

Years of Woe

Compiled and edited by Ryan L. Shelton for the November 2012 Risus One-Page Challenge.
Original ideas from the imaginations of the players of the Dieselarch Lexicon: <http://lexicon-rpg.wikispaces.com>

Overview

The Dieselarch Empire is crumbling. The once bright Sunlight Hegemony has crumbled as Anarchomages and Ætherpriests battle over the nature of magic. Rebels and anarchists have pulled many of the once great cities down stone by stone. Scattered pockets of empire remain, ruled by aristocratic lords or powerful members of the Bureaucratic Pool

Geography

The Archipelago is divided into three regions based both on shared geography and the periods during which they were conquered by the Dieselarch Empire.

Dieselomnina. Three large islands, 7 medium islands and numerous smaller islands in the center of The Archipelago, Dieselomnina is the traditional home of the Dieselarch Empire and was largely the extent of the empire in its earliest days.

Jopagella. These ten medium islands and numerous smaller islands stretch across the southern reaches of The Archipelago.

Qallach. The four large and 15 medium islands of Qallach wrap from the east, through the north, and to the west of the Archipelago.

The Anticithera

An enormous difference engine, built during the first age of the Dieselarch Empire, this was used to extensively to help plan all levels of government activity. Even private citizens consulted the Anticithera at Correlation Centers across the Archipelago.

The Sfaira

Widespread use of the Ætheric Pump (the single most important invention/discovery of the Dieselarch peoples) depleted the membrane between reality and the Sfaira, allowing Exobios to freely enter this world. By the time of the Years of Woe, Exobios exist in nearly every corner of the Archipelago.

Factions

Ætherpriests Although it suffered greatly as a result of the popularity of Æther Pumps, the Religio-philosophical underpinnings of The Hapellan Church survived, and was ultimately proven true. Ætherpriests, Techomages, Mechanomancers are all wonderworkers whose medium is some combination of technology and Ætheric magic.

Anarchists Nearly all opposition to the Empire was internal. And while all anarchists want to destroy the Empire, they have little common notion of what should follow. As the Empire crumbled and the Years of Woe began, nearly any bandit or warlord not associated with another group or ideology was called an Anarchist.

Bureaucrat Pool Once the clerks and minions of the Dieselarchi aristocracy, the bureaucratic class slowly gained power and ultimately isolated the aristocracy and ran the Empire themselves. Now they manage autonomous remnants of the Empire throughout the Archipelago

Knights of the Empire There are three major orders of knighthood extant in the Archipelago.

The Knights of Ætheria The largest and best-respected of the Knighthood Orders, the Knights of Ætheria were originally a large band of Mercenary fighters who styled themselves the Æther Lords. The Sunlight Hegemony viewed them as a major threat, but chose to co-opt them into the peacetime providers of protection and security. They are best known for their use of Æther and Steam powered mechanical mounts, such as the Quartz Raptor and the Coal-burning Pony.

The Sheriff-Knights of the Court The Court of the Empress's Mercy (the Imperial Courts) had maintained a large number of Sheriffs to enforce its ruling since its institution, and when the Knighthood Orders became popular, the Sheriffs became Sheriff-Knights.

The Knights of Iscar The technologically ambitious Knights of Iscar constantly maintained the pretense that their efforts were directed at the overall advancement of the sciences, and hired themselves out not just as a military unit but as a general research and development team.

Republic of Arts As the Early Age of the Dieselarch Empire waned into transitory chaos, a small group of scholars, utopians, and sophiturgists established the Balloon Brigade. Driven by a desire to preserve the accumulated Dieselarchi wisdom and culture, and taking advantage of the Ætheric Pump, Frejervik Nestoria perfected the Vistulic Skycraft. Using the technology of the Vistulic Skycraft, Nestoria and his companions outfitted the first fleet of lighter-than-air craft: The Balloon Brigade.

The Republic of Arts is the same idea, 900 years later. It is a flotilla of airships, a sky-borne city-state, which roves the Archipelago to rescue works of art and culture. Their fleet of airships slowly moves from island to island in the Archipelago, sending squadrons of Shrikes and Wyvern personal-fliers down to the surface to find treasures from the great Empire's past.

Exobios Creatures originating from other dimensions. There are many different types of exobios. Some are sentient and have integrated into Dieselarchi society. They frequently live in their own ghettos or communes.

Sample Clichés

Technomage, Mechanomancer, Ætherpriest: creating tehno-magical æther-powered devices, probing the depths of reality, use your ætheric essence to work magic.

Sheriff-Knight: Keeping the peace, fighting rogue exobios, enforcing the rule of law.

Æther Lords: Noblesse oblige, riding quartz raptors and coal ponies, defending the peasants from Anarchists.

Iscari Knight: thauma-technological supremacy, fighting with weird science weaponry, secretive sci-warrior

Republican Agent: swashbuckling, personal-flier pilot, dashing personality

Bureaucrat: leadership, grinding opponents beneath the cogs of bureaucracy, Dieselarch history

Exobio: Alien sensibilities, extra-planar abilities, traveling in and out of the Sfaira



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