

Rune Armor & Star Swords: The Knights of the Celestial Canticle
Written by: Roberto Micheri for the original Altermity System

Of all the races that inhabit Alliance space and its environs, the Nirvani are the only ones that are not native to this galaxy; even their name was given to them by the first Keriani who met them. When the rebels fleeing the forces of the TukNi-Amak puppet government landed on the fourth planet of the Grushh system, they encountered the strange sentients. They were surprised by their stories.

They called themselves humans and claimed to hail from a distant galaxy, having come here under the guidance of a great religious leader who saved them from a devastating plague that had decimated their native galaxy. They had populated the three systems and were ready to start anew in this new home.

But they arrived in the middle of a great interstellar war and soon found themselves embroiled in the turmoil of their new galaxy. The Keriani, whose own name roughly translates as "born from the womb of Ker," Ker being their name for their home planet, named the newcomers Nirvani, "born of no womb." This name would come to signify much more, a name that would be associated with the new order of the galaxy. The beginning of the Age of the Nirvani

The Indomitable Order

The Knights of the Indomitable Order are the warrior sect of the Church of the Celestial Canticle. Proud soldiers upholding a noble legacy. The Order traces its origins to the foundation of the Alliance and the great campaign of liberation waged against the TukNi-Amak by the Order's founder, Lord Sparrowhawk. The great Liberator of the Nirvani was the first soldier to convert to the faith and was selected by The Ever Present as his sword of vengeance against the enemy of his protected people.

When Lord Sparrowhawk returned from the dead, he led the Armada of the United People against the enemy who enslaved them. Among his followers, he identified twenty-three soldiers of great faith and courage; upon those twenty-three Nirvani, Lord Sparrowhawk bestowed the gift of his wisdom and power, and these in turn became his advisors and most trusted commanders. These came to be known as the Enlightened, the Saints of War. Some fell in battle; others, once the war was over, joined their brothers and sisters in the Church, but they knew that although the danger had passed, it would return.

Under the guidance of Sparrowhawk, these faithful formed an Indomitable Order to defend his realm against all enemies, visible and invisible. When Lord Sparrowhawk left the mortal realm, they remained behind as reminders of his glory and power, a living promise of his inevitable return. These enlightened Nirvani formed bloodlines through which they passed on their knowledge and powers to subsequent generations, keeping the fire of faith and triumph alive.

Taken from the Book of Deeds of the Church of the Celestial Canticle

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The Indomitable Order in modern times remains the premier-fighting branch of the Church of the Celestial Canticle. In the centuries since the campaign of liberation, the power of the Church has waxed and waned, but the erosion of power and influence is felt in no place more than in the Indomitable Order. In ancient times, these warriors were the elite forces, the first to enter battle, and their founders led the armies in that long-ago war for freedom. These military leaders wielded great power, the source of which, perhaps their faith, remains mysterious. They were more than mortal, yet less than gods, decked in Rune armor and wielding Star Swords; they seemed unstoppable. Those who survived the war established Bloodlines to carry on their name, glory, and power. Many generations have gone by, and time has been hard on those who live upon the memory of deeds passed.

The Bloodlines that form the modern Indomitable Order survive by breeding amongst themselves. Only in this way do they retain their power, which is their birthright.

There was a time when this was not so, but their power is weaker, and only by this practice do they still exist. A member of the Order is born, not chosen.

Diluted as their powers may be, they still are a formidable force. No current science has been able to successfully replicate the gifts bestowed upon these faithful by Lord Sparrowhawk. They guard the Church, fight for its causes, and aid the armies of the Alliance when called upon. Composed entirely of Nirvani, these orders are under the direct command of the Church hierarchy and, although highly independent, remain accountable to Church leaders.

They are men and women of combat and, as such, fill a few other roles beyond this in the Church. The Elders of most Bloodlines owe allegiance to one of the Church Patriarchs. Only one group within the Church is ordained and retains the faculty to celebrate the Church's rites and ceremonies. The others are adornment in the pomp and circumstance of Church spectacle, and a force of nature on the battlefield.

The Bloodlines fight among themselves, openly and covertly, for matters of theology, politics, and economics, but rarely without the watchful eye of the Church lording over their actions. Conflict aside, the Bloodlines need each other; only by marrying their members do they produce offspring that have the gifts of the Order. The powers of only one bloodline manifest in the newborn, and the house to which that parent belongs takes over the raising of the child. Any offspring beget with a Nirvani not of Indomitable blood results in a normal baby.

The members of the Order have little option but to fill the role they are born into as warriors. The Order does not allow its members to choose their destinies; they were born to greatness; they were born Indomitable. They must adhere to the tenets of the faith rigorously, follow the command of their superiors, and be willing to lay down their life for the Church. Those who seek other paths, and they seem to be more each day, are considered Fallen and are inhibited from their birthright and stripped of their heritage. Even worse, those who rebel and betray

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the Order become Renegades, to be hunted and brought to justice. They are stripped of their identity and become Fallen, or, when inevitable, killed.

Such is the life of the Indomitable. Face it with pride, for you are the chosen among the chosen.

Gaming Notes:

Each group or Bloodline of the Indomitable Order has its own outlook, position within the Church, benefits, and restrictions. However, there are some general rules applicable to all members of the order.

- Only Combat Specs or Diplomats whose second career is Combat Spec may belong to the Order. Members have no choice but to fulfill the role expected of them. The only choice they might have about it is to become a Renegade.
- Members of the order are Nirvani, humans in appearance for all practical purposes, but different in might and power. Although they appear human, they receive none of the game benefits normal Nirvani receive. They are a separate type of character, and their powers are below. Any references to mutant powers grant the character the use of the power and disregard any rules regarding mutation points or drawbacks.
- All members must follow, if not by conviction, at least in action, the tenets of the Church of the Celestial Canticle. Lax members will be reprimanded, punished, or, in extreme cases, declared Fallen or a Renegade.
- The Faith perk (PHB p.104) is useful, but not mandatory, for members of the Order. Those who purchase it, and this hero, will have to adhere in word and deed to the faith and receive a -1 situation die step on the perk check. Making the base situation die for the first Faith check -d6 (see the perk description).
- The use of Rune or Relic Armor enhances the powers of each bloodline; see the individual description for details. When using a Rune armor or a Relic armor, the hero's bio-field is the power source for the armor's internal systems. See the armor description in this document for more information.
- Members of the Order are adept at using the scarce and beautiful Star Swords. When the hero trained in the use of this weapon wields one in battle, they receive a -1 to their Melee Weapons – Powered weapons skill base situation die. Also, the hero may parry energy attacks, whose firepower type is ordinary (En/O).
- Members of the Order receive no benefit from the Code of Honor flaw (PHB p. 107). They already have a code of honor to live by, whether they believe in it or not. Not living by the code may turn members into Renegades.
- Renegades are members who, by choice or deed, renounce or may be

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banished from the Order. The Renegade is declared an enemy of the Church and is thus hunted and scorned by all the faithful. Characters who become Renegades lose all benefits they may receive by position and power within the Order and gain the Powerful Enemy Flaw without any point benefits (PHB p.109 at 6 pts.). Captured Renegades are subject to the same treatment as Fallen or killed.

- Those members who, by choice, renounce their birthright or are banished from their post are stripped of all benefits that may have been theirs by belonging to the Order; any relics or weapons are taken away, and a process is begun to inhibit their use of the Bloodlines power. The process lasts from three to six weeks and is excruciatingly painful, requiring another two to four weeks of recovery. The Fallen is infected with nanites that, over weeks of treatment, modify the subject's specific biology. These nanites, in turn, inhibit the character's use of his powers. This transforms the Indomitable knight into a normal Nirvani. His ability maximums return to the Nirvani norm, and any abilities higher than these are lowered. The process inhibits action and quick thinking, resulting in a -2 penalty to the hero's action check score, and a -1 to the WIL resistance modifier (can not lower it below 0, unless the hero already had a lower resistance modifier). The nanites also allow tracking of the Fallen within a 10-mile radius (planetwide if a satellite network is in place). The nanites must be replenished yearly, and for this purpose, the Order keeps close tabs on its Fallen, some, but few, of which have again risen to glory in the Order.

The Bloodlines

The term Bloodlines is the traditional term for each group of descendants of one of the original Enlightened, but crossbreeding among these groups over the generations means there is no direct descendant of a single Enlightened. Still, the Bloodlines are formed along the powers inherited from one of the Saints of War, and the Bloodlines organize themselves following the same traditions, even though some don't call themselves by that name anymore.

The Sisterhood of Heimdal:

This all-female group is the traditionalist among the Bloodlines; they are the keepers of records, the givers of names, the flame of memory. One of the Bloodlines that can trace its origin directly to the campaign of liberation, as Lady Heimdal, the Sisterhood's founder, has a system named after her in honor of one of her great victories.

It is here, in the Heim System, that the Sisters have their main temple and training grounds. From there, the sisters travel the Alliance in their quest to preserve the tradition, duties, and rights of this most sacred calling. They are the most vociferous opponents of the recently proposed reforms within the Church in general and the Order in particular.

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

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- The sisters all have the Enhanced Sense mutation as detailed in p. 219 of the PHB. Use the power and disregard any rules regarding mutation points or drawbacks.
- They also have an ability unique to the bloodline, possessed by no one else in the known galaxy, Bloodsense. When the child of two members of the Order is born, the baby's bloodline must be determined; the parents call a Sister of Heimdal to perform the Rite of Blood. The sister performs a ritual and meditates, cradling the baby and receiving a vision of the infant's future destiny. In the morning, the Sister names the infant's Bloodline and gives the baby a name.
- A Sister may use this power to identify the Bloodline of an adult member of the Order. The member must be at least 2 meters away, and the Sister must concentrate for at least one round. A WIL feat check is rolled to determine the success: Ordinary: The Bloodline is known. Good: The bloodline and the individual's relative power are revealed. Amazing: as before, but the member's given name is revealed.
- Stutter and other sonic weapons add a +2 to their roll for damage when used against the hero.

Sample Career: Heimdal Namegiver

Any Sister can perform the rite of the name giving to a newly born member of the Order, but certain individuals in the Sisterhood have found in this task their calling. They are revered among all Bloodlines, even their traditional enemies, for their task is one of the holiest of any member. Without their wisdom, the structure of the Bloodlines would be severely compromised. The Namegivers travel all through known space, wherever new Indomitables are born. Unless there are open hostilities among the Bloodlines, the Namegiver is traditionally given safe passage and hospice in any holding of the Order.

Signature Equipment: Ceremonial sword (use stats for Katana), Ceremonial Robes (CF long coat), First Aid Kit.

Skill Package: Medical Science-treatment; Culture; Resolve-mental resolve; Knowledge-theology(specific). Cost: 20 points.

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

Sisters in Rune or Relic armor have their power augmented to the Hyper Senses power (PHB p.222). The bonuses conferred by this power also apply to any Awareness-intuition roll made by the hero to determine surprise.

Bloodline Gilgamesh:

The most numerous and best-known Bloodline. When a common member of the Alliance thinks of the Order, the highly militaristic Gilgamesh comes to mind. Their numbers, although not legion, are plentiful when compared to the other Bloodlines, yet they have for centuries held no real power in the politics of the

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Order. They have been the pawns and allies of various factions, but to this day, they remain the grunts of the Order.

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

- The STR score of all members is improved by +1, and their racial maximum for STR is raised to 15.
- They also enjoy a +3 to their Wound rating.
- All members suffer a permanent -1 to their Action Check Score.

Sample Career: Gilgamesh Combatant

Bloodline Gilgamesh is one of the most numerous of all the Orders, and most of its members dedicate themselves body and soul to the arts of war. These are the ground troopers that form the backbone of the Gilgamesh forces. Strong, brave, dependable, and deadly to the enemy. Most of them are raised since childhood as part of the military unit, and strong ties of friendship and honor are forged among the men and women of the ground pounders. When the will of the Church must be imposed, this is the hammer that brings the message home.

Signature Equipment: Cerametal Armor, 11mm Charge Rifle, rations, and survival gear.

Skill Package: Armor Operation; Modern Range Weapons-rifle; Tactics-infantry tactics; Knowledge-theology(specific). Cost: 22 points.

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

When wearing Rune or Relic armor, members of this Bloodline have an additional 3 points in their Mortal rating. Damage is first taken from these points.

Bloodline Zeus:

This Bloodline is an ancient institution. For a long time, they claimed Sparrowhawk himself sired the Bloodline, but this claim was proven false by the Sisterhood of Heimdal, earning the eternal enmity of those who call themselves the Scion of Thunder. They have gone through a protracted power struggle for leadership of the Bloodline. The new Leader has still taken no sides concerning recent developments in the politics of the Order.

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

- The members of the Bloodline possess a variation of the Electrical Aura power (PHB p.218-219). The power works as described in the book, except for the differences described here. The damage inflicted using the power on living beings is:

Failure: light and energy, no damage

Ordinary: 1d4s

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Good: 1d4+2s

Amazing: 1d8+2s.

All effects are type En/O. Each use of the power lasts for 1 round; each use causes the hero to lose a number of fatigue points equal to the number of times the power has been used in a twenty-four-hour period (example: first use, 1 fatigue point, third use, 3 fatigue points).

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

The Electrical Aura power works just as described in the book when the hero uses Rune or Relic armor.

The Conclave of Ra:

This bloodline is the most progressive of all those who form the Order. Many military diplomats and tacticians in the order have emerged from this group. They have allied themselves with reform groups within the Church; their leaders are young and strive for a Church and Order renewed in purpose and vision. Recent events have made reform difficult, and the Conclave fears reprisals from the most conservative elements in the Church, mainly the high hierarchy.

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

- The members of the Conclave have a variation of the Energy Absorption power (PHB p. 220). The power works as described in the book, except for the differences described here. The character may only absorb 1d4 points of energy. When the hero absorbs energy, they emit a moderate intensity blue light for a number of phases equal to the number of points absorbed. When additional points are absorbed, they are added to the duration.
- The character may turn light into energy, requiring only half the amount of normal food if they are exposed to sunlight (or equivalent) for at least two hours on the day they consume less food.
- The character is weakened in the absence of light. In total darkness, even if sight enhancement is used, the character suffers a -2 step penalty to all actions. In the presence of Moderate intensity light (moonlight, heavy fog), the penalty is reduced to -1step.

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

The hero wearing Rune or Relic armor has the Energy Reflection power (PHB p. 220), with the exception that it may be used while wearing the armor. The hero may choose to reflect the energy or spend it to shed moderate light for a number of rounds equal to the points spent.

Bloodline Icarus (Icarians):

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The members of this Bloodline are the most independent and reclusive of all the Bloodlines. Fewer of them are born, and even the members of the Order sometimes do not know where their abbeys are located. They keep a small but powerful fleet of ships and have strong ties with the Church navigators, who have a small group assigned to serve the order.

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

- The DEX score of all members is improved by +1, and their racial maximum for DEX is raised to 15.
- Icarians have the Adaptation Gravity (light gravity) power (PHB p.216), with all benefits and penalties detailed in the book.

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

Any Icarian wearing a Rune or Relic armor may fly in any G0, G1, or G2 environments (see GMG p.62 for description). The Acrobatic skill is used to make any checks, and the hero may purchase the flight specialty skill to improve their ability to move in the air. If the hero is conscious and the armor is functional, the hero suffers no effects from fall damage. Also, while in armor, the penalties the hero has in high gravity because of the Adaptation Gravity (light gravity) power are negated.

The Children of Set:

One of the most historic Bloodlines, but also one of the most feared. The members are known as deceitful and bloodthirsty, and only cunning politics and a healthy dose of fear have kept the Bloodline from being banished altogether. They have recently moved in favor of reform and publicly defend the Conclave of Ra. The Conclave has, in turn, distanced itself from the Children of Set, but they wait patiently and know that the tide has changed and that their help will be needed. Who knows what their price will be?

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

- The Children of Set have fangs that use the Natural Attack power (PHB p.219). Some members have retractable fangs; others are not so fortunate and have deformed jaws and skulls that accommodate the fangs. Those who have the non-retractable fangs suffer a -2 on all encounter skills, except on the use of the intimidate specialty skill.

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

The hero has the Poison Attack power (PHB p. 222), delivering an insinuating hemotoxin through the fangs (see GMG p. 59-60 for an explanation of poisons). To use this power, the hero loses any environmental protection an armor may offer.

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Brotherhood of Ishtar (Ishtarians):

The Ishtarians are an all-male Bloodline long associated with the Sisterhood of Heimdal. Some historians claim that the Bloodlines were once one, which broke apart in the distant past. Opposed in politics to the Sisterhood for almost its entire history, the Ishtarians have recently been united with the Sisterhood's cause by the call for reform, and the perennial enemies now find themselves allies.

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

- A brother of Ishtar is considered a Talent, and this is the only major Bloodline that has any psionic capabilities. Unlike a regular Talent, the Ishtarian has a number of psionic energy points equal to his WIL. He may purchase one psionic broad skill (from his beginning allotment of skill points). They may eventually purchase all specialty skills in that category, with no limit to the skill level they may achieve on them, granted they pay the skill points (the hero can't start with more than 2 specialty skills).

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

The amount of psionic energy points possessed by the hero increases to a number equal to WIL times 1.5 (round down). The character receives a -1 step bonus to the specialty skill with the highest rank. If two or more skills are of the same rank, no bonus applies.

The Fellowship of the Jesesites:

The Jesesites are healers. The Fellowship is the only Bloodline still ordained within the Church, and the members may officiate all Church rituals. By the same token, all vows taken by the members of the cloth are taken by the **Jesesites**. Obedience, humility, celibacy. They are a rarity among the Bloodlines; they never marry and thus have no children. The members of the Fellowship are born from other Bloodlines. This is a rare occurrence, something that keeps the Jesesite numbers low, but when it occurs, the baby is given to the Fellowship for its upbringing and education. A somber occurrence for any Bloodline, a rejoicing for the faithful. But they harbor a dark secret.

Bloodline Benefits & Limitations:

- Jesesites have the Enhanced Healing power (PHB p.219), as per the book, with the exception that they may use it for themselves or on any other person they touch. They may use the power on themselves only once per day, but may use it on others more than once. However, after the first daily use (whether on themselves or someone else), they suffer half as much damage as they healed (round up to a minimum of 1 point per category of damage suffered).

Wearing Rune or Relic Armor:

Any Jesesite donned in Rune or Relic armor gains the Hyper Healing power

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(PHB p.221), as per the book, with the exception that they may use it on themselves or on any other person they touch once per day. They may use the power on others more than once, but after the first daily use (be it on themselves or someone else), they suffer half the amount of damage they heal (round up to a minimum of 1 point per category of damage suffered).

The Jesesites hold a dark secret: the power they use to heal others can be used to heal themselves. They may use the powers of healing to cause the opposite effect, causing the damage they would have cured in others, and are healed by the amount they would have suffered. This is a dark use of their power, and those who do it and are caught are declared Fallen or hunted like Renegades. The use of this power leaves a stain that can be noticed by any other Jesesite that uses their curative powers on the tainted Jesesite, or by any Sister of Heimdal using their Bloodsense. These Jesesites, when discovered, are branded as Dark Jesesites.

Final Notes

Other Bloodlines exist, but these are the major ones, whose numbers are significant enough to make an impact on the destiny of the Alliance. What follows are some notes on the equipment of the Indomitable Order, and some general notes:

Rune and Relic Armor:

Rune and Relic armor were manufactured during the liberation campaign or shortly after. The crafters of these armors were the members of a Bloodline long since extinct. The Forgers were among the first converts Lord Sparrowhawk gained, and they crafted the armor for his warriors. The power supply for both types of armor is the bio-field of the Indomitable warrior, and the armor augments the powers possessed by them.

The Rune armor has the same ratings as a Powered Attack Armor (PHB p. 188), without any of the features described in the text. The suit is fully environmental, as a soft e-suit, and the hero suffers no Action Penalty for wearing the armor. The features described in the book may be added to the armor if the hero pays for them, and those that require power would need an alternative energy source.

The Relic armor has the same ratings as a Body Tank (PHB p 189-190) without any of the features described in the text. The suit is fully environmental, as a hard e-suit, and the hero suffers no Action Penalty for wearing the armor. The features described in the book may be added to the armor if the hero pays for them, and those that require power would need an alternative energy source. Some Relic armors come equipped with built-in Star Swords. These swords can only be used when wearing the armor and use the hero's bio-field as a power source.

Legend has it that armor was crafted for each bloodline, further enhancing each

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group's powers. Others claim that some of these armors are Alien Artifacts with great powers beyond those of the Bloodlines. If these armors exist, they have either not been found or are the well-kept secret of the Bloodline that has them.

New Perk: Indomitable Ancestry (3 points)

A Nirvani hero may purchase this Perk, signifying that a recent ancestor was a member of the Indomitable Order. This perk can only be purchased during character creation. The main benefit derived from this perk is that the character may use Rune or Relic armors. To normal Nirvani, without these perks, these items are useless. Those blessed with the blood of an indomitable may use the armor, powering it with their own bio-field, although they gain no special benefits from the armor. The use of this armor tires the hero, unlike a true indomitable, and the character loses fatigue points while using it. For every hour wearing the armor, the character loses 1 fatigue point. Periods of extenuating exercise, such as All-out movement or combat, require a Stamina-endurance check with a result equal to those described on p.53 of the PHB. This roll is in addition to any other fatigue rolls the character may have to perform because of combat, so the character may have to make two fatigue rolls.