

Last Hope - Live Action Role Play

Players Handbook:

The Syndar

Version 1.2

Compiled and Written by Brian Pekarske and Kristen Knoertzer
Last Hope and the syndar created by Ryan Jopp and Justin Johnson
Io'Larian syndar created by Kristen Knoertzer
Phoenix Enclave created by Mischelle Maas
Syndar pantheon developed by Rebecca Pekarske
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Introduction

Who are the syndar?

The syndar are the eldest and most long-lived of the three playable races in Last Hope Live Action Roleplay. Their culture goes back farther than the history books of man can document. Their skin varies in pigmentation far beyond the typical coloration of humans, and they have ears which taper into points. From the shadows, they watched mankind take its first faltering steps towards creating the kingdoms of the old world. They are the children of the Sun and the Moon, and the stewards of the mana stream which gives life to every living creature and is the source of all things magic. To outsiders, they appear to be a fae and mysterious race, and rumors and campfire stories paint pictures of them as kin to spirits of nature; wild and fierce one moment, wise and calm the next, wielding powerful magic as if it were second nature to them.

Of course, the best campfire stories have at least some basis in reality.

There is a misconception among the other races, that the syndar live forever. This is probably due to the fact that many humans and ulven do not live long enough to notice the aging of a syndar, but though they live longer than humans, they are quite mortal.

In fact, never have the syndar felt the weight of their own mortality more than they do right now.

They are a race in their twilight years. With their birthrate on a noticeable decline and their population decimated by war, their outlook is bleak.

If you like a proud, long lived magical race with varied appearance and a unique culture, then perhaps you should consider making a syndar character for Last Hope Live Action Roleplay.

Chapter One

Playing a syndar character :

There are three lineages of syndar: The Io'Larian, the Serous, and the Celestine. These lineages diverge heavily in appearance, but there are some commonalities between them. All syndar have pointed ears of some kind, which range in size and shape, and they very commonly have strikingly colored eyes of various colors.

Io'Larian:

Io'Larian syndar bloodlines can have brightly or unusually colored skin and more predominantly bestial features like horns, or enlarged canines. Io'Larian syndar often live apart from central syndar society, instead living in tribal and familial settlements. Io'Larian tribes do not have much contact with the larger communities, though they often keep in contact with neighboring tribes. The few outsiders a Io'Larian tribe would accept are Io'Larian-born Celestines.

Some city dwelling Io'Larian make efforts to integrate themselves into Serous and Celestine societies. Serous syndar tend to ignore these Io'Larian, while tribal Io'Larian view them with distrust. Io'Larian often receive strange reactions when they travel in the human or ulven world, their striking skin color and their sometimes strange physiology being reason for pause.

Serous:

Serous syndar usually have the same range of skin of skin tones as is typical for humans. . They do not have horns. Their eyes can be of any color, and like all syndar, they have pointed ears of some kind. The Serous syndar make up the majority of the syndar population, as well as the majority of syndar in political positions.

Celestine:

Celestine are the gold and silver skinned sons and daughters of their gods, Lunara and Solar. A Celestine is usually born to Serous parents. Rarely, they'll be born to an Io'Larian family, but will lack any of the horns or fangs their parents might have. Celestine unions usually produce Serous or Io'Larian children of the maternal bloodline, though very rarely, may produce another Celestine child. In theory, these children are treated like any other Celestine, though in practice, they are often believed to be extra lucky and blessed.

When a Celestine child is born, there is much celebration in the commune. The parents and the child are honored while a message is dispatched to the nearest Celestine and their entourage. By law, Celestine children are to be handed over to the Enlightened, so that they may be raised as leaders and diplomats. The blessed family are not required to work until their child leaves, with the whole commune banding together to support them.

A Celestine's life is quite measured. As soon as they are old enough they begin their schooling. An encompassing education is given, with each individual choosing a specific area of study later on. Once they have graduated, a Celestine is assigned to a mentor who takes them out into the field.

These mentor-apprentice pairings are very important. Each pair is assigned a sector of the syndar lands, where they travel from city to city, commune to commune. They are expected to act as mobile liaisons, sometimes acting as final say in disputes that cannot be settled locally. Sometimes they act as healers, advisers, and religious leaders. It is a great honor to have a Celestine pair in town and officiating during a festival. Smaller villages and communes may expect to see their assigned Celestine once a year, while bigger cities may see them more often.

Once they have spent a year or two in the field, a Celestine may petition to be assigned a permanent position. Sometimes this is as an administrator to a royal pair, or to a city, sometimes as an honored

diplomat to one of the human kingdoms, still others choose to run one of the houses of healing dotting the kingdom. If it is within reason, and serves the syndar race, a Celestine can expect little trouble doing what they wish.

Celestine who were born to a Io'Larian tribe often end up as liaisons between the rest of the syndar and their isolated cousins. Only Celestine who were born to Io'Larian parents are accepted by the tribes. Due to the rarity of Io'Larian-born Celestine, there are rarely ever more than two within a generation. Celestine are often viewed as cold and aloof by others, and the belief isn't entirely unfounded. Celestine are taught from birth that they are the favored sons and daughters of the gods, sent down to create a connection between their elder siblings and their parents, and as a sign that the gods have not forgotten their children. They are taught at the most prestigious academy in the lands, and are given great authority and responsibility. A Celestine is often old fashioned, taught the traditional way of syndar life, something that can frustrate younger or more modern syndar. They are pampered and well taken care of. Even traveling out in the field has been perfected into an art, and a Celestine need not ever be discomforted. Some may enjoy this, 'roughing it'. The sad fact is, even as educated as they are, a Celestine often would have no idea what to do in a survival situation, and have little idea how to connect with those with different upbringings. They are raised in a rigid, traditional community, and are often unsure what to do when a situation deviates from all the protocols they have been taught. This way of life doesn't really have a place in the New World, but it's all the Celestine have.

Bloodlines:

Bloodlines are a set of genetic characteristics that determine a syndar's appearance. A child's bloodline is always determined by the mother. Not all syndar within a bloodline are related. Most bloodlines tend to stay within the same geographical areas, though it is not at all uncommon to see other bloodlines around. There is little stigma attached to having children outside of one's own bloodline. One's bloodline has little bearing on politics. Generally, only Io'Larian group by bloodlines. Io'Larian bloodlines are usually smaller, and comprise most of their tribal groupings. Serous bloodlines tend to be larger in size, and there are not technically any Celestine bloodlines, since a majority of them are born from Serous and Io'Larian.

Attention Spans: Syndar live a long time. They live much longer, in fact, than any of the other races (many live to see 200 years of age or more). Perhaps it is because of this, that to the other races, the syndar seem to be very slow to make decisions, or to take action on important matters. To the outsider, the syndar seem to take things slowly to the point of it being a fault as they carefully consider, then reconsider, and then cross-check every possible variable and outcome of their plans. This lack of haste carries over into syndar life in other ways, too. Their artwork, for example, is second to none. They have the patience to be perfectionists, and everything that they create from a castle to a humble piece of silverware is made to the finest quality, and undergoes the highest scrutiny of detail. The handiwork and architecture of the other races practically repulses the artisans of the syndar, especially anything that is of poor quality. The uniquely long attention spans of the syndar also mean that they are generally considered to be long-winded bores. If a syndar begins telling a joke, just about any non-syndar listener will have completely lost interest by the time they finally reach the punch-line several minutes later. Syndar are calculated and rarely commit crimes of passion. In general, they are less excitable than other races. Their overall manner is deliberate and methodical, where responses and reactions are thought out ahead of time before they are acted upon. They are very slow to gain or give trust to other people. It can take many years and many trials to gain the loyalty of a syndar. On the flip side, the syndar can hold terrible grudges. They may never forget who has slighted, cheated, or disrespected them. There are stories of young humans being given the cold shoulder by syndar for the transgressions of their fathers before them.

Syndar that have been gravely wronged can take the mark of the Rahd Noc, which is an oath of vengeance. Sanctified by a Magis or High Magis, the wearer of the Rahd Noc uses a mixture of their own blood and red magical paint to mark themselves from the top of the brow to the tip of their chin. It is obvious if a mark is genuine or just merely paint. The bearer of the Rahd Noc then bears the burden

of enacting revenge against whoever or whatever has wronged them. The Rahd Noc remains on them until they have completed this task, after which they can return to a Magis or High Magis and have the Rahd Noc removed. This is a way for some syndar to navigate through grief and tragedy. Through this ritual, they purify their souls of the grievous emotions that weighed them down.

Elitism in the Old World: A common attitude among the syndar nations was the belief that they were superior to all other races, so much so it was considered fact in their society. However, due to a similar value in etiquette, it was not something that was considered polite to openly flaunt or use as an insult to the other races. They do tend to come off as arrogant, though never to the point of hostility. While considered a less developed race, humans are still regarded as both highly useful or pleasing company to the syndar. The syndar believe that they themselves have been touched by magic and are the pinnacle of intelligence among the thinking creatures of Drun. They pity others for not being “up to par” with the children of the Sun and Moon. Serous and Celestine syndar will however openly snub their Io'Larian brothers and sisters. Though still syndar, they are considered the most imperfect of the three. Io'Larian who have integrated into enclaves are often ignored, and rarely remembered. Tribal Io'Larian could expect to be treated with outright disdain. Serous syndar had often referred to these groups as “feral” in an attempt to erase their identity as children of Io'Laros, first of the syndar gods.

Elitism in the New World: As the syndar have long lives and long memories, much of the attitudes of the Old World have carried on to the syndar within the colonies of Mardrun. While those who maintain this belief regard all races as lesser, the mordok hold their contempt most of all. Where the ulven judge the mordok as an intelligent and dangerous enemy and humans denounce them as monsters, the syndar regard the mordok as the lowest. The rare scholar may be fascinated with the mordok culture, for how could a society with such illogical technology be thriving as well as they have?

Common Mannerisms and Style: Numerous communes and academies have developed their own customs of body art or symbols depicted on their flesh; often clean lines and swirls meant to evoke a mystical or magical appearance. The quick and large smudge lines of traditional human or ulven face paint are uncommon. The Rahd Noc is, of course, universally recognized by all. Many syndar have a taste for fine jewelry. Magical jewelry is especially prized by the syndar. Fashion and styles may vary vastly between different communes. Although the standard greeting for humans is to shake hands and for ulven is to shake forearms, the syndar see such a greeting as odd. They do not and have never shaken hands as a greeting. This is sometimes misinterpreted as arrogance when a syndar does not shake hands or forearms, but it is typically the result of innocent ignorance as most syndar do not realize the importance of the gesture for the other races. The formal greeting to another syndar is a slight bow of the head, a closing of the eyes, and the stating of the phrase “Siala Kay Nu” * (See-alla Kai-Noo) which means “*With the Sun and the Moon.*”

Proper or older syndar in polite or formal occasions find it rude to be direct in their conversations. Asking “How is your sister?” is considered rude. Making a round-about statement such as “Your sister and I were always such friends; it is a shame she became ill recently” opens up the possibility for the other speaker to say how their sister is doing. This practice has declined in recent history as humans don't practice it, and even more so on Mardrun as the ulven have no patience for such round-about speech.

Celestine syndar and other aristocracy often take such indirectness to another level by speaking in the third-person, such as saying “This one bids you fare well” instead of simply saying “Goodbye”. Such habits tend to annoy humans and have been known to invoke frustration and even hostility in the ulven.

Tribal Io'Larian syndar share very few if any of the mannerisms of other syndar, but some Io'Larian bloodlines that live in the city adopt these habits to gain acceptance from the upper-class.

Chapter Two

Religion and Magic:

Religion: The syndar religion and lore revolves around the god Solar and goddess Lunara ruling over all existence in perfect harmony as equals. It is said that long ago, the two gods created children to walk among the earth. The first children were born from the animals and were flawed; their skin, horns and fangs betraying their bestial fae nature. The first children were named the Io'Larian syndar. The gods then created their second children, born from the elements of the world and were imperfect; their skin and ears being more of natural flesh. These second children were named the Serous syndar. The gods then created their third children, born from the stars and from their own cosmic energy and were perfect; their skin and features celestial gold and silver to match that of their own. The third children were named the Celestine syndar. The god's final gift to their children was that of their magic essence, and with it the means to express their spirituality.

The Celestine syndar revere only Solar and Lunara, of whom they claim to be the favored children. Serous syndar, though they revere Solar and Lunara above all others, often also seek the favor of the lesser nature spirits and demigods. While some of the Io'Larian syndar, the oldest of the children of Solar and Lunara, still venerate the Celestial gods, many have disowned the sun and the moon for casting them off into the wilderness at birth, and have instead found solace in what they claim are older gods: their grandparents.

The Celestine and Serous syndar typically worship both the sun and moon, but often favor one over the other. Whichever of the two they choose, they will adopt the sleep cycle to match. A favored child of Solar will typically awake at dawn, participate in the ritual greeting of the sun, and then go about their day. A favored child of Lunara will typically sleep during the daylight hours, awake around sunset, and participate in the ritual greeting of the stars and the moon before going about their business. Because of this split in sleep cycles, the cities of the syndar never truly rest, and it is almost as if there are two separate populations in the same city. Any rituals that a Serous syndar wishes to conduct in order to earn the blessing of a lesser spirit or demigod, however, should be conducted outside of the hours of their favored god.

Most holidays for the syndar revolve around eclipses, cosmic alignments, or the changing of seasons. Any day where the sun and moon can both be seen at the same time is considered a sign of good fortune, and syndar spellcasters find their mana naturally amplified on such days. A new moon is a time when most communes will make small offers or sacrifices, usually in the form of art, incense, or food. A small moon shrine may be visited by members and small contributions donated at the base of the shrine. This is an ancient custom that is meant to ask Lunara to return to the world, and is believed to bring good fortune.

Gods of the Syndar:

- Solar - The Sun God, patron of Life and Passion. Depicted as a tall man wreathed in fire, he is considered responsible for bringing the spark of life to Faedrun.
- Lunara - The Moon Goddess, patron of Beauty and Love. Depicted as a slender woman with a silver fan, which she uses to sometimes hide her face. Her waxing and waning face reflects the changing faces of love and beauty. She is also a favorite of sailors because of how her moods affect the seas.

Demi-gods of the Syndar:

- Celaeno - Goddess of Fate and Destiny, depicted as a robed, blind woman holding a scroll. First daughter of Solar and Lunara.

- Theros - God of Wisdom and Thought, depicted as a bearded man in somber robes bearing a book bound in thorns.
- Archtelios - The Hunter, The Bear, God of Hunters and Nature, depicted as a bear with stars for eyes, or sometimes as a man with a bow.
- Lyara - Goddess of Dreams, depicted as a woman with long flowing hair robed in ever-changing colors. The patron of storytellers and also of the insane.
- Fieros - God of Battle and Conflict. Depicted as a broad-shouldered man bearing a spear and shield, with a helm shaped like a golden lion.
- Omeria - Goddess of Fertility and the Harvest. Depicted as a robust woman crowned with flowers and bearing a basket overflowing with fruit and grains.
- Felenia - Goddess of Healing and Charity. Sister of Omeria. Depicted as a kindly woman with a crown of willow and bearing a bundle of rosemary and lavender.
- Gryx - The Hungry One, servant of Irunaki. Depicted as a black hound with crimson eyes, or as an empty vessel. Gryx consumes the essences of those deemed unworthy to return to the Lifestream.
- Irunaki - God of Entropy. Depicted as a formless shadow or a crumbling tower, or sometimes as a broken sword. Also considered the God of Time and Aging. The child of Khruki and Sialig, conceived by stealth and trickery.
- The Mercies - The 3 daughters of Celaeno and Irunaki, conceived during Celaeno's exile and bondage in the Outerworld. Depicted as vultures with the heads of beautiful women, or sometimes as three women; maiden, mother, crone. The Mercies pass judgment on wrongdoers and criminals and deliver the condemned to the hands of Gryx.
- The Seven Star Maidens - Daughters of Lunara and Theros. Considered to be the patrons of art and music.

Solar and Lunara are twins, children of Sialig (Earth) and Io'Laros (Sky), two of the "Old Gods". The children of Solar and Lunara are Celaeno, Archtelios, Theros, Fieros, and Lyara.

The Old Gods of the Io'Larian Syndar:

The "Old Gods", favored over Solar and Lunara by some of the tribal Io'Larian consist of three major deities:

- Sialig - The Earth, Mother of All
- Io'Laros - Lord of the Air
- Khruki - Brother of Io'Laros and Lord of Darkness

According to the religion of the tribal Io'Larian, Sialig and Io'Laros gave birth to Solar and Lunara. Most tribal Io'Larian revere both Sialig and Io'Laros, in addition to personal patron spirits specific to their particular tribe, often taking an animal form.

There are some tribal Io'Larian who revere Khruki, the Lord of Darkness and Terror. Stories of these syndar would go on to become the root of many stories of Faedrun, told at night by fires to frighten the young and timid.

Though the tribal Io'Larian revere the Old Gods, they consider it taboo to ask for favors or make demands of them except in the most dire circumstances. In the course of their day-to-day lives, the Io'Larian are more likely to call upon their patron spirits for guidance or favor. It is the belief of the tribal Io'Larian that natural disasters such as earthquakes or tornadoes are the result of people pestering and angering the Old Gods with matters unworthy of their attention.

Birth, Death, and the Life Stream: The syndar are a fae and magical race. Mana is part of their life, and all syndar, even those who do not study magic, have at least some basic aptitude for either the

Arcane or the Divine. To the syndar, mana is an ever-flowing river or stream, criss-crossing and encircling the world. Mana cannot be created or destroyed. It can be drawn upon, harnessed, and released, but it is never used up. Because mana is part of the life force of a syndar, it is believed that when a syndar dies, their mana must be released and channeled. When syndar die, their commune will hold a burial service that involves channeling mana out of the deceased and back to members of the commune, the Life Stream, or into mana stones. The body is sometimes embalmed, mummified, and placed in earthen or stone built tombs if the deceased was an important or influential figure. Death itself can be easily overcome by the syndar, or devastating to them. If a syndar did not know someone particularly well in life, their death is mourned and respected, but they will not grieve long. If a close family member or the significant other of a long term relationship dies, it can be extremely difficult for them to cope with the grief. When syndar grow accustomed to people for many years, their loss is felt that much harder and they may find themselves plagued by immense depression that requires time and meditation to overcome. It is very common for a commune's Magis to also act as an emotional guide to help the grieving cope with the loss of others.

Although rare, there are some syndar that are so sensitive to the flow of mana, that they can detect if a syndar corpse, long lost or buried, was properly laid to rest and the mana retrieved from the deceased. A small number of syndar priests dedicate their lives to finding the bodies of the fallen and conducting the reclaiming rituals. These syndar belong to a religious cult known as "The Reclament". The rituals of mana recovery are ideally conducted in close proximity to one of the many channels of the Life Stream. Some syndar are attuned enough with the auras of mana to actually see the Life Stream, but anyone can locate it, whether or not they have any magical aptitude, simply by finding a willow tree. Willow trees only grow near the banks of the otherwise invisible Life Stream, and for this reason are sacred to the syndar.

Just as mana must be released from a syndar upon their death, mana is also integral to the conception of a syndar child. A syndar pregnancy will not occur unless both parents contribute mana during conception. The average syndar pregnancy is slightly longer than a human's, lasting about eleven or twelve months. Because of this, children born of a syndar and human parent often only receive mana from the syndar side of the family, and thus do not have the full magical aptitude of a full-blooded syndar, though they are sometimes gifted with the grace, poise, and longer life spans of their syndar heritage.

When a Celestine syndar is born to Serous or Io'Larian parents, custom and law dictate that such children must be turned over to the Celestine of the Enlightened at birth. It is considered a great boon and a sign of good fortune for a Celestine to be born to a lower enclave.

There are no documented cases of conception occurring from syndar and ulven mating.

Clarification: A character born of both human and syndar will either be effectively human, or effectively syndar. In terms of character creation, the character can be called a "half-syndar", but will either be human OR syndar from a purely mechanical standpoint. You either get the syndar's magical aptitude, or the hardy versatility of the human, but never both.

The Siphoning:

Despite the mana recycling of the Reclament cult and other priesthoods, there has been a noticeable shrinkage of the Life Stream over the last five-hundred years. It is still there, but it just isn't as deep or wide as it always has been. The cause of this phenomena remains a mystery, but there has been much speculation and research on the subject. Because mana can neither be created or destroyed, it is believed that the mana is being redirected somewhere, or siphoned, but even the most skilled of the Life Stream trackers have made no progress in finding the source. Some priests believe that the phenomena heralds the apocalypse, or the death of the syndar race. Certain scholars had blamed the rise of the human race and the increase in the population of human spellcasters, but following the catastrophic fall of both the human and syndar empires on Faedrun, that theory has lost some validity. Reports from the cult of the Reclament suggest that human Spellcasters do not retain their mana when they die, but release it

naturally. One thing is for certain, though. The syndar birthrate has steadily declined over the last five-hundred years. Most scholars believe that this is directly tied to the shrinkage of the Life Stream. There are scholars that stoically believe that the human's use of magic brought about the undead plague that destroyed Faedrun. There is no real proof to this, but the humans coming to power and then the undead menacing the continent seem all too convenient for some syndar.

Bridge Magic

All syndar are born with the ability to manipulate mana and most become arcane or divine Spellcasters of some sort. The use of basic magic is very common in their society. To date there has never been a single case of a syndar being able to channel mana through both forms of magic. For thousands of years the syndar understood that a caster would only be able to wield either arcane or divine magic. When the human nations began to grow and prosper, the syndar sent out representatives after the initial war to meet and learn from them. A few syndar became aware of the Nara Pentare, a secluded human nation far to the east, and their monks. These humans had trained and learned how to harness magic from both sides. Shocked, the syndar reported back to their kingdoms. Some dismissed this as rumor and some wished to examine this more in detail. Because of the Nara Pentare's reclusive nature, they were not willing to allow these fae outsiders in to learn about their ways. This resulted in the syndar never being able to fully understand the monks and how they harnessed both sides. To most syndar, this remained a rumor.

On Mardrun, the syndar refugees were bewildered to find that harnessing both sides of magic was not only attainable but very commonplace with both the ulven and the mordok. The ulven referred to this as Bridge Magic and their priestesses and Daughters of Gaia could reach this potential fairly easily. Some of the surviving scholars have now dedicated their lives and their research to understanding this since it shatters the syndar's theories on magic that have remained unchanged for thousands of years.

Chapter Three

Syndar Society :

Syndar society on Faedrun is based upon three tiers of community consisting of the kingdom, the enclave, and the commune.

Kingdoms:

Much like many of the human nations and kingdoms, each of the syndar kingdoms are ruled by a king and a queen. Unlike other monarchies, however, The King and Queen rule together, and are elected officials. The Queen is not second to the King, and there is no blood heir privilege to the throne. This system mimics the rule of their two gods, Solar and Lunara, who rule together. Syndar live a long time, so continuous democratic votes keep a King and Queen in check during their reign. Enclaves have gone to war to remove an unworthy King and Queen, and some kingdoms have even seen a King or Queen call upon the help of the enclaves loyal to them to remove their counterpart should their duties prove to be failing. The King and Queen may or may not be lovers. Sometimes the pair are simply co-rulers, and have no relationship past their political duties. Any children that the Queen might have or the King might sire while in office will be born with the title of prince or princess, though they hold no claim to the throne. Because the titles of their noble birth stay with them for life, however, it may help them to get elected in the future, should they run for office themselves.

Tielorrien:

The largest and most prominent of the syndar kingdoms is the Kingdom of Tielorrien. The Kingdom of Tielorrien covers a vast region of terrain which is both mountainous and wooded. Though some of the smaller kingdoms maintain an isolationist stance regarding the rest of the world, the Kingdom of Tielorrien sees heavy traffic of merchants, scholars, and pilgrims. The capital city of Tielorrien is the City of Seven Gates. The city is an awe-inspiring example of syndar architecture. There is not a single building within it which would not be considered a work of art to a human visitor. Spires and towers twist high into the clouds, gleaming and sparkling in the sunlight. Banners and streamers adorn every building. There is not a space of wall anywhere within the city that is not beautifully adorned with frescos or murals. Even the cobblestones in the less wealthy areas are arranged into geometric patterns or runes of good fortune. At night, the white buildings glint and sparkle like multi-hued stars in the magical light of different colored syndar illumination rods. Special occasions and holidays are celebrated with magically enhanced fireworks displays, or the projections of master illusionists. It is said that the cities of the syndar never sleep, and this is especially true for the City of Seven Gates. Unlike humans who are, for the most part, daylight creatures, the syndar's core religious beliefs sustain this day/night cycle. When the followers of the Solar are going to bed, the followers of Lunara are just waking up. Every day and every night there are religious ceremonies to greet the rising sun and the rising moon, and the streets and markets are just as crowded at dusk as they are at dawn.

New World:

Most of the syndar refugees on Mardrun are originally from Tielorrien. This kingdom maintained the best relations with the humans, and contributed the most to the Grand Alliance. Due to their open trade policies, most syndar living in the human kingdoms were originally from or were descended from syndar of the Kingdom of Tielorrien.

Fawyth: The Kingdom of Fawyth is the second most populous of the syndar kingdoms, though it is still significantly smaller than Tielorrien. This kingdom maintains a strict isolationist stance regarding outsiders. It is a place of learning and science. It is also a place of closely guarded secrets. Any sort of complex mechanical devices found on Faedrun were likely either smuggled out of Fawyth, or

counterfeits of their designs. Their time-keeping pieces are especially prized across Faedrun, and to own one is considered prestigious. Thieves and Assassins highly prize traps and devices from Fawyth. There are merchants on Faedrun who would probably give up their first-born child for but an hour to roam the marketplaces of the capital.

The people of Fawyth are a stoic and quiet people. Even other syndar are regarded with suspicion by the syndar of Fawyth. The kingdom consists nearly entirely of Serous syndar. The Kingdom of Fawyth is an architectural wonder, as much of its capital is built into the side of a mountain, shaped from living rock by a combination of mechanical wonders and elemental arcane magic.

New World:

Due to this kingdom's isolationist stance and mistrust of outsiders, they were among the first to fall to the undead. They did not join the Grand Alliance and rarely participated in trade or commerce with outsiders. There are few known survivors of Fawyth on Mardrun, their secrets seemingly buried with them.

Lairthduil: Lairthduil is the third largest syndar kingdom in terms of population, and second largest in terms of territory. The people of this kingdom are revered for their ability to grow and nurture plants and herbs. Even the roofs of their homes are used to grow plants. The terraced gardens and fantastic irrigation systems of Lairthduil are a thing of wonder. Every possible space that can be used to grow vegetation is utilized. Clay planters are sculpted into walls, and pipes, chutes, and gutters criss cross overhead, entwined in beautiful ivies and vines. The walkways are made from clay and cobblestone, and lined with ornately crafted pottery, figurines, and sculptures that also serve as planters. Beautiful flowers line every path, masterfully arranged by the most revered gardeners on Faedrun. Even the humblest farmstead in this kingdom is a functional work of art, and the pride of the commune that lives there. The chief exports of Lairthduil are, naturally, produce and medicinal herbs. The people are practical and down-to-earth. A life of honest, hard work in the fields has foregone a strong and hardy people, almost all of whom, as farmers, favor Solar. They are not an aggressive people, but are capable of defending themselves if the need arises.

New World:

As the source of much of the food and medicine on Faedrun, Lairthduil was one of the first kingdoms of the syndar to be targeted by the Undead. The activation of ancient and enchanted guardians by their High Magi helped them to hold out for a while, but the relentless assault of the undead armies eventually crushed all resistance, and the fabled gardens of paradise burned. Many refugees from Lairthduil fled with whatever they could quickly harvest and carry. Some joined up with the army of Tielorrien and fought to the death against the undead in the Old World. Others made it across to the New World on refugee ships, carrying with them the seeds of life on Faedrun. These scattered survivors wander the New World planting herbs, trees, and flowers from their homeland as they seek to locate and map the sacred willow trees which mark the junctions of the Life Stream.

Karindren: This ancient kingdom was possibly the first to ever take to the seas. Karindren is a small kingdom, but one of the oldest. It is also possibly the most strictly steeped in tradition. Karindren is something of an oddity as their history suggests that they were once the fastest growing and most advanced society on Faedrun, and yet they seem to have stopped advancing rather abruptly some time ago. For several hundred years they made no technological progression and, in fact, outlawed many imports from more developed kingdoms. Their population hardly fluctuates, as they'll impose fluctuating regulations on the number of permitted children per household every election cycle. Karindren relies almost completely on the sea for food. Their ships are still built using the same simple tools and ancient techniques that have been passed down for over a thousand years. Every one of them is a true work of art, though they lack the speed and maneuverability of the newer, more advanced vessels

coming out of the human Kingdom of Aldoria. The people of this kingdom often favor Lunara due to her influence over the waves and the tides as well as their unique belief of the cycle of reincarnation. The Kingdom of Karindren has long had strained relations with the Kingdom of Fawyth.

New World: The people of Karindren were late to get involved in the war with the Undead. By the time they found themselves under attack, the May'Kar dominion had already fallen, and the betrayal of the Penitent had swelled the ranks of the dark forces with powerful spellcasters. As the Royal Marines of Karindren fought a desperate last stand on the streets of the capital, the civilians tried to escape the ports in a massive fleet consisting of everything from fishing boats to warships. They almost made it. As the fleet left the harbor, a group of traitorous spellcasters combined their mana, and amplified the effects of a destructive spell. They magically summoned a storm that created a tsunami. This wave hit the harbor and flooded the streets and swept an entire culture into the sea, leaving nothing but ruins behind, and a single lighthouse. Of the hundreds of ships in the harbor, only two escaped the terrible storm. The ships sailed into Aldoria shortly thereafter, only to learn that the port there was also under siege. The syndar of Karindren declined the invitation to sail East with the Aldorian ships to Mardrun and instead sailed North into the cold and icy seas of the arctic circle. They were never heard from again. Some say that they sailed to a snowy continent, far to the North, that their people had colonized long ago and kept secret, but that is the stuff of rumors and speculation. It is known that barely any survivors from Karindren made it to Mardrun.

Enclaves:

Enclaves are a state of local communes. Some are very large with many communes in them while others are very small. The largest enclaves may even have their own city, a sort of capital. Enclaves are governed by a tribunal of High Magi, selected from the Magi of the communes making up the enclave. Enclaves generally govern themselves, making decisions based on what the Magi of the communes say. They are responsible for policing their own trades and local populace. Only in an emergency or unprecedented situation will a Celestine be called in to consult or govern.

Communes:

Syndar communes are their villages and communities. Communes are usually comprised of a few bloodlines. The buildings of communes vary, depending on the local geography and traditions. Some are farms, spread apart by fields, some live together in a close village. Some are communes in the truest sense of the word, living together in one building and sharing the work of the community. They are generally all very close knit. Since syndar do not marry like humans do, child rearing is shared amongst the community. Children are very precious to syndar and are watched over by all. The blood mothers and fathers usually take great interest in their children, of course, but a child may have many parental figures, brothers and sisters, and other figures not directly related to themselves. The commune's Magis is usually the central point of any commune. They guide the commune, and their homes usually have a place for the entire commune to meet and to hold festivals. While the direct hearth of the Magis is respected as private, it is not at all unusual for members of a commune to be coming and going throughout the day and evening. While Magis do not directly rule communes, they are usually the final word in most matters. Magi are selected by the commune. Most times a Magis will raise a child as an apprentice, but another candidate may be selected from the commune if they are a better choice.

Government:

Democracy in the kingdoms of the syndar: Each kingdom holds a number of annual "Gatherings" where important political matters are discussed. This is normally done in a massive auditorium where even commoners can come and participate, though Io'Larian syndar are typically excluded from these meetings. These sessions typically coincide with the changing of the seasons. Each enclave is given a

certain number of seats to fill in this auditorium and a common vote is cast that is decided upon by all attending syndar. More than once has a major decision by a High Magis been trumped, shot down, or filibustered by the collective voice of all who are present at the Gathering.

Justice: Justice is not swift with syndar, who normally take a lengthy amount of time determining the guilt and punishment of offenders. Each commune has a group of lawgivers that follow the directive of their Magis and will determine guilt or innocence through a series of trials and debates. For minor infractions, it is not uncommon for a syndar trial to last longer than the actual sentence. Celestine judges are only called in when a decision cannot be reached.

Syndar who have severely wronged others or are repeat offenders may be judged to Reclamation. Clerics of the Reclament will be summoned to reclaim the guilty syndar's essence of mana while the accused is still alive. This is a painful process and removes the mana entirely, leaving the syndar "Hollowed". The emotional and psychological void is unbearable to most and visible in their gaunt faces and darkened and sunken eyes. Some syndar feel that to be Hollowed is worse than death.

Economy: The syndar have an obscure currency system in their home kingdoms, used by different classes of wealthy syndar. The values of pieces in this "chit" system are variable based on what they are paired with, and the pairings can change. This process can even confuse syndar who are not used to dealing with economics and trade on a regular basis. One human merchant made note that the combination and representation of different chit combinations resembled a game or a hand of cards, allowing different combinations to raise the value of the overall offer.

The economy of the syndar is more complicated than that of the humans and can fluctuate rapidly, so they tend to stick to the Vandregonian Silver coin out of respect and ease of trade. So far, the currency of the syndar has not made it into the human nation's economy much and it has not come over to Mardrun at all.

Marriage: Syndar do not believe in marriage in the same sense that humans do. They go through a courtship process where each partner tries to impress the other. If they find the other syndar to their liking, they enter into a relationship, but there is no further legal or religious step that solidifies that relationship. This does not mean that the syndar are promiscuous. They do not cast relationships aside lightly, but the syndar live a long time and despite their long attention spans and patience, it is possible for a couple to drift apart over the years. This parting is usually a mutual agreement that is less confrontational and more a mutual parting.

Though the syndar do not have weddings in the traditional sense, they do sometimes have joining festivals. These events are less of a ceremony, and more of a celebration of the couple's love for each other. These festivals are marked with feasting, games, and the gathering of the entire commune. A Magis or High Magis is always present, and though there is no actual religious ceremony bonding the couple together, prayers are offered up for the good fortune and happiness of the pair. There is much drinking and merriment as the gathered guests rejoice in the good fortune and newfound love of the couple.

The syndar consider same-sex relationships unusual, especially in a time when their birth rate is at such a steep decline, and even more so on Mardrun, where they make up the smallest percentage of the population. Most of the survivors who made it to the colonies, however, were younger syndar, and many of these outdated beliefs are slowly falling to the wayside.

Academies:

Trades are often organized into academies, or guilds. Academies are run by a more bureaucratic system. Decisions are often made by academic masters, with the title often running in the bloodline. Each academy has a branch institution located in each kingdom, where a trade or skill might be taught, with most tradespeople falling under the academy's purview. Academies are free to make their own rulings

about what they produce, and may accept commission rather than be bound by law or duty when approached by their kingdom's officials. Even so, tradespeople trained classically will still have to rely on superior technique to stand out from their peers, for there are no exclusive production and practice rights granted by law. Syndar wishing to learn what an academy has to teach will apprentice under a master in the craft. A syndar may attain the rank of journeyman under their mentor's tutelage, but a master rank is not often granted unless the journeyman travels to an academy hall.

New World: Though the main structure of these individual schools is gone, academics that fled early enough to the New World were able to integrate their curriculums into Newhope's University. Syndar young and old seeking to reconnect with the ways of their homeland may choose to study under the few surviving instructors, though in truth, the programs taught there are a shadow of their former glory.

Bellath-ah-Dien

Symbol: Leaf

Colors: Leaf Green, Pale Green, Dirt Brown

The Bellath-ah-Dien are renowned herbalists and growers of green things. It is said that the greatest masters of this academy can make a rose grow in winter. Syndar of this academy are taught the arts of growing plants and everything that may have to do with that. Many an alchemist owes their supply to the Bellath-ah-Dien, as well as the methods used to preserve them. This academy is also the largest exporter of spices and herbs for food. Since the Fall, many spices have been lost, ones that could only be cultivated in the specially created and lovingly tended gardens. The academy hall itself is a sprawling complex of fields, gardens, orchards, and greenhouses. If a space could be used to grow a plant, a plant is grown there, and if not, it becomes a space for decorations bearing floral and herbal motifs. A veritable army of apprentices tends to these gardens every day, as part of their training. The architecture of this academy was considered one of the marvels of the Old World, for their homes and buildings were nearly invisible to the casual glance. Even once inside their dwellings, one might take a wrong turn and suddenly find themselves outside in a secluded glade, or behind a waterfall with no idea what happened to the hallway that they just walked down, or how to get back to the living room. Contrary to common belief, these dwellings are not enchanted, but just cleverly designed to use nature to create non-magical illusions and to misdirect or guide the eyes of an observer away from anything that would give them away. To an outsider, every room was a secret room, and every door a secret passage. It was considered good practice to consult the Bellath-ah-Dien when planting anything, and a master may expect to be well paid for their services, not just for planning out rich estates, but to help a commune raise crops.

Rui-Calithil

Symbol: Arrow entwined with ivy

Colors: Forest Green, Bark Brown, Dusky Black

The Rui-Calithil academy teaches hunting in all forms. An apprentice may expect to not only master the use of hunting bows, but also the making and setting of traps and trap lines, as well as how to defend oneself in the wild. A Rui-Calithil learns how to eke out a living off of the land, learning what flora and fauna are edible, and how to find their way when far from civilization. They are also known for being the best animal trainers around, and pride themselves as the finest archers in the world. Their philosophy tends to be one of finding balance in all things, and accepting with serenity that beauty and cruelty in nature go hand in hand. Syndar trained at this academy often adopt odd social quirks even by syndar standards. Sometimes described as shy, isolated, and aloof, they tend to be viewed as strangely as they themselves view all others. Despite this appearance though, they are not pushovers, nor are they cowards. They are always watching, and always studying the world around them. They may seem quiet, but when the need arises, they can display a startling ferocity. It was said that in order to join this academy, you had to track a member back to its halls. While the truth is much more mundane, the Rui-

Calithil still tend to be closemouthed to those outside of their academy. This academy was also unusual in that it had more than a few Io'Larian syndar within its ranks.

Galendhidur

Symbol: A crowned helm in white on a black field

Colors: Black and white, with red

The syndar of the Galendhidur are the most militant of all syndar. This house has traditionally produced the finest warriors, the most skilled swordsmen, and the most capable tacticians in all of Tielorrien. Battle Arcanists of this particular academy are among the most feared spellcasters in all of Faedrun, and in times long past they would organize from the battlements and chain-cast spells into terribly destructive artillery, though such a gathering of wizards has not been seen in recent memory.

The syndar of this academy are generally stoic in all pursuits. They rarely display any emotion, and consider it a great dishonor to ever cry out in pain or fear. They typically answer questions as briefly as possible, and rarely ask questions themselves. Contrary to the common belief of outsiders, these syndar warriors do take enjoyment in life, and are capable of having fun, they just don't often express it in ways that non-syndar can sense. They are very competitive, and consider honor to be paramount to sportsmanship. It would be unheard of for a member of this academy to ever be caught cheating or lying. They are taught to be very patient, and very professional. They never run from a fight, although they may reposition themselves tactically on the battlefield at the direction of their officers.

These syndar share especially strong bonds of brotherhood/sisterhood with each other due to their training.

The syndar of the Galendhidur enclave wear white and black uniforms with signature red cloaks. Their traditional headgear is a crowned helm, as depicted on their heraldry. This helm will be trimmed with gold if the wearer is an officer. In general, they favor metal armor, but different units may be armed and armored differently based on their military specialty.

Lethellerion

Symbol: White shield with a red border

Colors: White, red, black

The syndar of Lethellerion are the most renowned healers in the syndar lands, and perhaps the most knowledgeable physicians in the world. They are not only priests, but scientists and scholars as well. In addition to their remarkable skill with healing magic, they are also experts of mundane, natural healing processes and surgeries. Healers of other enclaves and communes often studied under Lethellerion physicians and priests, and accomplished human healers sometimes made the pilgrimage to seek their tutelage and learn their secrets.

Members of this academy often perform a stint of military service early on in their lives, serving as healers on the front-lines before moving on to a higher scope of practice. Many veterans owe their lives to the field medics of Lethellerion, and experienced, battle hardened units often adore their healers almost to the point of being a unit mascot, referring to them as "little brother" or "little sister". The syndar of Lethellerion typically wear neutral colors like tan, or off white, along with their signature white cloaks with the red border. The border can be a solid line, geometric shapes, or even runes. Contrary to popular belief, the style of the border does not denote any sort of rank or hierarchy, and is simply the personal preference of the wearer.

Other communities:

Io'Larian Tribes: There are some Io'Larian syndar far removed from the enclaves of their brethren. These are usually small communities or families of hunters and gatherers that do not communicate regularly with the main governing bodies of their kingdom. They are shunned or at best regarded very

coldly by the other syndar. Tribes are ruled by a Shaman or other spiritual leader, much like a commune is ruled by a Magis. They typically follow what they refer to as the “Old Gods”, rather than Solar and Lunara. Not all Io'Larian syndar are tribal. Some Io'Larian live in the cities of the syndar kingdoms as second-class citizens with no democratic rights. Tribal Io'Larian have no respect for these city-dwellers. They would be just as inclined to pity their kin as to put them out of their misery. As far as the Tribal Io'Larian are concerned, they are free and the “domesticated” Io'Larian are slaves to an oppressive regime.

Other Factions and Sects:

The Reclament: The Reclament is a holy order of syndar clerics devoted to finding and laying to rest fallen syndar. They believe that the mana gifted to all syndar at birth is a resource that if abused and neglected will wither and die. The act of finding and returning the magical essence of all syndar helps keep this energy in the community and in the syndar race. Traditionally, the Reclament would return the mana of a fallen syndar directly to the Life Stream, but during the war of Faedrun, some were inclined to store the mana in mana stones. There is a debate within the order of the Reclament that doing so exacerbates the problem of the mana drought, but there is no evidence to support this theory.

The clerics of the Reclament typically dress in blue, which is almost universally accepted to be the “color” of mana for the sake of representation in art. Most clerics of the Reclament wear ornate leather or metal armor, to protect themselves as they go into dangerous locations to recover bodies. Their heraldry consists of running water and a willow sapling. The Reclament have a sort of diplomatic immunity due to their sacred duties, and cannot be denied entry into any syndar territory, kingdom, enclave, commune, or even homestead, as long as they are performing their sacred duties. All syndar are expected to offer hospitality to the Reclament, though the tribal Io'Larian are known to willingly neglect these obligations.

Though their duties are most often administering final rituals to the fallen, the Reclament can also be called upon to carry out punishment by permanently reclaiming the essence of a living syndar criminal, leaving the individual Hollowed, and forever stripped of mana.

Hollowed syndar are typically shunned by the syndar communities, and more often than not become wanderers. These syndar find it nearly impossible to hide their true nature and are generally easy to spot. The overall appearance of a Hollowed syndar can be described as somber or even haunted. To be hollowed is considered a fate worse than death.

The Enlightened: The Enlightened is a scholarly order that research arcane magic at its highest levels and overlooks the education of the Celestine syndar. They are powerful mages who also keep track of the massive libraries created in reference to magic and the lore of the world. To become a member of the inner circle of the Enlightened is to learn the most carefully guarded secrets of the syndar people, and the most powerful arcane magics. It is the highest scholarly order that an Arcanist can aspire to someday reach. Such knowledge comes at a price, however. To protect the greatest secrets of the syndar people, and its most powerful spells, a spellcaster must give up their entire identity and sever all ties with their enclave, commune, and even their family. They pick a new name, and the person that they once were ceases to be. They can never go back. Such is the price of knowledge.

The Phoenix: The Phoenix are an independent enclave of Serous syndar from the deserts of the human kingdom of the May'Kar Dominion. Following a vision of their patron spirit, the prophetic leader of this enclave led them away from their lands before the fall of Faedrun. The Phoenix syndar sailed to the New World and settled on an island to the south of Mardrun. There, they established a small colony. It was years before they had any contact with anyone on the mainland. The Phoenix are, due to the unique circumstances of their exodus, the only intact enclave in the New World after the fall of Faedrun. Their colors are black, gold and red. They maintain very good relations with the nearby human settlement of

Crow's Landing. Originally nomadic merchants on Faedrun, they now specialize in healing and the trade of magic items and potions.

Chapter Four

Syndar/human history:

Old World: The syndar kingdoms existed long before the humans even began to build cities and learn the art of agriculture. Maintaining a strict isolationist stance for many years, the syndar observed and studied the younger race, documenting its growth and development long before the humans could record such things for themselves. The humans discovered the crafts of tool making, building, and farming very quickly, but the syndar made a point of never intervening or influencing the primitive people that shared their continent. Eventually, the savages developed the crude feudal governments of the human kingdoms of Faedrun. Until that point, the humans lived in fear of the syndar, and the elder race was easily able to keep the barbarians from getting too close to their cities, mainly through a combination of superior magic, technology, and simple psychology. It wasn't to last forever, though.

In the Year 001*, the human kingdom known as the May'Kar Dominion reached out to the syndar in their efforts to create a society of knowledge and peace. While some syndar maintained the isolationist stance that the syndar were not to interfere with the humans under any circumstances, others either let their curiosity get the better of them or decided that the humans had advanced enough to safely approach for further and more immersive studies. It was the first time that the two races had real interactions with each other besides skirmishes and sightings at a distance. Once the syndar of Tielorrien began interacting with the humans, the veil separating the two races was a thing of the past. The humans began to advance even more quickly and became bolder with their exploration of the continent. They no longer feared the fae creatures of the forest now that the syndar were known to be mortal creatures of flesh and blood, rather than evil spirits. The dispersal of the superstitions that had always kept humans from traveling overland or going into the forests and mountains ushered in a new age of science and exploration. The economies of the larger human kingdoms boomed. Before long, the borders of the two largest human kingdoms began to expand, leading to conflicts with the tribal Io'Larian syndar, especially in the more mountainous regions where the humans attempted to set up mining operations. Before long, some human settlements were even expanding into the well-established borders of the syndar kingdoms.

**(The standard calendar of the May'Kar Dominion was reset due to the dawning of a new age, hence why history refers to this as Year 001. The syndar calendar is never used in the presence of outsiders, and so is never referred to in these texts.)*

In the year 005, the human Kingdom of Aldoria aggressively expanded her trade routes and territory, bringing the humans and the Kingdom of Tielorrien to the brink of war after the Aldorians were denied the right to representation in the markets of the syndar kingdoms. Instead of a pitched battle between the two races, however, the humans of Vandregon marched on their neighbors and tried to negotiate a peace treaty to avoid all-out war with the syndar. The battle of Grayfield resulted from this military action, where the humans of the two largest kingdoms turned against each other. In the aftermath of the battle between Vandregon and Aldoria, the syndar troops of Galendhidur and Lethellerion showed mercy to both of the bloodied human armies and tended to their wounded. The syndar-led negotiations that followed helped to usher in a new age of alliances, trade, and peace between the humans and the syndar. This age of prosperity lasted for almost two-hundred years before the Undead Plague broke out on Faedrun in the year 200.

By the year 205, the Grand Alliance was formed, consisting of the three largest human kingdoms and the kingdom of Tielorrien. The smallest syndar kingdoms were either overrun before they got a chance to react to the threat, or stubbornly maintained their isolationist stance like the Kingdom of Fawyth. Though Tielorrien's allies helped them to hold out longer, eventually the Undead Plague reached the City of Seven Gates. The fall of these syndar cultures, as well as the betrayal and corruption of the May'Kar's City of Peace in the year 235, destroyed innumerable volumes of history, religion, arcane magic, and culture, nearly erasing them from all memory. Over the decades of fighting, some estimates suggest that as many as seven million syndar warriors perished in the brutal battles with the undead, and

even more civilians were slaughtered as the cities fell. The syndar kingdoms took the brunt of the abuse in the early years of the war, allowing their human allies time to prepare and shift their forces all across the continent. Despite the undead presence in their homeland, detachments of syndar troops from Tielorrien were still sent to aid the humans in the Grand Alliance, even as their own lands were being overrun.

In the year 250, the continent of Mardrun was discovered by the Aldorians. Within a year, ships were regularly ferrying refugees to the colonies of the New World. Though most of the passengers were humans from Aldoria or Vandregon, there were syndar survivors among those evacuated as well, mostly civilian refugees from the Kingdom of Tielorrien or wounded Soldiers of the Grand Alliance.

New World: The syndar make up the smallest population on Mardrun. Their declining birthrate has hurt their chances of survival and their long-term prospects are not good. Though long-lived compared to the other races, disease, violence, and a general failure to adapt to the conditions in the New World has caused a downward population trend for the syndar on Mardrun as opposed to the humans, who have experienced growth in the last ten years. There are few leaders; most of the Celestine did not make it out and the few that did are mewed up in New Hope, struggling with the loss of their way of life and how to move forward. The Serous are scattered; some try to form new communities, while others just try to forget what happened and survive this New World. Even fewer Io'Larian survived, isolated from society and any warnings that would come. The syndar, while concerned about their predicament, stay true to their nature by facing their impending demise with dignity and a calm confidence. It would be unbecoming of them to panic. Deep in their heart, though, every syndar on Mardrun quietly carries a terrible burden. Empathic individuals can sense the sadness of the syndar, though it may be masked by arrogance or stoicism to the less astute.

A big question remains: As the mana stream slows to a trickle, and the sun sets on the eldest race of this time, will the moon rise to bless them in a different light as it always has in the past, or will they fall victim to the gathering darkness?

It is up to you, the syndar player, to decide.