ARRATA

Change Through Purpose.

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Part I

Core Rules

Chapter 1

Introduction

This part contains all of the core mechanics of Arrata; detailing Roleplaying, Characters, their components, dice rolling, and how Characters change.

1.1 What is Arrata?

Arrata is a roleplaying system inspired by the works of more traditional roleplaying games, with an emphasis on universality. The purpose of this system is to allow you to write stories with as much, or as little, nuance as you want.

Arrata comes with no setting; I believe it is better to create something of your own and flesh it out as you go along. Whether that's characters, the world, or the context in which those interact, you will be able to do things far more suited to your understanding than I ever could.

Doing things is often far more valuable and teachable than observing. Part of that is that *you will fail*. You will also succeed in creating your vision, although rarely in the manner you may be expecting. The great thing about fictional worlds is that they have no physical consequences, they cannot and will not hurt you, so you are free to try the things you want to, and to fail in awesome ways.

In using this system, a fictional world is constructed by a *Game Master* (GM). This world is populated with characters and given things like factions, populations, and conflict, things that make it alive and interactable. *players* take control of *player characters* (PCs) who are built with *Quirks* that define who they are as people, and *Stats* that define what they are as beings that interact with the world. Together, the players and GM create a story with the PCs as the protagonists, their actions being influenced by their Quirks and the outcomes determined by their Stats.

The word Arrata is a misspelling of errata, the plural of erratum; a list of mistakes in a written document. The word was chosen as it embodies the spirit of Arrata:

Change Through Purpose. By failing; making mistakes and blunders, you will develop as a person and become better than before. I hope in some way this system will allow you to explore these ideas, and perhaps even learn how you can change yourself.

1.2 Game Masters

Game Masters (GMs) are a critical part of any roleplaying system. Their job is to:

- Understand the rules as thoroughly as possible.
- Roleplay Non-Player Characters (NPCs).
- Be courteous and fair to their Players.
- Provide a story and setting.
- Describe:
  - The outcomes of rolls.
  - The environment.
  - NPCs and their actions.
  - Reactions and consequences.

The GM is the world engine, describing and defining what the world is: how it looks, smells, tastes, and sounds, and how it interacts with the Players' Characters and their actions.

As a GM, you have the most responsibility; orchestrating sessions and campaigns, managing NPCs, handling disputes, etc. Your Players are counting on you to prepare and improvise as well as you can and if you can't do those things, I suggest being a Player. Game Masters are to be afforded extra rights over the Players. They will have to make rulings and decisions for the Players, and should act as a mediator; thus these rulings are to be respected and treated as the new rule of law unless otherwise changed by the GM.

However, it is important not to overstep your authority as the GM. Punishing Players unfairly or making nonsensical rulings are unacceptable. If you find yourself under a GM making such decisions, the best course of action is typically to discuss the issue with the other Players and GM and failing that, leave the group altogether.

1.3 Players and their Characters

Players are the people in charge of player characters (PCs); their job is to be the "soul" driving their character in the direction most appropriate for them. Players are charged with the following responsibilities:

- Roleplaying their character.
- Being courteous to the Game Master and fellow players.
- Knowing the rules within reason.
- Following the rules and decisions of the Game Master.
- Being honest about rolls and their character sheet.

PCs are the protagonists of any Arrata game. They exist to provide a player with a point of view on the collective story being told and to allow that player to interact with that story following how their character would behave. Their PC is the primary responsibility of the Player, and thus if a conflict arises regarding your PC, it is your duty to respect the PC and fight on their behalf.

1.4 Non-Player Characters

Non-Player Characters (NPCs) are characters in the story created by the GM or players that act without player input. Instead, the GM acts as the "soul" of every NPC and treats them as closely as how a player would treat their character.

GMs can generate hundreds or even thousands of NPCs throughout long campaigns, so NPCs that are underdeveloped or single-purpose are acceptable as long as they are not used in a derogatory or offensive manner. On the other hand, situations may arise where an NPC is removed from the story when they were planned to have a greater role, in which case the GM shouldn't attempt to rewrite history and the flow of the story, they should accommodate and adapt the story to fit the new reality.

Chapter 2

Dice

2.1 Why Dice?

Dice are tools that are used to generate random numbers, which are in turn used to determine the outcome of certain scenarios. By adjusting things like how we count the value of each die, how many dice are rolled, and what special rules apply to them, we turn completely random, arbitrary values into probabilities that reflect the upper and lower bounds of a particular thing.

2.2 Dice Notation

When using and discussing quantities of dice, often the term Dice Notation may be used. This refers to a system that helps define two things about the dice being rolled:

- How many dice are to be rolled, represented as Y.
- How many sides the dice being rolled have, represented as X.

This is composed with a D in between, which stands for dice, in the form YDX, although I prefer and will use a lowercase d for the rest of this document. Individual dice are written without the Y value. Here are a few examples:

- 3 dice with 20 sides each: $3d20$.
- 14 dice with 6 sides each: $14d6$.
- 100 dice with 100 sides each: $100d100$.
- 1 6-sided die: $d6$.
- ...

I will refer to the composed value generated from this schema as *rolls*.

2.3 Rolled Dice

For reference, when a roll is made, the result in this document will be recorded in parentheses () and each die's result will be separated by commas. These values are chosen at random for this document.

Here are a few examples:

- $4d20 = (10, 5, 14, 20)$.
- $10d2 = (1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0)$.
- $5d6 = (4, 1, 6, 1, 5)$.
- ...

2.4 Addition and Subtraction

There will be cases where a roll would be given or have lost dice to roll, in which case we represent the change in a quantity of dice as $+/-XD$, where X is the number of dice being added or subtracted and D (always capitalized) is denoting that X represents a number of dice.

For example:

- I gained 3d6 for my 6d6 roll: $6d6 + 3D = 9d6$.
- I lost 2d20 from my 4d20 roll: $4d20 - 2D = 2d20$.
- ...

2.5 Exploding Dice

There are also cases where dice can "explode". This means that when the maximum possible value of a die is rolled, the value of that die is kept, and you can add $+1D$ to the roll, rolling one more die. This can theoretically repeat infinitely, although the probability of that is essentially impossible.

To denote a roll as exploding, add an exclamation point, !, to the front. Here are a few examples, not that they are summed to show how the value of the exploded dice affected the outcome:

- $!3d6 = (6 + 2 + 5) = !1d6 + (6 + 2 + 5) = 4 + 13 = 17$.
- $!2d20 = (20 + 20) = !2d20 + 40 = (10 + 15) + 40 = 65$.

- $!6d2 = (1 + 2 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 2) = !3d6 + 9 = \ldots$

2.6 Evil Dice

In opposition to exploding dice, Arrata will deal with *Evil dice*. Evil dice are denoted by adding an upside-down exclamation point, ¡. Instead of giving the roll an additional die to roll and add to the sum, Evil dice give an extra $D1$ that subtracts from the roll. For example:

- $¡2d20 = (1 + 5) = 6 - ¡1d20 = 6 - (10) = -4$
- $¡6d6 = (4 + 5 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 6) = 19 - ¡1d6 = 19 - (6) = 13$
- $¡3d10 = (1 + 1 + 1) = 3 - ¡3d10 = 3 - (1 + 2 + 1) = \ldots$

Note: Evil dice and Exploding dice can happen simultaneously!

2.7 Dice Pools

Arrata functions on *Dice Pools*. This is a way of rolling dice that focuses not on the sum of the values of the dice rolled, but by comparing each value to a constant, C.

2.8 Conditionals

For Dice Pools, conditionals are used along with a given constant C to achieve a specific effect. For Arrata, this conditional is the $>$ operator. This is used to count the number of dice rolled that are larger than C.

For example:

- $4d20 > 10 = (12, 13, 4, 1) > 10 = 2$
- $5d4 > 1 = (1, 4, 2, 1, 3) > 1 = 3$
- $2d10 > 9 = (4, 7) > 9 = 0$
- $\ldots$

This counted sum can be used for several schemas, and the value of C can be used to further tune probabilities. Arrata makes heavy use of conditionals for its systems.

2.9 The d6

Arrata uses the d6 as its primary die and no others. It's a convenient die as they're extremely stackable, provide a decent window of probabilities, and are often very cheap and numerous, which is excellent for Arrata because Dice Pool-based rolls can call for 10+ dice at once.

Because we know all rolls in Arrata use the d6, whenever a Quantity of dice is discussed, dice notation will not be used. Instead, the roll will be composed into a **Stat**.

Chapter 3

Stats

Now that we've established the basic rules of dice, we can translate those into the mechanics, different parts of Characters, and the components that make them up. A stat is a composition of two elements:

- **Quality**: The C constant used for a conditional roll.
- **Quantity**: The number of d6s to roll.

Stats are values that represent the capability of a single part of something or someone. They represent, in a statistical sense, the upper and lower bounds of what that part can do.

3.1 Quantity

Quantity has already been defined; it is the number of dice rolled, specifically in d6s. It specifies the Y component of YdX or the value of the dice pool. In a more character-focused sense, Quantity represents the capacity to do what a particular stat does. It defines the upper bound for the stat's capability.

Quantity is an *uncapped* value, meaning that Quantity values can be arbitrarily large, from 1 to whatever lies just below infinity. Luckily, you won't need to purchase $\inf - 1$ d6s, as Arrata will almost always deal with Quantity values from 1 to 10. In rare cases, Quantities might be in excess of 20, but those are extremely rare and represent supernatural forces beyond conventional limits.

3.2 Quality

Quality is the C constant used for a conditional roll for the dice pool. In Arrata, Quantity comes in 3 levels:

- **B**asic: $C = 3$.
- **A**dept: $C = 2$.
- **S**uperb: $C = 1$.

For the value of stats, refer to the first level of the name of the Quality. For example:

- $10d6 > 3$ is B Quality.
- $4d6 > 2$ is A Quality.
- $5d6 > 1$ is S Quality.
- ...

Quality is special in terms of characters' stats as it represents not how much a person could do with a stat, but how easily they reach that maximum. Most stats will be of Basic Quality, being Adept or Superb means that specific stat is beyond conventional ability; usually representing some sort of prodigal ability or technologically advanced method.

3.3 Composition

Stats in Arrata are not written in dice notation, instead, they are composed in the format BX where B is the letter of the Quality and X is the value of the Quantity. Here are some examples with the Arrata-composed stat and its equivalent dice notation form:

- $B6 = 6d6 > 3$
- $A100 = 100d6 > 2$
- $S40000 = 40000d6 > 1$
- ...

Now that stats are defined, we can discuss what exactly they're used for.

3.4 Checks

A critical part of roleplaying is meeting something that is a challenge for the character to overcome; something that they may or may not be able to do. When this happens; when an action is contested, a **Check** is called for. Dice are rolled and compared to a *difficulty level* to determine the outcome, which the GM will interpret.

Checks are the core of the system, knowing when a check occurs and what to do are critical pieces of information for GMs and players alike. Not only do they drive forwards the story, but checks are also used to challenge things about characters, which allows them to learn and improve.

3.5 Success and Failure

Because Arrata uses dice pools and comparisons, Arrata works on a binary success/failure schema. Quality defines the threshold for what a success is; if a die is rolled and is greater than its Quality constant, then the die rolled is counted as a success. This is done for each die you roll and the number of successes is summed up. Any die whose value rolled is equal to or less than the Quality is called a failure. The sum of the failures of a roll is not usually used for anything and that operation will be stated ahead of time, so when you roll, don't worry about summing them up.

For example:

- Rolling $B2$: $(4, 2) > 3 = 1$ Success, 1 Failure.
- Rolling $A5$: $(2, 6, 1, 3, 5) > 2 = 3$ Successes, 2 Failures.
- Rolling $S4$: $(6, 2, 5, 4) > 1 = 4$ Succeses, 0 Failures.
- ...

3.6 Obstacle

In Arrata we refer to the *difficulty level* as **Obstacle**. When making a check, this value will be provided by the GM, by a specific subsystem, or it may not be provided at all. Obstacle defines the lower bound of the number of successes needed to *pass* the check. If you roll successes below this value, you will *fail* the check. If an Obstacle value is higher than your stat's Quantity, you automatically fail the check.

For nomenclature's sake, Obstacle is shortened to $Ob\ X$, where Ob stands for Obstacle and X represents the value of the Obstacle for the check. For an entire check, it is written in the form $Stat$ vs $Ob\ X$.

Here are a few examples:

- Rolling $B2$ vs $Ob\ 1 : (2, 2) > 3$ vs $Ob\ 1 = 0$ Successes vs $Ob\ 1 = failure.$
- Rolling $A4$ vs $Ob\ 2 : (5, 6, 3, 5) > 2$ vs $Ob\ 2 = 4$ Successes vs $Ob\ 2 = pass.$
- Rolling $S6$ vs $Ob\ 4 : (1, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4) > 1$ vs $Ob\ 4 = 4$ Successes vs $Ob\ 4 = pass.$
- ...

3.7 Intent

When a check is called for, *Intent* must be defined. State what exactly it is your character intends to do and what they hope will happen by doing it; that will be used to define the *difficulty level*. The GM will then determine the outcome:

- If you *pass* the check,
- If you *fail* the check,
- If you have extra successes/failures.

3.8 Extra Successes

Some checks may have boons if you have successes extra. for example:

> *A cook is making a large volume of stew with their B5 cooking skill. The GM declares that with their ingredients, the Obstacle of the check will be Ob 2. The cook rolls and gets all 5 successes! The GM says that because the cook not only met but surpassed the Obstacle, the resultant stew is incredibly delicious, and the patrons consuming it are mesmerized.*

There are no extra consequences to having successes under the Obstacle of the check.

3.9 Advantage

Some situations will happen where a side in a check has an advantage in doing their task. For example; exploiting the environment, having a relevant Quirk, playing into your Argos, having the high ground in a fight, and getting Help from another character would all induce a level of advantage.

When advantage is had, the rolling side with advantage turns their roll into an open-ended roll. In addition, if multiple sources provide a level of advantage higher than 1, or the roll was already open-ended, then the extra levels of advantage turn into $+1D$ each.

With open-ended rolls, remember that any maxes of the die (6) will add $+1D$ to the roll. The 6s that are rolled are also counted as successes. Open-ended rolls in Arrata are denoted with a ! in front of the roll.

For example:

- $!B3 = !(6, 4, 6) > 3 = 2$ Successes + $!B2 =$ 2 Successes + $!(4, 2) > 3 = 3$ Successes.

- $!G4 = !(6, 2, 3, 5) > 2 = 3$ Successes + $!G1 =$ 3 Successes + $!(4) > 2 = 4$ Successes.
- $!S6 = !(6, 4, 6, 3, 5, 3) > 1 = 6$ Successes + $!S2 =$ 6 Successes + $!(2, 2) > 1 =$ 8 Successes.
- ...

3.10 Disadvantage

There are also situations where the inverse may be true; the terrain is unfavorable, your Quirks are opposed to the action, it opposes your Argos, having the low ground in combat, and enemies harrying you would all induce a level of disadvantage.

Disadvantage imposes Evil dice to the roll, and may also be obtained in levels. Past the first level of disadvantage, or if the roll already has Evil dice, the check will have +1 Ob imposed per level of extra disadvantage.

Evil dice subtract -1 Success from rolls that result in a minimum value (1). In Arrata, they're denoted with a ¡ in front of the roll.

For example:

- $!B3 = !(6, 4, 6) > 3 = 2$ Successes + $!B2 =$ 2 Successes + $!(4, 2) > 3 = 3$ Successes.
- $!G4 = !(6, 2, 3, 5) > 2 = 3$ Successes + $!G1 =$ 3 Successes + $!(4) > 2 = 4$ Successes.
- $!S6 = !(6, 4, 6, 3, 5, 3) > 1 = 6$ Successes + $!S2 =$ 6 Successes + $!(2, 2) > 1 =$ 8 Successes.
- ...

3.11 Help, All at Once

There comes a time when two or more characters will be working towards the same intent at the same time. It could be that some are attempting to help others, which is called Help, or that they're doing a sensitive task in parallel, which is called All at Once. Choose a character to act as the leader of the roll - this person should be the one who is relying the most on the other characters - the weakest link in the scenario.

Have the non-leading characters roll first, summing the success *and* failures. Subtract the successes from the failures, and give that level of advantage to the leader of the roll. If the number is negative, give that level of disadvantage instead. Also, note down a check for all characters rolling here.

Here is an example of Help:

> *Agnar woke up at the bottom of a pit with a large boulder on top of him! He's uninjured, but at an awkward angle; luckily, his comrade Steven has arrived to help! Since Agnar is in the disadvantaged position and is the one in need of help, he'll be making this supporting roll with his A5 Power stat, and Steven will be leading the roll with his weaker B4 Power stat. The GM puts that, to free Agnar, the Ob will be 3. Failing to meet that Ob will result in the boulder crushing Agnar's foot, injuring him!*
>
> *Agnar rolls first: 3 successes - 2 failures, a net of +1! That means Steven gets to roll with a level of advantage! Steven rolls: !(6, 1, 5, 2), 2 successes but he gets to roll an extra B1 because of the help from Agnar: (4), making 3 successes! They both roll the boulder off Agnar, an act that seems to have won Steven some free liquor tonight!*

And one of All at Once:

> *Steven hears the scraping of boots up ahead. Unfortunately, both Agnar and himself lost their weapons in the fall and will need to deploy stealth if they hope to avoid getting gutted. Unfortunately, this calls for a Stealth check, one that falls under All at Once, and Agnar has the tact and Stealthiness of a pregnant horse (B2). Steven sighs, and prepares his A6 Stealth roll. The GM declares that this Stealth check will be an Ob 4.*
>
> *He gets 5 successes - 1 failure! A net +4 advantage for Agnar! That means Agnar rolls a !B5: (6, 6, 3, 4, 1). 3 Successes so far, but he gets 2 more from the open-endedness of the roll: (4, 1). That makes 4 successes! Through some miracle, Steven manages to compensate for Agnar's bumbling mess of a stealth attempt, and they sneak past whatever's prowling these halls in one- well, two pieces.*

3.12 Character Stats

3.12.1 Core Stats

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To everyone that helped me along the way:

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