

# DUALITY

Welcome to the setting of the Warwick Tabletop Games and Roleplaying Society's LARP: the world of Duality. Duality is a world in tension. North of the river, a panoply of dukes and barons squabble over the pieces of a kingless kingdom, while to the south a hivemind slowly grows in power. Across the sea, a series of oligarchs attempt to extract as much wealth as they can from the land, while trying not to lose it to hordes of treasure-hungry pirates. Various factions vie for supremacy and survival, and in amongst it all are the player characters: some just trying to survive, and others to change the world...



## PLACES

### NORTH OF THE RIVER

Most of the lands north of the great river are ostensibly part of the kingdom of Kitaland, but around a century ago the king disappeared into the mists, beyond even the eyes of magical divination. Instead, the remnants of the kingdom are ruled over by a series of local powers, each claiming some feudal right to the land they hold and engaged in an ongoing, if not constant, civil war. The most powerful of these are the three Archbarons, each ruling over vast swathes of land.

#### TOURN

Tourn has been the traditional seat of the monarchs of Kitaland since the burning of Ysron. It is here that many lords and barons still meet out of tradition, especially those interested in attempting to reunify the kingdom or appoint an heir to the king. This city is

also the home of the royal dungeons, now operated by the King's Reeves.

#### ANND

According to ancient legends, Annd lies in the very centre of the world. Although this is little more than a myth, it reflects the enormous spiritual significance of this city. Annd is said to be the site of many miracles, and is thought to be a place in which the Void and Deeps are in perfect balance. It is thus no wonder that the city is filled with temples and shrines of all deities and spirits, and is the meeting place of the Grand Congregation.

#### BIYBLIAT

The academy of Biybliat is the most advanced north of the river, if not in the world. Those who pass through its gates are the foremost in medicine, alchemy, and the arcane arts.

## OSTPORT

The major trading power of the known world, the newly-declared independent commonwealth of Ostport is the most prosperous of the many ports along the eastern coast. Although it is extremely rich, it has such great defenses that even the Lords of the Sea do not dare demand tribute from it.

## YSROND

Ysron was once the capital of Kitaland, as well as being home to a great number of mages. Unfortunately, it was completely destroyed in an arcane fire many years ago, and has never been rebuilt.

## THE NORTHERN TUNDRA

Although some foolish lords have tried to stake a claim to it, the region south of the Voidscaper mountains has and always will be the domain of the northern Hunter Clans, though monasteries of followers of the Void may also be found inhabiting the lower slopes of the mountains.

## SOUTH OF THE RIVER

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The land to the south and west of the river can be roughly divided into the lands of the Republic of Lupanum in the east, and the great forests in the west. For the most part, settlements in this area are likely to be clients, allies, or rivals of the Republic, with only the western Hunter Clans untouched by its influence.

## LUPANUM

North of the river, “the city” could refer to whatever centre of culture and commerce is nearest, but south of the river everybody knows that “The City” means Lupanum. All those who travel in the south will find themselves drawn to the marble metropolis, home of the military power of the Legions, the prestigious College of Aphraus, and the Palace of Lupermater, where the Senate sits in its eternal session.

## THE FREE TOWNS

Those towns that are not clients of Lupanum are an array of unique settlements, populated largely by mercenaries. Some are allies of the Republic, some are enemies, but all are aware that the wolf of Lupanum eyes them hungrily.

## THE ENDLESS FOREST.

Although much of the entire western continent is woodland, the Endless Forest is exceptional. It is deeper, larger, and thicker than any other in the known world, and is home to dangerous beasts both mundane and magical. This of course makes it a natural home for the western Hunter Clans, who make up the overwhelming majority of civilisation in this area.

## THE MISTS

Around a hundred years ago, the world was beset by horrific natural disasters and hauntings by chaotic and violent spirits in what was dubbed “the Time of

Horrors”. It was found that the origins of these tragedies was linked to whatever lies beyond the Endless Forest, which is completely shrouded in a deep fog. King Gustavus II of Kitaland rode into these Mists, and although the horrors stopped, it is not known what caused them, or whether the king survived.

## ACROSS THE GOLDEN SEA

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To the east of the main continent lies an archipelago in what is known as the Golden sea. Many of the ports and islands here are pirate hideaways, while many more are farming and fishing communities that are perfectly happy to facilitate the buccaneers that live amongst them.

## DENGE

The Lords of the Sea all agree that there is no greater or worse place on the planet than Denge, the largest gathering place of pirates in all the seas. The entire island is covered in taverns, gambling houses, and brothels in which to spend ill-gotten plunder.

## THE SHINING COAST

The Golden Sea gets its name from the vast amounts of money that can be made from the mines on the western edge of the desert. Vast amounts amounts of gold, precious gems, and vital minerals flow out from the Shining Coast to the ports of Lupanum and Kitaland, and, although slavery is no longer practised, life in the mines is still nasty, brutish, and short. Of particular note are the cities of Mitzitare, Bulwark, and Axia.

## MITZITARE

The wealthiest and oldest of all the cities of the shining coast, Mitzitare was the first to invent the great salt tanks that are now standard across the Coast.

## BULWARK

Bulwark is a centre for steel-smelting and weapon smithing, and its rulers have grown very rich by profiting off the civil war in Kitaland.

## AXIA

Once known as the Sapphire Port, Axia was recently raided by the Lords of the Sea. It’s mines and wealth are now being fought over by the other Coastal oligarchs.

## THE UNENDING DESERT

Inland from the Shining Coast, the east is almost completely uninhabitable. The desert is hot in the south, and freezing in the north, and it is only inhabited by spirits and the rare beasts that stalk the dunes and stone.

## THE SHADOWED SEA

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To the south lies the Shadowed Sea, a deep and treacherous ocean, which is said to extend forever down into the Deeps. It is said that the gods themselves lie at the bottom of the Shadowed Sea.



## THE VOIDSCRAPERS

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The Voidscrapers lie at the north of the world, and reach far up into the Void. Although those dedicated to the Void live on the lower slopes, any who ascend too far will eventually lose their souls to the Void.

## FACTIONS

There are a number of important groups that exist in the world of Duality, many of which it is possible for player characters to be a part of.

### THE KING'S REEVES

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In the absence of the king, the sherrifs of Kitaland maintained that they still held both royal authority and a duty to keep the peace. The King's Reeves view themselves as the keepers of law and order, though their critics will point out that they themselves are often corrupt and ineffective.

The King's Reeves operate across Kitaland, usually alone or in small groups. They focus on tracking down and arresting outlaws (particularly those with large bounties) rather than protecting villages and towns, and are seen by local authorities as generally harmless, though many question the legitimacy of their claim to be enacting the will of the king.

### LUPANUM

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The Republic of Lupanum is an alien society to outsiders. The citizens of the Republic are bound together in a shared hivemind, sharing thoughts with around ten others at a time in what are called Nodes, which are then organised into an advanced and multi-layered social structure. This grants the Republic great organisational advantages, but comes at the drawback that it slows the expansion of the nation, as each additional citizen puts more strain on the overall hivemind.

The citizens of Lupanum are each a member of one of the three orders: the engineers and builders of the order of Reman, the philosophers and scholars of the order of Aphraus, and the soldiers and strategists of the order of Romula. The legions of the order of Romula are by far the most disciplined and effective fighting force in the world. However, due to the limits of the hivemind, they are few and mostly dedicated to protecting the client states of Lupanum, as well as punishing those who stray out of line.

### THE HUNTER CLANS

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"Hunter Clans" is a broad term, covering a variety of tribes with varying social structures but common cultural beliefs. They are often split into the distinction of the northern clans and the western clans, but this only reflects the difference in landscape between the northern steppe and the western forest. The common trait of all Hunter Clans is an emphasis on hunting dangerous and rare beasts: almost all forms of status in a Clan are related to this central pursuit.

The Hunt is usually a solitary pursuit, as working with another hunter is less glorious than going alone (notably, working with non-hunters carries far less taboo). Although obviously not everyone in the clan can dedicate their whole life to the Hunt, it is expected that everyone be familiar with both the basics of hunting and harvesting the useful parts of slain quarry.

### THE GRAND CONGREGATION

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Throughout Kitaland and the Golden Sea, there are several venerated gods, as well as a multitude of local spirits that require prayer and dedication. So that worship could be properly coordinated and priests could collect their needed tithes, the Congregation was formed. Historically, much of the Congregation's work went to ensuring that priests were protected and given status by the state, but since the collapse of Kitaland the congregation has become a mediator between various powers due to its unique position.

Members of the Congregation vary from local shrine-keepers up to the bishops of the most well-known gods. Although members may not see eye-to-eye on many matters, they all agree in the importance of their organisation.

### THE LORDS OF THE SEA

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Although the pirates who terrorise the Golden Sea may appear unorganised, the vast majority of them count themselves as members of the Lords of the Sea. This horde of bucanears has a relatively loose membership structure, with the only real requirement being belief in and adherence to the Pirate Code.

The specifics of the Pirate Code may vary, but there are some central tenets that never change. The first rule of the Pirate Code dates back to the origins of the Lords of the Sea: "None shall ever be made a slave". Other key rules include not targeting other Lords of the Sea, the equal distribution of treasure, and the ability of the crew to depose a Captain who they find unfit for purpose.

### THE NAMELESS

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The exact origins or nature of the Nameless are unclear. They are perhaps best described as cultists, though their god, if it can be called that, is not one recognised by any others. Rather than concern themselves with worship or other trappings of religion, they instead focus on securing the future through careful manipulation of the present. Even death and destruction may for them just be part of a longer plan to achieve their grand objectives.

While exactly how the Nameless came to be is unclear, it is true that they are ancient; in their own words they claim to be older than time itself. It is also true that they do have some limited ability of precognition, to see beyond the veil of space and time into possible futures. In fact, one of the theories as to their ultimate aim is that they wish to control the course of destiny, whereas others believe they exist to keep the fabric of reality intact.

# RELIGION, SPIRITS, AND MAGIC

## THE VOID AND DEEPS

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In the most general sense, there are two major supernatural forces in the world: the Void and the Deeps. These are physical regions as well as spiritual ones, and adherents to these forces often found temples and monasteries in or near the areas that embody their faith.

The surface, where most people live, is the meeting place of these two forces, and so stands in a state of rough equilibrium between the Void and the Deeps.

### THE VOID

The Void makes up all places that are high above the ground, most notably the Voidscaper mountains to the north. The Void symbolises cold rationality, isolation, and the rejection of emotion. Followers of the Void reject gods and superstition, and focus on logical reasoning and their own moral principles. Being in the Void for too long can cause spirits to weaken, can make magic become muted, and will eventually cause those who dwell there to have their souls pulled from their bodies.

### THE DEEPS

The Deeps embodies mystery and community, and is found below ground level, especially in the depths of the Shadowed Sea. Alongside the depths of the ocean, the Deeps also manifests as a series of shifting tunnels and caves beneath the surface, reflective of the randomness of this domain. Some small, usually deeply religious, communities do make their homes there, but the constant change makes societies below very rare. Followers of the Deeps are dedicated to the gods, but are also all eager to share their faith with others.

### THE FLOW OF MAGIC AND OF LIFE

It is generally accepted that magic originates in the Void, but quickly flows downwards and pools in the Deeps. Likewise, life is said to originate in the Deeps and souls to ascend into the Void after death. What happens then is unknown.

## SPIRITS

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For the everyday people of the world, spirits are the most common, if not the only, supernatural presence they will encounter. Spirits are embodiments of an idea or a location. They are sentient, though often in a way quite different to humans. Spirits vary in strength and influence with respect to the prominence of what they represent, from the relatively weak spirits of bridges and families, to the powerful spirits of mountains or ideas. Some spirits have names, such as the spirit Lupermater of Lupanum, and many are capable of bestowing gifts and curses on those who fall within their gaze. Therefore, spirits are commonly paid tribute of prayer and maintenance of their domain. This is good for the spirits, since if the

concept a spirit embodies grows too weak it will die a slow and painful death.

## GODS

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It is commonly, but by no means universally, accepted that there are gods, and completely accepted that if they exist then they dwell at the bottom of the Deeps. Some theorise that gods are just exceptionally powerful spirits, others that they are something else entirely, and others still that they are completely fictional. If one believes in a god, one worships them all; although it is common for priests especially to pick a patron god, all gods demand tribute and respect. A great number of gods are worshipped across the world, but the most prominent are those below:

### SKOI

The god of connections, Skoi emphasises friendship and commerce. They are also the god of wisdom, but this is a byproduct of sharing knowledge.

### HELLEN

Hellen is the god of the sun, and also the god of battle. In legend, they conquered the sun and wrested it away from the Void.

### QUEXXLIA

Quexxlia is the god of fire and the god of rebirth. Their followers preach that in order for new life to arise, there must first be destruction.

### ASHEN

Known to some as the Great Leviathan, Ashen is the god of the oceans, and will supposedly one day rise to engulf the land.

### VELOS

Velos is the god of the random and the absurd. Some call them the god of madness, but they are still prayed to as a defense against tragedy.

### LUPERMATER

Only the Lupans call the wolf-mother Lupermater a god. She is certainly powerful, but almost everyone outside the Republic sees her only as a powerful spirit.

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