

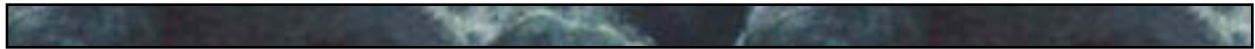


STORM KNIGHTS

# PATTERNS IN AYSLE

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JASYN JONES



## PATTERNS IN AYSLE

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## INTRODUCTION

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Aysle is a fantasy world, a place where the impossible is commonplace, where both mighty wizards and humble shepherds work magic, and where the laws of physics are bizarrely different. Stranger than these, however, are the Patterns.

In Aysle, Patterns are the true forms of existence, the templates for everything that does exist, has existed, or can exist. The characteristics of all things are determined by their Pattern, and everyone and everything in the cosm is just a manifestation of a higher reality– the realm of the Patterns.

The Patterns, and lore of them, are unique to Aysle and heavily influence Ayslish attitudes, society, and culture. It is

impossible to truly understand Aysle– or the Ayslish– without first understanding the Patterns.

The *Aysle Sourcebook* introduced the concepts of Patterns, but didn't delve into their nature very deeply. A lot of details about Patterns were omitted, and some that were presented were contradictory or confusing.

This article takes the fragmentary details about Patterns given in the *Aysle Sourcebook* and extrapolates from them a coherent philosophy of Patterns. It also includes some possible influences this philosophy might have on Ayslish religions, culture, and magic.



## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PATTERNS

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A Pattern is the true form of every creature, item, substance, force, phenomenon, or concept. The Pattern contains within it all that a thing is, and all that it can become. Everything about a given thing is contained within its Pattern.

Aysle is a diskworld, because that is part of its Pattern. The sun rises and sets because that is an aspect of its Pattern. The stars exist because of their Patterns. Everything is the way it is, because of its Pattern.

Patterns are not mere knowledge, but are the essence of the thing, the source of the thing. Yet just as important is the *manifestation* of the Pattern: the actual thing the Pattern created. The only reason Patterns exist is to create things, and without manifestations the Patterns cannot fulfill their purpose.

Patterns describe everything about a manifestation and are therefore unchanging (while manifestations change constantly.) They are immutable and eternal, having no beginning and no end.

As immutable truths, Patterns are objective and definitive. They define what exists and do not change based on what is known or theorized about them.

The realm of the Patterns includes Patterns of things that might one day exist, but which do not yet exist. A Pattern is thus

“Patterns are not mere knowledge, but are the essence of the thing, the source of the thing.”

independent of any given manifestation of it— it exists even if no manifestations of it do, and it existed before any manifestations of it did.

As everything that exists or has existed

### PATTERNS IN THE AYSLE SOURCEBOOK

Certain facts about Patterns are given in the *Aysle Sourcebook*. The Patterns are the pure form or true form of existence, and everything— all that was, is, or might be— has an associated Pattern. This includes "thought, communication, emotion, matter, and movement."

Patterns exist somewhere other than "here," though where they do exist is never fully explained. Magic, and especially designing spells, depends heavily on using Patterns, and magic— and only magic— allows the Living to sense and interact with the realm of the Patterns.

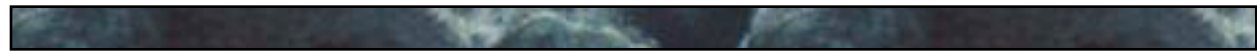
This might seem to place them beyond the reach of all but those studied in the magical arts. However, all Ayslish are born with the ability to use magic and hence the ability to sense and interact with the Patterns. All Ayslish therefore know that Patterns exist, and even have an intuitive knowledge of their most basic characteristics. The existence of Patterns is an objective fact and they are as real as the Sun, the Stars, and the Limit.

descends from Patterns, the realm of the Patterns predates the manifested world. The realm— and the Patterns thereof— existed long before Aysle existed.

The realm of the Patterns is therefore more than just some adjunct dimension that mages use to work magic, it is an eternal realm, the place from which everything else, including the gods and the afterlife, is descended. The realm existed long before Aysle was created, and will continue to exist long after the diskworld crumbles into nothingness.

### The Hierarchy of Patterns

Patterns determine the nature of everything, both generally and specifically. For example, the Dog Pattern determines the nature of all dogs, while the Hunting Hound Pattern determines the nature of all



hunting hounds (a type of dog). The Pattern of Hunting Hound is contained within the Pattern of Dog (else a hunting hound wouldn't be a dog, as Dog of necessity contains everything about all dogs.) The Hunting Hound Pattern is said to be a *lower order* Pattern of Dog.

At the same time, dogs are just one example of Earthly creatures, hence everything about dogs is included within the Earthly Pattern. Earthly is said to be a *higher order* Pattern than Dog.

Patterns are derived from higher order Patterns and give rise to lower order Patterns. This progression, carried to its logical end, means that all Patterns are ultimately descended from a Prime Pattern, the highest order Pattern that defines all Patterns and hence all of existence. Perfect knowledge of the Prime would enable perfect knowledge of everything that is, was, or can ever be.

Taken to the other extreme, each individual manifestation has its own associated lowest-order Pattern, or *individual Pattern*, that determines the characteristics of that specific manifestation.

Everything in the manifested world arises out of an individual Pattern, and higher order Patterns almost never manifest directly (and if one does, it is an event of world-shaking proportions).

Like all Patterns, individual Patterns do not change, although their manifestation does, this change occurring in accordance with the Pattern. For example, all humans age. The aging process is a part of the Human Pattern, and therefore all individual human Patterns. When a human ages, they are said to be *expressing* a new *aspect* of their Pattern.

## Observing Patterns

Patterns are not of the everyday world, one cannot touch or see or otherwise sense a Pattern without using magic. Mages do so to cast spells, but they also do so to investigate the characteristics of Patterns (as Patterns are the source of and therefore the key to all knowledge).

“The realm of the patterns is an eternal realm, the place from which everything, including the gods and the afterlife, is descended.”

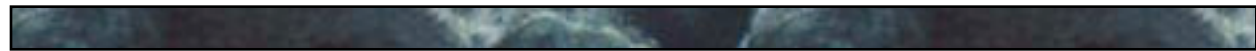
Patterns are incredibly complex, and the most skilled of mages can sense but a small portion of their totality. As a

result, sometimes magic alone isn't enough to allow the Ayslish to discern the full properties of a Pattern.

As manifestations of Patterns exist in Aysle itself (the manifested world), mages can study those manifestations to gain information about the Pattern. One cannot perfectly observe the Pattern of Dog, but by observing a manifestation of it—“my neighbor's dog”—one can gain insights into the Dog Pattern itself.

“A pattern is the true form of every creature, item, substance, force, phenomenon, or concept. The pattern contains within it all that a thing is, and all that it can become...”

Ayslish mages and philosophers seek to discover and codify Patterns by observing their manifestations and gathering and collating information about multiple manifestations. As magic can be unreliable (and often dangerous), this is often more fruitful than trying to divine the characteristics of Patterns directly.



The way to knowledge, for an Ayslish person, is to observe manifestations and build from them theories about the nature of the controlling Pattern, which Patterns define everything. As a result, the Ayslish strongly believe that existence is knowable and discoverable. Mysteries are simply aspects of a Pattern that haven't been identified.

### Patterns and Ayslish Culture

The Patterns are the most significant, most central fact of Ayslish life. The Patterns are real, and (thanks to birth magics) few dispute this. They impact every culture, and their characteristics determine how most Ayslish view the world.

Patterns underlie everything, and themselves are knowable, so everything can be explained and understood, eventually. Nothing is anomalous, and the unknown is merely a manifestation of a Pattern that hasn't been encountered or hasn't been properly understood. This leads the Ayslish to believe that there are no unknowable answers, no unsolvable mysteries.

Ayslish are curious, they have a thirst to see and understand the unknown. Mistakes or errors are chances to better learn the underlying Pattern, that they may avoid

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the mistake in the future and teach others how to do so as well.

Ayslish are well-schooled observers,

### OTHER WORLDS

Most Ayslish assume that the Patterns are universal, that all worlds arise from the Patterns. Not all do, and discovering that other cosms know nothing of the Patterns comes as quite a shock. Many simply refuse to believe that this could be true, preferring instead to blame the natives of the alien cosm— they must not be smart enough, disciplined enough, or moral enough to have discovered the truth.

Those who can accept this look upon those bereft of the Patterns with pity. Without a Pattern they have no true self and exist solely as a manifestation. As a result, they are less than fully whole.


Many of the Corrupt take this to mean that the Patternless are less than fully real, and thus they can be victimized at will. The Honorable find this behavior appalling.

Walking the surface of a world without Patterns is very disturbing to an Ayslander. Without Patterns, the world has no essence, no truth. It is mere chaos, without a template to form it. Nothing happens for a reason, and truth is therefore unknowable. The Ayslish are as appalled by Pattern-less worlds as Jakkats are by worlds of the Dead. They just seem—unnatural.

trained to notice everything, as any detail might be significant. They are tireless investigators and researchers as they believe that everything can be explained, eventually. Even if they cannot explain a mystery, they take great pains to describe and define it, that others might gain an insight into the Pattern underlying it.

The Patterns are organized and hierarchical, and the Ayslish assume that all of existence is as well. The Ayslish never look at something as being an isolated manifestation, but as a specific case of a higher order Pattern, and another after that, and another, so on back to the Prime Pattern.

Ayslish, like Earth biologists, group organisms together in a hierarchy of groups. The Ayslish base this on the Patterns, and not any categorization that would make



sense to Earth biologists. More, the Ayslish group everything in the same way, as part of the same overarching scheme.

The Ayslish believe both that the current state of things can be improved, but that it is more-or-less based on the perfect

“Ayslish Academicians display a love of the pedantic and exact and an intolerance of ambiguity.”

Patterns and so is largely correct. They tend to assume that the current methods are informed by the truths of the Patterns and have a hard time seeing or admitting that fundamental errors might exist.

In any field of endeavor, the Ayslish display a preference for incremental improvement of the status quo over rapid or extreme changes, and reject outright the wholesale replacement of current methods with new techniques.

At their worst, Ayslish can be hidebound traditionalists who cling to the past and oppose meaningful change. (This conservatism is one of the reasons that Ardinay's campaign for “half-folk” rights has been so ineffective.)

Paradoxically, Ayslish are deep believers in progress (if incremental and measured progress) and organized scholarly research. The current knowledge is known to be imperfect and so can obviously be improved upon. They take little for granted and are always looking to enhance their knowledge or techniques. Everyone, even common laborers, is inclined to seek ways to improve (the Corrupt seek ever more perfect means to pursue dissipation and vice, and to hide this from others).

Ayslish believe that any one observer or observation will be flawed, but that by comparing many observations, truth can

be discerned. As a result, they prefer to work in teams. Lone craftsmen are tolerated, but are seen as somewhat eccentric.

Ayslish reliance on teamwork also manifests as a love of organization. There are few activities that are not structured, organized, and planned. Spontaneous activities are viewed with suspicion. Overindulged, this can manifest as inflexible bureaucratic officiousness. Ayslish officials like everything to be in order, and deeply resent the anomalous and unexpected.

All Ayslish prefer explicit laws over unstated and implicit traditions. Even where standards of behavior have no attached legal penalty, the behaviors expected are detailed and explicit. Most Ayslish are upfront about what they expect and will offer, the worst are legalistic manipulators who try and twist words around to find loopholes in their promises.

### **Aysle's Magical Tradition**

As Aysle magic depends on the Patterns, its magical Tradition formed around the philosophy of the Patterns. The Tradition is so old, and its philosophies so ingrained in all the cultures of Aysle, that it has no name.

“At their worst, Ayslish can be hidebound traditionalists who cling to the past and oppose meaningful change.”

As the Patterns are universal, so is this Tradition. Any mage from any culture can learn the Tradition and the Tradition's headquarters, the Academies of the Mage Isles, are open to all magicians.

Ayslish magicians evince the same tendencies as other Ayslish: a love of team-



work, organization, incremental and painstaking change, explicit rules and expectations, shared research, and a belief in eternal and unchanging truths.

The magician's love of order and investigation is embodied in the Academy of the Mage Isles. Academicians display a love of the pedantic and exact and an intolerance of ambiguity. Each island corresponds to one, and only one, sphere of arcane knowledges. These spheres are subdivided into specific arcane knowledges, each of which has its own tower. Every island is led by a single archmage, who heads that Isle's Academy and its assorted Towers, faculties, students, and supporting services. The archmages form a council that meets to decide issues affecting all islands.

The Ayslish approach magic in the same ordered, deliberate fashion. The object of magical research is to explore and define the nature of Patterns, then use those Patterns to affect the world. Magical concepts are explored in depth, defined in detail, and there is an intolerance of uncertainty.

The Patterns studied by mages are (in general) lower order Patterns of the Magic Pattern, and their properties are determined by its properties. Mages study three types of Patterns.

The first Patterns studied by the Tradition are those corresponding to the four magics, the characteristics and limitations of each type of magic being defined by its Pattern.

The second set of Patterns are the arcane knowledges. An arcane knowledge is a Pattern corresponding to one category of potential targets for spells, focusing on

how to affect that target with magic.

The third kind of Pattern studied by mages are the supernatural Patterns known as effects. Each effect Pattern is the model for a single discrete use of magic. For example, a *fireball* effect is a manifestation of

“An arcane knowledge is a Pattern corresponding to one category of potential targets for spells, focusing on how to affect that target with magic.”

the Pattern of Fireball.

All spell effects have an associated effect Pattern, and if no Pattern exists for an effect, that effect is impossible. For example, miraculous healing is not possible with magic, because there is no effect Pattern that allows it.

The individual manifestation of effect Patterns are called spells, and each spell is a different manifestation of the effect Pattern. For example, the many *fireball* spells differ in their intensity, area affected, duration, color, sound, and so forth. Despite this, they share the same core Pattern.

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Spell design is the process of defining an exact manifestation of an effect Pattern. Each effect has characteristics defined by the Pattern and each spell must therefore honor those characteristics. Mages cannot force an effect to behave contrary to its Pattern. (Misunderstanding of the properties of an effect leads to spell defects.)

Once an effect is chosen, mages define how it manifests, specifying the spell's du-





ration, range and so forth. They also define aspects of the spell (focusing, control of form, etc.) Collectively, the details of how an effect manifests are called the Process. The combination of the Pattern (or general effect) and the Process (how the general effect operates in this specific spell) defines what the spell does when it is cast.

Once the mage has defined how the effect will manifest in the spell, he chooses symbols to evoke that affect. These symbols, also known as components, include items, gestures, incantations and so forth. The specific symbols chosen are always in some way evocative of the desired effect. In the Ayslish Tradition, these laws include Contagion, Similarity and Voice.

In addition to the standard components, that are fairly universal, most Traditions have unique components. Exclusion is an Ayslish component that involves lim-

“Much of magic, especially Alteration, involves overlaying one Pattern upon another.”

iting the spell's effect to a lower order (and thus more specific) Pattern descended from the arcane knowledge of the spell, for example designing a spell that affects only Birds and not Avians. Exclusion can go as far as limiting the effect to the lowest order

Pattern, the individual Pattern of one specific target. This is called Uniqueness.

Patterns affect Ayslish magic in other ways. Much of magic, especially Alteration, involves overlaying one Pattern upon another. When a human is altered into a dragon, the Pattern of Human is overlaid with the Pattern of Dragon. The individual human Pattern has not changed at all— the manifestation has. Therefore, the change must be supported with an active spell effect, otherwise the individual Pattern seeks to return the manifestation to its natural state.

## DUNAD AND THE PATTERN OF MAGIC

The Pattern of Magic determines what magic is in Aysle, including the four magics and their characteristics, the arcane knowledges, and birth magics. Two of the central properties of the Pattern of Magic are that people can only interact with the Patterns through magic and that magic can only be worked through interaction with the Patterns.

This presents a conundrum for mages, as one cannot sense the Patterns without using magic, and one cannot use magic without first being able to sense the Patterns. For ages this prevented anyone from using magic. In essence, the Pattern of Magic had not yet manifested.

Aurel, Dunad's sword, was infused with the Pattern of Magic (though how this


happened is unknown). When he broke the sword, Magic first manifested in Aysle. This allowed people to learn magic, cast magic spells, and sense the Patterns.

From this one moment, all of what Aysle now is descends— all spells, all magicians, all magical items. It is the epochal

“Dunad is the central figure in Ayslish history, hated by Giants and honored by humans.”

moment in Ayslish history.

Dunad is therefore the central figure in Aysle, hated by Giants and honored by humans. He gave knowledge of the Patterns and knowledge of magic to the



world, and his ascent to godhood was accomplished through this act.

## Dunad

At the time of the Breaking, knowledge of magic and the Patterns was confined to those whom Dunad had taught, those who had been his followers the long years of the Giant Wars.

Dunad began as a common warrior, one of the thousands fighting the Giants. His skill with his enchanted sword Aurel soon won him renown. He proved a natural leader, and many flocked to his banner. In time, he became the most accomplished human warhost.

His reputation was secured the day he led a daring raid on the Giants' capitol and slew the most prominent giant chieftain, Arthuk. Ever after, the Giants sought his life in vengeance, and many times his survival was a near-run thing.

Dunad's love and wife was Shali, the sole survivor of a village the Giants massacred and burned. She hated war and the predations of the Giants, but knew that peace would come only after the Giants were defeated.

Shali was Dunad's first companion, and Dunad first taught the workings of magic to her. Though magic did not yet exist, she learned all there was to know of

“The Words and Deeds of Dunad is the seminal text of continental Ayslish philosophy, law, and morality.”

it, that when magic became real, she could practice it and teach it to others.

The second companion of Dunad was Minegeh, known as the Scholar. He was a humble man, the son of shepherds, and

was slender and frail. Though incapable of wielding a sword in battle, he was renowned for his wisdom and learning.

It was he who taught the young Dunad his skills in swordplay, tactics, and strategy. In return, Dunad taught him of the unseen world of the Patterns, the source of all that is, was, and could ever be.

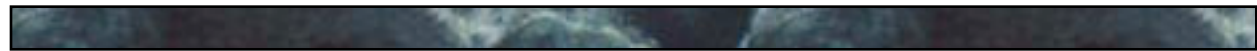
After Dunad's sacrifice in the Valley of the Sword, Shali and Minegeh the Scholar began to teach the bodies of lore he had

“Ever after, the Giants sought his life in vengeance, and many times his survival was a near-run thing.”

bequeathed. Shali established the first mage academy (a small, rude, and hidden affair, not the grand institution it later became) while Minegeh became the first priest of Dunad (now a Divinity) and taught both the philosophy of Patterns and the tenets of Honor. There were gods before Dunad, chief among them Elmiir and Arthuk (who ascended to godhood after Dunad slew him), but his was the first human religion.

Minegeh wrote *The Words and Deeds of Dunad*, the first and most significant holy book of the Church of Dunad. This book illuminates Dunad's doctrine through stories and lectures he gave, along with tales of his deeds. *The Words and Deeds of Dunad* is the seminal text of continental Ayslish philosophy, law, and morality.

According to the teachings of the Church, Dunad's divinity was present in his Pattern, and his life as a mortal merely a manifestation of his divine Pattern. He was meant to become who he was in this life, meant to teach his followers, and meant to release magic into Aysle, thereafter returning to the realm of the gods (the



afterlife). He could not free magic until his followers had learned that which was necessary to spread the practice of magic and the doctrine of Honor.

### **The Journeys and the Founding of the Academy**

After the Breaking, the companions of Dunad began spreading the word of Dunad and the lore of magic. The Giant Wars were still raging, and so the followers of Dunad were forced to move from place to place. They wandered among the many nations, even the Vikings and the Barbarians. They visited Elveim, the land of the elves, and though Shali was allowed to teach the elves magic, priests of Elmiir forbid Minegeh to preach the words of Dunad.

Among each people they organized schools of magic and congregations of the Church of Dunad. They left behind mages and priests to carry the work forward. This pilgrimage was the work of a decade, and at its end Minegeh died in the far lands of the Ice Nomads, his body laid to rest at the top of a glacier, his mantle passing to another.

During the Journeys, the companions discovered an small, isolated group of rocky islands that were honeycombed with caverns and dotted with empty ruins of unknown provenance. When her wanderings were complete, Shali returned there and established a permanent Mage Academy.

She enchanted the islands with powerful spells of unlocation and invisibility, thus preventing anyone from finding or

seeing them, unless they had been invited. Mages of each nation were brought here to study magic, safe from the prying eyes of the Giants. During these years, the Academy taught only war magics.

By the time the first class had mastered their spellcraft, the first wave of those born after the Breaking, those who were gifted with birth magic, had begun to mature. This included a great many Giants, which Giants were the only ones of their race who knew of and could use magic. Shali knew she had to strike soon, before the

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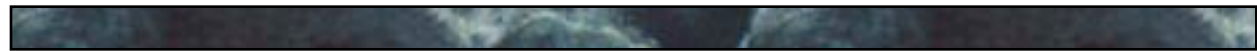
rapidly maturing Giant mages could master their magics, and ensure the Giants' final victory.

Shali's mages returned to their war-hosts, and began the campaigns long ago planned by Dunad. Aided by magic, the humans drove the Giants from the continent of Aysle. Other lands were soon freed, and one by one the Giant tribes were driven from Upper Aysle.

### **The Battle of the Shrine**

The last battle of the War took place in the Valley of the Sword, the site of the chief temple of Dunad and the Shrine of the Breaking (in which the haft of Aurel lay). With the defeat of the Giants, thousands of pilgrims from across the face of Upper Aysle had thronged to the valley, that they might worship at the Shrine. There, around the temple, they built a great city.

During the battles that drove them from the surface, the Giants had learned to hate and fear magic. They devised a plan to seize Aurel, the source of magic, and turn it upon their enemies. The Giants dug



tunnels up from the Land Between (where they still battled with the dwarves) and on Dunad's Day, the anniversary of his sacrifice, they erupted from the tunnels into the heart of the city. The slaughter was great.

“At the height of the battle, with the defenders all but defeated, Shali and the Deans of the Academy appeared over the city.”

The priests of Dunad defended the city, facing off against the priests of Arthuk, but paid a dear price. Attack after attack drove the defenders back, and the Giants drew ever nearer to the Shrine.

At the height of the battle, with the defenders all but defeated, Shali and the Deans of the Academy appeared over the city. They descended to the Shrine, now held by a mere handful of the faithful, and halted the Giant's advance. Shali found herself facing the leader of the Giant horde— Borl, the mate of Arthuk whom Dunad slew.

Secretly tutored by priests of Arthuk during the long years of the Companions' Journeys, Borl alone of the Giants had mastered magic, and had become as proficient as Shali herself. When they met in battle, the two archmages proved to be each other's equal. The struggle was epic, and awesome to behold.

The two hurled spell after spell at each other, tearing the sky and breaking the land with energy unleashed. Phantoms and monsters they raised, ice and fire they

threw. The battle about them came to a halt, as Giant and human alike stood stunned, in awe of destruction unimagined.

The battle was lengthy, and neither champion held the upper hand for long. At the last, Borl drew upon the energies of Corruption to throw a shroud of death about Shali. Shali's improvised sword of light cut through the shroud, but not before it had eaten much of her life. In but a moment, she had aged decades. She collapsed to the ground.

Borl stood over her, her armor drenched with the blood of hundreds of defenders. She sneered and drew a strange weapon— the haft of Aurel.

In secret, some nights before, Borl had entered the Shrine. Following the instructions of her god (and husband), Borl used her magics to neutralize the enchantments placed upon the Shrine, that she might draw forth the haft and steal it away. The attack on the Shrine had been but a ruse to draw Shali and the other mages out, that the Giants might slay them and wrest back control of Upper Aysle.

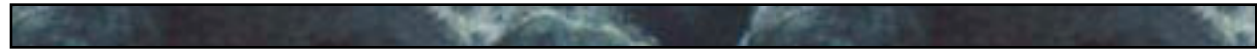
Shali staggered to her feet, her face a mask of agony. Borl drove Aurel deep into Shali's heart. Shali staggered back, her

“The attack on the Shrine had been but a ruse to draw Shali and the other mages out, that the Giants might slay them and wrest back control of Upper Aysle.”

life's blood pouring down the front of her white tunic, and collapsed. She died mere feet from where her husband had passed into memory. Among those that were there, many swore

that, as she fell, she smiled as if in triumph.

Borl bellowed, her victory cry echoing throughout the now-silent city. The defenders looked on in horror as she leaned down and cupped a handful's worth of



blood from the corpse, that she might drink of her foe's life (as is the Giants' way). She raised her bloody gauntlet to her mouth, and dripped Shali's blood onto her face, where it began to burn.

Aurel, clutched in the giantess's other hand, likewise erupted in flames, furiously burning white hot flames that began to consume Borl entire. The sword glowed white with the heat. Borl died screaming, her flesh burning to ash. Aurel itself vanished in the flames, and never after appeared in the manifested world. With Borl's death, the Giants' assault was broken, and the remaining warriors and priests of Dunad joined with the mages to sweep the valley clean.

Having thus slayed and been slain, the two passed into Eternity.

### **Honor, Balance, and Corruption**

Honor, Balance, and Corruption are the three moralities of Aysle. They descend from three of the chief Patterns, which Patterns lie very close to the Prime. The moralities shape life in the manifested world and in the afterlife.

The three moralities affect religion, as the deities form factions around each morality, and their doctrine and churches advance one of the three. Deities who follow the same morality often ally with each other (as do their mortal agents), this being

“Borl died screaming, her flesh burning to ash.”

more common among the Honorable than the Corrupt.

Magic is, in large part, shaped by the moralities. Life is Honorable, Death Corrupt, while Time and True Knowledge are neither (and hence Balanced.) Darkness is Corrupt, Light Honorable, and Magic Bal-

anced.

The moralities bisect Aysle itself, with Upper Aysle mostly following Honor, Lower Aysle Corruption, and Balance found everywhere. (Of course, the ascent of Uthorion changed this greatly.)

“Many beings are innately drawn to one of the moralities. Giants are strongly drawn to Corruption, Unicorns to Honor, while humans are Balanced, and capable of choosing any of the three.”

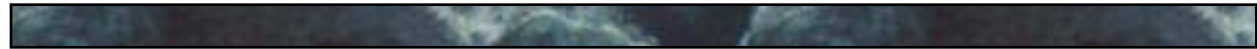
Many beings are innately drawn to one of the moralities. Giants are strongly drawn to Corruption, Unicorns to Honor, while humans are Balanced, and capable of choosing any of the three. This predisposition, like all things in Aysle, is a result of their Patterns.

As Patterns, the tenets of the three moralities are perceivable and real. Honor and Corruption are defined a certain way, because their eternal Pattern makes it so, and this definition doesn't change (though what is known of them can vary).

Honorable Ayslish would never accept the notion of a continually evolving standard of behavior, as the Patterns do not change and therefore what is moral doesn't change. It is only through learning about the Patterns, that we can know truth.

The Corrupt reject the notion of a perfect and unchangeable standard of Honorable behavior, and strive to spread doubt and confusion about what Honor means. Under the guise of “improving knowledge,” they call into doubt the most basic and well-established tenets of Honor.

“The Patterns are difficult to observe



and understand,” the Corrupt argue, “and so our knowledge of them is therefore imperfect. Being imperfect, it is wrong in some part, and no one can know which. We cannot be sure that any part of our lore is correct, and so we must allow those who have different understandings to take action as they choose.”

By calling the tenets of Honor into doubt, they seek to undermine the standards of Honorable behavior.

Without such standards, even the most Corrupt actions can eventually be justified, and so the Corrupt spread confusion, that they might more easily indulge their most base desires.

Many of those who heed the words of the Corrupt themselves fall into Corruption. Those who hear, but do not themselves fall, no longer stand vigilant against Corruption’s machinations. This allows the Corrupt to quietly seduce the naive and foolish until, piece by piece, the entire land has fallen into depravity and debauchery.

Among such a people, the standards of Honor are reviled and rejected, and the people rejoice in Corruption and seek to fulfill their every degenerate impulse. Violence and strife is constant, and no man is safe in his house or holdings, as thieves and bandits steal anything they can lay hold upon. Sorrow and rage are the order of the day, and peace and prosperity flee such a people.

Nor is such sorrow solely to be found in the manifested world. For the Corrupt, their sorrows follow them into the afterlife.

### The Afterlife of Aysle

The Ayslish afterlife is the domain of

the Gods and the souls of those who have passed on. Like all of Aysle, the nature of the afterlife is determined by the Patterns.

The choices a person makes in this life draws them closer to one of the three. As they pass from the manifested world into the afterlife, they are drawn to one of three

“Both Shali and Borl died, and as they did so they passed into godhood, taking their places at the sides of their mates.”

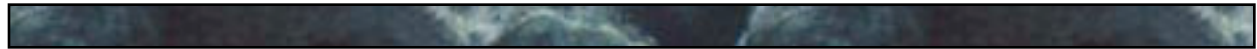
estates, each estate corresponding to one of the moralities. These estates are the final resting places of the dead.

Both Shali and Borl died, and as they did so they passed into godhood, taking their places at the sides of their mates. Shali was drawn to the estate of Patterns corresponding to Honor, Borl to the estate of the Corrupt.

The Corrupt dwell in a distorted world where truth about the Patterns cannot ever be known, and where everything varies greatly from its Pattern— birds have grotesque and misshapen wings, fields are barren and blackened, sleep gives no rest, and food no sustenance.

“After they die, the Corrupt dwell in a distorted and grotesque world— birds have misshapen wings, fields are barren and blackened, sleep gives no rest, and food no sustenance.”

The Honorable dwell in a realm of perfection, in which every Pattern is pure and undiluted. All of the joys of life are present here, but in refined and glorified states. The people are free of disease or handicap, the water is clear and pure and infinitely refreshing, and each day brings new wonders.



The world of Balance is a near-match to the world of the living, save that the Honorable and Corrupt have been removed to their own estates, and Balance is no longer caught between them. The extremes of Honor and Corruption have been removed, Balance exists in perpetuity, and the Gods of Balance and their followers no longer need strive to achieve or maintain it.

These differing visions of Honor and Corruption are reflected in this life. Honorable behavior beautifies the visage, makes the fields more fruitful, and ennobles and enlightens everything. Corruption distorts one's visage, scars the land and debases and defiles everything. As in this life, so in the life to come. As in the life to come, so in this life.

# STORM KNIGHTS

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