

**THE
GODMAKER
PROJECT**

**A
PANTHEON
OF VALUES**

BY

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FOREWORD

**Do not depend on others to
define your values.**

Create your own gods.



This book is inspired by a medical doctor I know who lives and breathes service to others. He is adamantly religious, and described to me how the argument of whether his God is real or not is immaterial. It would not alter his life either way. His God was an embodiment of the values that he aspired to reflect, and that was enough. His God was an amalgamation of the service, love, purity, and dedication that he sought to emulate in every aspect of his existence. His God was a symbol of what he believed every human should be, and that gave meaning to his faith.

I wanted that.

**I had never concretely identified the
values and traits that I aspired to have.**

**I had never given myself a symbol to
unequivocally believe in.**

**I had no unshakable truth to hold fast
to when I was tested.**

I wanted to have that structure.

So I made it.

**This is not a religion. This is me drawing
the map that will guide my life and my
actions. I have taken parts of myself
and ascribed them to symbols, which I
intend to believe in as such. Symbols of
the best version of myself**

The dolls in this book are kachina dolls, used originally by Native Americans to denote stages of growth. My family used to sell them in New Mexico, and the ones you see here were gifted to me by an aunt. Their names are inspired by my heritage, which is predominantly Mexican and Spanish, with Portuguese and Irish influence.

I chose the values by writing a long list of character traits and deciding which I wanted to encompass the most. I wrote the essays by recording myself speaking out loud any thoughts about those character traits, which I then summarized into long written form.

I created the folklore stories to give lore to each God, to make their existence more real to myself. Stories are meant to inspire and to teach, and I will carry these stories with me always.

I feel no connection to any formed religious group, but I feel complete solidarity with this selection of characteristics and traits. This work rectifies the past, current, and future versions of myself. Faith in my own creation will guide me to live what I deem a worthy, positive life.

My first book was written as a way to amend for my past, and this book is written to carry that notion into the future.

I invite you to join me and decide for yourself who you want to be.

I truly hope that you create your own gods.

-DS

TZOLQUIXTLI

THE RADIANT

SERENOVENTO

THE EMPTY

BRIGHIDÁN

THE MANY

MARAFADO

THE PATHFINDER

FINNACHALL

THE STARGAZER

ESTREMOZ

THE IRON

QUAUHTEMOCZIN

THE PILLAR

RIOSCURO

THE KNOWING

TZOLQUITLI



THE RADIANT GOD

Influenced by the Mexican heritage, this god is the deity of sun and fire and is heavily tied to the concept of being one's most genuine self, of being absolutely true to one's individualism and uniqueness.

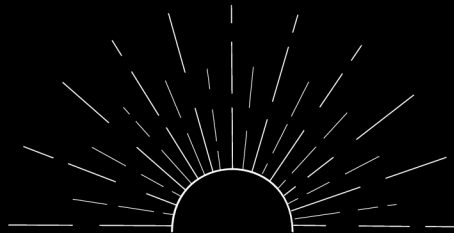
INDIVIDUALISM AND UNIQUENESS

The ability to understand your core identity is the process of recognizing, understanding, and accepting your fully honest self, while being released from the heavy shackles of shame. Identity is being able to frame and vocalize the concepts that are innate to your truest self. When you can say phrases like “I am this, but not that” and “I enjoy this activity, but I do not enjoy that one”, and know that the only judge in that decision is you alone. The enjoyment is not tied to being perceived by anyone, or by achieving a social status, or a leaderboard. Only from you and your inner drive.

It's very easy to get caught up in peer influence and have our interests and routines formed by how we are going to be perceived by our community, our friends and family, and others in our social circle. When the world in general tells you that all business men wear suits and you want to be seen as a proper business man, many people default to wearing a suit.

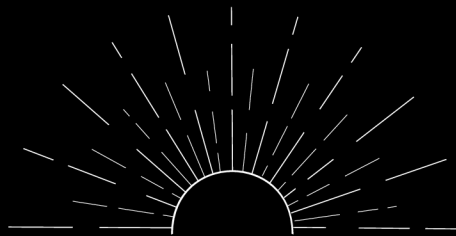
Those who are true to themselves and prioritize that uniqueness will avoid the suit in favor of something that is more aligned with their nature. Or perhaps they will wear the suit and make it their own with style and design choices. Or maybe they were drawn to the suit, but for their own reasons. But they will never adopt the traditional outfit simply because of how they feel it is perceived by others. That separation from peer influence and freedom from the fear of judgement is a strength to be admired.

Humans are social creatures and we want desperately to be accepted. It is ingrained in us that acceptance is paramount, likely because acceptance into a community meant the difference between life and death for early humans that had to fight to survive. But now, we've reached a different stage of Maslow's hierarchy, are less concerned with general survival and more able to focus on self-actualization. This means that we no longer have to be accepted into whatever community is at hand, and can instead find communities with which we have the most passionate and value-driven alignment.



To begin to identify oneself, you have to develop an inner locus of control and understanding that prevents your actions from being swayed by the outside world. You have to let go of the shame that dictates giving in to actions that you don't even really want to be doing. Shame is wrapped up in being worthy of our peers, and afraid of their rejections. We may be ashamed to be our true selves because it does not fall within the bounds that others have told us are acceptable to exist in.

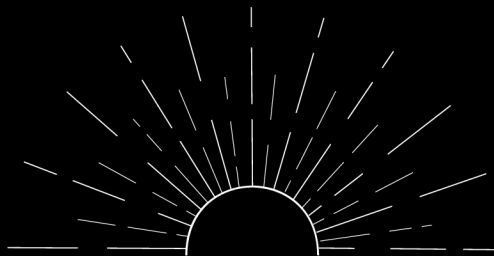
Shame will try to tip the scales which weigh our perceived desires and our actual desires. Many times, we find ourselves craving the admiration and recognition of others that we feel have some social status. We move in ways that make other people think we're worthy, but strength is found in defying that definition and moving in the way that feels the most natural. Weakness is living by the approval of others for fear of shame.



There is a freedom that comes when you do not choose your actions based on the fear of reactions and judgements. The measurements of what we decide to do lose the less validating external factor of peer influence, focus on more valuable external factors (like helping others) and also bring along internal, intentional factors.

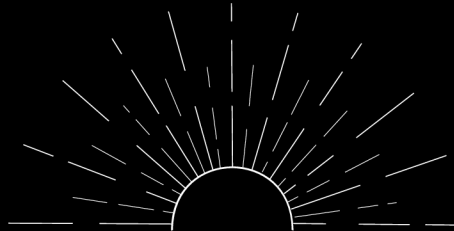
We come to find that when we are engaging in self-fulfilled actions, we are then leading much more enriched lives. People who live this way radiate with individualism and embody the “forge their own path” mentality that is universally admired. Their tangible confidence and purpose that they move through the world with is a dead giveaway of their inner locus of control, and it inspires others to be the same.

To start to find our identity, we need to have a keen ear to our own internal desires (which is hard to understand at first), and try new things until an activity and community feel right (which is time consuming). There is often a long, tiring, and circuitous road to understanding true personal identity, and it takes overcoming the hill of peer-defined identity first. It is well worth it though, as the journey ends in a state of grounded, experiential joy. The kind of experience that takes you out of your head and fully into the immersive actions, where people can lose themselves in a state of flow that feels true to their inherent nature. That is the reward for being yourself, because only in finding, identifying, and trusting ourselves can we truly begin to authentically and purposefully engage with the world.



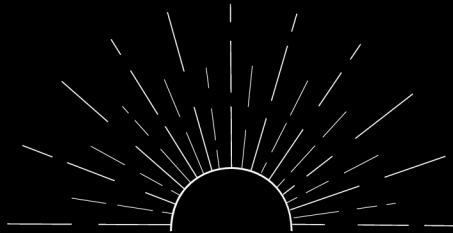
LEGEND OF TZOLQUITLI

In the heart of the lush Mexican jungles, under the nurturing warmth of the sun god, Tzolquixtli, lived a small, introspective monkey named Xico. Xico was a spirited young monkey, with a lustrous coat and a tail that swished and flickered as he adventured through the jungle vines. However, his heart carried a sorrowful tune. He often found that when he lifted his eyes to the birds flying freely in the sky, he lamented his life on the ground. He envied their wings and their ability to navigate the wind beneath their feathers. He felt chained by his bodily nature, never able to experience the powerful autonomy of swooping flight. The taunts of the birds that dropped nuts on him from high above did nothing to ease his discontentment.



One day, Xico decided to take his woes to Tzolquixtli, the god of the sun and fire. As he narrated his frustrations, he shook his balled-up fist towards the air. Xico expressed his desire to be like the birds, whose movements seemed to him to be the essence of freedom. Tzolquixtli, the radiant deity of the individual soul, bent an ear and listened patiently to the little monkey's complaints.

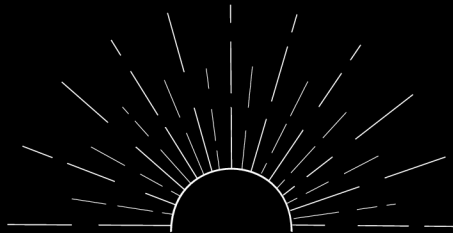
The god thought to himself about what to say, then said nothing. With an understanding nod, Tzolquixtli decided to grant Xico's wish. With a wave of his hand, he transformed Xico into a bird, releasing him from his earthly chains. Testing his wings with a newfound flutter, Xico stretched his new body and felt each feathers individual rustle. He took a few steps, and with a leap of desire, he soared into the skies. He felt the wind glide over his form, the freedom bubbling and emerging exactly how he had so deeply desired it to. And thus, Xico ascended.



Days grew long as Xico continued to explore the skies, and each time he did so, his exuberance overtook the doubt that was beginning to creep in. Xico appreciated the chance to fly, but he never enjoyed the games the birds played, such as dropping nuts on everyone's heads. Bird language was shrill and quick, and Xico could never express himself clearly. Xico spent much time alone, not knowing how to connect with others as they built nests and sang songs. When he cruised through a cloud on a lonesome evening flight, he felt a more isolated sense of the old adventure. But as he looked down at the lush jungle, a pang of longing filled his heart.

Soon, Xico realized that the skies were not his realm, the air was not his element, and the birds were not his people. The joy he initially felt slowly gave way to a sense of alienation, a sense of being out of place.

He missed the community of monkeys, with their playful antics. He yearned for the thrill of chasing each other through the trees, and the sense of belonging that he once took for granted. The skies were vast, but the other birds were different - they did not understand him, nor he them. He felt more alone than he ever had on the ground.

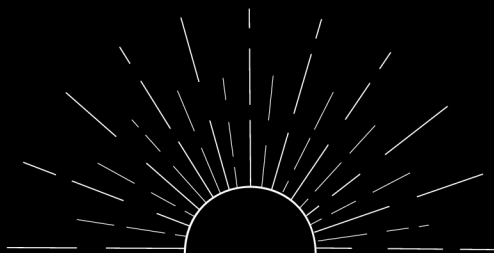


Unable to bear his loneliness, Xico approached Tzolquixtli once again, this time, asking to be reverted to his original form. The sun god, full of wisdom and understanding, restored Xico to his true self.

Tzolquixtli looked with adoration into the monkey's eyes, "Xico, do you now understand why you can never be a bird? See the many gifts that nature has bestowed upon you. The birds may soar in the skies, but that is their adventure and you have your own. They may reach the heights, but the depth of the forests is lost to them."

"I realize that now. I had felt bound by their freedom" remarked Xico.

Tzolquixtli shook his head, "Freedom, Xico, is not about where you can go, but about how you feel where you are. Freedom is bringing your entire self as you move through the world. You, Xico, have a unique beauty that the birds could never possess. Feel the power in your grip. You have the ability to maneuver through the complex jungle as you wish, with the strength of your limbs and a flick of your tail. It is a spectacle to behold as you maneuver through the trees, an art form that is withheld from the birds."



Xico pondered over the god's words. A new perception of himself began to emerge. His engrossment for what he did not possess became a gratitude and cherishing of what he did. He started seeing the world through new eyes. The freedom of the birds no longer seemed so appealing compared to the exhilaration of his acrobatics in the trees, the community that understood him, and the sheer joy of being a monkey. Xico found himself.

SERENOVENTO



THE EMPTY GOD

A Portuguese-Spanish hybrid, combining 'sereno' (calm) and 'vento' (wind) Serenovento controls the water and the winds, representing tranquility, peace, and balance in the face of change.

TRANQUILITY

Tranquility is the attribute that will bring peace to your life. It will that remove the anxiety that inherently exists in every human who was thrust into a random existence where we seek to find purpose and meaning. Tranquility is rooted in gratitude, which then blossoms outwards towards optimism and wisdom, giving us peace of mind and stillness of soul.

Gratitude is itself an appreciation of things exactly as they are, without any wish for them to be any more, less, or different. It is acceptance of the resting state of all objects, a valuing of their uniqueness, and the opportunity to acknowledge their presence. Through this appreciation and admiration, we become grateful for all things.

With gratitude, we are able to refrain from impressing our personal measurement on the external world, which are rooted in our biases, our fears, and our desires. Often, these three cause us to assign value to the world that is true nowhere except our own minds. The hard truth is that desire is an endless hole, as by its very definition it is only reserved for things we do not have. To live in desire is to live in a world that occupies only our minds, and to disconnect with the world as it stands before us. Similarly, occupying a world of nothing but fear and bias is a slanted, small space to spend a life.

To live in a world of gratitude is to live in a world where we really and truly see what the world has to offer and to express a deep appreciation for the state it presents with. Comparison is the thief of joy, and this is true for any lived experience. The color of a shirt is not good or bad, it simply is. Once we connotate objects to be good or bad, we spend our lives chasing the good and running away from the bad, constantly stuck in an ebb and flow where things are dull by comparison and any pain becomes paralyzing. However, some things just are, and coming to this place of deep internal acceptance is absolutely tranquil. It is only when we stop thrashing around in the water that we can know the peace of floating on top.



Seeing the genuine form of things brings about a wisdom of the world and its true operations, instead of overlaying our many opinions on how it should be. Overcoming the personal narrative broadens the mind and teaches us the truth at the very heart of wisdom. The world is much, much larger than only what exists in our heads and being able to see and come to peace with more of it, without a reference towards self, is how we learn the true nature and grow wise beyond our years.

Shedding the weight of comparison and the frustrations of desire and fear also bring about a naturally optimistic state. Things will flow along as they are meant to. Sometimes up, sometimes down, but always forward along the stream of time. This is not to say that one should accept harm or damage or cruelty, by any means. There are many, many evils in the world, and we must actively fight against them. But the ability to do so with heartfelt peace of purity in the natural world is much less frenzied and heavy than could otherwise be.



Acceptance of the evil and acceptance of the need to fight against it is much less of a load than the internal stress of wishing the evil was not there and fearing the battle. The latter carries a load on the mind and the heart that are present before any malevolent force is even encountered. Those who do not thrash against what they wish was the case can instead float through what is. When the battle comes, they will fight. They will strategize and prepare as much as is necessary. But then they will relax the mind the rest of the time and live fully and with gratitude in the moments that are not spent fighting or preparing, without wasting energy on fear or imagined battle scenes.

Instead, the wise know that things will come and pass, and turn out as they shall. They sit deeply in that contented optimism. Tranquility allows us to live at peace and ensures that we externally experience deeply every moment of our short time here. Tranquility gives us purity of vision. It is wondrous to know peace, and from that peace comes the power to embody all other listed attributes with ease.



LEGEND OF SERENOVENTO

Serenovento, the God of the water and winds, sat on the edge of the expansive beach, where the sand met the frothy sea. His eyes glistened with the reflections of the azure water and the golden sun, a perfect mirror of the world around him. The wind passed through his empty form, continuing on its journey without hesitation. He was one with the wind, the ocean, and the sand - his spirit soaked in the essence of existence.

Time held no grip on Serenovento. Instead, it flowed around him, a quiet symphony of change, which he watched with silent observation. There was no tie to the world around him, only a detached and open contentment that all is at peace. When a warring vessel arrived and a horde of armed men stormed the beach, their swords gleaming under the harsh sun, he watched. The armies from the lands behind him came to meet the invaders and Serenovento noticed each fierce gaze and every sharpened spear.

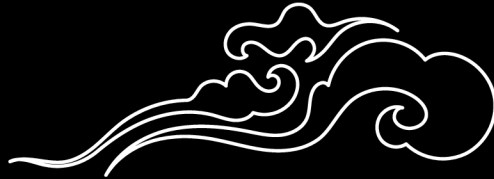
He watched as the battle cries of both sides turned into wails, as their pride was turned into humility, and as their lives were extinguished. He saw the rise and fall of men, of kings and soldiers. He watched as the sand was stained crimson, then returned slowly to its former hue, washed clean by the forgiving waves.

Years later, Serenovento sat as the beach bore witness to the growth of a great city, sprung from the seed of the first fortress. Serenovento watched as the echoes of battle were replaced by the sounds of trade and prosperity. Fighting ships became vessels of trade, and cannons were exchanged for chests of treasure. Wealth traversed through countless hands as fortunes were won and lost, and Serenovento watched rags become silk and riches become rags again. Still, the God of the Calm watched. He was an anchor in the storm of transformation, never to falter, never to sway.



Decades turned into centuries, and generations of families blossomed. Serenovento noticed the characteristics of great-grandfathers beaming in the faces of their descendants. The same laughter, voices, smiles, and tears emanated in the descendants of those he had watched carry those traits long ago. He saw their joys and their defeats, their celebrations and failures, the entire dizzying spectrum of experience that brings color to human life. He absorbed the stories, the emotions, the very essence of their existence. In his silent observation, he was a vessel afloat on their experiences.

Then, after countless cycles of the sun and the moon, Serenovento drew a long breath. It was a breath that tasted of the salty sea, of the wind that had witnessed centuries of life and death, of the sand that held stories of joy and despair. A breath that carried the story of time, the wisdom of existence, and the tranquility of acceptance.



His exhaled breath was a gentle breeze, caressing the golden sand and the cerulean waves. His eyes, still reflecting the eternal dance of the sky and the sea, held a simmering ember of profound understanding. He looked at the beach, the city, the children playing in the sand, the ships far out at sea, and whispered to himself, "All is as it should be."

In the serenity of his words, there was an undercurrent of unwavering acceptance and an embrace of the ceaseless tide of change. It was the voice of tranquility, the voice of peace, and the voice of balance in the face of the world's impermanence. The essence of humanity, distilled through centuries of observation, found fluidity through Serenovento, the God of the Calm. And he breathed.

BRIGHIDÁN



THE MANY GOD

Mixing Irish roots with the Goddess Brigid, known for wisdom, healing, and metalwork, and the powerful suffix -án, Brighidán embodies empathy, humanity, and unity.

EMPATHY

I do not feel as though I am overstating things when I say that empathy is the unit of human existence. The more empathetic you are, the more human you are, because the more capacity you have for encompassing the worldview and lived experience of another. So much of our life is lived within the bounds of our own heads, locked within the borders of our personal narrative.

Every experience is tainted by our experiences, biases, and perceptions in ways that are uniquely our own. This is a wonderful and beautifully human thing, but it also tricks us into the assumption that our worldview is correct. Why would it not be? We've spent our entire life of lived experience to build it.

That is exactly the problem, though. It has a maximum value of exactly one life. Those who are empathetic can escape the limitations of their own narrative and assume many lives within their perspective, many enriched human experiences that can both clash against each other and move together fluidly, to form a more cohesive and comprehensive picture of what it means to be a human. The opinion of an empathetic individual is more informed and nuanced than the opinion of those who only know their own minds. A fully formed mind gives you a human value of one, but empathy can increase that infinitely.

Being able to overlay many individually subjective experiences onto people's situations also gives you the ability to more closely connect with others to form valuable relationships, because you feel as they feel and see as they see. An experienced gathered from an account in a book may be distant from your own experience, but parallel to other person, and may help to give a little bit of insight to their situation. The empathetic can step into the shoes of others and understand them on a level that is beyond the face value facts and logic.



You are able to encapsulate their worldview and the road that led to it. Then you can measure it against your own, seeing how they compare and contrast, and why one person may reach one conclusion while separate people reach another. Empathy is the embodiment of the divine feminine, as it takes the external and makes it internal. Each of us needs a balance between our feminine and masculine, as there is a time and place for both. When we seek to understand the external world, we are embracing the understanding nature of the feminine, and when we seek to alter the world, we are embracing masculinity. Both are necessary for the complete human experience, and both allow us to find harmony and purpose within ourselves.

Empathy is us internalizing the world so that we can reconcile differences and find unity and harmony, it is a nurturing role. We must embrace the divine feminine whenever we wish to build a bridge between ourselves and another. The root of empathy is in self-identification, in becoming more aware of our own experience. To begin to understand anything, we must first understand ourselves. Before we come to know the borders around them, thoughts and emotions swirl around inside of us as colors and physical sensations.



As we grow, we learn many words to describe our thoughts but often people learn less words to describe how we feel. There is nuance to emotions like happy, sad, and angry, and having the right words to more aptly describe our internal state is how we correctly communicate it to others so that they understand. No one can read minds, and when we fail to provide the right words, that is exactly what we are asking them to be.

As a tree must grow before it can spread its seeds, so to must be come to acknowledge ourselves before stepping into the minds of others. It is a focused act to pause whenever a sensation comes up and note its particular characteristics. This is a feeling of being mad, but a certain kind of mad. Nor just run of the mill, basic mad. What is special about this one? How did it start? How do I want to handle it? What about my lived experience caused me to feel this way when others may not jump to this feeling in this scenario?

The more that we can start to understand and identify our own patterns, the more clearly we can recognize similar patterns in others.



We may see another's emotion and think "Oh, I've been that kind of mad before. I can see what might have caused it and how I should react to put them back at ease." That is understanding and connection.

By doing so, we can more fully understand how an entirely different human experience has led to the same emotion. It may look and sound much different on the surface, but under the mask is the same swirling color that we've felt inside ourselves.

Suddenly we can recognize many forms of single emotions, and many of the secondary emotions that the first is linked to.

The additional sadness that comes with that special kind of mad, and so forth. We can understand how it manifests in others and what the root cause may be. Suddenly, humans become much more accessible and we can connect at a level of depth and understanding that evaded us before, and we've grown our own human measurement in doing so.



Thus, we grow. Begin with paying attention to your own flowing colors, watch them without being fully swept away by them and learn how they move and what they look and feel like. Next, begin to capture and assign language, the language of every human and literary character as you read through stories, and the faces and physical language of every movie star in a great role, and everywhere else you find humans discussing their inner lives. Learn how words feel as they begin to walk in step with your own emotions. Once you've learned the beats of your drum, begin to play it for others and invite them to join in with music of their own. That is human connection, and that is the most rewarding part of being alive.

LEGEND OF BRIGHIDÁN

In the bountiful land of Manna, where abundant harvests once painted the landscape with hues of green, ochre, and gold, a cruel drought had reduced the once fertile soils to a barren wasteland. The people of Manna, once joyful and full of life, were now slowly wilting like the crops they so painstakingly tried to nurture. Desperate and on the brink of despair, they journeyed to the sacred temple of Brighidán, the goddess of empathy, humanity, and unity.

Brighidán's temple stood on a softly rolling hill, bathed in the soothing warmth of the nearby hot springs. There, the starving people fell to their knees in front of the goddess, pleading for mercy and intervention. Their stomachs rumbled as loudly as their cries, both yearning in agony for sustenance. Brighidán, their divine matriarch, listened intently to their cries, her own heart throbbing with the pulse of their collective despair.

The sorrowful of her people penetrated her divine being, stirring an intense, empathetic yearning to alleviate their suffering. She felt their pain as her own. Their storied lives resonated deeply within her mind as her eyes looked over the crowd.

There was Aine, a spirited lass whose laughter once echoed across the valleys, but whose amusement was now choked by the famine. Aine was a social young girl, who made friends far and wide, and whose inner fire was fueled by sparking the same within others.

Her dreams of becoming a healer, once vivid and vibrant, were now haunted by the gaunt faces of her kin, which she had no power to restore.



Also within the crowd was Eamon, a sturdy farmer whose land was as parched as his dreams. Eamon had taken pride in being able to sustain the people around him, working to ensure the strength of his friends and family. His proud, roughened hands, which once tilled the soil and brought forth bountiful harvests, now trembled with weakness and despair.

Almost buried by those around her, Maura's face peeked out through the crowd. A wise old woman, whose ageless eyes reflected the trials of time's passage, she had seen the rest of the village grow from children, and knew each of them inside and out. Her once lush and lively tales had now become dirges of despair, and her lyrics pined for the lost prosperity of her land.

Brighidán, moved by their desperation, gathered their pain within her, cradling it tenderly, as a mother would cradle her child. The essence of their collective humanity filled her with a profound sense of purpose and power. The sorrow and despair, the dreams unfulfilled, and the poignant hope that lingered in each heart, was a melody that orchestrated within every fiber of her being.



Summoning the motion swirling inside of here and directing the stream of power, Brighidán plunged her hands into the cracked and parched soil of Manna. As her hands delved into the depths of the earth, the essence of her people's misery, now transformed into a powerful force of life, flowed from her divine fingertips and seeped into the roots of the land. Her divine warmth surged into the arid soil, breathing sustenance into the very heart of Manna.

In the days that followed, the people of Manna watched in awe as a miracle unfolded before their eyes. Green tendrils broke through the cracked earth, the withered trees bore new leaves, and the dried-up springs bubbled with fresh, crystal-clear water. The famine receded like a forgotten nightmare, and the people of Manna rejoiced as their land was once again filled with abundance and vitality.



The rosiness of vitality flowed back into the cheeks of the young, and even the old had more spring in their step. The community had found each other in the darkest times, and come together in a powerful force of life. Using Brighidán as a conduit, the flow was channeled back into the earth itself, as all is one under the endless sky.

This tale of Brighidán, the divine embodiment of empathy, reminds us of the power of unity, and the transformative potential of shared experiences. Empathy isn't merely the ability to understand and share the feelings of others; it is the capacity to turn shared pain into collective healing. It is the force that binds us together in times of adversity, enabling us to rise above despair and build a world of compassion, unity, and hope.

MARAFADO



THE PATHFINDER GOD

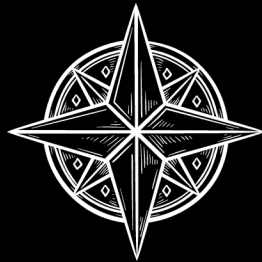
In Portuguese, Marafado means "sly or crafty." Marafado is the god of resourcefulness, determination, and courage, always finding a way to succeed and never accepting defeat.

RESOURCEFULNESS AND DETERMINATION

This character trait is one I call Pathfinder, where one has the determination to march towards a goal, the courage to maintain their path even when it is difficult or others look down on you, and the cleverness to maneuver around obstacles and limitations. The world is not set in stone, and rules are more fluid than one might think. Learning to forge your own path towards an end goal is a trait that separates those who achieve from those who ponder. It is the concept of a malleable reality to believe that if there is a will, there is a way. Of course, we should all seek to follow patterns and to learn from others, but we should also have the faith in ourselves to march off the marked path when necessary, if the path no longer suits us.

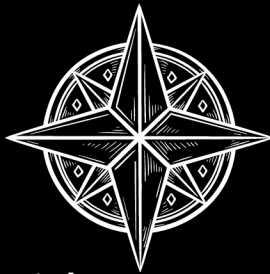
This character trait is the embodiment of masculinity, where one seeks to take the internal and make it external. To take an idea or a creative notion from inside of our minds and turn it into a reality, bending the entirety of the earth ever so slightly to our will. This is a strong character trait, and it is tempered by others, namely the feminine embodiment of empathy and the open minded-nature of curiosity, both of which are mentioned in other chapters. It is crucial not to be so consumed by our ideas that we assume we are always correct or we cause others to needlessly suffer for our own gain. The Pathfinder characteristic is an emboldening force, and one that we must be conscious of wielding.

However, when used correctly, Pathfinder is the opportunity to transform our lives into what we most desire them to be, the lives that evade others who give up when obstacles cloud their vision. The hidden secret of the world is that there are only limitations if you choose to accept them, and that accepting them is only one option. Those who believe that they are capable of more choose to see limitations as a deep gorge with a thin bridge connecting the ends. Even if they don't know where the bridge is, they believe in its presence and walk until they find it.



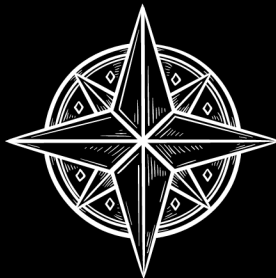
And if they search endlessly and never discover it, they still believe that the bridge is possible and seek out ways to build it themselves. Every path has to be walked a first time before it can become well-worn, and the Pathfinders are those whose feet chart the way. The strongest demotivating factor in the world is other people. Sometimes external people, and sometimes just the imagined voices of others in our heads. Those who say we should not pursue a dream, those who actively list reasons to fear defeat. These people are scared to grow and possibly feel the sting of failure, so they wait in safety at the bottom.

They may even try to keep you there as well, because anyone who goes up and succeeds is a direct challenge to their own choice, calling out their fear and limitations and serving as living proof of their own forfeited opportunity. Optimists may do something and be proven wrong, but pessimists never do anything at all. It takes courage to stand against others, courage to stand as a unit of one and walk a new path. There is no way of knowing what dangers may lie along those stretches of road, and you must trust yourself to deal with them all.



There will be no right way to win, so you must be clever enough to find opportunities to take just one more step forward. Cleverness is the ability to look at an object as a tool and to see every way to use it. Just because a tool has been created for one purpose does not limit its potential to only that pursuit. It is a form that can be slipped into any crevice in which it fits and for any purpose it can achieve. It takes a clever eye to acknowledge the many different lives that any object or concept can lead, which mirrors the multi-directional aptitude of the Pathfinder themselves.

Determination is also the hallmark of the Pathfinder, marching doggedly towards a clearly identified destination, despite hardship, slippage, or doubt. Whenever a trial grows too burdensome, many begin to question themselves, to wonder if they have what it takes or if they are on the right path at all. But the determined among us have confidence that once a decision to pursue a goal is made, one should not waver away from the intent. Come hell or high water, we must keep moving.



The Pathfinders are the innovators of the world, the ones who lead others to push the boundaries of what is possible. The creators and dreamers who shape the future. To be a Pathfinder is to see the very fabric of reality as a tool and to have the will, the courage, and the cleverness to alter it into something new.

LEGEND OF MARAFADO

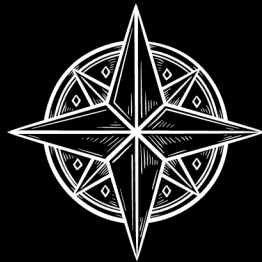
The tales of Marafado the Pathfinder are often the boldest and most daring retellings of Manna folklore.

His leadership style of stone-faced determination, undeniable strategic mastery, and brilliantly blazing courage was a beacon of hope for his people. He maintained the pace of a charge from the helm of the front lines, never from the rear. The stories of his battles against the shadow spirits were etched in the lore of his people, his name an echoing power ballad in their songs and prayers.

On a day of inky clouds and wailing winds, Marafado found himself leading his army against a slithering horde of these malicious spirits. They had doggedly pursued the intruders across hills and valleys, as wolves pursue prey whose scent fills their noses. The spirits, small in number, feared the might of Marafado and his warriors.

They were hellbent on retreat, their dark shapes oozing into the craggy mountains that towered ominously against the horizon. The shadows had many hiding spots, and unbeknownst to Marafado, this was an area that they knew well. In a seemingly orchestrated tactic, the dark spirits all seemed to slow down at once, letting the distance close between the hunters and their prey. At the entrance of a craggy pass, the spirits paused to look back at the pursuant enemies, then slipped into the crevice between two sheer rock faces.

Driven by the intoxication of victory and the desire for absolute vanquishment, Marafado followed in a frenzy, his army close behind him. Their bloodthirsty howls echoed through the pass, the cumulative ferocity growing stronger as they ventured deeper into the mountain range. However, the spirits had taken advantage of their local awareness and knew that the path had long been blocked on one side. They hunkered down into the shadows and slipped through crevices in the rock, circling back around Marafado and his soldiers by slinking up the mountain walls. The spirits reached the top of the wall as the men reached the blockade and were looking around for the shadows that they were certain were trapped in the encircling stone with them.

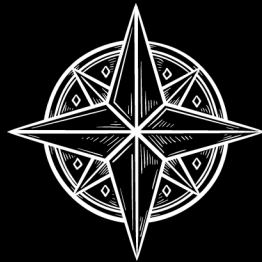


Marafado sniffed around, hinting for a clue as to where the spirits may have gone. He heard a creaking from behind him and whirled around in time to see large boulders beginning to tumble down the cliff face, causing an avalanche that sealed the only exit of the pass. The way they had come was now sealed by an abundance of solid rock, trapping Marafado and his men in a stony prison. Cackles could be heard in the distance as the shadows returned to the darkness.

For two days and nights, the trapped warriors toiled to move the massive boulders that barred their way.

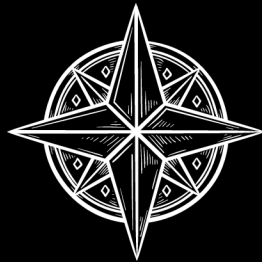
Using levers made from the few trees in the barren landscape and working in unison, they tried to budge the stones, but their attempts were in vain. The

rocks, as old and obstinate as the mountains themselves, refused to move. They had all but given up, too tired to continue, and becoming more wary of the possibility that they may waste away in this cave with each passing hour.



But Marafado, whose iron-strong will and fierce determination often shaped reality to his whim, was not to be subdued so easily. Fire blazed in his eyes as he channeled his godly ferocity and the frustration with the situation him and his men were in. With a roar that reverberated through the rock itself, he sprouted four additional arms, his powerful muscles flexing and pulsing with rejuvenated power. His feet dug into the earth as he took a firm grip, with 30 flexed fingers tightly pressed into the largest boulder that stood in their way.

With every ounce of his strength, he drove all of his power into his limbs and hoisted the massive rock above his head, determination reverberating in the grunts that escaped his gritted teeth. He strained against the weight, the muscles in his arms bulging to twice their normal size as they strained under the immense load. For a moment, the mountain pass was silent, every breath held and every eye fixated on Marafado, as he balanced the rock and teetered on the brink of victory or defeat.



But Marafado was not to be denied. With a final mighty heave and a bellowing roar, he cast the boulder aside, creating an opening for him and his men. A triumphant cry echoed through the mountain pass as the trapped warriors witnessed their leader create a path to freedom.

The weary soldiers marched back home, having lost the day but not their lives. Reminded that even when things seem bleak, there is always a way to navigate a choppy sea, even if you must sail directly through the waves.

FINNAGHALL



THE STARGAZER GOD

From Irish heritage, combining the legendary warrior Fionn with -ghall (meaning stranger), Finnaghall represents optimism, curiosity, and creativity.

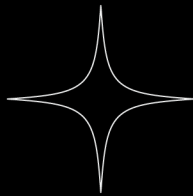
CURIOSITY AND CREATIVITY

Life is short, but life is also long and if we are not careful, life can become a doldrum of routine and boredom that leaves us tired, frustrated, and annoyed. Human beings thrive on novelty, and the best way to continuously retain novelty in your life is to maintain a student mindset. Maintain a sense of curiosity, creativity, and wonder towards the world around you and you will never be bored again. Existence itself will begin to stimulate you.

Life will gain depth and color. The smallest and simplest of objects will start to tell stories, if you'll only stick around long enough to listen.

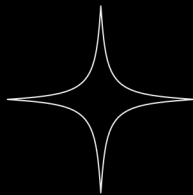
At its base, curiosity is an acceptance that there is much to learn, that we haven't learned it all, and that the pool of knowledge goes on forever. Even after we think we've learned something, we must accept that a new piece of information or a new perspective may fundamentally shift what we previously considered as fact. Ego and pride are the enemy of the student mindset because often once people feel they've found the truth, they stop looking and quickly grow stale.

It's understandable why this inherent refusal to absorb new information happens to so many of us. Humans are living in a perpetual game of survival, and survival is easiest when one knows all of the facts and can act accordingly. So, we have to plant an 'I know this' flag to feel as though we can safely assess and move through the world while knowing how things work and what to expect. The flip side of this is that if we assume that our knowledge is undoubtedly correct, it means that the knowledge of others is wrong. They have to be, because the very existence of their worldview, if proven true, could mean that all of the measurements we have taken to assess the world may be wrong, and if we're operating on bad information, it could be a threat to our survival.



You thought you had your back against a safe wall, then that wall disappears. Instead of dealing with that constant feeling of threat, it is common for people to close their mind to all curiosity about anything new and to shut down their ability to learn. To develop biases and prejudices based on fear, which paint the whole world in a bleak light. All in the name of protection.

Thus, curiosity is rooted in a perception based on growth. Curious people see the entire world as an open book and want to follow every trail to understand more about the flow of the world. They are not threatened by the opportunity to grow and the potential to reassess their assumptions. Within that is a deep humbleness that accepts that new information could present itself at any time and an appreciation for how vast the world is in comparison to ourselves.

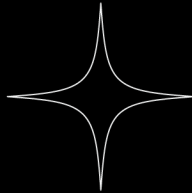


Additionally, there is a fearlessness in those who are curious, as they jump right into the deep end to see for themselves what happens down there, instead of assuming, marking that assumption as fact, and complacently staying forever on the shore. There is a willingness to be educated, to embrace information and ask for more. To have faith in themselves to dance in a full spectrum of colors and not be irreversibly lit by a single shade.

Those who are curious are also an enthusiastic bunch, because they are constantly bathed in a genuine sense of wonder and novelty. Life seems like a never-ending series of adventures, whether it be bulldozers, ants, human behavior, or the immeasurable types of cheese, there is always more to explore and endless perspectives to understand.

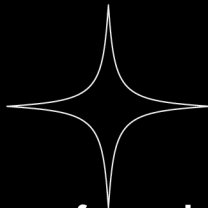
Those who seek to understand more of the world often come to gain an appreciation for the variety of perspective and can see things through many lenses.

These lenses spark a chain of insight and detail linking that is the undertone of creativity. The piecing together of influences into a unique and innovative style culminates in originality. We all stand on the shoulders of giants. Creative people have seen many details of the world and have explored them enough to retain the parts that fascinated them, blending them together into their own personalities. The creative live an inspired life because they have sought and found the beauty of the world and resonated deeply with much of it.



Within these character traits is a fundamental appreciation for the craftsmanship of the world. Each object has a history and a purpose, and the detail of its composition is often an intricately linked web of purpose, intention, and function. As the human search for novelty seems to be an unquenchable quest, it's a really common issue that things get taken for granted in pursuit of the next. We drive around in giant metal machines that have all sorts of materials and features, and we find ourselves bored. Each and every part of a car was originally pulled in some way from the ground beneath our feet. Even leather from a cow was built initially by the consumption of grass that helped the cow grow.

It is an absolute wonder that man took pieces from the earth and built a computer-operated moving machine that runs on explosions, yet we sit in the driver seat and all we can think about is our anger towards traffic. It is even more amazing that so many components of our modern life have been inspired by the natural world and that the intricacies of natural design have stimulated and encouraged the creativity of the builders, dreamers, and innovators among us. The earth itself is a fountain of inspiration.



Man has lost his sense of wonder, and with it comes the humdrum of daily routine. Luckily, anger is quick to fade when looking out into the expansive stars of the universe. The relative size of our miniscule problems falls short in front of the bountiful starscape. Suddenly our egos and our first-person narrative fade away. Carrying around creativity and curiosity is like carrying around a bit of the whole universe, reminding us to look up now and again and remember the adventure of existence.

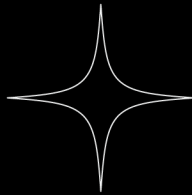
LEGEND OF FINNAGHALL

In a time before time, the god Finnaghall roamed the Irish countryside, his spirit in the constant pursuit of adventure. A timeless wanderer and child of inspiration and curiosity, he often walked through the emerald fields and foggy moors, inhaling deeply the scent of the world around him. Finnaghall had a knack for seeing the things that others missed, and he enjoyed taking his time to explore everything that caught his eye.

One sunny afternoon, Finnaghall found himself in the heart of a forest. As he went back and forth between stooping down to peek under rocks and peer into burrows to see who was living there, he noticed a flash in his peripheral view. As he turned to look, a mesmerizing spectacle caught his eye: thousands of iridescent bugs, shimmering in the sunlight, were performing an intricate dance.

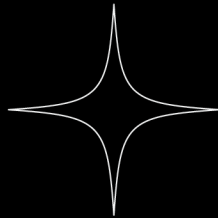
Concentric circles of the bugs shimmied across the earth, as lines of others zagged up and down the trunks of trees. Finnaghall knew that even the smallest beings had their own rules, traditions, and celebrations, and he was thrilled to witness such an event. Enraptured by their beauty and the intriguing ritual, he joined the tiny dancers in their mirth. Hands thrown towards the sky, and with the earth pulsing beneath his feet, he mirrored the rhythm of the jig and danced with the insects.

As he watched and danced, Finnaghall did not need a reason for the celebration, he only appreciated the event. He listened intently to the buzz of insect discussions, but did not care to judge what was being said. This was his way, to be wide-eyed and open eared, seeking the contentment of understanding and the joy of the pursuit, without the added weight of scuriny. This gave Finnaghall the freedom to embrace adventure and to consistently find himself in new and exquisite situations.



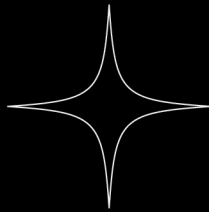
Continuing his journey, Finnaghall came across a cave and as he peered into the gloom, he could tell that the opening stretched deep into the mountainside. He knew that anything could be hiding in the shadows and that he should safely err on the side of caution, but he was not one to pass up an opportunity to explore the world around him. Its darkness whispered softly about untold mysteries, arousing his curiosity. He ventured inside the opening in the stone, his keen eye intrigued by the columns and pedestals of rock formations. Each hanging stalactite told a story of movement through geological epochs long forgotten and Finnaghall was enamored by every one. He descended deeper and deeper, carried away by his exploration until he realized he was utterly lost.

Luckily, Finnaghall was creative, and his cumulative knowledge weaved together a tapestry of understanding about the world that make even the trickiest of situations more manageable. Feeling around in the darkened space for clues and resources, he made out the features of an interesting mushroom growing in a rock crevice. Remembering a passage that he read in a dusty tome, he began searching the cave for the root system of the fruiting body. He followed the line of the mushroom a few inches under the earth and saw the gleam he was looking for.



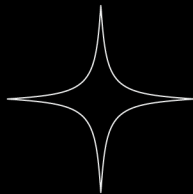
Finnaghall knew that the mushroom he had seen was only the top layer of a bioluminescent mycelium, which glowed pallidly among the dirt. Using the soft glow of the collected fungus, Finnaghall traced his steps back, finally emerging into daylight atop a majestic mountain. He took a moment to feel the sun on his skin and the wind whistling by, then turned his attention to the landscape.

As awe-inspiring as the view was from the mountain's peak, what caught Finnaghall's eye next was a nest, high in an ancient yew tree. Within, a brood of pterodactyl hatchlings squawked and flapped their tiny wings. The sight thrilled the curious god, he had never seen these animals up close, and especially not the young. He climbed the tree to observe the miracle of new life and see what the babies looked like before they became the fierce predators they would grow into. At first, he made sure to keep his distance, but he couldn't quite see the level of detail in the wings that he wanted.



He rationed that just a little closer couldn't hurt, as it's not every day that one gets to learn more about young pterodactyls. However, as he was watching the small animals explore their newly formed wings, the shadow of the mother darkened the sky. She returned to the nest, her predator eyes fixed upon the intruder. With a mighty swoop, she grasped Finnaghall in her formidable talons and took to the skies. High above the emerald fields, suspended between earth and sky, Finnaghall knew he had to act. From his vantage point in the sky, he looked around and assessed where he was.

His many explorations had imprinted deeply in his mind every nook and crevice of the land, and he knew that there was a body of water on the other side of a hill that they were flying over. Finnaghall waited until the time was right and they were over the lake, then he yanked the feathers nearest him as hard as he could. Caught by surprise, the mother pterosaur released him from her clutched talons, reacting to the sudden sharp pain. The curious god had dived into water from many high cliffs before and breached the surface with a stiff, pointed body that cut through the waves.



Finnaghall swam to the shore, and as he walked onto the beach, a grin lit up his face. He stretched out his limbs and walked back to his divine abode, his heart filled with the wonder of his adventures. His journey, lined by curiosity and creativity, was a testament to his wandering spirit, a living embodiment of the world's grandeur, and a reminder of the enchantment lurking around every corner. For in every direction, Finnaghall found magic.

ESTREMOZ



THE IRON GOD

Derived from Portuguese heritage, named after a historic city in Portugal. Estremoz embodies the spirit of adaptability and resilience, holding dominion over stone and earth.

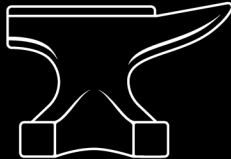
ADAPTIBILITY AND RESILIENCE

The only constant in the world is change. Being adaptable and resilient allows us to maneuver through the change without being derailed as we orient our lives towards a fulfilling purpose. The essence of adaptability is coming to accept the consistent presence of change and being unfazed by the constant cycling of factors and situations. Change is not frightening; it is an adventure.

Changes are essentially microdeaths, as discussed in the Remembrance of Death section. As soon as we think we've surveyed the land and have a clear picture of what's to come, it shifts rapidly below our feet. Each minute change is the emergence of something new, sometimes only slightly changed, and sometimes completely unrecognizable from the moment before. Then you must adapt or be left behind. Being adaptable means having the ability to weigh any impacting factors of a situation and then using them to move forward with an action that resonates with your internal purpose.

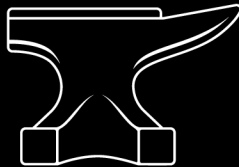
Consider a highly stressful change: losing your job. For many people, this derails a lifeline of foundational security.

Being adaptable means that you are unshaken even by such drastic sideswipes, because you can quickly determine the factors of the new reality, reevaluate the options ahead of you, and decide which actions should be taken. These actions may go up and down, but as a whole they move towards the larger goal of a fulfilled life. The adaptable of the world would ask questions like “Do I have enough resources to meet my immediate needs? If I do not, what will be my new way to get them, even if it costs me my pride and other desires?”. Most importantly, they would ask themselves “Can I handle this setback without losing sight of my greatest goals, the goals that are measured across an entire life, and not just through this moment?”



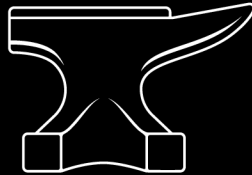
The concepts of grit behind these questions are the signs of adaptability. Being adaptable means being able to work around the facts of the new scenario like water flowing around a barrier. Accept the new hurdle and go around it, through it, or over it. The confidence and security derived from knowing that we can fall back on ourselves alleviates the fear and anxiety that come along with the initial change, and we are able to remain steadfast on our path. Adaptability isn't limited to these major life changes; it shows up in a lot of smaller interactions as well.

Social anxiety centered is related to adaptability. New people are unknowns. Conversation is dynamic and changes constantly, by definition. Those without the confidence to adapt well to each new step of the conversation often have anxiety about engaging in the first place. There is an ever-present fear of “Will I say the right thing?” or “Will I even have anything to say at all?”. They’ll often leave conversations belittling themselves for not reacting correctly or feeling dumb about sharing a thought. People who are adaptable trust themselves to react in an acceptable way no matter where the conversation leads, and to do so with confidence.



Confidence in conversation comes from trusting yourself in the general trajectory of your engagement and not harping on the details. The most straightforward way of achieving this is to come into a conversation with the express intention of being your genuine self. Then even if you walk away and doubt whether you said the right words, reacted correctly to their words, or how your thoughts were received, you can be assured that you presented a genuine and intentional version of yourself. You were your honest self, and that is the most fulfilling way to engage with others. Let that be your anchor and you will never drift too far away.

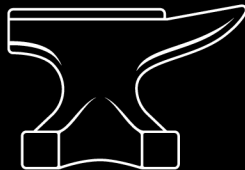
Resilience is a complementary characteristic that walks in hand with adaptability. When we're blown off-course, resilience is the tool we use to survive at the edges until we've charted back to the middle. Without the resilience to persevere, we may find that fear and doubt prevent the return to our best selves and we move in a direction that's very far from our ideal destination.



Resilience is knowing that you can manage your resources, time, and energy in ways structured for long-term benefits and not immediate gratification. Resilience is making it work with less to get to more.

Resilience is resistance to being defeated by suffering, through adapting to new situations. A hungry man with only one sandwich will split it into pieces and only consume each portion when the right time comes, because their resiliency can outlast the temporary resource shortage. That man is not broken by a temporary setback and understands that the bigger picture is the one that should be measured. Getting through the days until there is more.

These two characteristics are upheld closely by people who have an overarching trajectory to a north star and can zoom out far enough to see the whole story without being bogged down in the details. Some focus only on the bad times and never pull their head out far enough to see that on a bigger scale, the bad is a blip in an ocean of good. If you walk towards a general horizon, it will not matter the exact route you took, and moving through life with a formed idea of where that horizon lies can outlast any deviations that temporarily alter a perfect course.



Why are these two critically important? Because an intrinsic human experience is one where we struggle, since struggle is as persistent as change. However, human beings find purpose in struggle, because human beings find purpose in solving problems, both for ourselves and for others. The narrative of human existence is a journey to bring value to the world, and trying to placate yourself with contentment is a shallow human experience. It's not what we crave. We all come into the world with the intention to do impactful things. The only way to achieve that is to take something that's not good, wrestle around with the struggles that it brings, and make it better. And it won't be easy. But with the adaptability and resilience to manage the curves, it will be done.

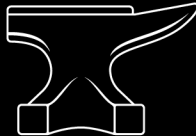
LEGEND OF ESTREMOZ

In a quiet city within the illustrious tapestry of the Manna landscape, lived the celestial Estremoz. A divine presence, deeply imbued with the essence of the Portuguese landscape, she was the beacon of resilience and adaptability. Her ruling over the stone and earth was firm and fair. She stood as a symbol of fortitude, embodying the spirit of the ancient marble city to which she bore her name.

One inconspicuous day, an elusively disguised spirit, shrouded in deceit and malevolence, waited in the streets for the goddess to walk by. The spirit approached Estremoz with a wicked gleam in its eye. Its hand clasped tightly around an object in its fist, the shuffling demon was visibly excited by the prospect of destruction. The spirit pretended to run into the goddess and fell down to the floor, feigning a bout of clumsiness. The spirit rose and apologized profusely, begging the goddess's forgiveness.

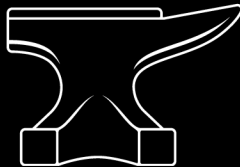
To show amends, the spirit offered her the object in its palm, an artifact of great beauty and delicate craftsmanship. The artifact glistened brightly with polished metals, but in its core, it held a vile curse. Caught off guard by the spirit's crafty words and not wanting to seem ungrateful, the unwary Estremoz accepted the gift into her satchel and bowed deeply to the stranger who it seemed to her was being abundantly generous for such a common accident.

She continued walking onwards until arriving at her fortress, and as she did, the curse unfurled its wicked design, forcing her to metamorphose into a delicate songbird. As Estremoz peered around her with eyes that were not her own, she was shocked by her new form. The surprise was unexpected, but she was not derailed. She was as adaptable as the very stones she reigned over, enduring change as they do - able to be shaped, yet constant in inherent form. Using the only tools she had at hand, she crafted a plan. Flying into her own corridor, she perched on the windowsill and sang a clear song through the stone hall. The patrons of the hall were baffled by the insistence of the small bird, but one pair of ears perked up. The sounds that Estremoz made communicated her plight to her loyal handmaid using a series of unique chirps that echoed the dialect of the Old Magic, a language both she and her handmaid had a deep understanding of.



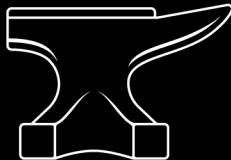
The handmaid, as steadfast and faithful as her mistress, quickly dived into the tomes of Old Magic. However, the malevolent spirit had been watching its plan unfold and noticed her endeavor. Wrath began to seethe from the spirit as it understood the threat to its scheme. In its rage, it manipulated the curse to again transform Estremoz, this time into a sleek cat. The handmaid took the scroll that contained the curing charm and ran through the halls, but the songbird was nowhere to be found.

Despite the abrupt transformation, Estremoz was not faltered, reflecting the essence of the sermon she once inscribed in the cosmic stones, proclaiming the omnipresence of change and the necessity to flow with it. She set out again, moving quickly through shadows and tight spaces to evade the eyes of the ever-watchful spirit. She found the handmaiden gazing wistfully out of a window, eying the sky for the songbird form she believed held her goddess captive. The cat form of Estremoz ran circles around the handmaid's legs, bustling for her attention. Through purrs and meows, coded in the rhythm of the Old Magic, she once again communicated her new form. The handmaid wrestled the scrolls from her satchel and began incanting the necessary charms to restore her mistress.



Hearing the mewling cat, the spirit quickly oozed to where the two stood. Its wrath growing ever larger and more powerful, the spirit revealed its terrifying form to the handmaid, petrifying her with the ghastly gaze of a soul eternally damned. With the maiden frozen in abject horror, the spirit seized the cat and through it through the window. Twisting the curse once more as the goddess flew through the air, the spirit transformed Estremoz into a tiny seed and she fell to the ground, trapped, silent, and still.

Estremoz, even cloaked in her plant form, understood the magnitude of her situation. There were no immediate tools at hand to act with, the only thing she maintained was an infallible patience. Instead of panicking, she tapped into the profundity of her divine character - resilience and adaptability. Over the course of two years, while her city was lost without the strength of their leader, she grew into a magnificent tree. Through this incredibly long passage of time, Estremoz had actively the configuration of her leaves and the pattern of her bark, to contain figures that mirrored inscriptions of the Old Magic.



The handmaid, constantly gnawed at by the guilt of failing to save her goddess, had carried the burden through the years. Once, under a brief respite underneath this unique tree, the lines of the tree began to look more familiar. Upon a closer look, she recognized it immediately, the symbols of language used by the ancient ones to speak to each other. Overcoming her tremble, she placed her face close to the tree, her hands shaking with anticipation as she recited the words of the Old Magic. In a burst of divine energy, the curse was broken, and Estremoz returned to her original form, her stone and earth dominion restored. Despite time, her kingdom, her people, and the stone around them all remained unshaken.

QUAUHTEMOCZIN



THE PILLAR GOD

Inspired by Mexican heritage, this god would carry the spirit of all Aztec Emperors within him. Quauhtemoczin embodies loyalty, integrity, and community.

INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY

We should aspire to be unshakable. After one determines their identity, we should seek to abide by the values and principles that we have deemed to be worthy. Find your internal compass and stick to it.

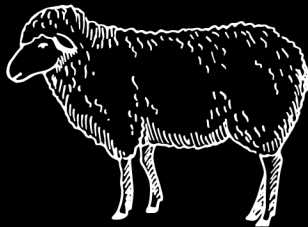
Then once you know yourself, find your tribe and seek to be a contributing part of that community. There is a deep sense of fulfillment that comes with being part of a community, doing well within that community, and giving back to that community. One should aspire to be the type of person that others can rely on as a solid bastion in times of uncertainty. The

Pillar characteristic allows others to build
unconquerable fortresses on top of its stable
foundation.

It is common to come to a decision in life and feel paralyzed because there are too many factors to weigh and grey areas to consider. However, those who have clearly determined their values, beliefs, and principles, can easily decide what fits into their personal buckets of right and wrong, then make the choices accordingly.

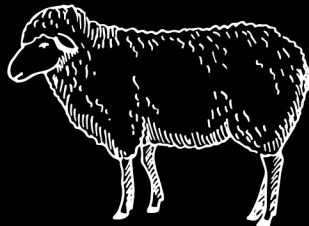
Often, those who are surer of themselves bring forth the same sense of surety in others, due to that strong sense of conviction. Even more so when there's a basis of integrity and logic behind the decisions. Being intentional about identifying a cohesive set of fundamental guiding principles is necessary for making decisive action, and those who make decisive action never waste time wondering, 'what if'.

It's not always a clear path to finding guiding principles, because many principles that are classic rules tend to conflict with other seemingly unshakable rules. For example, the principle of 'fairness at all costs' can be directly antithetical to the principle of 'operate towards the greatest good'. For a king whose people have been plagued by an illness, it may be a difficult decision to quarantine and exile a small group, who had no fault of their own, have contracted the disease. There may be a small chance to save these souls if they are maintained in the area with medical assistance, but it may also result in a great loss of life through contagion. There is no right answer to this moral quandary, but perhaps a clearly identified set of principles can help to determine which path is more aligned with your internal north star.



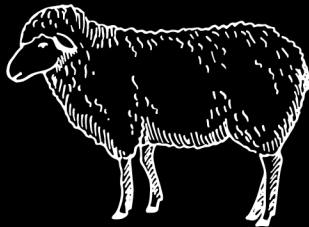
It's no great surprise that many people who play the lottery fantasize about how they will use the winnings to help their loved ones. If we have unlimited resources, our first priority is to provide for those around us, to ensure their safety and security, and to make their dreams come true. Humans are social creatures, and it is deeply fulfilling to both give and receive love and support.

Along with maintaining a set of devoted internal principles, there is also a comfort in maintaining a reliable role within one's given and chosen community. Both concepts are deeply rooted in a strong foundation of identity and purpose. A king who sits in his castle is a lonely man with no connection to his role, but a king who walks among the streets of his people comes to know them, understand them and care for them. He begins to want more for them, to see their fears and their desires, to act in service towards their betterment. We do not need to be kings to do the same work. Being deeply ingrained in the community around you, acting in service towards the improvement of the lives and well-being of others, comes back tenfold with purposeful repayment.



Humans living in an absurd existence can only find purpose through service to others and acknowledgement of self. We build skills to teach them to others. We build wealth to increase security and reduce toiling labor. We build our bodies so that they may do more work for those who cannot do so themselves. The life spent in service as a life well lived.

The Pillar characteristic is deeply entrenched in those who are leaders. The type of leaders who charge side-by-side with their soldiers into battle, instead of calling commands from the rear. It is a type of leadership whose goals and metrics are external and quantified only by the life quality and value of those around them, as opposed to any internal sense of inflated, ego, or pride. The Pillar characteristic is what we all wish our politicians would be, and what they were initially intended to be. Leaders of the community who act in service of their people.



It is also not necessary to lead in order to be a Pillar. When a winter storm blows out the electricity of an entire block, the man who risks the elements to climb into the air and restore warmth to the families around him is a community pillar. The nurse who volunteers to extend her shift because the hospital is overrun with those who need her help, embodies the pillar characteristic. Acting in service with a set of defined principles, sturdies the mind and the soul against a constant barrage of unknowable situations. Our navigations may be circuitous, but will always be pointed towards the north star. Through the grounding of doubt in an immovable sense of self and service, we find the purpose that inspires a well-lived life.

LEGEND OF QUAUHTEMOCZIN

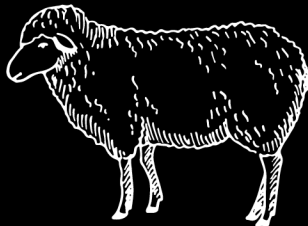
In the celestial orchestra of the cosmos, beyond the mortal world of Manna, dwelt Quauhtemoczin. Within a galactic amulet around his neck, he bore the souls of Mexico's strongest leaders, carrying their power forever with him. His divine temple, wreathed in stardust, stood as an effigy to service, selflessness, and an unyielding devotion to his people.

Watching over the mortal realm, Quauhtemoczin sensed the shadows of the foreboding period known as the Shadowscape creep into Manna. It was an epoch that cycled through the grand cosmic symphony, which repeatedly brought prosperity at its dawn and despair at its dusk.

Even the great universe ebbs and flows, and every expansion eventually contracts as well. Through the halls of time, light springs forth and spreads across the mountains and valleys, and as the light draws thin and the symphony comes to a crescendo, those who dwell in the dark come out for their turn to walk the hallowed ground again. As the shadows lengthened and whispering demons swarmed the land, the god's heart ached for what was soon to overtake his people. He understood the cosmic order, the rhythm of highs and lows, but he refused to watch his people perish.

First, the dark spirits descended upon the mortals' homes, tearing them asunder with wicked delight. The shelter that the people had built with their own hands to protect themselves from the elements were ribbons in the grasp of the shadows. The men, women, and children cowered while the bastions of stone and timber were reduced to rubble and sticks.

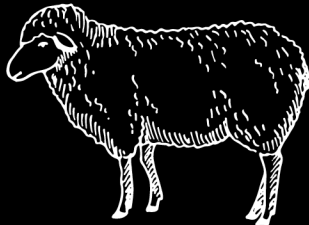
Upon witnessing this, Quauhtemoczin, the selfless god, took up his mighty celestial hammer. The strikes echoed through the heavens as he dismantled his own shimmering temple, breaking the exquisite masonry into smaller pieces. By breaking down his home, he could transform the divine stones into a shield of resilience for his people, teaching them to build new homes from its fragments that were unbreakable by the spirit wrath.



The malevolent spirits were not satiated by the first plunder. They returned and pillaged the possessions of the mortals, raking the clothes from their backs and the plows from their fields, taking from them what little they had left. Quauhtemoczin, resolute, opened the vaults of his celestial realm, giving his people the divine tools and implements that were once his, helping them carry on in the face of loss.

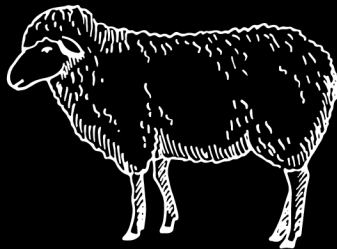
The spiritual power of these godly tools was too immense to be overshadowed, and the demon spirits were kept at bay.

The final blow of the Shadowscape fell upon the land, a devastating famine that withered the very life away from the soil and the seas. The demons claimed the plants and animals for themselves, robbing Manna of sustenance and vitality. Witnessing the hollow eyes of his beloved people as they stared down the inevitability of slow starvation, the god made an irrevocable decision. With love in his heart, he prepared his final offering to keep his people afloat through their tribulations. The heart and hands of Quauhtemoczin were sturdy and sure as he prepared his own divine body to be consumed, knowing that his celestial flesh would maintain his people's lifeblood throughout the deepest darkness.



Before his ultimate gift, he removed the turquoise amulet from his neck and placed as much of his own soul within as he could. He directed his people to bury it deep within the earth where his temple once stood, promising that his inner light would illuminate their path through the shadows.

As the curtain of the Shadowscape began to lift, the faces of those who had feared the worst now began to blossom with hope and gratitude. The people found their way back to remnants of the godly temple, expecting to pay homage to the god's memory. As they crested the mountain from where he sat watch, they were astonished to find Quauhtemoczin. His rejuvenated body brisled with vibrancy as he worked, felling cosmic trees with his celestial axe, the foundation of his new temple taking shape. His turquoise amulet gleamed at his chest, a beacon of hope and a symbol of the god's unwavering devotion to his flock.



RIOSCURO



THE KNOWING GOD

A blend of the Spanish words for 'king' and 'dark', Rioscuro carries the mortality of mankind, and the awareness of death. Only Rioscuro knows what is on the other side.

DEATH AWARENESS

Though it may initially seem to be morbid, the remembrance of death is likely to be the most valuable tool for making life feel more rich, fulfilling, and valuable. Death is the flip side of life, and the inverse of any state is what gives a state its relative identity. Light defines dark, cold defines heat.

The more closely we walk with death, the more we embed ourselves in the experience of life. We tend to have a visceral reaction to the notion of death as something that is only meant to be avoided. Once it has caught up to our minds and our bodies, it means the end is near whether for us or someone that we care about. However, death happens to be all around us, whether we happen to notice it or not.

There is constant death in the most literal form, as the animals around our neighborhood succumb to very short, cruel lives. There is the death of the animal that is on our dinner plates, whose life sustains our own. These are very literal, blatant examples of death. At a higher and more abstract level, there is the small death of time. Death, in essence, is a finite object lost forever and irrevocably to the void. For a living being, that death is the energy leaving the confines of the body and expanding into the universe, for energy cannot be created or destroyed, it simply changes form.

Similarly, as each moment shifts into a new one, we will never be able to recapture the unimaginable complexity of each passing millisecond, as the form of the moment is in turn lost to the unending void of time. Death is change embodied, and there are small deaths and small changes around us with every passing instance of time. With a lifespan of 76 years, that gives you about 3,962 weeks to live. Within those weeks, we move to days, hours, minutes, and seconds. Trillions of moments, and every single one is simultaneously unique, valuable, and fleeting.



Every time you leave your home, say goodbye to a friend, finish a meal, or finish a book, there is a miniature death as that singular event and the moments that composed it slip away into the void. Even our own bodies are never the same moment to moment, as our heart has a finite number of beats and our cells a limited number of divisions. This all sounds overwhelming and depressive, but that's not the way it has to be. By embracing and walking hand in hand with death, we can learn to appreciate and recognize the value of everything and to minimize the issues that seem so important in our day to day. The beautiful uniqueness of every moment is exciting and novel, and no detail is too small to be taken for granted. Every flower becomes more beautiful simply because it will be different immediately.

This gives a lovely feeling of dynamic vibrance to the world, a comfort in knowing that we will never be stuck, never be locked in, and always swept up in the blowing winds of life. There is even a phrase to describe the freedom of embracing the eternal: Optimistic Nihilism. It will not always be, but it is here now, and I am glad for its presence. When we're on a vacation, there is a stark difference between the first and last day. The first day, we find ourselves enthusiastic for everything that lays before us, with no thoughts towards the distant horizon of home. The last day is a different story. We find ourselves trying harder to soak up every moment, to imprint the last sunset to memory and to savor the last bite of vacation food, because we know it is almost time to return. By the last day, I yearn for the openness of the first.



But what if we could savor every day this way instead? What if the acknowledgement of the fleeting nature of life, instead of driving us into fear and clinging to normality, allowed us to instead relish and preserve every moment we pass through? It is possible, and it is the magic of embracing our finality. Yes, it is scary to acknowledge and ponder over the end. But it is inevitable, and the enemy of fear and the unknown is control and awareness. Make death your companion and learn his secrets, so that you know him well, as his presence makes life sweeter.

This dynamic mirrors our external relationships as well. For example: I try to consciously keep my dog's mortality as an acknowledged fact as well, which means that every day I get to experience the depth of love that blooms from me when I realize that his purity and benevolence will likely be shorter than my lifetime. Each time I have that thought, a bittersweet wave rolls over me, and I'm left with a deep appreciation and the ability to really see him. To fully perceive the presence and the vibrance in his tiny little 17lb body. And I am grateful for the moments and the memories.



In essence, death is change. Often we connect one experience with good and feel negatively when it transitions into a bad. But when we know that every moment has value, we see 'good and 'bad' with less strict lines. Pain itself becomes a color in the spectrum of experience and one that we embrace because it is a part of existence.

Like death, we do not need to run from pain, or from sadness, or from any other classically negative experience. Instead, we need to relish in the fact that every instance is one slice of our pie of life, and that once we sit in the emotion or the sensation, it just is. There is a Buddhist saying that 'cold is an emotion', meaning that cold is just a state of existence, and that our reaction to cold defines the way we categorize it. The power comes in choosing that reaction, just as we can choose to react to death as a companion. This concept gives us an unbelievable amount of control and wisdom over our lives, even as the world swirls around us.



So, as you walk, look to your side and see the footprints of death beside you. Let him point out a flower to you and choose to see the flower with all of the depth that it deserves, for while beautiful, it is temporary. Let the impermanence of the world fill you with gratitude, with a thorough appreciation that you were able to be immersed deeply in the story of the world and experience existence in its entirety. Overlook nothing, for every moment has value. This is the core of the rest of the values in my Godmaker temple.

LEGEND OF RIOSCURO

In the shadow-veiled corners of Manna, where the sun rarely pierced through to the ground, dwelt the enigmatic god Rioscuro. As the Keeper of Darkness, he was the conservator of night, secrets, and mysteries, wielding the power of shadow and illusion. This shadowy region of Manna, wrapped in the cloak of the moon, was shrouded in whispers of the unknown and laced by the stars' silken threads.

In ancient days long since passed, Rioscuro began pondering deeply the balance of existence. He sensed an imbalance in the rhythmic order, and introduced a new figure to the world to restore it. That figure was Death, an entity that accompanied once vibrant beings through the transition into still, silent husks. The people of Manna grew to fear Death and its cold touch.

The embrace of Death brought nothing but misery into their lives. Never before had they been made to face the absence of a loved one, to attempt to cross the chasm left within their souls after an abrupt departure. The weeping for their losses echoed across valleys which had never paid audience to such sorrow, and they cried out from their aching depths against the unfairness of it all. One man, filled with abject frustration, dared to journey to Rioscuro's temple in the heart of darkness. The man strode across the shadow realm, propelled by newfound existential dread, and determined to convince the god to obliterate Death.

In the encumbering shade of the temple and the god himself, the man poured out his anguish, his voice echoing through the darkness. He pleaded, "O Rioscuro, great god of Night, Death brings nothing but sadness and misery. I beg of you, obliterate this dreadful entity. Spare us the torment of its icy grasp."



Rioscuro, whose existence was spent dwelling within the spaces that most avoid, understood the depth of this man's pain. Rioscuro knew that this monumental shift would forever scar his beautiful people. He knew that he had introduced a foreign terror that be the root from which fear would stem. But by giving them Death, Rioscuro also gave them Life. He knew that Death was necessary, that it was an integral part of the fabric of existence. That a life without end is naught but a shallow pool. He looked upon the grieving man. In his eyes, the shadows danced, telling the tale of life and death, of change and continuity.

The arrival and departure of all things big and small enchanted the man as he gazed deeply within Rioscuro. "Listen, my child," Rioscuro said, his voice rumbling deeply with the echo of the cosmos. "In the heart of every moment, life and death are gracefully partnered for their eternal dance. Each instance that comes into being also passes away, slipping into the void of time. This is the essence of death, the transformation and change that fuels existence."



The god continued, "The remembrance of death, my child, is the key to a truly fulfilled life. To acknowledge and accept the fleeting nature of existence is to appreciate the resolute vibrance of each moment in time, to savor the precious sanctity of every experience, every relationship. It gives meaning and value to life, lends richness to it, just as the cold defines heat and the dark defines light. Every heartbeat, each blink of an eye, is a step closer to death. But remember, each pulsing heartbeat moves life within you, moment by moment, breath by breath."

Rioscuro paused, the shadows softening around him as he concluded, "Death is not an end, but a transformation. It is not a void but a transition.

Death is the constant companion that teaches us to value life, to see its beauty, its worth. Without death, life would lose its sweetness, its vibrance. So, do not fear death, my child, but welcome it. Let Death escort you to a richer and more complex understanding of your own existence."



With Rioscuro's words echoing in his ears, the man slowly raised himself from the floor and thought back to those he had lost. He realized that through their absence, his affection for them had grown exponentially. His mind ventured back to shared occasions, and he felt their presence as warm embers within his core.

The man left the temple, carrying with him the profound wisdom imparted by the god. As he journeyed home, Death appeared on the path before him, not as a dreadful specter but as a gentle guide. In its skeletal hand, it held out a flower. The man took the flower, marveling at its vivid hues, its delicate petals, its sweet scent. It was the most beautiful flower he had ever seen.