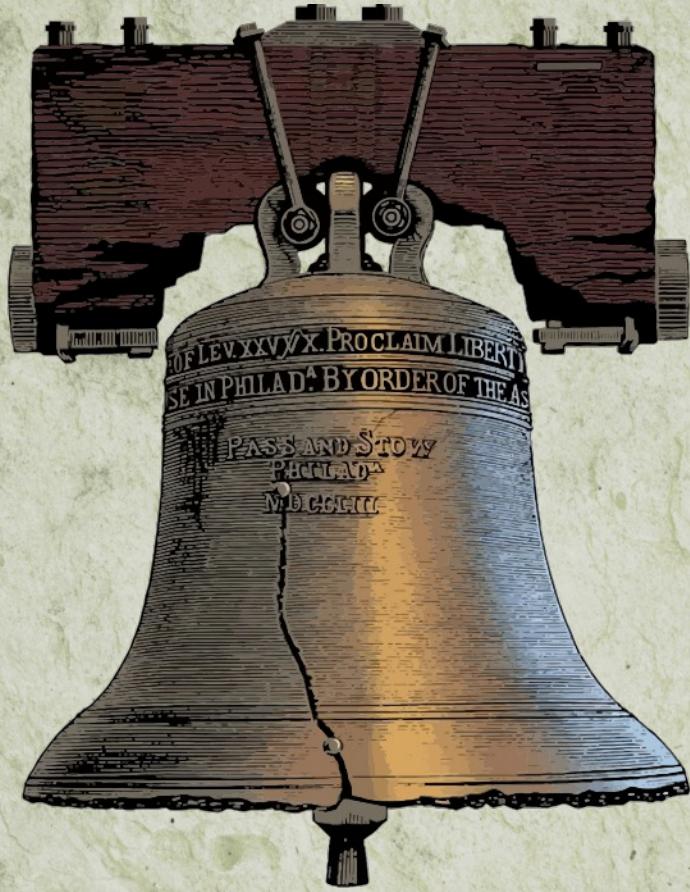




PHILADELPHIA AND THE GODS



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REQUIRES THE USE OF SCION: ORIGIN AND SCION: HERO



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INTRODUCTION

"Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing"
– Benjamin Franklin

Welcome to my Philadelphia series setting for Scion. A World where Heroes have gathered to deal with a threat that is the legacy of prior generations.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS

THIS BOOK DETAILS a series setting and the rules meant to make Scion work best for the setting. Philadelphia started off as one of my “pick-up binders”, ongoing series of one-shots with a collection of characters available for anyone to play. Over time, these settings develop their own history and depth, while still allowing for flexible groups and short adventures with minimal planning.

Whether you use **Philadelphia and the Gods** in this way or not, I hope you’ll find the inspiration for a city in the World with a lot of things going on, enough to keep your players occupied for a long time to come.

WHAT THIS BOOK ISN'T

This book is neither a guide to the city of Philadelphia, nor a comprehensive list of those who populate the setting. In the first case, there are a lot of better resources on the Internet for those who want to get to know the streets, sights and people of Philadelphia. Second, while the setting does hinge on certain historic elements of Philadelphia, especially the Liberty Bell, it is by no means a series that demands an accurate portrayal of the city.

I have also taken liberties with the folkloric creatures who populate this book. While I have tried to respect the sources, in the end the creatures and characters are here to serve the setting, not to illustrate myth and folklore. To that end, I've made decisions to give specific identities to those creatures.

WHAT IS IN THIS BOOK

Chapter 1 details **Philadelphia Then and Now**, seen from the perspective of the scions of the Pythian Congress. It also touches on how the contemporary Pythian Congress operates.

Chapter 2 goes into the **Places** of the Philadelphia of the World detailing the locations both mundane and mythical of key interest to the scions of Philly. Finally, the chapter breaks down the centers of religion in the city, according to pantheon.

Chapter 3 is devoted to **People**. The major players of the Pythian Congress are detailed, as well as important mythic denizens. This section also details the foes of the Congress: the Pythonspawn and other

products of the Curse of Philadelphia, the mysterious Titanic Cult of Cthon, and a pair of renegade Scions attracted to the area because of all the chaos.

Chapter 4 moves into the **Series Setup and Rules**. Included are a breakdown of a “pick-up series”, some house rules for Scion that make things run more smoothly, and a random generator for Philadelphia adventures.

THEME AND MOOD

The main theme of this setting is consequences. The Founding Fathers of the Republican Compact made choices on behalf of America and Philadelphia, and the consequences of those choices have reverberated through history until the current day, where the Pythian Congress needs to deal with them. Similarly, the choices that the characters make today will shape the city for the future. The way they choose to treat others will come back to haunt them for good and ill, and the causes they choose to embrace will embrace them in return.

The mood of Philadelphia is action-adventure. The characters will face powerful foes, often ready to cause great damage to the city. But they are powerful in their own right, and can solve the problems that face them with decisive action. Don’t dwell on the exact right action -- good intentions and the courage to see them through should be enough for the Heroes to make Philadelphia a better place.

OTHER BOOKS

This setting is meant to go with two other books available on the Storypath Nexus.

The Republican Pantheon details the neoclassical Theoi pantheon which plays a major role in the history and background of Philadelphia. It includes descriptions of new mantles for the major Theoi, five new gods, and details on the Republican worship of the Theoi, and their major divine foe.

For those looking to start their own pick-up series quickly, *The Pythian Congress* provides ten premade characters, including five detailed as SGCs in this book. This gives you a start on a Pythian Congress of your own, with plenty of room for your players to expand the troupe of characters.



CHAPTER 1

PHILADELPHIA

THEN AND NOW

"Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof Lev. XXV X
By Order of the ASSEMBLY of the Province of PENNSYLVANIA for the State House in
Philada
Pass and Stow
Philada
MDCCCLIII"
- Inscription on the Liberty Bell

MYTHIC HISTORY OF PHILADELPHIA

EARLY HISTORY

BEFORE EUROPEAN SETTLERS arrived, the land that would one day be known as Pennsylvania was settled by the Lenni Lenape tribes. While the Lenape aren't actually considered part of the Anishinaabe peoples, for the purpose of this setting we assume that the area was under the purview of the Manitou, since the Lenape mythology is similar, and comes from similar origins. To this day, hidden denizens and Terra Incognita linked to the Manitou can be found in the area.

The Aesir came into the region along with Dutch, German and Swedish settlers in the early 17th century. They established shrines throughout the region, and connected with the settlement of dwarves now known as Down Town. Many of these shrines still exist in rural Pennsylvania, tended by isolated families.

Philadelphia was founded in 1681 by William Penn. He had received a grant from King Charles II of England for the land, but also negotiated a treaty with the Lenni Lenape tribe. Penn's treaty-making has been immortalized in the tree that Penn and the Lenape signed under (see Penn Treaty Park). The actual treaty disappeared, probably destroyed by descendants of Penn who wished to pursue less equitable dealings with the Lenape.

THE REPUBLICAN COMPACT

The path that leads to contemporary Philadelphia really begins with a group of Theoi worshippers and scions involved in the American Revolution. They admired the representative principles embodied by both Athens and Republican Rome, and wanted to recreate them in the New World. In 1787, during the Constitutional Convention, they met and drafted an agreement they called the Republican Compact. In exchange for the pantheon's blessing on the nascent American government, they promised regular worship to a collection of Theoi deities, praising them for specific virtues they saw embodied in their new Republic. Sworn under the Penn Treaty Tree, the Compact fatebound the Theoi to the cause of the

Revolution, and essentially created the mantles of the Republican Pantheon (the Republican Theoi are detailed in The Republican Cult).

THE OMPHALOS

In 1814 Aaron Helios Moran, an American mercenary and one of the signers of the Republican Compact, brought the Omphalos of Delphi back to Philadelphia after one of his overseas adventures. He installed it in the newly-founded Athenaeum of Philadelphia (see p. 11). The Athenaeum was persuaded to add the collection and protection of mythical artifacts to its purpose, as well as to begin planning for a "renewed Oracle for America". The first Pythian Oracle of Philadelphia was installed here in 1824.

THE CURSE AND THE CONGRESS

The defining moment in Philadelphia's mythic history occurred in 1835, and is still largely a mystery. John Marshall, the United States' fourth chief justice, was a scion of Athena. Along with his efforts to create a strong federal government, Marshall became involved in questions of the abolition of slavery. While he recognized the evils of slavery, he ultimately sided with the status quo out of a fear of the social disruption that abolition would cause. He was also a proponent of resettlement of slaves to Africa.

All of this brought him into conflict with the abolitionists of the era, including several Orisha scions who had been engaged in both diplomacy with, and guerilla warfare against, the dominant Theoi pantheon. What happened next is ill-understood.

It is known that Marshall was cursed by an unknown scion of Sonponna. The curse reputedly went "As your voice speaks both for and against our freedom, let your body speak for and against itself." This reputedly manifested in a series of gastro-intestinal ailments which ultimately killed him. Upon his death in Philadelphia (where he had come seeking the advice of the Pythian Oracle), the Liberty Bell was rung. The ringing of the bell (which had recently become a symbol for the abolitionist movement) to honor Marshall somehow caused the curse to pass to the bell and to the city. The bell cracked upon that ringing, sending a ripple of Fate throughout the city.



Somehow, the twisted curse interacted with the threads of Fate attached to the Omphalos. A crack opened up in the basement of the Athenaeum, leading to an underground Terra Incognita of caves and passages. Upon the exploration of these passages, a number of Greek *drakon* were discovered.

The theft of the Omphalos and the curse on Marshall had combined to awaken the myth of Python, the great dragon that Apollo had slain, and whose fumes were the source of the prophetic visions of the Pythia. Expeditions were sent into the tunnels, but nobody was able to eliminate the threat of the “Pythonspawn”. Moreover, several draconic creatures appeared elsewhere in the city, including in Franklin Park. Not all of these creatures were Greek drakonai, either. Any number of wormlike or serpentlike creatures from different myths appeared in the city.

In 1838, a group of scions met at the Athenaeum to discuss what to do about the threat. The scion population of the city had swelled to unusual levels, due to questing scions of all stripes attempting to deal with the pythonspawn, as well as those involved in the Pythian Oracle, and the other Republican shrines in the city. It was agreed among those attending that they would act as a group under the guidance of the Pythian Oracle. In order that things not be dominated by one voice, they agreed to democratic discussion and votes

to handle non-immediate problems. They called this new organization the Pythian Congress, and over time it grew to be the de facto regulatory body for scions in the Philadelphia area.

NEW MIGRATIONS

The 19th century brought a large immigration of Irish workers into the city. Several neighborhoods grew up, and became centers for the practice of *indress*. The aos si came with them, especially the hearth spirits. The Polish immigrants and their fairy creatures made a similar transition. These religious centers disappeared through the 20th century, but there are still communities that take pride in their Irish roots.

Philadelphia had long had a notable free black population, but after the Civil War, further migrations through the 19th and early 20th centuries swelled that population, increasing and diversifying the population of those worshipping the Orisha. The Pythian Congress has had a habit of welcoming the scions of the Orisha individually, while largely ignoring the communities they have come from. This has created some stress in the Congress from time to time.

THE PYTHIAN CONGRESS TODAY

The Pythian Congress has grown into a formal organization comprising all of the scions of the gods residing within the greater Philadelphia area. Membership is mandatory, but attendance at the meetings is optional. Most members do attend the weekly meetings, however. This is partly to keep abreast of current events (important in a city where giant lizard attacks are a periodic occurrence), and partly as a social occasion.

All post-Visitation scions over the age of 18 have a vote. Minors act as non-voting members, as do pre-Visitation scions who are aware of their parentage and request to join, and non-scions who have been invited to join the Congress. Over the years membership has included prophets, centaurs, fae princes, and stranger things. Generally, there are between 15 and 30 members of the Congress, counting both voting and non-voting members.

The organization is run and meetings are chaired by a triumvirate of oracles. The leadership of the oracles rotates every year, and membership in the triumvirate is by election every three years, from among those nominated by the gods or scions for having suitable prophetic gifts. The current triumvirate consists of the Pythian Oracle, a Prophetic scion of Orula, and a scion of Odin. The only other permanent position

within the Congress is the Historian, who acts as secretary, treasurer and dispatcher, as well as managing the mythic collections of the Athenaeum. Irene Ravensblud has been the Historian for nearly 20 years.

Other business of the Congress is handled on an ad hoc basis. When a situation arises, it is either brought to the attention of the triumvirate or the Congress as a whole, depending on its urgency. The Congress then delegates one or more scions to deal with the issue. The “committee” reports to the Congress during regular meetings. Committees last until the issues are dealt with, and are then dissolved. Common issues “sent to committee” include pythonspawn, sorcerers or rogue scions attempting to take advantage of the power of the Omphalos, and disputes between scions or other denizens of the mythic community of Philadelphia.

The Congress works with the local and state authorities to deal with mythic threats and disturbances. Generally the police are willing to let “the Athenaeum” deal with monsters, ritual kidnappings, and rowdy satyrs as long as they are kept in the loop and laws are upheld. Conversely, scions are expected to defer to the police in mundane matters, even ones where scions are involved. There’s a lot of gray area, and there have been jurisdictional fights in the past, but overall the system has worked for Philly for nearly two centuries.





CHAPTER 2

PLACES

"The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the Hand of Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."

– Alexander Hamilton

PHILADELPHIA IS A busy, strange city with any number of strange mythic corners. The locations listed below are only those areas most important to the Congress itself.

THE ATHENAEUM

Home to the Pythian Congress, the Athenaeum is an Italianate brownstone, faced in marble. Inside, the decor tends towards the classical, with marble facades and secret corners. Open and airy, the Athenaeum provides a large amount of study space for those with permission to access its collections.

The Athenaeum's mundane collection includes correspondence and manuscripts from the Founding Fathers, as well as an impressive collection of architectural plans and manuscripts.

More significant, however, are the mythic holdings. In addition to a library of manuscripts and journals from American scions, the Athenaeum possesses an extensive collection of mythic artifacts, gathered through the activities of the Congress over the past two centuries. The artifacts are kept in a series of underground vaults, classified by usage and pantheon. The artifacts are not infrequently loaned out to scions on Congress business. Less often, they are claimed by divine parents and passed on to scions as their Birthrights.

THE CHAMBER OF PYTHIA

At the bottom of the Athenaeum, below the vaults, there is a single, round chamber accessed by a single stairway. The concrete room has tiers of seating surrounding the central podium. On the podium, a tall three-legged stool sits above the Omphalos, which itself rests on a grill in the floor.

This is where the Pythia, Oracle of Apollo, exercises her divinatory powers. Sitting on the stool, she summons the vapors of Python and enters a trance. In this ecstatic state, she utters the pronouncements of Fate in ancient and lost tongues. Once the trance has past, she and those skilled in translation determine the words and meanings of her prophecies.

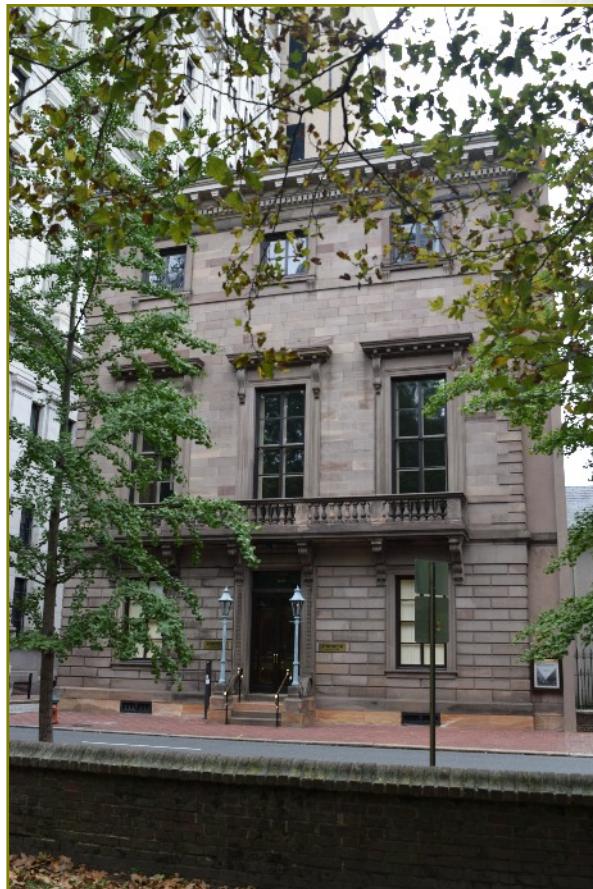
Anyone can apply to visit the Oracle and place their question before her. A donation is expected, but the

petitioner's needs and ability to pay are considered as well.

THE CAVERNS OF PYTHON

Beneath the Omphalos, under the grill in the floor (which can be removed with effort -- it's not cemented down, merely heavy) lie the Caverns of Python, a Terra Incognita comprised of an endless series of caves and tunnels, redolent with poisonous mist and inhabited by drakonai (and the occasional stranger monster). The caverns connect with the Temple of Apollo in Delphi, where another Pythian Oracle holds sway.

Thanks to the Curse of Philadelphia, the Caverns also connect occasionally with other locations in Philadelphia, allowing the drakonai to escape into the World. The combination of noxious fumes of some kind and the alignment of Fate can transform any hole in bare earth or stone into a passage into the Caverns.



THE LIBERTY BELL

Symbol of the compact of liberty between the American government and its people, the bell was initially forged in London, but then reforged by John Pass and John Stow after it cracked upon its first ringing. The bell rang to summon the Constitutional Assembly, and to celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Republican Compact. In the 1830s, the Bell (with its Bible quote referencing the liberation of slaves) became a symbol of the abolitionist movement and gained its moniker of the Liberty Bell.



Always fragile, the Bell cracked after it was rung to announce the death of Chief Justice John Marshall (see p. 7). Caught up in the power of the curse, it became an object of legend. To ring the bell when the city was endangered by the curse would summon those committed to the defence of Philadelphia. However, to ring the bell at any other time would shatter the bell.

The bell is currently kept on display inside the Liberty Bell Center. The bell is housed in a reinforced-glass tower overlooking Independence Park. The tower allows the Bell to be seen while preventing direct access by crowds. Direct access is only available through special permission, and is usually limited to VIPs and scions in a case of crisis.

If the Bell is rung while city is under a threat stemming from the Caves of Python or the Philadelphia Curse, all members of the Pythian Congress within the bounds of the greater Philadelphia area will be summoned to the source of the threat, and given a +3 Enhancement to deal with the threat. Doing so does weaken the bell, however, and is reserved for threats requiring the assistance of the entire Congress.

TEMPLE OF THE REPUBLIC

Across Independence Park from the Liberty Bell stands a modest Greek Revival temple, the first major shrine to the Theoi in United States. The temple has a large space dedicated to the Republican Triumvirate of Athena, Justicia and Mercury. Along the sides are shrines to other important members of the Republican pantheon. The entire temple is tended by acolytes, but there is only one priest, dedicated to the Triumvirate, on site.

CITY TAVERN

A famous Revolutionary-era tavern which had the Founding Fathers as patrons. The current tavern is a re-creation of the original, which burned down in the mid-1820s. Built on the original foundations, the current restaurant hides a secret in its cellars.

PHILADELPHIA PASTORALS

Those who descend into the basement by the back stairs can see another staircase leading upward, apparently into the front entry. Taking it leads you into a Terra Incognita Philadelphia, a pastoral recreation of Colonial-era life. A blend of American nostalgia and Arcadian myth, the land encompasses a “Philadelphia city” conforming to Penn’s original idealized open grid, as well as surrounding farms, fields and woods. Nymphs, centaurs and satyrs can be found surrounding the city, though they are often shy.

ARCADIA

In Greek myth, Arcadia was a vast unspoiled wilderness, the home of the god Pan. It represented a lost Eden, a gentle age of unity with nature, and is embodied by the pastoral image of the shepherd tending their flocks.

PENN TREATY PARK

This small park on the shore of the Delaware commemorates the treaty made between William Penn and Chief Tammanend of the Turtle Clan in the Lenape village of Shackamaxon. At the heart of the park stands the elm tree under which the compact was sworn.

The power of the tree is such that any it preserves the knowledge of agreements sworn under its branches, and will enforce those compacts if called on to do so. Any bargain or agreement sworn here may be solemnized at the cost of a point of Legend. Once this has been done, the tree will grant the knowledge of the exact nature of the agreement to anyone who touches

it and asks about the agreement. If the agreement has been broken, the tree will inflict a +2 Complication on anyone who broke the agreement whenever they attempt to benefit from the broken agreement.

BARTRAM'S GARDEN

John Bartram was an 18th-century botanist who did a great deal to catalog the flora of the America of his day. He founded a botanical garden as part of his research, where he collected samples from across America and the world. The garden (and the connected house) stayed in his family through the 1850s.

In 1891, it became a Philadelphia city park. At the time, the city was experiencing an influx of free black people from the Southern states, and with them a number of Orisha scions. Orunmila claimed his place in the Triumvirate of Seers, and the scions and priests of the Orisha needed a place to supply their rootwork.

Part of Bartram's Gardens were set aside for the use of the Orisha, and a priest of Osanyin was added to the garden's staff. Over the years, this position has been traditional. The current head gardener is Bartram Josephson, son of Osanyin. The Garden holds no supernatural power itself, but it an amazing source of

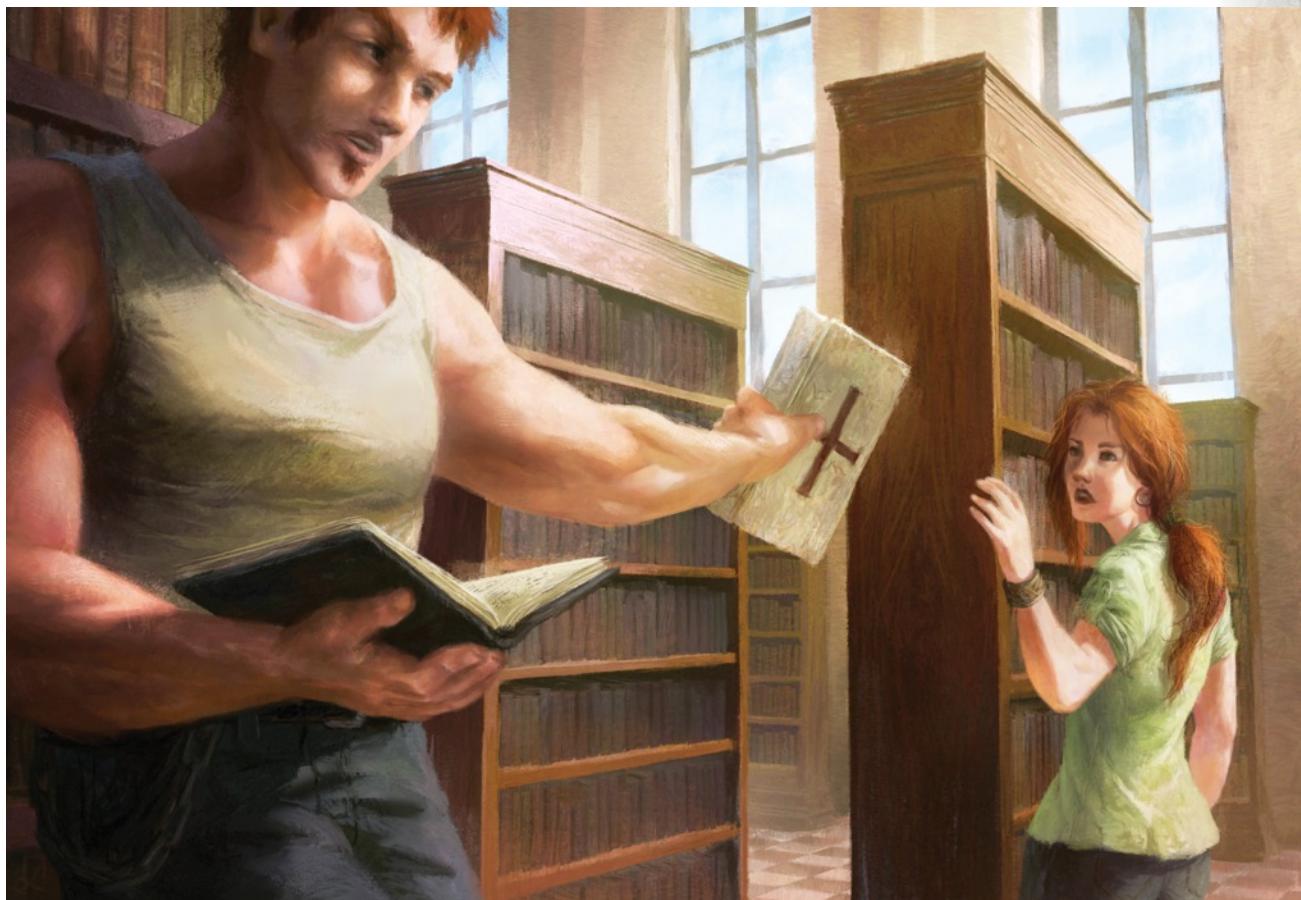
the plants needed for Orisha rootwork (+1 Enhancement for plants harvested for a particular mystical purpose).

MASONIC TEMPLE

Philadelphia's Masonic Temple is one of the most elaborate examples of Masonic architecture in the United States. It includes seven lodge rooms in various styles, but the overall general interior style is Egyptian Revival, and there are two lodge rooms consecrated to the worship of the Netjer and the practice of Heku.

CHINESE CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY CENTER

This relatively modern building in Philadelphia's Chinatown includes a small shrine specifically for the veneration of ancestors. Tablets for every family who have contributed to the building of Philadelphia's Chinatown can be found here. Their spirits can often be found here as well, living in a complex hierarchy determined by their seniority, age and contributions to the community.



FIELDS OF THE MEMEGWESI

Downriver at the elbow of the Delaware river, there is a tunnel underwater in the bank. The tunnel is all that remains of a tributary stream which was covered up long ago through the magic of the memegwesi, Manitou "little people", creating a Terra Incognita. Only those attuned to Water, those with the blood of the Manitou, or those shown the tunnel by the memegwesi themselves can find it.

The memegwesi live along the bank of this stream in an ancient Lenape village. They live an idyllic life, largely due to the fact that their farming is done entirely by human slaves. Periodically they sneak out into the World and flip over a boat, and then capture the crew and passengers and steal them away to work their fields. Time passes more slowly in here, but the human slaves still age. It has been nearly 100 years since they went on a raid, and their slaves are weakening.

DOWN TOWN

In the back alleys of Germantown, there are doors which shouldn't be there. Storm cellars or walkdown doors into basement areas don't correspond to the interiors of the buildings. Instead, they lead into root-choked passages through the earth which lead to a town under Philadelphia -- the dwarven settlement of Down Town.

Down Town is a community of tight streets and brownstone houses situated in a vast cave. Electric streetlights shaped like 19th-century gas lamps light the streets -- the alleys are illuminated only by strange, glowing mushrooms. Down Town is actually a neighborhood of Nidavellir, but its inhabitants act American and think of themselves as Philadelphians.



RELIGION IN PHILADELPHIA

As befits a city that attracts Scions, many religions are represented within Philadelphia. Here's a quick list of the various practices that can be found in Philly, and where you can find them:

AESIR

With a sizeable German population, personal family practices of laukr are common in Philadelphia. There is a prominent stave temple in the Chestnut Hill area of Northwest Philadelphia which has been there since 1835.

DEVA

Philadelphia's small South Asian population has set up several temples in the area. Each has one or two priests and serves a local population. Recently, however a grand temple has been raised northeast of the city. Its elaborate facade and flock of peacocks have led to the rumor that an avatar of Sarasvati has made her home here, but so far no confirmation has come to the Congress from the temple.

KAMI

There is one Shinto shrine in Philadelphia, on the grounds of the Shofuso house & garden in Fairmount Park. The shrine is small, and kept by volunteers, though the Japanese America Society of Philadelphia ensures that Shinto rituals are performed in the shrine and house on a regular basis.

MANITOU

There are no midewiwin in Philadelphia. The displacement of the Lenni Lenape means that their traditional territories harbor few, if any, of the Anishinaabek or their cousins.

NETJER

Kemetic worship in Philadelphia has become inextricably intertwined with Freemasonry in the city. The only temple spaces are those areas of the Masonic Temple dedicated to Kemetic practice. The city favors Ptah, Khnum and Bast.

ORISHA

Abòrìshà are common in Philadelphia. They practice in small, neighborhood groups, with practices spanning the whole of the African diaspora.

SHEN

There are several Buddhist temples which honor Shén in Philadelphia, as well as a traditional shrine in the Chinese Cultural and Community Center.

TEOTL

There are few Mēxihcāh in Philadelphia, and no formal places of worship. Some people have small altars in their homes.

THEOI

Hellenismos has been a growing faith in City of Brotherly Love ever since the Omphalos was brought here in the 19th century. The most common faith is the Republican cult, whose worship rituals are centred on the Temple of the Republic in Independence Park. There is also a Cult of Liber which meets regularly in various locations, and several other independent shrines to the Theoi.

TUATHA DE DANANN

There are several small shrines in Irish neighborhoods, but most rituals get performed in private homes or community centres. Ind iress priests aren't uncommon, but most of them practice their vocation in their spare time.



32

gym, after running
you're putting the
!

isrhodos
vgun32. Shear
t everything.

@jmalik
isrhodos on 5th ave.
Donnie's got style, I'll give him t

Donnie Rhodes @adonisrhodos
Right back at ya, friend



Shelly Fairchild
OMG, Saw @adonisrhodos
to work. Think I
I'm feeling "love"



Donnie Rhodes
I might have the

CHAPTER 3 PEOPLE AND MONSTERS

"Hide not your talents, they for use were made,
What's a sundial in the shade?"
- Benjamin Franklin

THE PYTHIAN CONGRESS

ALL OF THE characters in this section also appear in The Pythian Congress document with full, playable stats. They are listed here with Antagonist stats.

THE PYTHIA

The Pythia is the chosen oracle of Apollo, the conduit of the powers of the Omphalos. Traditionally subservient to the priesthood who interpreted her trance-visions, the Pythia's role has broadened with the rise of both feminism and audio recorders. Today, the Pythia is the high priestess of Apollo's Oracle, and interprets her own prophecies.

The current Pythia is Laurel Holt, age 23. Laurel was selected to replace the previous Pythia through the power of the oracle when she was only 6, and trained with the then-current Pythia after school and on weekends from then on. When she was 16, the Pythia retired, and Laurel ascended to the sacred stool.

Laurel is a serious-minded young woman who is focused on Fate. Despite her young age, she makes her voice felt in the Congress, trying to weld it into the coherent body she knows is necessary. She is concerned with the increase in problems in Philadelphia recently, and she has been using her oracular abilities to try and get to the bottom of things. So far, she has accomplished little.

LAUREL HOLT, THE PYTHIA

Archetype: Nemesis
Knacks: Unerring Delivery (Liminal), Somebody's Watching Me (General)
Flairs: Curse
Drive: Serve the Oracle, avoid the coming disaster
Primary Pool (11): Omens & portents
Secondary Pool (9): Self-defence, problem-solving
Desperation Pool: 6
Health: 5
Defense: 4
Initiative: 9

DAVID MARTINEZ, PROPHET OF ORULA

A born leader, David Martinez is a Prophet and the Chosen Voice of Orula (Orunmila). He began by using his gifts as a babalawo, and his assertiveness and skill

earned him the orisha of divination's blessing, and a call to the Pythian Congress. He has been a part of the Triumvirate for a decade now.

Under David's leadership, the Congress tends to focus on action in the community as well as in the supernatural spheres. There are those who complain that this isn't the purpose of the gathering, but David's view is that since the Curse of Philadelphia began as a response to social injustice, balancing the scales will help ameliorate the situation.

DAVID MARTINEZ, SCION OF ORULA

Archetype: Nemesis
Purviews: Gun, Fortune
Qualities: none
Flairs: Dread Gaze (fear),
Drive: Unravel the problems of the Congress, Help your community
Primary Pool (11): Leadership, divination
Secondary Pool (9): Orisha rituals, parkour
Desperation Pool: 6
Health: 5
Defense: 4
Initiative: 9

IRENE RAVENSBLUD

Irene is the Congressional Historian. She acts as secretary for the Congress, as well as chief researcher and curator of the Congress' supernatural collections. In addition, she can add her mastery of seidr to the prophets' oracular abilities when needed.

Irene is a trans woman in her early 50s. She joined the Athenaeum in her early 20s, fresh out of graduate school, and worked her way up to Historian. She dresses and looks like a stereotypical librarian, with tweed suits, a bun often held together by pencils, and large glasses. She is often preoccupied with research, and tends to be short with those who distract her to no good reason, but she is glad to help with 'an actual challenge'.

Irene initially joined the Athenaeum looking for information on her father. While she was able to discover his identity early on, Irene was only recently Visited by him. Odin told his bookish daughter that she would be needed, and granted her the assistance of his raven Muninn.

IRENE RAVENSBLED, SCION OF ODIN

Archetype: Nemesis

Purviews: Wyrd, Journeys

Qualities: A Cage of Words

Flairs: Curse

Drive: Unravel the problems of the Congress, Learn everything you can

Primary Pool (11): Occult lore, Philadelphia history

Secondary Pool (9): Stick-fighting, academic discussion

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 5

Defense: 4

Initiative: 9

BARTRAM JOSEPHSON

Rootwork runs in Bartram Josephson's blood. His family have been traditional magical practitioners for as long as they've been in America (and probably longer). Blessed by Osanyin at birth, Bartram was chosen to become the tender of Bartram's Garden and trained from birth to be a master of plants.

Bartram's main focus these days is in tending the garden, and cultivating the mystical plants needed for the magical practices of the city's practitioners, both Orisha and otherwise. He is also a skilled healer, and doubles as a medic for the Congress.

BARTRAM JOSEPHSON, SCION OF OSANYIN

Archetype: Nemesis

Purviews: Gun, Fertility, Health

Qualities: none

Flairs: none

Drive: Take care of those under your care, both plants and people

Primary Pool (11): Botany, rootwork, traditional medicine

Secondary Pool (9): Keeping quiet

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 5

Defense: 4

Initiative: 9

DANIEL STONE

As befits a city with this much mythic and monstrous activity, the Philadelphia Police have a Supernatural Investigations Squad. This squad deals with reports of the strange and occult, including scions, sorcerers, dark cults and renegade spirits. They work

closely with the Pythian Congress, allowing the scions to deal with the monstrous side while keeping the mundane details in sight.

Lieutenant Daniel Stone is one of the SIS's main investigators, and their liaison with the Pythian Congress. He is an intensely serious young man, focused on the case at hand. He speaks only when he has an important detail to share. Daniel is a scion of Bast, though he doesn't usually advertise his mother's identity.

DANIEL STONE, SCION OF BAST

Archetype: Nemesis

Purviews: Heku, Moon

Qualities: none

Flairs: Second Wind

Drive: Protect and Serve

Primary Pool (11): Investigation, ritual magic

Secondary Pool (9): Silence, combat

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 5

Defense: 4

Initiative: 9

OTHER DENIZENS

MEMEGWESE

Little folk of the rivers and streams, memegwesi are playful souls but at times they can be cruel. In particular, they are able to flip any boat traversing their rivers, no matter how large. This can cause a lot of trouble. Overall though, they would rather get along with people, as long as they're shown the proper respect.

Memegwesi are short people, about 3' high, and covered in otter-like fur. They have large heads and eyes, and their hands are webbed.

MEMEGWESE

Archetype: Foe

Qualities: Twitchy, Unseen, Vulnerability (salt water)

Flairs: Upend - Spend 1 Tension; a target boat is upended, or a targeted swimmer is considered Prone.

Drive: Have fun. Live the good life without working

Primary Pool (7): Hiding, swimming, fishing

Secondary Pool (5): Tricks, wrestling

Desperation Pool: 3

Health: 1

Defense: 1 (4 if Unseen)

Initiative: 4

DWARVES (DVERGAR)

The dwarves of Down Town are renowned for their craftsmanship, and many make their living crafting special and unique items, either for other dwarves or for the surface world. This is a living community, though, and many make their livings in a myriad of ways, either in Down Town or in Philadelphia above.

While most dwarves are law-abiding and reasonable, they have had a problem lately with organized crime. The brothers Snorri and Durri Runnison made their money and built their organization in black marketeering, but recently they have expanded into protection operations in Down Town. Their fellow dvergar are unhappy, but so far nobody has been able to find a way to push back.

DVERGAR THUG

Archetype: Foe

Qualities: Armored (included), Sure-Footed, Vulnerability (sunlight)

Flairs: none

Primary Pool (7): Intimidation, Brawling

Secondary Pool (5): Navigation, Guns

Desperation Pool: 3

Health: 2

Defense: 2

Initiative: 4

SNORRI AND DURRI RUNNISON

Archetype: Nemesis

Qualities: Armored (included), Institutional Disbelief, Sure-Footed, Vulnerability (sunlight)

Flairs: Inspiration

Drive: Gain power, avoid the law, keep the other brother in his place

Primary Pool (11): Machinations, threats, dirty tricks

Secondary Pool (9): Brutality, craftsmanship

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 6

Defense: 5

Initiative: 9

Snorri and Durri are a pair of brothers who built up their crime network through ruthless moves and exploitation of their fellow dvergar. They have plenty of enemies, but so far they are all more afraid of the pair than angry.

Things won't last, however. The brothers each resent the other, and are sure that they are on the verge of being betrayed like they betrayed their former business partners.

BASILEUS AND NIKOLAUS

Leaving behind the wilds of Philadelphia Pastoralis to make the city their playground, satyr brothers Basileus and Nikolaus run a recurring pop-up rave. Bas handles behind the scenes chores, arranging site use, stocking the bar, and starting the rumor mill churning to advertise events, while Niko is front and center once the party starts, working the floor between rounds at the DJ booth. The pair run a clean house and are immensely proud of the fact. Along with their bouncers, Bas and Niko keep an eye on the crowd, intervening when bad behavior threatens to spoil a guest's fun. While there are recreational substances on offer at the bar, the house manages their own supply, and outside dealers are run off with extreme prejudice.

BASILEUS AND NIKOLAUS

Archetype: Rival

Qualities: A Cage of Words, Inspiration, Natural Weapons (horns), Sure-Footed

Flairs: Hypnotic Charm

Drive: Everybody plays, everybody wins

Primary Pool (9): Athletics, Headbutt, Revelry; *Bas*: Intoxicants (+1 Enhancement); *Niko*: Music (+1 Enhancement)

Secondary Pool (7): Alcohol Tolerance; *Bas*: Local Statutes; *Niko*: Electronics

Desperation Pool: 5

Health: 3

Defense: 3

Initiative: 6



THREATS

PYTHON SPAWN

Pythonspawn actually refers to two different though ultimately linked threats: the Caves of Python and The Philadelphia Curse.

THE CAVERNS OF PYTHON

The Caverns of Python (see p. 11) are directly linked to the myth of Apollo and Python. For as long as the Pythian Oracle remains in Philadelphia, the Caves of Python will periodically spew forth venomous draconic serpents. Cutting off the caves cuts off the Pythia's power.

The creatures spawned through the Caves are traditional Greek *drakonai*. Largely serpentine, they have four legs coming from an elongated body, and a serpent-like head, including poison fangs. They are also able to breathe poison gas.

DRAKON (HATCHLING)

Archetype: Foe

Qualities: Natural Weapons (teeth)

Flairs: none

Drive: Hungry!!!

Primary Pool (7): Biting, slithering into tight spaces

Secondary Pool (5): Burrowing, constriction.

Desperation Pool: 3

Health: 1

Defense: 2 (armor)

Initiative: 4

Hatchlings are even more snakelike than their parents. Their legs are nearly vestigial, and they move by slithering. Hatchlings are about 6' long from snout to tail. Their poison, however, is still undeveloped, causing only momentary shortness of breath.

DRAKON (JUVENILE)

Archetype: Rival

Qualities: Miasmic Presence, Natural Weapons (teeth & tail), Size (+1), Toxic (gas)

Flairs: none

Drive: Eating, staking out territory, killing supernatural Denizens in Philadelphia

Primary Pool (9): Fighting, thrashing

Secondary Pool (7): Poison, burrowing

Desperation Pool: 5

Health: 3

Defense: 4 (armor)

Initiative: 6

Even a juvenile drakon is large and dangerous. At this stage they've grown to 12-15' in length, and their legs have grown out, along with their torso area. They are now able to breathe out a cloud of noxious breath which is both foul-smelling and acidic. The smell of this poison surrounds them at all times.

DRAKON (MATURE)

Archetype: Titanspawn

Qualities: Apocalyptic Presence, Natural Weapons (teeth & tail), Size (+3), Toxic (fangs, gas)

Flairs: World Shaking

Drive: Protecting your territory, eating, killing Scions (especially Theoi)

Primary Pool (13): Fighting, thrashing

Secondary Pool (11): Poison, crushing

Desperation Pool: 7

Health: 10

Defense: 5 (armor)

Initiative: 8

A mature drakon is huge, between 100-200' in length. With a head big enough to swallow a large man whole, and a tail which can sweep a street clean of cars, it's a force of nature. At this point, their poison breath can hit everything within Close range of them.

DRAKAINA

Archetype: Nemesis

Qualities: Natural Weapons (teeth), Size (+1), Stand Tall, Toxic (venemous fangs), Vengeful Blood

Flairs: none

Drive: Protect the nest

Primary Pool (11): Grappling, managing drakonai

Secondary Pool (5): Poison, hunting

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 5

Defense: 4 (armor)

Initiative: 9

Occasionally, a clutch of eggs will instead hatch a drakaina. This female drakon has a bipedal form, with a humanlike face and arms, and moves upright on either one or two tails. Drakaina are driven to tend egg clutches and act as assistants for larger drakon.

THE PHILADELPHIA CURSE

The Philadelphia Curse is a strange mutation of Fate caused by the intertwining of separate elements including the Caves of Python and Marshall's curse. The end result is that serpentine Titans and titanspawn are drawn to Philadelphia, and other magic and monsters will take on a serpentine element if possible. Possible manifestations of the Philly Curse include:

- A cult that worships Jormungandr buying a farm just outside of Philadelphia.
- A sorcerer's fire spell spawning flaming serpents or salamanders instead of creating a fireball.

Monsters similar to the drakonai but linked to other pantheons may also be attracted to Philadelphia. Generally, these can use the appropriate drakon stats with some minor changes, but can be described in different ways (and may have specific weaknesses).

- **Aesir:** Wyrms. Large serpents. The largest ones will be venomous constrictors related to Jormungandr.
- **Manitou:** Water serpents, centipede-like monsters from the Underworld.
- **Netjer:** Spawn of Apes, often appearing in the Delaware river.
- **Tuatha de Danann:** Worm-spawn of Crom Cruach.

THE CULT OF CTHON

The Cult of Cthon is a dark and nihilistic Titan cult. Instead of being dedicated to one titan, they venerate any number of beings associated with the earth and Underworld. Their exact goals seem murky, even to themselves, but they believe that when the "ancient gods below" retake their power on the surface, they will reward their servants in the cult.

One of the cult's main agents is the mysterious sorceress known only as "the wise woman". A master of Fortune and Fate, the wise woman appears to those in need of aid. Women desperate for a child, executives passed over for a promotion, angry disenfranchised teens. She offers them her assistance, giving them access to magical rituals which will give them what they want. These rituals always call on the Cthonic titans, giving them access to worship and the potential to make their plans manifest in the world. Of course, by then the mysterious wise woman is gone.

If confronted, she will use her Fortune powers to their fullest. One of her favorite tricks is to activate a Fatebinding on a Hero, distracting them from dealing with her. Jinxes and Canaries are perfect for this.



THE WISE WOMAN, AGENT OF THE CULT

Archetype: Nemesis

Qualities: Obligation

Flairs: Curse, Sorcery (Fortune), Mastermind

Drive: Seed the power of Cthon.

Primary Pool (11): Bargaining, Finding unfortunate souls, Cthonic rituals

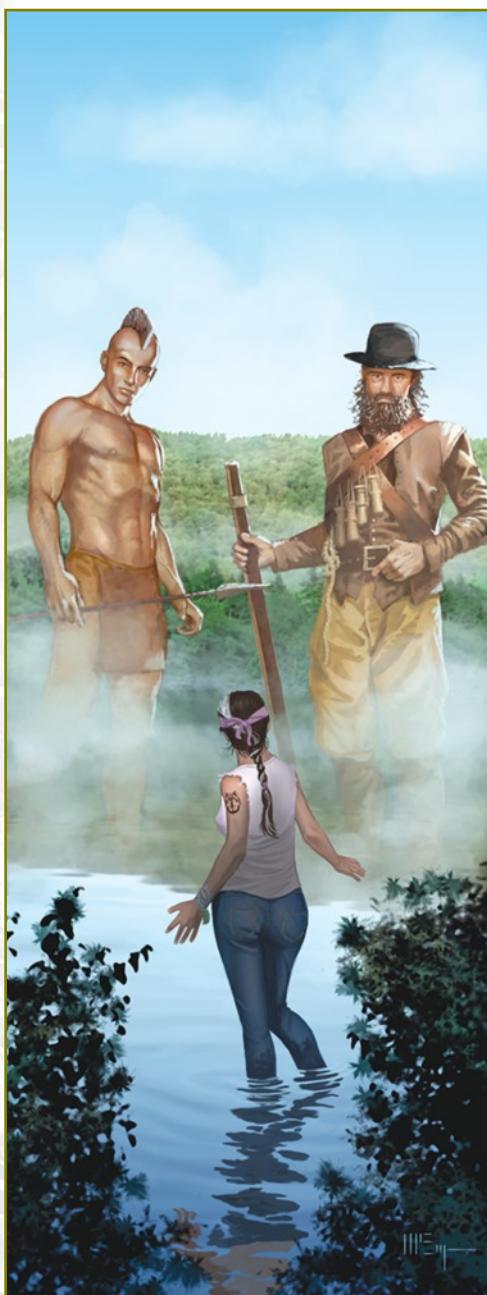
Secondary Pool (9): Curses, mysterious appearances and disappearances

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 5

Defense: 4

Initiative: 9



RENEGADE SCIONS

The high population of Scions in Philadelphia makes it a good place for those with darker agendas to hide. While theoretically all Philadelphian scions must be part of the Congress, in practice it's easy to slip through the cracks if you're interested in hiding. Here are a couple of renegades whose actions in Philadelphia might bring them face-to-face with the Heroes.

JEAN SINGER

Some Scions of Loki fight against their parent's darker nature. Jean Singer embraces it. They are a professional assassin, specializing in killing Scions and other creatures of Legend. They don't ask questions, they simply go after whatever target they are paid to kill, maim or humiliate. Until now, they have avoided taking contracts in Philadelphia, but a high enough price (or pressure on Dr. McBride) could change that.

Jean is a genderfluid person in their 30s. They are mercurial with their appearance, presenting as male one moment and female the next, with a variety of hair and eye colors, though their skin usually remains fair. Their gender identity doesn't necessarily match their looks, either. They are a master of disguise, and will appear as whatever gender does the job.

Jean's secret worry is their Wyrd. Prophesied to cause the death of their one true love, Jean lived a relatively carefree life until six months ago. Seeking medical care for a non-work-related hand injury, they met Dr. Malcolm McBride, an orthopedic surgeon working the clinic that day. It was love at first sight, like a bad comedy. Knowing that they were asking for trouble, Jean continued to see Malcolm, and soon they were dating regularly. Jean has resisted moving in with Malcolm, or coming clean about their work.

JEAN SINGER, SCION OF LOKI

Archetype: Nemesis

Purviews: Wyrd, Chaos, Deception

Qualities: Tough as Nails, Willful

Flairs: none

Drive: Do the job. Protect Malcolm

Primary Pool (11): Lies, murder, dirty tricks

Secondary Pool (9): Stand-up fights, stealth, escapes

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 5

Defense: 4

Initiative: 9

RAY CALDBURN

Pennsylvania has its fair share of rural communities, and that means that there are places for scions with agendas of their own to disappear. Ray Caldburn isn't a resident of Philadelphia, and so isn't technically in violation of the Congress' rules, but he is a man with a dark agenda, and that agenda could easily get tangled in with the Congress' own.

A Scion of Baldr, Caldburn's wyrd was actually positive: he would serve his father in the world after Ragnarok. Of course, that somehow meant he had to survive to see Ragnarok, first. The thought preyed on Ray's mind for years, until he decided that it meant that Ragnarok was coming soon, and he had to make sure to survive it. He bought a house in rural Pennsylvania, and began turning it into a bunker to survive Fimbulwinter and the chaos that would follow.

Eventually, Ray's work brought him into contact with other preppers. Unlike most of them, he was optimistic and confident that he would survive. Combined with his personal charisma, he attracted a commune of Ragnarok preppers who looked to him as their leader and savior. The power has gone to his head, and he's begun going into Philadelphia periodically to look for others to join his little cult.

With sun-bleached hair and deeply-tanned and windburned skin, Ray is the epitome of "ruggedly handsome". He dresses in jeans and work shirts, and wears a ring with his father's name etched in runes. His farm is warded against both Scions and jotnar, and he has an armory of both modern weapons and rune-blades bought from the dwarves of Down Town.

RAY CALDBURN, SCION OF BALDR

Archetype: Nemesis

Purviews: Wyrd, Beauty, Epic Stamina

Qualities: Tough as Nails, A Thousand Ships

Flairs: Dread Gaze, Inspiration

Drive: Survive Ragnarok, lead your band of followers to glory.

Primary Pool (11): Charisma, contingency plans, marksmanship, Ragnarok myths

Secondary Pool (9): Close combat, seidr, general mythology

Desperation Pool: 6

Health: 5

Defense: 4

Initiative: 9



A detailed illustration of two women in a dramatic scene. A woman with long, wavy red hair, wearing a flowing green dress, stands on the right, her hand reaching towards another woman. The second woman, on the left, has dark hair pulled back and is wearing a brown coat over a light-colored shirt; she is looking up at the first woman. In the background, several birds are flying against a bright, sunlit sky with large trees. The setting appears to be outdoors, possibly near a building with a visible doorway.

CHAPTER 4

SERIES SETUP

AND RULES

“Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.”
– Benjamin Franklin

PHILADELPHIA IS NOT a typical city for the World. Not only does it have a large (ridiculously large by the standards of *Scion: Hero*) population of scions, it also has a number of problems which spawn semi-related dangers on a regular basis. The number of problems explains the number of scions, but it's still an unusual city.

This is because **Philadelphia and the Gods** as written isn't meant for your average Scion series. It's meant to be the backdrop for an ongoing pick-up game, one where the cast of scions changes from session to session. This is a great way to deal with a less stable group of players, who can't always make it every week, or ongoing play at a game store or club.

Of course, you're welcome to use this Philadelphia however you see fit, but if you're interested in exploring the pick-up game format, here are the rules changes which make things flow smoothly.

TROUPE BASED PLAY

When you start off a pick-up series like this, you'll need a larger number of player characters than usual. While players are encouraged to make multiple characters, you may need to boost the pool, at least at the beginning. The **Pythian Congress** document includes a solid starting selection of characters for a Philly game, including several of the notable scions mentioned in the setting descriptions.

Instead of having a single character each, characters are placed in a common pool. At the start of each adventure, the players select a hero to play for the adventure. If the players aren't entirely comfortable with this, let them put their names on a single character. They get first choice of that character each time they play, and are the only ones who can spend XP for the character.

SELF CONTAINED ADVENTURES

Instead of focusing on the developing story of a Band of Heroes, a pick-up game focuses on the moment-to-moment adventures of those Heroes who answer a particular call. This means that from one week to the next, the adventures may not have anything to do with each other. A problem arises, and either the Seers of the Congress warn of it, or the Congress comes to the PCs and asks them to deal with it.

This doesn't mean that there's no continuity, no recurring characters or developing themes. On the

contrary, the backdrop of Philadelphia will continue to evolve over time. Recurring SGCs will be added, villains will reappear with new schemes, and the life of the city will be all the richer for being a jumble of stories, instead of one narrative.

The other thing about Philadelphia adventures is that they're short. Most of the time, you want to create an adventure that can be resolved in a single evening's play, about 3-5 hours. One core problem, one twist, and 2-4 scenes. There's nothing wrong with a longer story every now and then, of course, provided everybody is around for all the game sessions. The Adventure Generator on page 27 is set up for one-night adventures.

EPISODIC DEEDS

Myth has its fair share of short tales as well as epics, so there's not a lot to hold you back from one-shot stories in *Scion: Hero*. However, the Deeds system really is structured around ongoing stories rather than one-shots. Instead of the Deeds listed in the book, this Deed structure works more smoothly for one-shot tales.

Short-Term Deed: This is the same as in the book. The player picks a Deed that the character can accomplish over the course of a one-session story. When they succeed, they gain 1 XP. If all the players accomplish their Short-Term Deeds, they all gain an additional 1 XP.

Committee Deed: The Committee have been brought together to accomplish some task, and this is the definition of that task. The Storyguide should describe the situation to the group, and then allow the players to pick the Committee Deed together. While it's natural to define this in terms of success, there's nothing wrong with deciding that your Committee Deed for the night is, for example, “Get outmaneuvered by the new villain”. When the Band achieves this Deed, everyone gets 1 XP.

Legendary Deed: This is a personal deed that a player chooses for a character with the consent of the group. It represents the next great milestone in that hero's story, for good or ill. “Slay a great Titanspawn” or “Defy my divine parent for the greater good”.

Once a Hero has completed three short-term deeds, two band deeds and their legendary deed, they increase their Legend by 1, with all that comes with it.

ENDURING BONDS

Bonds are a great way to represent Heroes who normally work together in an episodic situation. As such, here's an alternate rule for Bonds. When you work together and create a Bond, characters may buy a Bond rating up to the number of successes on the teamwork roll, at a cost of 1 XP per rating. These Bond ratings refresh every session.

ENDURING FATEBINDINGS

Rating 1 Fatebindings can be very transient in a game of one-shots. Consider allowing rating 1 Fatebindings continue on to the next episode, as long as they were used in the current adventure.

HEROIC PLAY

The structure of this kind of pick-up play lends itself well to the wandering adventures of Heroes, but it fits less well with the journey to godhood described in *Scion: Demigod*. As such, it's advised that play stops at Hero for *Philadelphia* and similar games. Characters who attain 4 Legend can either be retired from the series, leaving town to seek their greater destinies, or they can be played without any further increases in Legend. Whether you want to allow them Legendary Deeds to give them a sense of story momentum is left to the group.

THE ADVENTURE GENERATOR

An ongoing series of one-night adventures demands a lot of content. Add to that the fact that often, you're playing at short notice (as a fill-in if your regular game gets cancelled, for instance), and it's important to have some way to generate adventure ideas quickly.

Enter the Adventure Generator. Roll six dice, and you have the bones of an adventure. The first three dice give an Outline of the adventure: what kind of plot, how to get started, and a twist to complicate matters. The second three dice are applied to the tables of whichever kind of plot you rolled in the first half.

Be warned that this generator doesn't do all the work for you. In particular, the specific faces of the legendary threat or quest your Heroes are called to meet isn't filled in for you. This will probably take some research on the GM's part (or at least a look in **Mythical Denizens**). The generator also only sets up the situation; it doesn't tell you what comes next or how to resolve it, so be ready to improvise to a greater degree than a scripted adventure.



OUTLINE

D10 You are asked to...

- 1-4 ...Fight a monster
- 5-7 ...solve a problem
- 8-10 ...go on a Quest

D10 by...

- 1-3 ...a warning from an Oracle
- 4 ...a request from the gods
- 5-7 ...the Pythian Congress
- 8 ...an ally
- 9-10 ...someone in need

D10 Things are complicated by...

- 1-2 ...The involvement of a third party
- 3-4 ...A secondary goal
- 5-6 ...urgent time pressure
- 7-9 ...misinformation
- 10 ...a Fatebinding or other personal issues

FIGHTING MONSTERS

D10 The monster is...

- 1-4 ...Pythonspawn
- 5-6 ...connected to the Cult of Cthon
- 7-8 ...titanspawn or beast from other myths
- 9 ...a renegade Scion
- 10 ...a sorcerer

D10 The monster threatens...

- 1-2 ... a landmark
- 3-5 ...a neighbourhood
- 6 ...a group of people
- 6-8 ...a Fatebound person
- 10 ...a treasure

D10 The monster is connected to...

- 1-2 ... the Theoi
- 3 ... the Orisha
- 4 ... the Tuatha de Danann
- 5-6 ... the Aesir
- 7-8 ... the Manitou
- 9 ... the Shen or Deva
- 10 ...another pantheon

SOLVING PROBLEMS

D10 The problem is...

- 1-3 ...disruption of social order
- 4 ...a physical threat
- 5-7 ...stolen objects/resources
- 8-10 ...missing people

D10 Caused by...

- 1-2 ...a renegade Scion or sorcerer
- 3-5 ...friction between divine factions
- 6-7 ...disruptive Fatebindings
- 8-10 ...action by supernatural Denizens

D10 The problem is related to...

- 1 ... the Theoi
- 2-3 ... the Orisha
- 4-5 ... the Tuatha de Danann
- 6 ... the Aesir
- 7-8 ... the Manitou
- 9 ... the Shen or Deva
- 10 ...another pantheon

QUESTS

D10 Journey to...

- 1-5 ...a local Terra Incognita
- 6-7 ...a secret location in Philadelphia
- 8-9 ...a distant Terra Incognita
- 10 ...a distant location in the World

D10 in order to...

- 1-4 ...retrieve a treasure
- 5-6 ...gain a person's aid
- 7-8 ...locate a lost place or people
- 9-10 ...complete a legendary task

D10 The quest is related to...

- 1-2 ... the Theoi
- 3-4 ... the Orisha
- 5 ... the Tuatha de Danann
- 6 ... the Aesir
- 7-9 ... the Manitou
- 10 ...another pantheon