

## Falling Star

*"Prayer is not enough"*

A campaign setting for Burning Wheel

### Intro

For a thousand generations the people of Sagara have lived with the land, in alliance with the trees, the rivers, the animals. Some would call it magic, but it was simply treaties- a few rituals, rites and festivals in exchange for better harvests, health, or small blessings.

For a hundred generations, the people of Abel have pushed and pushed the Sagara into the hills and the deep forests, sometimes through war, sometimes through simply settling the land. Most of the Peninsula used to be under the care of the Sagara, now sacred groves and blessed rivers go unattended, and the treaties between man and spirit are broken. The Sagarans have little time to choose how they will survive into the future.

For ten generations, the Kizo horde has slowly pushed it's way down from the north, destroying each land, each people, each culture as it went. Powered by a dire fanaticism which demands that matter be destroyed, flesh be scarred, and the world devastated before heaven may come, the Kizo have neither fear nor reason to turn them aside.

And yesterday, they have arrived at the borders, just as a star fell from the sky, striking the Ibalian palace.

The Kizo will destroy both Sagarans and Abel alike, now is the time to choose. Will the Sagarans ally with their enemies? Will they die protecting the land and the graves of their ancestors? Will they flee and become a people without a home?

There is no choice, today, everyone is a warrior.

### Falling Star- What's it all about?

This is a campaign setting about culture, about identity, about survival. It's about 3 cultures clashing, and hard choices made to survive whether physically or culturally, as an individual, or as a people. You'll play as leaders and heroes of the Sagaran people, struggling to survive against

both the general colonization of the Abel and the violent invasion of the Kizo.

Unlike normal Burning Wheel, this time, entire groups get Traits, which defines their overall attitude. At the end of each session, you'll use the Trait Vote mechanics and your heroes will evolve, perhaps keeping their ways, perhaps losing them, perhaps mixing amongst cultures. Basically, the Cultural Traits exist as an axis for conflict for your heroes- as individuals as well as a people.

The other aspect is the spiritual alliances of the Sagaran people- their magic is tied directly into the land- lose the land, lose the magic. The land is not a power source- it is spirits, it is ancestors, it is effectively nations of beings which your people have cultivated alliances with in order to survive, and all of them are being cut away, one acre at a time.

### Life in a Village

You were born and raised by your family and extended family- there are many people who you call aunt or uncle, regardless of whether you are related by blood or not. You learned a bit based on what the village needed and what you had talent for. Perhaps as a youth, you were sent as a pilgrim to perform rites further out in the deep woods or high hills. Most marry as teenagers, either with someone in the village, or a neighboring village (either spouse might move).

You would know the stories of the area around your village- the spirits which live where, and what rites and rituals should be done to keep the treaty with them. This might be a very old tree, a spring, or even the mound of the ancestors where everyone is buried.

If there is trouble, the strong and able pick up weapons. If the trouble is between families of the village, or neighboring villages, elders lay down rulings, though politics might complicate things, delay action, or result in unfair rulings. For the most part, keeping the peace is the most important thing.

### Life on the Border

If you live in or near an Ibalian town, your people were probably pushed out of the land further in,

perhaps long, long ago, perhaps just a few generations ago. You know your family history, and the stories of places, but it is empty- your ancestors grave lies unattended, the rivers and trees and hills, all now filled with the stomping feet of the Abel. You probably are of mixed blood yourself, or at least have taken on enough of their ways that if you went into the hills, everyone would look at you funny.

Some Abel towns have been living with or next to your people so long that the mixing of cultures is normal and the people are people to you. Some towns the people hate seeing you, because you remind them that they do not belong here. In the worse areas, you're probably harassed or beaten up every so often, but not killed, if only because you probably still have cousins in the hills who would return for justice.

## Traits

### *Personal*

Each player chooses one of the following Traits for their character, along with the normal Traits that they would get via the life path system.

Sagaran Appearance, Mixed Blood, or Could Pass for Iballi

### *Village*

As a group, choose 2 Character traits for a given village. If characters come from multiple villages, assign traits to each. Each Village has it's own ways, though collectively the Sagara people tend to fall around these traits:

Generous  
Proud  
Trusting  
Stern Demeanor  
Patient

Each player character gets those 2 Traits for free. (NPCs can have one, both, or neither, depending on how well they fit in with the Village culture).

### *Border*

Characters who live on the border can choose 2 Character Traits either from a Village or the Iballi Trait list as they see fit.

### *Magical Traits*

Each Village also gets 2 Magical Traits, and the native inhabitants also receive these for free. Players may choose to spend their own Trait points to buy extra Magical Traits.

You'll notice a lot of these traits are have a specific object or area of effect- for example, you may only get the benefit for being under a specific tree- not any tree. This is the land based nature of the Sagara way.

### *Snake Treaty (2 points)*

As long as you do not deliberately harm snakes, snakes will never bite you, nor constrict you. This treaty is often held by peoples who do a lot of hunting or foraging in deep forest and jungle.

### *The Village Tree (2 points)*

Gain +1D to Farming, Folklore, Plants-wise if you spend an hour under the tree  
Gain +2D to Midwifery rolls performed under the Tree

### *The Village Spring/Brook*

Gain +2D to Health tests for the day if you drink from this spring.

### *Ancestral Mound (2 points)*

Gain +2D to Folklore, Family History if you spend an hour on the mound  
Gain +1D to any wise if you spend an hour on the mound

### *Crawler Treaty (3 points)*

As long as you don't go destroying hives and young, bugs leave you alone. Mosquitos, scorpions, spiders, centipedes- all the creepy crawlies.

### *Plant Treaty (3 points)*

Gain +1D to Plant-wise, Farming, Herbalism, Apothecary, Foraging if you spend an hour meditating with plants within half a day's walk of your village.

### *Cave Oath (2 points)*

Gain +2D to Meditation, any-wise, Survival if you spend a full day in this cave.

#### *Waterfall Spirit (3 points)*

Gain +3D vs. poison if you sit in this waterfall for an hour.

Gain +1D to any one Will or Perception based skill for a day after sitting in the waterfall for an hour.

#### *Dawn Treaty (2 pts)*

As long as you are within an hour's walk of your Village, gain +1D to any skill roll for 15 minutes at dawn. This treaty is only held at the oldest of villages.

#### *Dusk Treaty (2 pts)*

As long as you are within an hour's walk of your Village, gain +1 D to any skill roll for 15 minutes at dusk. This treaty is only held at the oldest of villages.

#### *Tiger Treaty (2 pt)*

Tigers will never attack anyone within the village, nor native villagers as long as they do not harm or harass the tigers.

#### *River Agreement (2 points)*

Gain +2D Swimming, +1D Piloting, Fishing in this river.

#### *Village Stone (2 points)*

Gain +2D Ugly Truth, +1D Oratory, Sing, Poetry while standing on the Village Stone.

#### *Hill Treaty (2 points)*

Gain +1D Climbing, +1D Orienteering, +1D Foraging on this hill.

### **Working with Spirits and gaining more Magical Traits**

Any Sagaran player character can contact spirits using Circles- this roll is not just finding a place or object with a spirit in it, it's also trying to figure out what rites and rituals actually will open the door to communication as well as what it wants.

Spirits as contacts can provide information, or Helping Dice to a roll. Like the traits above, they are very local, so you can't build up a pile of Helping Dice and run across the country and use them.

Just as normal contacts turn into Relationships, spirits turn into Traits to solidify the relationship. Any of your children will inherit this trait for free, as long as you teach them the basic rites and rituals and history of the spirit and the treaty between you.

### **The Abel**

The Ibali are a feudal society, often held together by tenuous links of alliances and power, which break out into various skirmishes and occasional war between the many lords. They respect power and often mistake it for capability, and that for ethical behavior. That is, "The Gods favor him- he must be doing something right!". In general, they are pushy, assertive, and ambitious.

At this point, the Sagara live in areas too hard to really be worth the effort of colonizing, so the many Abel border lords are quite content to leave them be- often looking to take land from each other, which is easier.

Choose 2 of the following Traits to define an Abel Village or Town:

Ambitious  
Pushy  
Mercenary  
Cynical  
Judgmental

### **The Kizo**

The Kizo believe that matter and flesh are chains that bind the spirit, and only by constantly degrading them, can one be freed at the end of life. For this reason, they have no problem devastating the land, burning as they go, after all, there is always more to have, and at the end of it, they will find freedom of the soul.

The usual process is to invade, make use of the infrastructure, overtaxing it and taking little care of it, until it collapses, then move on. As far as the people of the lands they invade- they offer only

two choices- conversion or death. Converts are forced to lose an eye ("For they are half-blind"), which marks them as second class citizens.

Most Kizo have some form of ritual scarring, though the priesthood take part in self mutilation to prove their piety, and maimed warriors become priests as well.

Kizo can buy the Trait Tough at 1 point and Tough as Nails for 4 points.

Kizo also get 2 free character Traits from the following list:

Abused  
Cruel  
Filled with Hate  
Merciless  
Murderous

### **Special Trait Rules**

At the end of each session, be sure to use the Trait Vote. Judge each PC as to whether they have lived up to the Traits in their culture or not. Hand out Fate and Persona Artha like candy when the PCs tackle the issues of identity between the cultures.

#### *Social Conflicts-*

Different Cultures? +1 Ob

Same Culture?

with equal # of Cultural Traits of the home culture? +0 OB

with less Cultural Traits of the home culture? +1 OB

with no Cultural Traits of the home culture AND Cultural Traits from a group that you don't look like you belong to? +2 OB (Sagaran with Abel Traits, Abel with Sagaran Traits, etc.) +2 OB.

### **Scenarios**

#### **The Call to War**

Many elders have called as many warriors as could come- there is a danger on the winds and the Kizo will wipe out the Abel and the Sagara alike, unless

something is done now. Your heroes are called to the meeting and alliances and plans must be made- the survival of everyone depends on it. Will you push to make alliances with the Abel? Will you urge everyone to escape?

#### **The Falling Star**

First the refugees came from the north, talking of an army of half-humans, merciless and unrelenting sweeping down from the north. While the lords fortified their lands and called up soldiers, it seemed as if this would simply be another army to break on the fortified lands of the Abel.

But then the star fell, striking the palace. Was it magic? An omen from the gods? Is the king alive or dead? What of his heirs? No one knows, the country is in a panic, and a few lords are looking at taking power while a foreign army threatens to sweep in.

At the bordertowns, refugees and panicked people are flooding in, many hoping to take refuge in the hills and woods.

Will you negotiate their safety? Will you say, "No more. This is our land."? Will you negotiate treaties between the Abel and Sagara as the war commences?