

# Transmutation

The RPG of Remaking the World  
by Mendel Schmiedekamp

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**Mount Eseth, Home of the Order of Mercury**

## Forward

Transmutation is a Roleplaying Game (RPG). This means that when you play Transmutation, you take on the persona of a character you created yourself. Then in this role, you, the other players, and an additional player called the Games Master (or just GM for short) work together to explore and achieve your characters' goals. Your part in this is to decide what your character does in response to situations and how he or she interacts with the other player's characters. The other players do likewise. At the same time, the GM's task is to fill in the details of the world, act out any extra characters, and make things interesting for you and the other players.

Of course things work best if everyone is trying to make things interesting for each other. Ultimately RPGs are a cooperative game, so while your character's goal is written down, your goal as a player is to make the game fun for you and everyone else playing. The best groups of players are the ones who play with that goal in mind.

As an aside, the photographs you see in this game are all from the morgue file: <http://www.morguefile.com/>, a wonderful source for public domain photographs.

# The Making of the World

There are many stories that tell of the origins of the world. This is perhaps one of the truer ones.

*For three eternities, this world we now call home was an endless plain of crystal and salt, devoid of life and meaning.*

*At the dawn of the fourth eternity, the first one arrived. She was a glimmer, a thought on the wind. She danced through the plain of crystal, revealing in freedom. But crystal is stasis, it does not grant freedom willingly. Caught in the paradox of her travels, the crystal plain shattered.*

*Breaking apart, it trapped the first one, cutting her in half.*

*We have come to know those halves as the perfect substances: as Mercury and Sulfur.*

*Together they danced through the newly shattered crystal, creating the elements of our world.*

*Their joy at existing created the first wood. Living matter growing from unliving crystal.*

*Their exuberance with their new world created the first fire. Dancing as flames and ideas glittering through the empty crystal.*

*Their sadness at becoming trapped and separated created the first water. Trickling down and eroding the once perfect crystal.*

*This dance went on for an eternity.*

*For it was at the dawn of the fifth eternity that the Peoples arrived. The eternity in which we now live.*

## Elements

The essence of the world of Transmutation are the six elements from which it is composed. Unlike most elemental traditions, these elements do not form a single cycle. Instead they form a hierarchy of relationships. These elements are present in the physical world, but they also represent outcomes for different actions taken by characters.

### Crystal

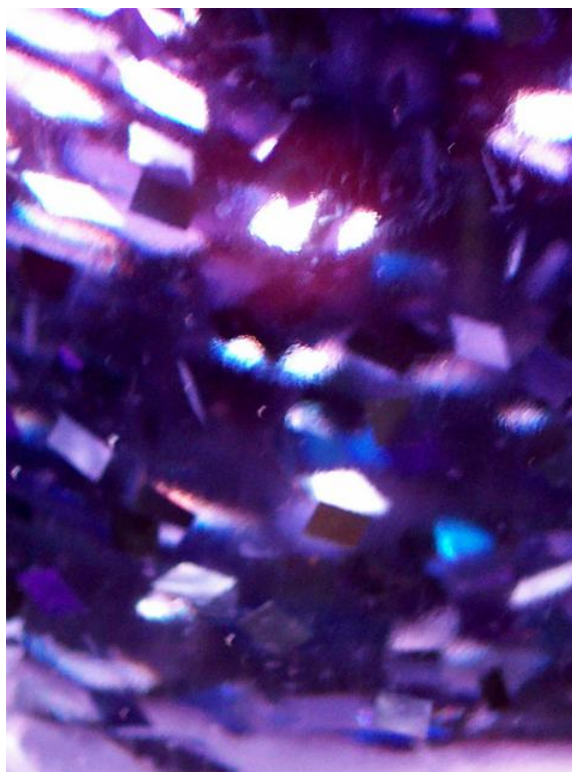
At the top of this hierarchy is Crystal, the base element of the world, neutral and otherwise without life. Salt is one of its common forms, and the most feared for it is crystal without even the potential for life. In the context of an action crystal is an impasse, the lack of progress.

### Mercury

The passive, receptive side of the next level is Mercury. In the world mercury is the predominant metal, crafted to form what ever is needed. It is flexible and durable. Mercury soothes and flows, bringing insight and understanding. In the context of an action mercury means that understanding is achieved, often by perception and acceptance.

### Sulfur

The active counterpart to Mercury is Sulfur. In the world sulfur is seen in the light of the sun and the movement of the crystal plates. It influences everything it touches. In the context of actions, Sulfur implies control and manipulation, rather than transformation.



Mixing of Mercury and Water

### Wood

The next hierarchy is one of change and transformation. In this Wood is the element of life and growth. It is innately present in all living things, especially vegetation. In the context of actions, Wood implies an enhancement of existing capability, healing, and the achieving of potential.

### Fire

Where Wood implies growth, Fire is the element of creation. Fire is present in the appearance of new life, and in the ideas that form the basis of the intelligent mind. In it's more physical form it can be found as spark and wildfire. In the context of actions, Fire implies a categorical change. Either something new has been made or something has been fundamentally altered. However, fire itself does not destroy, it only transforms.

## **Water**

The last element is Water, the element of erosion and destruction. Water is present in the gradual decay of life and in the sudden destruction that comes without warning. Until

water appeared crystal was eternal, now all things dissipate in time. In the context of actions, water is destruction, and harming. It is the element that can create salt, seeping the last potential from the other elements leaving them devoid of anything, including life.

## The Coming of the Peoples

None can remember from where the Peoples came. All that is known is that the peoples were fleeing something truly terrible, whether simple destruction, merciless slaughter, or just punishment.

*When the first of the People came to this world, they were left only partially formed.*

*With the urgency born of flight, they sought a way to complete their forms, both and in body and mind.*

*The first Tribe found the horses, in the shattered plains, and grew like them, growing long legs. They also formed herds, choosing leaders and ruling themselves as horses and people.*

*The second Tribe found the turtles, in the crystalline sea, and grew like them, growing hardened skins. They learned calm within water, to direct what no force can stop.*

*The third Tribe found the ravens, in the glittering skies, and grew like them, growing feathers and winged arms. They learned the joy of the skies, and the search for treasure.*

*The fourth, and last Tribe, found the monkeys, in the emerald hills, and grew like them, growing long dexterous fingers. They learned curiosity, and the importance of crafting tools.*

*The four Tribes have since journeyed far from their early places, living together and fighting together. Once they were one People, but they have been shattered, like the first one. But perhaps this shattering can be mended.*

## The Art of Being

The typical characters to play in Transmutation are seekers and explorers. Unlike many amongst the Peoples, a player's character leaves their community in search of the any number of things. Perhaps she desires peace between two neighboring towns. Perhaps he wishes to join one of the alchemical orders. Perhaps salt is encroaching and she is seeking a new elemental oasis for her people. Or perhaps he seeks an enlightened metal, for any of the reasons people seek power.

This is the first and most important part of Transmutation. Every player's character wants to change the world, you must decide how and why.

Once you have chosen your character's goal, the next step is to choose a Tribe. Each character is a member of the Peoples, and so comes from one of the four Tribes (Horse, Turtle, Raven, and Monkey). While at one time the Peoples were one species, each Tribe is now unable to produce offspring with the other Tribes. This does not keep them from living together, but communities are typically based from one Tribe, with smaller groups of the other Tribes.

While not required, it is often best if all the players agree to be from one community. This does not restrict what Tribe they may be, but one Tribe should be chosen as the dominant Tribe for that community.

The third step of creating a character is to decide his or her elements. A character has seven slots for elements (chosen from the six elements mentioned in the previous chapter: Crystal, Mercury, Sulfur, Wood, Fire, and Water). These slots must be split between Mind and Body, giving each category at least two elements.

1. Choose Your Goal
2. Choose Your Tribe
  - Horse Tribe
  - Turtle Tribe
  - Raven Tribe
  - Monkey Tribe
3. Choose Your Elements
  - (a) Choose Seven Elements
  - (b) Split Between Mind and Body (each at least 2)
4. Record Your Tribal Formula
5. Select Five Additional Formula
6. Name and Describe Your Character

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The next part of character creation is to determine your character's formula. Formula represent special aptitudes or abilities that your character possesses. Each character gets two Tribe-specific Formula, as well as five Formula selected from the list below. Some Formula require other formula to be known. This prevents you from selecting those Formula till you have already selected the required ones.

Once you have selected Formula, you complete character creation by choosing a name and describing your character's appearance and personality.

### The Tribes

The Horse Tribe are the Peoples most focused on leadership and governance. They are also the fastest runners and have exceptional stamina, having inherited this from their namesakes. They have long, pointed, ears, stand taller than their brethren, with

long gangly limbs. Their skin comes in many colors, as does their hair, which is typically cut short.

- **Fleet of Foot:** On physical action based solely on speed, you succeed on a Crystal as well as any appropriate elements.
- **Herd Think:** On mental actions to understand a leadership structure, you succeed on Crystal as well as any appropriate elements.

The Turtle Tribe are the only Peoples who feel at home in the dangerous seas and oceans of the world. They are sturdy and rugged, and are known for being both stubborn and wise. They have tough greenish skin, and a stout physique. They have little in the way of body hair, and they often wear minimal clothing, being comfortable in most weather.

- **Tough Skinned:** When an opponent attempts to Salt you in physical combat you choose the card they must engage to Salt. This does not apply to armed opponents.
- **Way of the Sea:** When performing a sailing or swimming related action, you succeed on Crystal as well as any appropriate elements.

The Raven Tribe are the Peoples who are most focused on treasure and freedom. They are quick witted and acquisitive, and have the rudimentary ability to glide on membranes beneath their arms. They are the smallest of the Peoples, with slight childlike builds. They often carry a large variety of pouches, carefully placed to ensure freedom of movement.

- **Gliding:** You may engage a Body Sulfur to glide for a minute. The Sulfur is returned immediately when you finish gliding.

- **Quick Thinking:** On mental action based solely on speed, you succeed on a Crystal as well as any appropriate elements.

The Monkey Tribe are the Peoples who are most inventive and curious. They are industrious and creative, making a variety of tools and technology that the other Tribes have neither the patience nor the aptitude to create. They are the hairiest of the Peoples, with long slender fingers and quick darting eyes. They are almost never seen without some sort of tool, and are always busy doing something.

- **Dexterous:** On physical actions based solely on manual dexterity, you succeed on Crystal as well as any appropriate elements.
- **Engineer:** In actions involving alchemical inventions you succeed on Crystal as well as any appropriate elements.

## Formula

**Alchemical Invention** This Formula requires either Alchemist (Fire) or Engineer. You may take this multiple times, each time choosing a different invention. Choose two different elements. Once per day, when you engage an element of the first type, you may treat it as the second type.

**Alchemist (order)** You have joined one of the Alchemical Orders. You may only ever take this Formula once.

**Armored** You have an armor of your choice and know how to properly wear and use it. When an opponent attempts to Salt you in physical combat you choose the card they



must engage to Salt. This does not apply to unarmed opponents.

**Artist (form):** You may select this Formula multiple times for different forms. You have a developed ability in a certain art form and possess any required tools. You may perform a mental action succeeding on a Fire to make a work of art. Example forms are tapestries, cryslyn playing (a stringed instrument which adds specially cut crystals to resonate with the music), and poetry.

**Crafter (craft):** You may select this Formula multiple times for different forms. You have a developed ability in a certain craft and possess any required tools. You may perform a physical action succeeding on a Fire to make a functional object. Example crafts are weaponsmith, crystalsmith, and carpenter.

**Healer:** This Formula requires Alchemist (Wood). You may engage a Wood element to heal a Salted element. The Wood element is not returned for a day.

**Hunter (Terrain):** You may select this formula for three terrains: Shattered Plains, Crystalline Sea, and Emerald Hills. On actions taken to deal with the terrain and find your way in it, you succeed on a Crystal, in addition to any appropriate elements.

**Influence (group):** You are well loved by this group. This requires Reputation for that group and Alchemist (Sulfur). When performing a mental action to interact socially with this group you succeed on Fire, in addition to any appropriate elements.

**Inventor:** This Formula requires Alchemist (Fire) and either Engineer or a Crafter Formula. You may make alchemical inventions with your Crafter Formula. These still require an appropriate Formula to use. All of

your alchemical inventions may be used twice a day.

**Leader (group):** You are an acknowledged leader in the selected group. This requires Reputation for that group and Alchemist (Crystal). When performing a mental action to interact socially with this group you succeed on Mercury, in addition to any appropriate elements.

**Learned (topic):** You may select this Formula multiple times for different topics. You have studied a particular topic. When performing a mental action involving finding out about that matter you succeed on Crystal, in addition to any appropriate elements. Example topics include Beasts of the Emerald Hills, Heraldry, Trees, and the Order of Crystal.

**Loremaster:** This Formula requires Alchemist (Mercury) and one or more Scholar Formula. You may engage a Mercury element to automatically succeed on a mental action on which you have a Scholar Formula to apply.

**Master (craft):** You may select this Formula multiple times for different crafts. You are required to have Crafter for this craft before you can select this Formula. When performing an action related to this craft you succeed on Crystal, in addition to any appropriate elements.

**Master Healer:** This Formula requires Alchemist (Wood) and Healer. You may engage a Crystal element to heal a Salted element. The Crystal element is not returned for a day.

**Psychic:** You may initiate mental combat with someone you can see.

**Reputation (group):** You may select this

Formula multiple times for different groups. When performing a mental action to interact socially with this group you succeed on Crystal, in addition to any appropriate elements. Example groups include Shattered Plains Nomads, Order of Fire, and Leatherworkers.

**Scholar (topic):** You may select this Formula multiple times for different topics. You are required to have Learned for this topic before you can select this Formula. When performing a mental action involving finding out about that matter you succeed on Sulfur, in addition to any appropriate elements.

**Way of the Weapon:** You have a weapon of your choice, and the skill to use it. While armed with it you may Salt in physical combat even if the General Effect card is not Water. You may take this multiple times,

selecting different weapons.

**Way of the Warrior:** This Formula requires Alchemist (Water). When unarmed you may Salt in physical combat even if the General Effect card is not Water.

**Weapon Master (weapon):** This Formula requires Alchemist (Water) and Way of the Weapon for the weapon selected. When armed with that weapon you may Salt for two cards after one action.

**Virtuoso (form):** You may select this Formula multiple times for different forms. You are required to have Artist for this form before you can select this Formula. When performing an action related to this art form you succeed on Crystal, in addition to any appropriate elements.

## The Enlightened Metals

When the Peoples came to this world. They brought the enlightened metals with them. Now lost, these metals are said to have the power to reshape the world.

*When the Peoples came to our world, they brought many wonders. The greatest of these wonders were the metals.*

*Gold is the metal of the sun. It is said that gold glowed with light and beauty. It could inspire the Peoples in ways they can now only dream. It was Gold that inspired the Peoples to make this world their own.*

*Silver is the metal of the sky. It is said that silver could ease away all ugliness and pain, a freedom that the Peoples can now only dream. It was Silver that kept the Peoples safe in their new world.*

*Iron is the metal of the last world. It is said that iron can be used to make anything, from houses to ideas, from weather to animals and plants, a power that the Peoples can now only dream. It was Iron that forged the new homes of the Peoples in this world.*



**The Font of Iron**

## Transformations

In Transmutation, characters are often faced with uncertain situations. These situations can be resolved in one of two ways. If the character has a formula that performs the required task, by simply by spending the formula cost, the situation is resolved. Often a character will not be so lucky. In this case the situation is resolved using an action board. The GM keeps a small deck of one of each element handy. During an action the GM places one or more cards from this deck onto the action board, starting with the General Effect spot. If the action is a simple action involving only one person, that is the only card required. If the action has a more varied outcome, or involves two or more competitors, then at least three cards are dealt, plus an additional one for each competitor beyond the first pair.

The elements on each of these spaces determines what result the action has. For example, a character is attempting to climb a crystal cliff face, this action requires a single card (as a simple action) and will succeed with either a Wood or a Sulfur (the former because of enhancing the ability to climb, and the later because the cliff has been controlled), but if a Water is drawn then the character has probably fallen, if a Fire is drawn then the cliff has changed, probably for the worse, and if a Mercury is drawn then the climber has learned something about the cliff. If the action's goal is in line with the meaning of the element, then the action succeeds, otherwise it will fail in any number of ways.

For an action with more than one card, each additional card describes the result of that character's portion of the action. For example, in a three man foot race the General Effect indicates how well the race is run in general, while each runner has a card indicating their placement. Another example is

that of a psychic combat, in this case there are two participants, and the General Effect describes whether and how the fight is continuing, while each card indicates the effectiveness of their respective attacks.

Characters may influence the final elements of the action board by engaging cards from either their Mind or their Body, depending on whether the GM decides the action is primarily mental or primarily physical. Engaged cards return only after the next action is taken, and at most one engaged card returns each action. The exception is if the character rests and is not involved in an action, all engaged cards are regained.

When a card is engaged it transforms one of the elements on the action board. The specific transformation is based on the elements of the two cards. There are several rules to determine the transformation:

**Rule of Stasis:** Crystal and any other element become that element.

**Rule of Love:** Mercury added to Mercury creates Sulfur, Sulfur added to Sulfur creates Mercury. Either added to the other creates Crystal.

**Rule of Excess:** Wood, Fire, or Water added to itself creates Crystal.

**Rule of Destruction:** Fire added to Wood, Wood added to Water, and Water added to Fire all produce Sulfur.

**Rule of Creation:** Wood added to Fire, Water added to Wood, and Fire added to Water all produce Mercury.

**Rule of Wood:** Both Sulfur added to Wood and Wood added to Mercury produce Fire. Both Mercury added to Wood and Wood added to Sulfur produce Water.

**Rule of Fire:** Both Sulfur added to Fire and Fire added to Mercury produce Water. Both Mercury added to Fire and Fire added to Sulfur produce Wood.

**Rule of Water:** Both Sulfur added to Water and Water added to Mercury produce Wood. Both Mercury added to Water and Water added to Sulfur produce Fire.

These rules are shown graphically on three cheat sheets below. While the rules seem complex, they are not extremely difficult and the cheat sheets make it much easier to use them during game.

In addition to engaging cards, various Formula can also be used during actions. Those are indicated in the Formula themselves. It is also possible for non-participants to aid those who are. In this case, those characters must announce their intent before the element cards are dealt. Then they must engage exactly one card, even if it would be detrimental. This same approach is taken if there are significant forces working against a character's actions. These are declared before dealing elements, and the GM draws one additional card for each opposition and must play these on the board before the end of the action. If this requires additional cards, then the GM can shuffle together an additional one of each element for the remainder of the draws.

## Salting

At the end of a combat action, either mental or physical, if both the General Effect and the card associated with a character show Water, then it is possible to Salt one opponent. This requires choosing one of their Mind or Body cards (depending on the type of action) including an engaged one. Then you engage an appropriate card to transform the chosen card to Crystal. This card then becomes Salt, and is marked that way on the character sheet. Salt cards are not usable until healed, and if all the cards in a category are Salted, then the character's Mind or Body dies.

## In Time

Transmutation is meant to be played in multiple sessions, as each character is seeking goals, for themselves and for each other. Over time, characters will change, and gradually improve. After each session a character may choose to heal a Salted element or learn a new Formula. If nothing is gained in one session, then after the following session a character may choose to change one element in Mind or Body. If after three sessions nothing is gained, then after the following session a character may choose to add a new element card to Mind or Body.

## The Alchemical Orders

Founded shortly after coming to this world, the Alchemical Orders are the backbone of the Peoples.

*The Orders are our teachers and leaders, our healers and crafters, our artists and peace-keepers.*

*The first lesson is respect. Showing respect is a mark of wisdom, it is the due of those who led us to our new home. This is the lesson of the Order of Crystal, the judges and speakers of our world.*

*The second lesson is patience. Patience allows you to understand our world, to view its mysteries. This is the lesson of the Order of Mercury, the teachers and lorekeepers of our world.*

*The third lesson is passion. Passion makes pain bearable and life worthwhile, it is what ultimately drives us. This is the lesson of the Order of Sulfur, the entertainers and artists of our world.*

*The fourth lesson is endurance. By enduring what our world inflicts we can rise above it. This is the lesson of the Order of Wood, the healers and midwives of our world.*

*The fifth lesson is cunning. By our cunning will we survive what cannot be endured. This is the lesson of the Order of Fire, the crafters and builders of our world.*

*The sixth lesson is strength. All else is for naught if we do not possess the strength to protect ourselves. This is the lesson of the Order of Water, the warriors and defenders of our world.*

## The Lay of the Lands



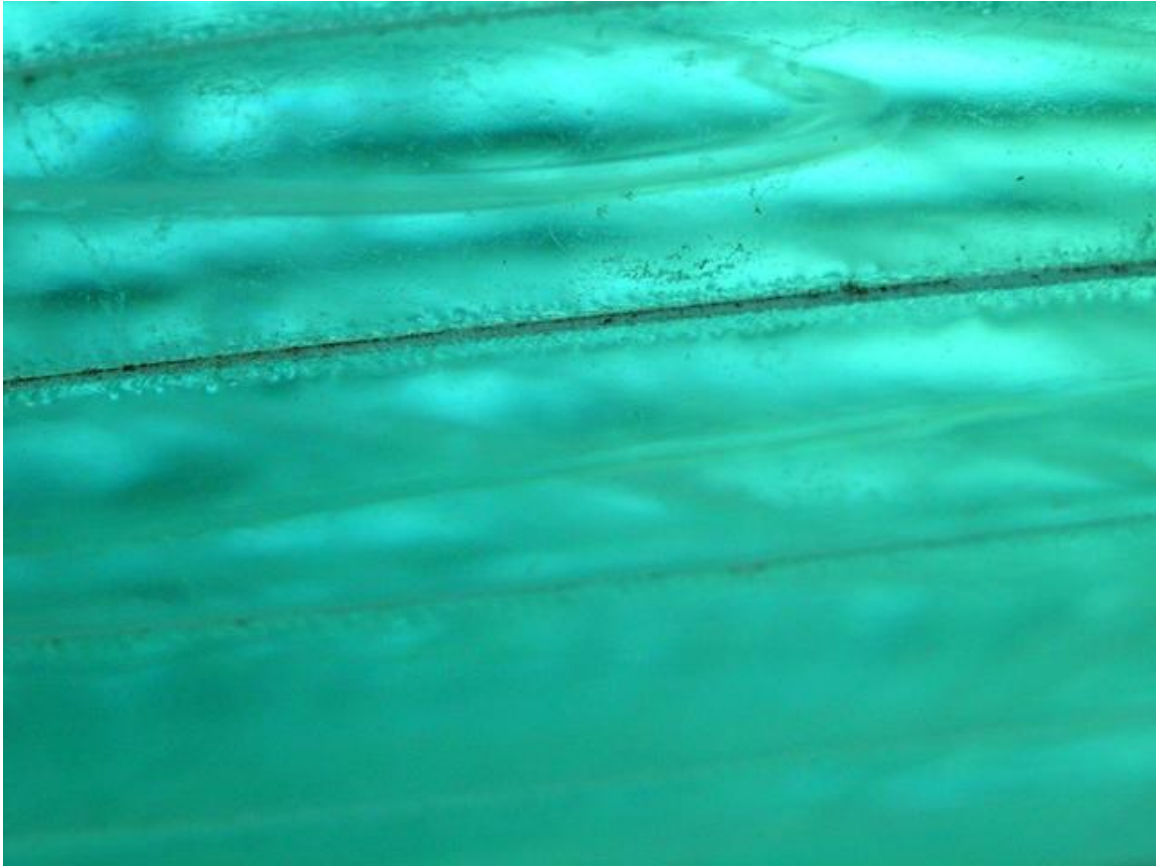
### The Shattered Plain

The shattered plains comprise the majority of the known world. They are a brutal and unforgiving landscape. Largely unconquered by elements other than crystal, they are only made livable by the presence of oases, places where other elements have made their way to the surface. Due to the scarcity present on these plains, most of the communities here are wary of strangers, and are ever watchful of a raiding party.

The largest communities here are huge fortresses, some built long ago in the Arrival. Some are known as safe trading spots for the horse caravans that traverse the plains. The most famous of these is Kadigon, an ancient fortress town where anything in the world can be found.

Because many of the oases are small and last only a short while, a culture of horse nomads has formed, traveling from one short-lived oasis to another, searching for forgotten towns and lost treasures of the Arrival. These nomads do not work with the Orders, as the townsfolk do, instead they maintain their own traditions, which perhaps go equally far back.

Several Orders maintain their sanctuaries in the shattered plains. The Order of Fire has a vast fortress located beneath the plain, near the canyon of Axsthen. The Order of Crystal also has its main headquarters in a place called Homegate, which is said to be the place the Peoples first entered their new world.



## The Crystalline Sea

The second most common terrain of the world is the huge, violent seas. While the seas have life, it seems to bear a grudge against the Peoples. It is said that only the Turtle Tribe can sail these waters while avoiding certain disaster. Most of the Peoples in these areas stay to the coastlines, only traveling far enough to fish or get to the next town.

The coasts are places of contrasts. A fertile river valley could be only an hour away from a deadly salt-flat. The people who live there have learned to keep the land fertile, and to dread the encroachment of Salt.

There are numerous large towns along these coastlines, often at the end of caravan routes. One, Golkeep has the finest ship-builders in the world. Only here does the Order of Water procure their wargalleys, and

the most confident sailors will still feel much safer on a Golkeep ship. Another well known town is Idesan, the cultural center of the Peoples. This is where the grand guildhouse of the Order of Sulfur can be found.

Two other Orders can be found near the seas. The Order of Mercury has its tower on Mount Eseth, on the coast of the most unusual portion of the sea. Here the water is so thick with the essence of mercury and sulfur that here it rains upward, rather than downward. In this constant reverse waterfall, the Order of Mercury continues their strange explorations. The Order of Water's castle can be found deep in the sea itself, on an isolated island. Here the Order trains their best and most feared for warfare, and provides services to the highest bidder.





## The Emerald Hills

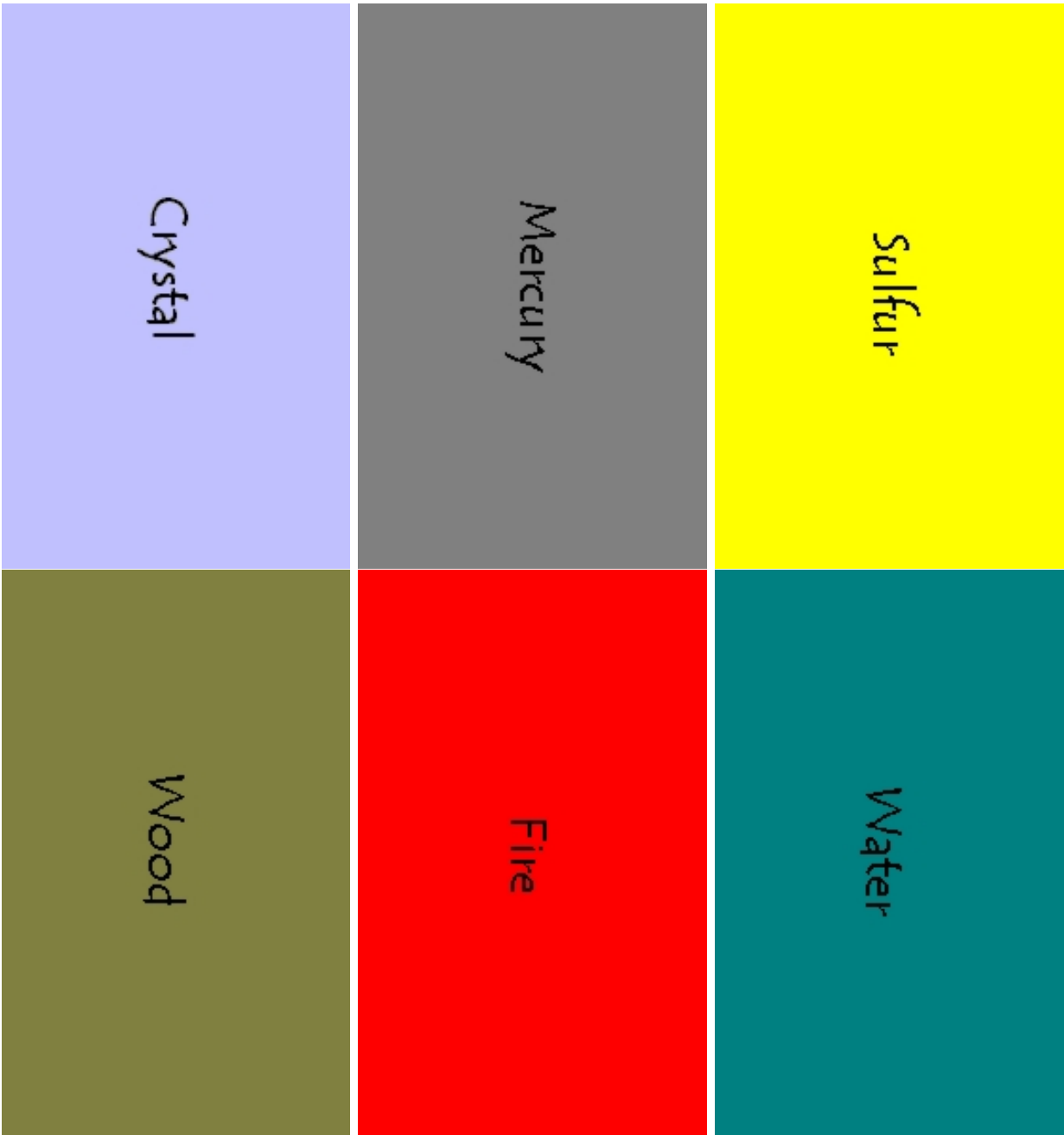
The emerald hills are the lands truly claimed by life. Here food is plentiful, and the terrain and weather do not conspire against the Peoples. Unfortunately that same temperateness makes the hills dangerous, because they are the home of many strange creatures. The civilized places are well protected, but few would venture along into these wooded hills.

There are two types of settlements in the hills, walled villages and tree fortresses. The walled villages are more common, including most Tribes that have settled in these hills. The tree fortresses are almost exclusively built by the Monkey Tribe. Here there

have crafted walkways and carved buildings from living trees. One of these fortresses, Widrath is also the sanctuary of the Order of Wood, the only order who dwells within the emerald hills.

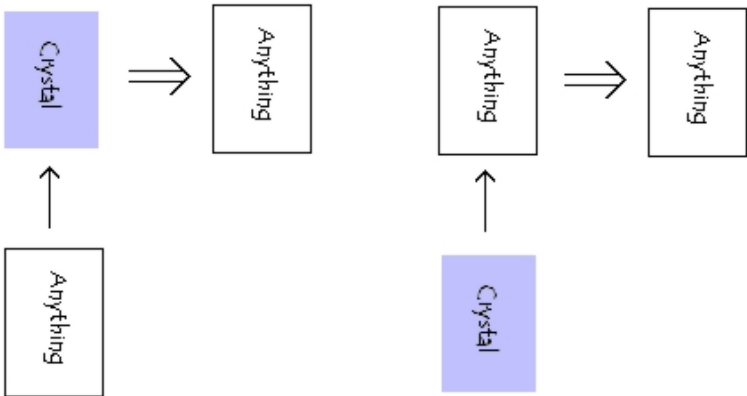
Occasionally there is evidence found of extremely old settlements deep in the forest. Explorers of this region have even suggested that these might predate the current eternity, and be from some other people who were here before the Peoples ever arrived. If this is the case it begs several interesting questions. The most important of which being, what happened to them?

Element Cards

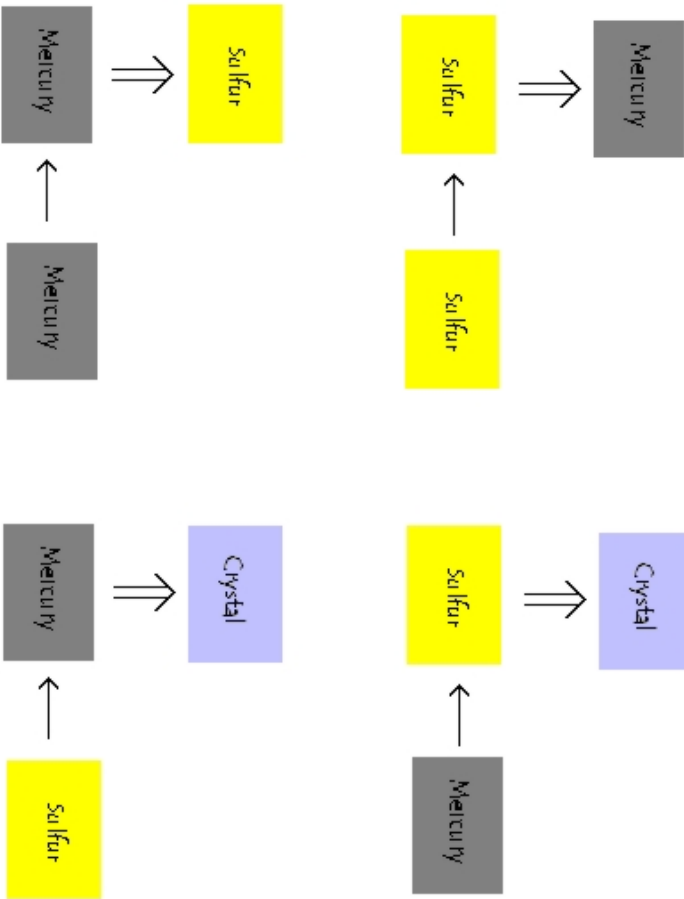


# Element Cheat Sheet 1

## The Rule of Stasis

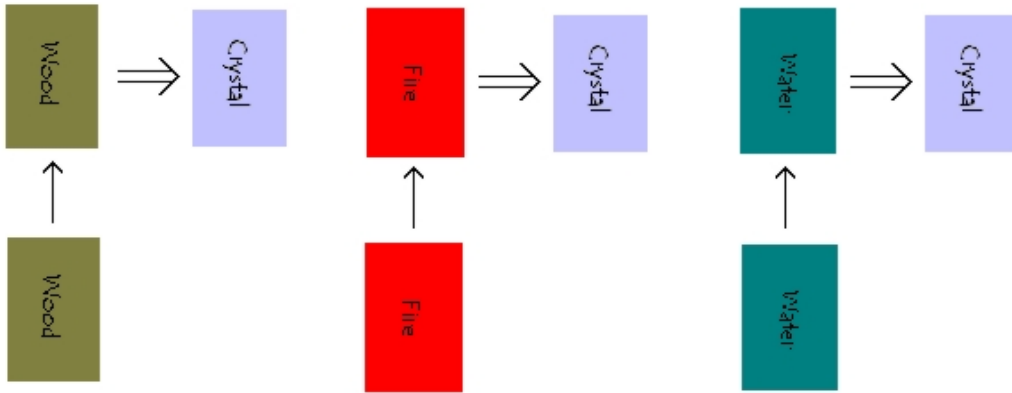


## The Rule of Love

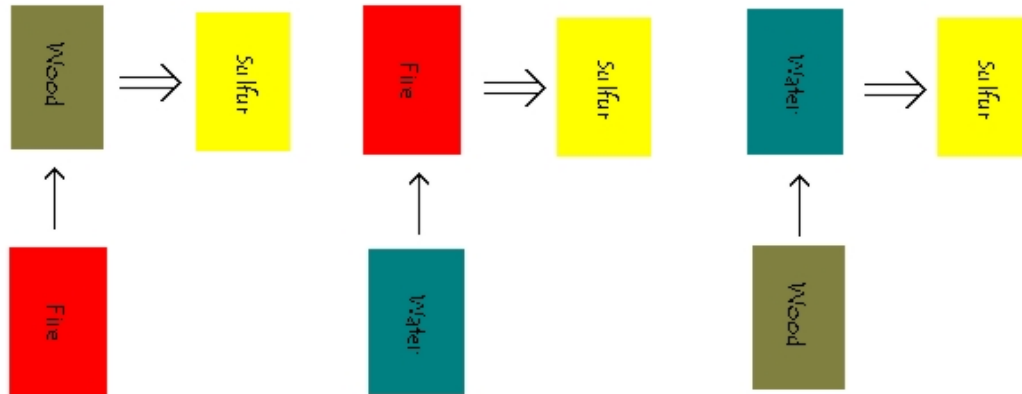


# Element Cheat Sheet 2

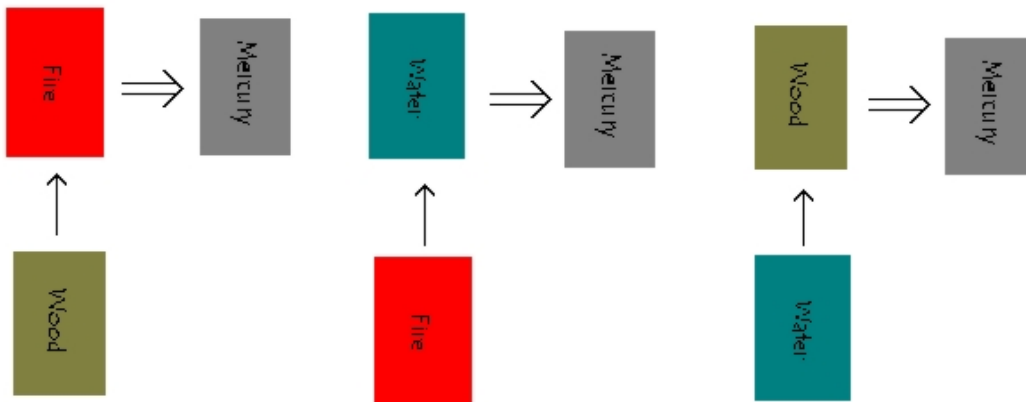
## The Rule of Excess



## The Rule of Destruction

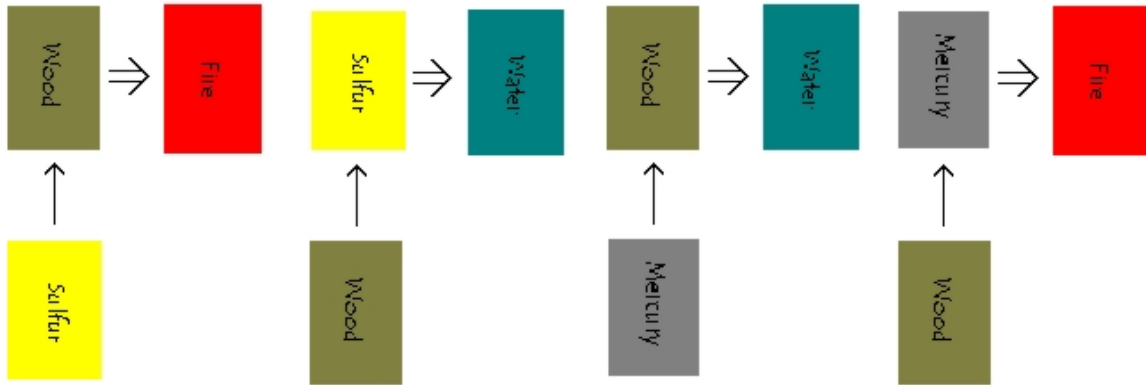


## The Rule of Creation

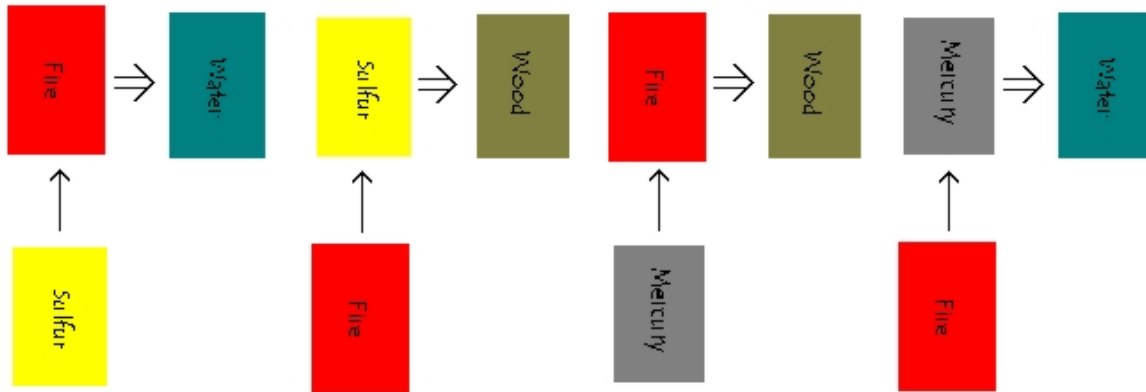


# Element Cheat Sheet 3

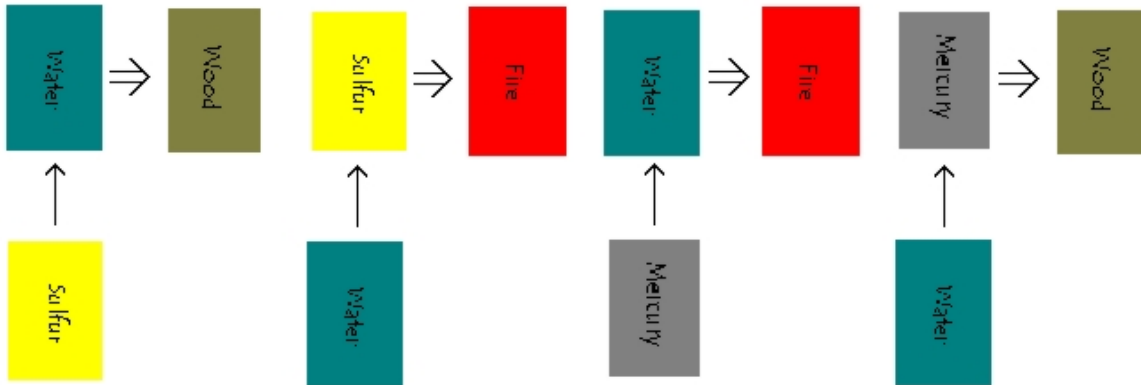
## The Rule of Wood



## The Rule of Fire



## The Rule of Water



# Transmutation Character Sheet

Name:  
Goal:  
Tribe:  
Player:

Tribal Formula:

Other Formula:

Mind

Body

Elements:	Elements:
Cards	Cards

## Transmutation Action Board

General Effect

Action Towards

Response From

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Additional Competitors

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