

ELVES or NO!

A Lasers & Feelings Hack for Talislanta

Choose a Background: Talislanta has like 100 of them. Choose one from the giant list, or if the one you want isn't there, choose that.

Choose your number, from 2 to 5. The higher the number, the more you are like an Elf. The lower the number, the more you are not like an Elf. The two types of check are **ELVES** and **NO!**

ELVES: Mysticism; nature; history; diplomacy; religion; being quiet & swift; calm, precise actions.

NO!: Swashbuckling; deception; dungeoneering; being loud & smashing stuff; wild, passionate actions.

Come up with a cool sounding name. Or if you're feeling lazy just add/drop a random syllable from your background's name.

Choose a Goal, or make something up: Make a Ton of Money, Lead the Party, Crush Bad Guys, Meet Sexy Humanoids, Find a Safe Place, Discover Ancient Secrets, Establish Your Reputation, Fight the Powers That Be, Use Powerful Magics, Help the Downtrodden, or just Keep Being Awesome.

As a group, decide how you're starting:

- Outside a lost ruin from before the Great Disaster.
- Attending a *Lyceum Arcanum* seminar in Cymril.
- Hiding aboard a caravan in the Quan Empire.
- On ship sailing around the Southern Coast.
- Lost somewhere in the Wilderlands of Zaran.
- On a windship flying home to the Seven Kingdoms.
- At the Thaecian *Festival of the Bizarre*.
- Riding through the desert lands on Equis-back.
- At the *Clash of Champions*, held yearly atop the Great Barrier Wall between Aamahd and Zanth.
- In the caverns of the Underground Highway.
- In the city of Maruk, looking to remove the curse.
- Riding war sleds in the north, fighting Ice Giants.
- Trapped in the Dreamrealms, on the stage of the Dreamweaver or Noman.

Rolling the Dice:

When you do something risky, roll **1d6** to find out how it goes. Magic is always risky, and always needs a roll; spells are free-form, but the GM has final say.

If your Background would help you with the check, roll +1d.

If you're more Elf, roll +1d if you're prepared.

If you're more No!, +1d if you're taking an unnecessary risk.

The GM will tell you how many dice to roll, based on your character and the situation. Roll your dice and compare each die result to your number.

↓ If you're using **ELVES** (mysticism, precision), you want to roll **under** your number.

↑ If you're using **NO!** (swashbuckling, passion), you want to roll **over** your number.

0 **If none of your dice succeed,** it goes wrong. The GM says how things get worse.

1 **If one die succeeds,** you barely manage it. It's either a partial success, or a success which comes with a complication, harm, or cost.

2 **If two dice succeed,** you perform your action well.

3 **If three dice succeed** you get a critical success! The GM tells you some extra effect you get.

! **If you roll your number exactly, and you're more Elf,** you get a special insight into what's going on - ask the GM a question and they'll answer you honestly. **If you're more No!,** something wild and crazy happens - it might be a wild magical mishap if casting a spell. Either way, you can change your action if you want to, then roll again.

Helping: If you want to help someone else who's rolling, say how you try to help and make a roll. If you succeed, give them +1d.

For the GM:

Play to find out what happens. Introduce a threat or objective early. Before a threat does something to the characters, show signs that it's about to happen, then ask them what they do. *"Solimorrion XXVII starts casting his signature Chains spell. What do you do?"* *"The Danuvian pours a glass of Skoryx and slips her arm around your waste. What do you do?"*

Call for a roll when the situation is uncertain. Don't pre-plan outcomes - let the chips fall where they may. Use failures to push the action forward. The situation always changes after a roll, for good or ill.

Ask questions and build on the answers. *"Have any of you encountered an Exomorph before? Where? What happened?"*

It might be fun to ask the players questions about the world as you play: *What do Gnorls do with the secrets they buy? Do you think the Ariane are really peaceful, or is there something more sinister going on? Why do Orgovians hate money? What makes the Pharesians or the Rasmirins anarchists? Is Dhuna skin green, brown, or purple?* While many of these questions have canonical answers in the setting books, I encourage you to let the players come up with their own ideas, provided they're into that sort of collaborative world-building.

Elves or No! was mainly a joke written to pass time, but could possibly be used by a GM who wanted to introduce new players to the world of Talislanta, particularly its wackier side. A GM should have some prior familiarity with the world. That said, I think a part of the joy of Talislanta is how no two tables imagine it quite the same, and for that reason, they also shouldn't feel too bound by the setting.

I made a giant list of backgrounds for new players to choose from. As presented, the entries consist of a couple of distinctive or amusing ideas for each. They're intentionally vague so as to be a starting point from which the players might then expand upon the world through their characters.

Aamanian: You're a religious fundamentalist who worships Aa, a god of law and order. You hate the Paradoxist Zandirs, and most other non-converts. You dress in white and remove all of your body hair.

Aeriad: You're a devolved green or blue bird-person. You're good at scouting, three-arrowed crossbow marksmanship, and magically hybridizing plants. You can glide, or fly with levitation bracers.

Ahazu: You're a four-armed jungle-dweller who goes into a state of Shan-Ya battle madness at random intervals. You fight the Moorg-Wan. You have a strict code you follow involving honorable combat and subserviance to those who show you their strength.

Araq: You're a nihilistic hybrid of reptile and humanoid from the wastes, who despises everything, particularly mages for creating you. You ride a two-headed horned dinosaur, and hunt land dragons.

Ariane: You're a mystic who believes everything is alive, and everything reincarnates into everything else. You left the maze-city of Altan to experience and record the outside world - such an Ariane is known as a *Druas* or "seeker."

Arimite: You're a dour rogue who likes throwing knives and drinking *chakos*. You might be part of the Revenants, a secret order of assassins for hire.

Azir: You hail from an isolated island - your people do not welcome outsiders, ever. Magic is overrated... aeons ago, your ancestors' brethren found the Orb which corrupted them with the secrets of magic. You wear masks to depict your current mood. Others say there are two suns, but you know one is an illusion.

Bane: You're a forest-dwelling vampire with sharp fangs and the ability to exactly mimic any sounds you hear, including magic incantations. Your skin doesn't reflect light, but your eyes glow. You have perfect night vision, and can see through illusions.

Baratus: You're a ponytailed sky-pirate who travels the Astral Plane in a windship. One day your people will return to conquer Talislanta. You permanently dye patterns on your skin with fermented blood.

Batrean (Female): You're a travelling paramour-rogue with mind-influencing pheromones. You're also skilled at making alchemical powders, which you use to disguise your appearance.

Batrean (Male): You're a brute who can't smell.

Beastman: You're a furred humanoid who enjoys hunting and then eating other sentients for sport.

Black Savant: You're a mute, seafaring, mummified alchemist and necromancer who deals with fiends. Your brethren's corpses are buried and their souls lost. You seek the means to reawaken them.

Bodor: You're a portly travelling musician who sees sounds as colors.

Castabulanese: You're an eco-communalist descended from a group of lost Phantasians; through study of aeromancy and astromancy you have a deep understanding of winds, weather, and tides.

Callidian: You're an elderly scholar who lives in the library of an ancient, ruined city. You're skilled at written magic and can read any script.

Chana: You're a head-hunting witchfolk who fights with a trained viper that you wear as a bracelet. The heads can answer your questions.

Cymrillian: You're a green-skinned magician or swordmage from a cosmopolitan city made of green glass. Unless you're a rebellious youngster, or the rare **Pharesian** anarchist, your clothes are likely green as well. There's also a small number of **Tanasians**, a faction of elitist conservatives.

Danelek: You're a nomadic trader who uses salt crystals for money. You sweat through your tongue. You take fingers and tongues as trophies.

Danuvian: You're a warrior woman from a gynocratic city state in the wastelands. You wear face paint and a mohawk, and ride a sentient Equus lizard-horse.

Darkling: You're a miner subjugated by the Ur. To you, lying is the most beautiful of all art-forms, and thus, it is a point of pride that you strive to never tell the truth, ever. You worship Sham, the god of lying.

Dhuna: You're a xenophobic witch who seduces men with your kiss, and worships forgotten gods.

Djaffir: You're a nomadic trader or bandit from a desert land. You always wear a mask. Your aht-ra (lizard-camel), is your most valued companion.

Dracartan: You're a stoic thaumaturge from a city in the Red Desert who worships the god Jamba. You

wield distilled elemental essences, which are as dangerous to you as they are to your enemies.

Drukh: You're a hunter from the hills. You never show fear, and when you hear your shamans' music, you become an invincible fighter. You dye things purple with berry juice. You worship noman.

Farad: You're an unscrupulous business magnate who worships Avar, the god of capitalism.

Ferran: You're a treasure hunting rodent, who can release an unpleasant smell when provoked.

Gao: You're a dashing sea rogue from an island city of thieves, skilled in dueling, and perhaps in magic. You uphold a professional code of honor. As with most Gao, you have dozens of parents.

Gnomekin: You're a buff little tunneler who wears sunglasses to shield your eyes and worships Terra. You can use crystals to do magic.

Gnorl: You're a shriveled little gnome, generally female, who trades in secrets as currency.

Green Man: You're a peaceful little plant-person who can speak with and influence other plants. You live inside a giant lotus flower.

Gryph: You are a proud bird-person, keen of vision and swift of flight, and a great hunter.

Hadjin: You're a wealthy aristocrat, who lives a life of opulence - or you're a **Hajan**, of lower status officially, who nevertheless lives a life of luxury.

Harakin: You're a survivalist from a barren land who flies around on a Dractyl beast looking for food.

Imrian: You're an aquatic slaver whose coracles are pulled by giant, blind eels. Others are lesser beings.

Ispasian: You're a cold and calculating, but legitimate, mercantilist from the Kang Empire.

Jaka: You're a proud beast-folk with the innate ability to sense potential danger. You wear a talisman to temper this sense and ward off the Evil Eye. You're able to befriend and train all manner of wild beast.

Jhangaran: A swamp-dwelling people, the Jhangarans have four castes, the Mud-Miners and Marsh-Hunters, who despise each other, and hire the Mercenaries to attack one another. The fourth, the Outcasts, are feared by the other castes for their

mere touch turns any into an Outcast - thus the others castes leave large offerings to satiate them.

Kang: You're a hyper-militarist who seeks honor in battle. The Kang now control the Quan Empire.

Kasmiran: You're a shriveled, hooded, trade-mogul, who carries a spring-knife everywhere. You're skilled in the art of magical writing, and in building traps. You make sure to get everything in writing.

Kharakhan: You're a giant who rides through the wastes in a huge war wagon. You are deeply knowledgeable of lost and ancient writings.

Mandalan: You're a mystical martial arts pacifist-warrior, a master of passive resistance.

Mangar: You're a bald pirate, who fights dirty and trusts no one. Though famed for torturing captives, you detest slavers and slavery. You are superstitious to a fault, and enjoy singing, dancing, and playing a dice game where you throw knives at each other

Manra: You're a nature-worshiping shapechanger, capable of turning into beasts, plants, or other humanoids. You have to learn each form first though.

Marukan: You're a downtrodden worker from a cursed city. Anything bad that can happen to you, does. The only respite from the perpetual misfortune are the luck talismans you wear. You might also be a talismaner, who performs luck magic.

Mirin: You're a blue-skinned humanoid who lives in a northern land where you fight Ice Giants. Your people are skilled in ice magic and worship the ice god Borean. Or you might be a **Rasmirin**, an anarchist banished to an island for worshiping the ice-demon known as Aberon.

Mogroth: You're a giant sloth amber-miner who likes eating leaves and being friends with people. Yay!

Monad: You're a striped giant who was biologically constructed to serve as a menial laborer. You are mute, and communicate only through sign language. Although others think you are unintelligent, you have a secret and complex intellectual culture. You reproduce by splitting yourself in two.

Mondre Khan: You're a noble mountaineer waging a guerilla war with the Kang. You're tormented by and must suppress your inner desire to hurt others.

Moorg-Wan: You're a four-legged humanoid with a tail who lives in mud. You despise the Ahazu.

Muse: You're a beautiful vagrant with butterfly wings and powerful telepathic and natural-magical abilities. You have a friend who's a little whisp fairy. Although aloof, you have a tendency to form strong infatuatory bonds with others. Flying makes you tired.

Nagra: You're a tracker who follows the invisible trails left behind by anything with a soul. You wear your soul in a jar around your neck for protection.

Na Ku: You're the spawn of a giant king, who you have to feed constantly. You're always hungry and eat everything. Your arrows' poison kills within hours.

Oceanian: You're a sea nomad from a floating city made of giant kelp. A witch cursed your ancestors to never set foot on land again; you're not sure what would happen if you did, but whatever it is, you're sure it can't be good. You fight with a crossbow that rapid-fires a barrage of sea urchin needles.

Orgovian: You're a nomadic barterer who hates money; you'll attack anyone who tries to give you it.

Parthenian: You're a bronze robot who salvages underwater treasures. You eat oil. You have a built-in flamethrower. Also, lots of slaves.

Phantasian: You're a wizard who lives in a flying castle over a semi-tropical isle. You know how to build windships and distill the essence of emotions and dreams. Your people used to know amazing magics, but have forgotten most of it. You're still skilled in aeromancy and astromancy.

Quan: You're an obese noble (or rather, an impoverished former noble), from a powerful empire. Your ancestors were great warriors and martial artists.

Rahastran: You're a wandering fortune-teller who does magic with a deck of 20 triangular Zodar Cards. The cards can tell you pretty much anything.

Rajan: You're a masked, horned, nihilist-cultist who worships Death. You might be a necromancer, an assassin, a priest, an executioner, or some combination of those things. You might also be a muscular **Shadinn** or **Vird** infantry nomad.

Raknid: You're a sorcerous hybrid of demon and scorpion who's part of a psychic hivemind.

Sarista: You're a carefree traveller who worships Fortune and mocks Death.

Satada: You're a subterranean slaver reptile who fights with a crossbow/grappling hook/fishing pole. You believe your ancestors once ruled the world.

Sauran: You're a cold-blooded reptilian from the Volcanic Hills. Your people are matriarchal and worship Satha, a dragon goddess. One in ten Saurans can change their skin colors. There are also the rare giant and somewhat dim-witted **Sauruds**.

Sawila: You're a peaceful artisan from a tropical island. You do magic through singing, dancing, and wind-chimes. You have a colorful feather mohawk.

Sepharan: In ancient times your ancestors tried to destroy the Omniverse with the lost codex. Your feelings about that are complicated. You draw magic calligraphs on your body and other objects. Your third Demon Eye emanates anti-life, and when opened, unleashes destruction and madness.

Sindaran: You're a two-brained alien with a penchant for alchemy, collecting things, and the complex strategy game of Trivarian. If you ever try to do magic you'll go crazy, becoming a **Sindra**.

Snipe: You're a giant friendly snail who likes to gossip and bathe in mud. Your shell resists magic.

Stryx: You're a vulture necromancer who sees everyone else as future food. Your allies are the Ur.

Sunra: You're a semi-aquatic seafarer under the rule of the powerful Quan Empire, who values freedom, family, and learning. Your brethren, the free **Sun-Ra-San**, travel the oceans and hunt sea dragons.

Thaecian: You're a pleasure seeker obsessed with all things absurd, provocative, and bizarre. You're skilled in the art of enchanting magical orbs.

Thiasian: You're a passionate performer who reveres a reclusive Enchantress from a nearby isle.

Thrall: You're a hairless orc with a strong sense of justice and honor. You train your whole life in combat, and prepare to die to defend others. All Thralls look identical, so you tattoo your entire body with intricate rainbow-colored designs.

Ur: You're a ruthless warlord from a deforested land. You worship a stone idol with three eyes.

Vajra: You're a Kang-enslaved engineer with armored skin who burrows through the ground. You love your family (essentially all the Vajra), more than anything in the world. If you endure too much stress your dark-fire is unleashed, and you become super-charged, capable of defeating any foe; then you die.

Verdir: You're a hedonistic pleasure-seeking plant-person. You talk to plants. You ride giant bugs.

Wanderer of Ashann: You are wandering the wilderlands searching for something. Nobody knows what you're searching for. You see through the eye on your staff. Or maybe you walk through the body that carries your staff. Who is to say?

Weirdling: You're a shriveled little gnome, generally male, who collects geegaws and bangles. You're a thief, but if captured must give up your treasure or grant your captor a wish.

Xambrian: You're a edgy, tormented wanderer from the wastes. You hunt wizards to revenge your ancestors; their spirits talk to you sometimes. You fight with a spirit blade, and can dispel magic at will.

Xanadasian: You're an elderly chronicler who has been tasked with recording all of history, no matter how insignificant, as it occurs.

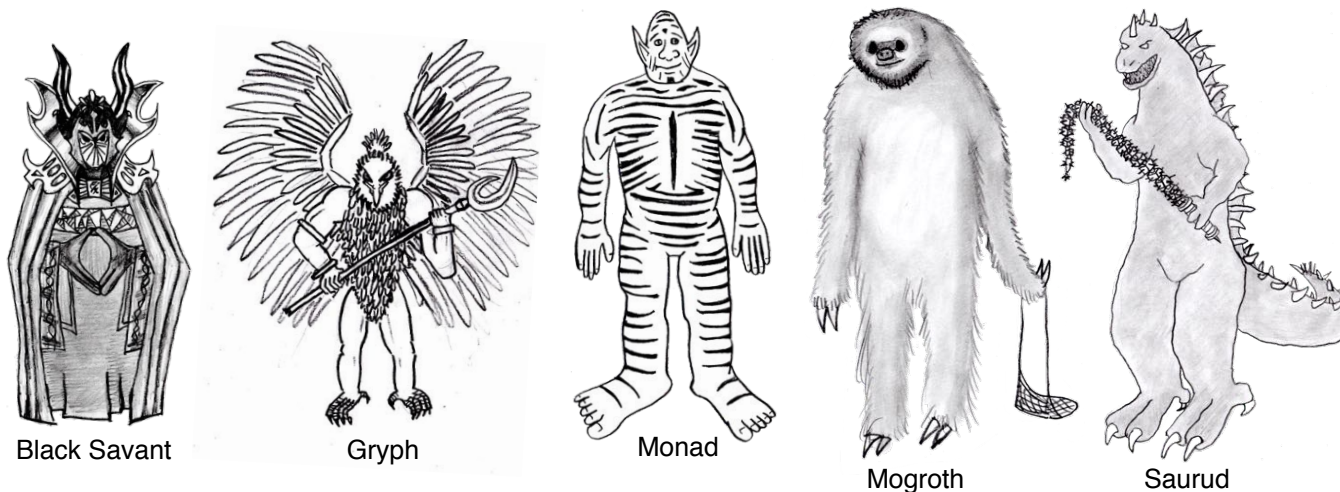
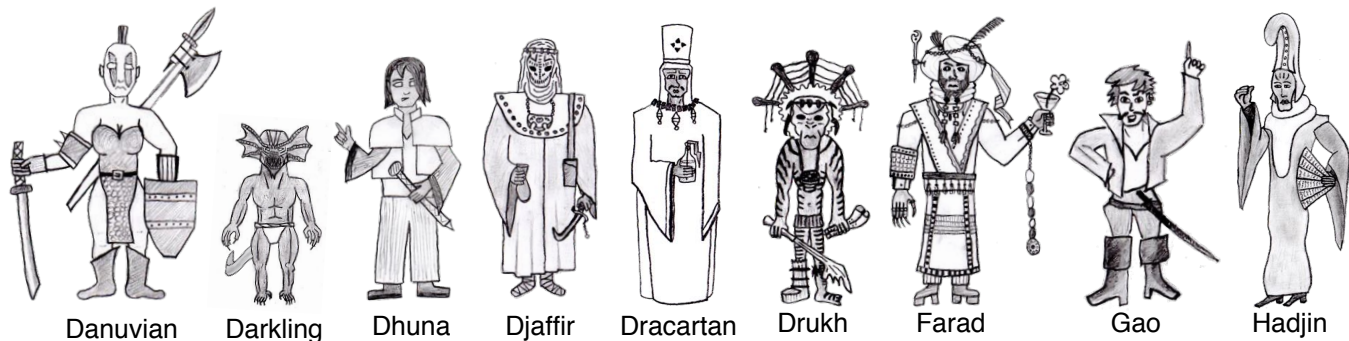
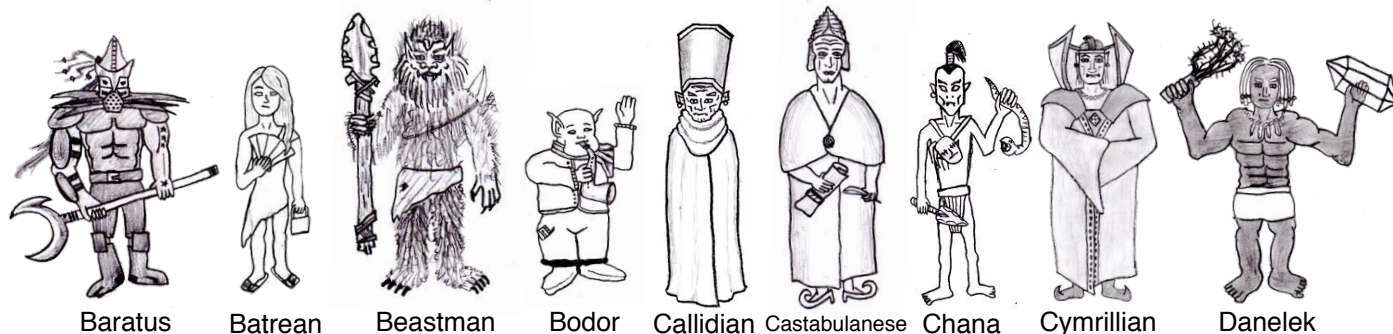
Yassan: You're a mechanical genius from a desert land; you can fix or build anything, and never go anywhere without your multi-purpose acetylene torch/refrigeration device/solder-gun/sand blaster/compressed air source/arc welder.

Yitek: You're a tomb raider with a dark sense of humor. You have a musical instrument.

Yrmanian Wildman: You're a furred humanoid prone to fits of extreme and erratic behavior. You constantly eat poisonous psychedelic mushrooms.

Za: You're a bandit-smuggler who follows the principle of "Blood for Blood." You drink the blood of your foes from their skulls. One day the *Tirshata* will be revealed, and you will smite all who oppose you. You have a quiet, sensitive, and empathetic nature.

Zandir: You're a radical who follows a religion based on being wild, carefree, and super chaotic. You hate the Orthodoxist Aamanians. You dress in bright colors. Zandu is also home to the **Zann**, who are stubborn and hyper-contrarian fishermen.



ELVES or NO!



Ferran



Gnomekin



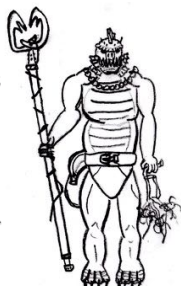
Gnorl



Green Man



Harakin



Imrian



Ispasian



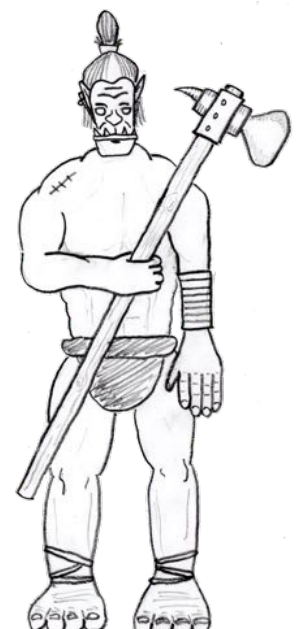
Jaka



Jhangaran



Kang



Kharakan



Mandalan



Kasmiran



Mangar



Manra



Marukan



Mirin



Mondre-Khan



Moorg-Wan



Muse



Na-Ku



Nagra



Oceanian



Orgovian



Parthenian



Phantasian



Pharesian



Quan



Rahastran



Rajan



Raknid



Rasmirin



Sarista



Satada



Sauran



Sawila



Sepharan



Shadinn



Sindaran



Sunra



Thiasian



Thrall



Ur



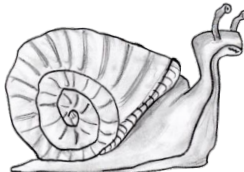
Vajra



Verdir



Wildman



Snipe



Stryx



Thaecian



Wanderer of
Ashann



Weirdling



Xambrian



Xanadasian



Yassan



Yitek



Za



Zandir