I don't trust magic or those who use it.
  4. I have moments where the corruption resurfaces in my behavior.
  5. I keep secrets about how much the corruption changed me.
  6. I am drawn to sources of corruption even as I fight against them.

16. Frontier Settler

*"The edge of civilization isn't just a place. It's a way of life."*

You helped establish or maintain one of Aethel's frontier settlements, outposts of civilization on the edges of wilderness, danger, or unexplored territories. Life on the frontier taught you self-reliance, practical skills, and how to build community in harsh conditions. Whether you left seeking adventure or were driven away by disaster, you carry those frontier values with you.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Survival, Animal Handling
* **Tool Proficiencies:** One type of artisan's tools, vehicles (land)
* **Equipment:** A handmade tool or weapon from your settlement, a map of the frontier region you lived in, a small token from a community member, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Frontier Adaptability:** You excel at making do with limited resources. You can improvise tools and basic equipment from available materials, create adequate shelter in wilderness environments, and identify safe food and water sources in natural settings. Your frontier background grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with other frontier communities and traders but **Neutral starting Reputation** with urban elites who may view you as uncultured.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Neutral (any), reflecting the practical, community-focused mindset required for frontier survival.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I can make a tool out of practically anything.
  2. I share what I have, even when I have little.
  3. I'm suspicious of luxuries and "soft living."
  4. I speak plainly and directly, sometimes to the point of rudeness.
  5. I'm always preparing for the next disaster or shortage.
  6. I value practical skills over book learning.
  7. I tell colorful stories about frontier life.
  8. I'm uncomfortable in crowded urban environments.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Community:** Survival depends on people working together. (Good)
  2. **Self-Reliance:** Each person must be able to stand on their own. (Neutral)
  3. **Expansion:** Civilization must continue to grow and claim new territories. (Lawful)
  4. **Freedom:** The frontier offers escape from the constraints of society. (Chaotic)
  5. **Harmony:** We must learn to live with the land, not just on it. (Good/Neutral)
  6. **Opportunity:** The frontier is where anyone can make their fortune. (Any)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. My settlement was destroyed, and I seek to rebuild it.
  2. I send most of my earnings back to support my frontier community.
  3. I carry a map to a promising location for a new settlement.
  4. I seek solutions to a threat that endangers frontier communities.
  5. I'm searching for a lost member of my settlement.
  6. I protect a secret resource discovered near my settlement.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I hoard supplies unnecessarily, fearing shortages.
  2. I judge "civilized" people as weak or corrupt.
  3. I take foolish risks to prove my self-reliance.
  4. I'm slow to trust outsiders or accept new ideas.
  5. I believe might makes right in times of scarcity.
  6. I'm haunted by something I did to survive on the frontier.

17. Prophecy Bearer

*"The words were written before I was born. My life is not my own."*

You are the subject of a prophecy or prediction, perhaps ancient, perhaps recent, but specific enough that it has shaped your life. You might embrace your prophesied role, rebel against it, or simply seek to understand what it truly means. Regardless, the knowledge that greater forces have marked your path sets you apart.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Religion, History
* **Languages:** Two of your choice
* **Equipment:** A copy or fragment of the prophecy concerning you, a distinctive birthmark or physical feature mentioned in the prophecy, a symbolic item related to your foretold destiny, a set of traveler's clothes, and a pouch containing 15 gp.
* **Feature: Fated Path:** When you attempt a task directly related to fulfilling your prophecy, you can gain advantage on one ability check, saving throw, or attack roll. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you complete a long rest. Your prophesied status grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with those who believe in your destiny but **Disliked starting Reputation** with those who fear or oppose what you're foretold to do.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Any, though often influenced by the nature of the prophecy, a prophecy of salvation might push toward Good, while one of destruction might pull toward Evil.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I quote my prophecy at every opportunity.
  2. I try to hide my prophesied status from strangers.
  3. I see signs and omens related to my destiny everywhere.
  4. I question whether the prophecy is literal or metaphorical.
  5. I feel the weight of expectation constantly.
  6. I deliberately act contrary to what others expect of the "chosen one."
  7. I collect other prophecies, seeking patterns or connections.
  8. I worry that I'm not worthy of my foretold role.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Destiny:** I must fulfill what was foretold, whatever the cost. (Lawful)
  2. **Choice:** Prophecy or not, I forge my own path. (Chaotic)
  3. **Greater Good:** My destiny serves a purpose beyond myself. (Good)
  4. **Power:** The prophecy marks me for greatness; I will claim what is mine. (Evil)
  5. **Truth:** I seek the real meaning behind the prophetic words. (Neutral)
  6. **Balance:** Perhaps I am meant to bring equilibrium, not extremes. (Neutral)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I protect those who have helped me understand my destiny.
  2. I seek others mentioned in the same prophecy.
  3. I am drawn to locations featured in my prophetic visions.
  4. I oppose a rival who features in my prophecy as an adversary.
  5. I seek the prophet or oracle who first spoke my destiny.
  6. I hide a secret aspect of the prophecy that would frighten others.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I expect special treatment because of my prophesied status.
  2. I take unnecessary risks, believing my destiny protects me.
  3. I doubt my ability to fulfill my prophecy.
  4. I resent the lack of normalcy my destiny allows me.
  5. I manipulate others using my prophesied status.
  6. I fear what happens after the prophecy is fulfilled.

18. Underworld Escapee

*"I clawed my way out of the darkness. I won't go back."*

You were once deeply embedded in Aethel's criminal underworld, perhaps as a gang member, indentured servant to a crime lord, or even a prisoner in an inescapable dungeon. Against the odds, you broke free from that life, though your past continues to shadow you. You have learned skills in darkness but now seek to use them in the light.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Stealth, Deception
* **Tool Proficiencies:** Thieves' tools, one gaming set
* **Equipment:** A memento of your criminal past (modified to hide its true nature), a disguise kit, a set of common clothes, a hooded cloak, and a pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Criminal Network:** Despite leaving that life behind, you maintain knowledge of how the underworld operates. You can identify criminal operations, recognize gang symbols and territories, and know where to find black markets in settlements of significant size. Your background grants you **Disliked starting Reputation** with law enforcement and **Hated starting Reputation** with your former criminal associates, but **Neutral starting Reputation** with other reformed criminals.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Chaotic (any), reflecting a rejection of the structures that once confined you, though some reformed criminals embrace Lawful alignments as part of their redemption.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I instinctively case every location for exits and valuables.
  2. I use criminal cant and slang without realizing it.
  3. I'm paranoid about being recognized by my former associates.
  4. I'm overly generous to those in situations similar to my past.
  5. I keep a weapon hidden on me at all times.
  6. I use humor to deflect questions about my background.
  7. I'm uncomfortable with luxury after years of deprivation.
  8. I have a nervous tic from my time in the underworld.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Redemption:** I can never undo my past, but I can forge a better future. (Good)
  2. **Freedom:** No chains, physical, social, or economic, will ever hold me again. (Chaotic)
  3. **Justice:** The corrupt system that created criminals like me must be reformed. (Lawful)
  4. **Survival:** I'll do whatever it takes to ensure I never return to that life. (Neutral)
  5. **Vengeance:** Those who kept me down will pay for what they did. (Evil)
  6. **Balance:** I've seen both worlds; I walk the line between them. (Neutral)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I escaped with someone who depends on me for protection.
  2. I owe my freedom to someone who showed me kindness when no one else would.
  3. I seek to free others still trapped in my former life.
  4. I have information that could bring down a powerful criminal organization.
  5. I'm searching for something stolen from me during my criminal days.
  6. I've adopted a new identity that I protect at all costs.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I fall back on criminal solutions when under pressure.
  2. I trust no one completely.
  3. I'm drawn to the thrill of illegal activities despite myself.
  4. I hold a grudge against legitimate authority.
  5. I lie about my past reflexively, even when truth would serve better.
  6. I value my freedom above the wellbeing of others.

19. Elemental Touched

*"The primal forces flow through me. Sometimes I control them. Sometimes they control me."*

You have been marked by elemental power, perhaps through exposure to a planar rift, a ritual gone awry, inheritance from an elemental ancestor, or simply being born during a powerful elemental convergence. This connection manifests physically and influences your abilities and temperament.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Arcana, Nature
* **Languages:** Primordial (you can choose Auran, Aquan, Ignan, or Terran dialect based on your elemental affinity)
* **Equipment:** A focus item attuned to your element (a coal ember, vial of pure water, stone from a sacred mountain, or feather from a great height), clothing with motifs of your element, a journal documenting the manifestations of your power, and a pouch containing 10 gp.
* **Feature: Elemental Affinity:** You can communicate with elemental creatures of your affiliated type and have resistance to one type of damage associated with your element (fire for fire, cold for water, lightning for air, or acid for earth). Your elemental nature grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with elemental cultists of your affiliated element but **Disliked starting Reputation** with those aligned with opposing elements.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often reflects the nature of the affiliated element, Fire tends toward Chaotic, Earth toward Lawful, Water toward Neutral or Good, Air toward Chaotic or Neutral.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. My mood shifts like my element (stormy, fluid, blazing, or immovable).
  2. I'm drawn to manifestations of my element in the natural world.
  3. I use metaphors and similes related to my element.
  4. My body temperature, moisture level, or physical presence subtly reflects my element.
  5. I perform small rituals honoring my element daily.
  6. I become uncomfortable when separated from my element for too long.
  7. I sometimes lose control of minor elemental effects when emotional.
  8. I view problems through the lens of my elemental philosophy.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Harmony:** I seek balance between the elemental forces within and without. (Neutral)
  2. **Power:** My elemental gift sets me above ordinary mortals. (Evil)
  3. **Protection:** My power exists to shield others from elemental dangers. (Good)
  4. **Freedom:** Like the elements, I must be free to follow my nature. (Chaotic)
  5. **Mastery:** I must perfect control over my elemental connection. (Lawful)
  6. **Cycle:** All elements are part of a greater pattern that must be maintained. (Neutral)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I protect a location with a strong connection to my element.
  2. I seek others with elemental touches to learn from them.
  3. I was saved by an elemental entity who I now serve.
  4. I search for the source of my elemental connection.
  5. I have visions of an elemental catastrophe I must prevent.
  6. I'm drawn to complete a task that will balance elemental forces.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I am arrogant about my special connection to the elements.
  2. I sometimes lose control of my elemental powers when angered.
  3. I am uncomfortable around manifestations of opposing elements.
  4. I believe elemental forces are superior to humanoid concerns.
  5. I am reckless in using my elemental affinity.
  6. I hear whispers from elemental entities that others cannot perceive.

20. Celestial Emissary

*"The heavens have plans for this world. I am but their humble instrument."*

You have been chosen as an agent of celestial powers, perhaps through divine selection, ancestral connection to celestial beings, or a near-death experience that left you touched by higher realms. You carry a fragment of celestial essence and serve as a conduit for their will in Aethel, though you may interpret that role in various ways.

* **Skill Proficiencies:** Religion, Persuasion
* **Languages:** Celestial
* **Equipment:** A holy symbol or celestial token, a set of ceremonial clothes, a small reliquary containing a minor celestial blessing (emits dim light in darkness), a journal of visions or instructions, and a pouch containing 15 gp.
* **Feature: Divine Insight:** Once per long rest, you can enter a brief trance to receive guidance on a specific question or situation. The GM provides a cryptic but truthful answer, vision, or omen related to your query. Your celestial connection grants you **Liked starting Reputation** with temples and religious orders aligned with good deities but **Hated starting Reputation** with fiendish cults and evil organizations.
* **Alignment Tendency:** Often Good (any), reflecting celestial influence, though some emissaries interpret their mission in Neutral or even Lawful Evil ways, believing harsh methods serve higher purposes.

Suggested Characteristics

* **d8 Personality Trait:**
  1. I speak with absolute certainty when conveying celestial guidance.
  2. I see the potential for redemption in everyone.
  3. I quote celestial wisdom that others find cryptic or strange.
  4. I am uncomfortable with worldly pleasures and temptations.
  5. My eyes glow faintly when I'm emotional or channeling power.
  6. I perform small blessings and rituals throughout the day.
  7. I sometimes speak in a voice not entirely my own.
  8. I am patient with others' moral failings, seeing the longer celestial perspective.
* **d6 Ideal:**
  1. **Mercy:** Compassion is the greatest virtue, even toward enemies. (Good)
  2. **Order:** The celestial plan must be fulfilled exactly as decreed. (Lawful)
  3. **Inspiration:** I must help others find their own divine spark. (Good)
  4. **Judgment:** The unworthy must face divine consequences. (Lawful/Evil)
  5. **Balance:** Light cannot exist without darkness; I maintain the equilibrium. (Neutral)
  6. **Redemption:** Even the most corrupt soul can be saved. (Good)
* **d6 Bond:**
  1. I serve a specific celestial entity who communicates with me regularly.
  2. I protect a sacred location where the veil between worlds is thin.
  3. I seek a prophesied individual crucial to celestial plans.
  4. I oppose a specific fiendish threat that celestials have identified.
  5. I guide others who have been touched by celestial power.
  6. I carry an artifact of celestial origin that must be delivered or protected.
* **d6 Flaw:**
  1. I believe my celestial connection makes me superior to others.
  2. I follow celestial guidance without questioning its morality or consequences.
  3. I am naive about mortal motivations and deceptions.
  4. I neglect my own needs and health in service to my mission.
  5. I am intolerant of other religious perspectives.
  6. I fear I am not worthy of my celestial selection.

Customizing a Background

While the backgrounds presented here cover many common origins in Aethel, you might want to create something more tailored to your character concept. Work with your GM to customize a background that fits both your vision and the world.

To customize a background:

1. Select two skill proficiencies that reflect your character's early experiences
2. Select two tool proficiencies or languages
3. Choose an appropriate equipment package
4. Develop a unique feature that ties into Aethel's Reputation system
5. Create suggested characteristics that reflect your background's influence on personality

Remember that your background should meaningfully interact with Aethel's core systems of Reputation and Alignment and should consider how your character might function within an Expedition's size and compatibility limitations.

Personality Characteristics

Beyond your background, consider developing these four categories of characteristics to bring your character to life:

* **Personality Traits:** Small, specific ways your character behaves or perceives the world
* **Ideals:** The principles, beliefs, or moral philosophy your character values most highly
* **Bonds:** The people, places, objects, or goals that your character is connected to and cares about
* **Flaws:** The vices, fears, or weaknesses that could lead your character astray

These characteristics not only help you roleplay consistently but also provide the GM with hooks for adventures and character development. They should reflect both your background and your alignment, creating a coherent picture of who your character is beyond their mechanical abilities.

Reputation and Alignment in Play

As you adventure through Aethel, your Reputation and Alignment will evolve based on your choices. Consider how your actions might be perceived by different factions:

* **Consistent Alignment:** Acting in accordance with your stated alignment reinforces it and builds Reputation with like-minded groups.
* **Alignment Shifts:** Consistently acting against your stated alignment may eventually cause it to shift, affecting your Reputation and potentially your Expedition compatibility.
* **Reputation Consequences:** High Reputation might grant access to exclusive quests, rare items, or valuable information. Low Reputation could lead to increased prices, hostility, or even being barred from certain locations.
* **Expedition Dynamics:** Remember that Good and Evil characters cannot maintain a stable Expedition together. If alignment shifts occur during play, the GM may require party restructuring to maintain the integrity of the Expedition system.

By thoughtfully developing your character's background, personality, alignment, and approach to reputation, you create not just a collection of abilities but a living, breathing individual ready to make their mark on the world of Aethel.