

A Game of Bastards

What This System Needs To Function (Goals for Alpha v. 1.0)

1. Character Building Rules

i. Suits

Every player begin by choosing a **Suit** – **Clubs**, **Hearts**, **Spades**, or **Diamonds**. Using Tarot decks with Cups/Swords/Staves/Coins works if you prefer, and is more appropriate for some settings. Accordingly, each character has a relevant stat for each suit, to represent his ties to each of the four Fates and a relevant **Trait**.

ii. Points & Costs

Every character starts with a 1 in each trait(2 in their chosen suit), 1 in each skill, and 10 XP. Increasing a trait, gaining an advantage, upping a skill, or gaining a specialty costs 1 XP. Disadvantages may be taken only at character creation – the character gains 1 XP for each disadvantage. *Note that at creation, no character may have a trait or skill above rank 3.*¹

Characters gain 1 XP at the end of every scene they are directly involved in, 1 XP at the end of every opposition they're involved in, and 1 XP every time they are inflicted with a **Disadvantage**. When the group uses the **Time Passes** indirect action, players may spend their character's XP to gain new **Advantages**, increase **Traits** or **Skills**, learn new **Specialties**, or remove certain **Disadvantages**. Generally, players should not gain more than a single rank in a trait/skill/advantage each opportunity they take to spend XP. Feel free to suspend this rule, however, for special circumstances(like the next scene being the last one of the session) or if you just don't care about smooth progression.

iii. Traits

Body(Clubs/Swords) represents the physical capabilities of the character, from actual brute strength to agility and overall fitness and endurance. The **Clubs** character is in some way tied to the Fate **Kranos**, destined to live a rigorous life but challenged to use it as a means to attain ultimate knowledge of the self and one's capabilities. A **Fated's Body** is added to physical damage rolls, physical attacks, and skill checks requiring raw power(such as lifting heavy things or breaking out of a grapple), agility-based challenges(scaling a fence, leaping a great distance), the <magic skill>, or endurance tests(running a few miles, holding one's breath underwater). In addition, a character may only use weapons with a damage bonus less than or equal to their **Body** in one hand. Anything above requires both hands to wield.

Spirit(Hearts/Cups) represents the characters resolve, determination, or raw willpower, as well as things like spirituality or empathy. The **Hearts** character is tied to the Fate **Loressa** and inevitably becomes someone of conviction and passion, destined to determine their own path and challenged to make their changes to the world left behind last after they're gone. **Loressa** is said to show favor via the presence of butterflies and elaborate cloud formations. A **Fated's Spirit** is added to rolls involving fear effects(like seeing an angry crocodile, or a clockwork monstrosity bigger than your house), skill attempts such as those to incite or lead(like riling a

¹ This line might not be needed. Testing will indicate if this is an actual needed restriction balance-wise.

crowd up for a much needed revolution, or keeping your men's morale up during a war campaign), sanity damaging effects(like seeing a **Fate** in person, or killing someone for the first time), the <> magic skill, and if your character is **Desperate**, a number of combat hands.

Mind(Spades, Staves) is the character's intellectual capability, ability to think and solve problems, and directly correlated to one's reflexes. The **Spades** character is quick-witted and aware of their surroundings, a nod to their patron **Fate Aiyala**. Characters of this suit are destined to stumble upon questions no other could solve, and are challenged to push the boundries of human knowledge. A character adds their **Spades** score to intellectual skills(Research, disarming traps, tactical decisions), attempts at trickery or influence(lying, bribery, haggling), reflexive hands(defense hands, dodging traps, taking cover), mental contests(chess, psionic influence, repartee, or performance), and the related magic skill of <>.

Luck(Diamonds/Coins) is one of largest deciding factors in any **Fated's** life, and indeed one of the most important aspects of this game. It is chance, the ultimate result of being touched by one of the **Fates**. The **Diamonds** character isn't quite sure how they've made it through life – it just seemed like opportunity came their way. **Esme**, the **Smiling Lady** to most of her more devoted followers(the sort seen betting their entire savings on a hand of cards, or just fortunate enough to always find a warm place to sleep at night) is very generous to those that become attached to her strings. Of course, there is always the risk of losing it all soon afterwards, but the faithful know she's got them taken care of. They just have to do the legwork.

A **Fated** adds their **Diamonds** score to any skill roll that is more dumb luck than technical know-how(like attempting to fix a TV by hitting it), draws a number of cards equal to their **Luck** at the beginning of their turn in an **Opposition**, and those of this suit have access to a number of advantages to use their **Diamonds** bonus on other skills as well as defense and attack hands. <>, **Esme's** magic skill, is powerful and unpredictable, though its users rarely realize just how much power they actually possess. In **Desperation**, a character may use their Luck score for many of their hands.

In addition, every **Trait** has a related **Trait Pool** – equal to the rank of the trait multiplied by 5. When damage is taken, it is applied to the relevant **Trait Pool** based on the type of attack.

iv. Skills

Athletics

Dexterity

<Weapon(type) or Unarmed> Combat

Stealth

Technology

Academics

Influence

Craft(Type)

Business

Perception

Meditation

First Aid

Guts

v. Specialties

A synergistic bonus between two skills at rank 2 or above. A player may spend 1 XP to gain a Specialty between any two skills at rank 2 or above – this can be almost anything but should refer to a specific action (Like using Influence x Craft(Theatre) as an “Acting” Specialty) or realm of study(such as Academics x Athletics resulting in Biology as a specialty).The level of the **Specialty** is equal to the lower of the two skills involved, increasing as the skills increase. Add the **Specialty** bonus to any draws involving the specific action or school of knowledge indicated.

vi. Advantages

If a character has a 0 in the trait pool indicated by the suit, they cannot use advantages of that suit. Advantages that grant new actions for a character to perform(Like Counter, Defense Stance, or Disarm) can be further improved by taking **Specialties** in the action using related skills. Advantages marked with an asterisk(*) can only be purchased at character creation.

Defensive

All-Out Defense - Clubs

At any point during or before this character's action this round, the character may declare the use of the **All-Out Defense**. All of the character's defense draws against physical attacks add their **Body** bonus instead of **Mind**. The character's **Body** bonus is doubled for all of these draws, but they cannot take any actions this round. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the multiplier of the effect.

Careful – Spades

When this character successfully avoids taking damage from an attack, they may draw a card. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Counter<Weapon> - Spades

The character has learned to use their opponent's movement against them in melee combat. When attacked with a melee weapon and wielding the chosen weapon above, this character may sacrifice any number of skill cards on the defense(leaving a minimum of 1) – if successful, they may then immediately use those skill cards to initiate an attack action against the same opponent.

Defensive Stance – Clubs

During your action, you may voluntarily lower your attack draws by a number of cards equal to or less than your **Body**. You may increase your cards on all of your defense rolls by this amount until the end of the current **Opposition**. This **Advantage** can be deactivated freely during your turn.

Dodge – Clubs

The character may spend 1 **BP** to use their **Body** bonus on their next physical defense draw instead of **Mind**. Their **Body** bonus is doubled for this draw. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the cost and multiplier of the effect.

Florentine <Weapon>- Spades

This character adds 1 to reflexive defense draws against melee attacks while using the chosen weapon and its relevant skill. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Interpose – Hearts

Once per turn, when a character in melee range of this character is targeted with a physical attack, this character may become the target of the attack instead.

Intense Concentration – Spades

When this character deals damage to an opponent's **MP**, increase that damage by 2. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Iron Wall - Clubs

The character may spend a wildcard at any point in an opposition round. During that round, damage to the character's **BP** is reduced by their **Body** score. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to multiplier of the effect(rank 2 is 2x, 3 is 3x, etc.).

Karmic Shuffle – Diamonds

The character may spend a wildcard to make all characters involved in the opposition(including themselves) add **Luck** to their physical defense rolls instead of any other trait. This effect lasts until this player's next turn. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to turn length of the effect.

Mind Over Matter – Spades

The character may spend 1 **MP** when taking damage to their **BP**. If they do, the damage is dealt to their **MP** instead. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, allowing **SP** and subsequently **LP** damage to be converted.

Soul of Steel – Hearts

The character may spend a wildcard and sacrifice their action at any point during a round before or during their turn. During that round, they reduce any damage directed toward their **SP** or **BP** by twice their **Spirit** bonus. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the multiplier of the effect.

Serendipity - Diamonds

The character may spend 1 **LP** to use their **Luck** bonus on their next physical defense draw instead of **Mind**. Their **Luck** bonus is doubled for this draw. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the cost and multiplier of the effect.

Study – Spades

The character may use their action during a turn to **Study** a single opponent. For the remainder of the opposition, double the character's **Mind** bonus for physical defense rolls against that opponent. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the cost and multiplier of the effect.

Offensive Advantages

Ambidextrous – Clubs

This character reduces the two weapon fighting penalty to 1 card. This advantage can be taken a second time, removing the penalty entirely.

Berserk – Hearts

This advantage may only be used once per scene. The character may spend a wildcard during their turn to become **Berserk**. **Berserk** characters add double their **Body** bonus to any physical damage they inflict. In addition, they may only use offensive advantages, and play 1 less card on defense draws (minimum 1). A character remains **Berserk** until the end of the current scene or they may end it by sacrificing an action and succeeding on a **Meditation Fate Draw** off of **Mind**. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the multiplier of the effect.

Disarm – Spades

This character may spend 1 **MP** to make a physical melee attack off of **Mind**. If successful, the attack deals no damage, but the opponent drops their weapon. If the character takes a second level of this **Advantage** and pays an additional **MP**, then the character may choose to place the weapon in one of their empty hands. (Otherwise, it takes an action to recover a dropped weapon.)

Eagle Eyes - Clubs

Reduce all medium and long range penalties by 5. This Advantage can be taken up the 3 times.

Ferocity – Clubs

This character may spend 1 **BP** when making a physical melee attack to double their **Body** bonus for that draw. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the cost and multiplier of the effect.

Gun Fever – Diamonds

When this character successfully deals damage with a ranged attack, they may immediately spend 1 **MP** to make a second ranged attack with any weapon in hand at -5. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with the penalties and cost for each attack stacking cumulatively.

Intensity – Hearts

This character may spend a wildcard at any point during a round. During physical attack draws this round, they add a card from the top of the deck to their cards in play at the beginning of the betting step. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Lucky Strike – Diamonds

This character may spend 1 **LP** when making a physical attack. They add their **Luck** to this draw instead of **Body**, and the defending character uses **Luck** in place of **Mind**. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with the second level doubling this character's **Luck** bonus (and adding 1 to the cost) and the subsequent level adding to the cost and multiplier of the effect.

Lunge – Clubs

This character may spend **1 BP** and lower their defense draws until their next turn by a number less than or equal to their **Body**. The character then makes an immediate physical melee attack, adding twice the number subtracted to the draw. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the cost and multiplier of the effect.

Point Blank – Spades

Reduce melee and short range penalties with ranged weapons by 5. This **Advantage** can be taken up to 3 times.

Savage – Clubs

The character may spend **1 BP** before making a physical melee attack. If the attack is successful, they may make an additional physical melee attack immediately at -5. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with the penalties and cost for each attack stacking cumulatively.

Trip – Clubs

During a physical melee attack, this character may spend **1 BP** to attempt a **Trip**, handling this as a normal attack with their chosen weapon. If the attack hits, it deals no damage, but the opponent is **Knocked Down**.

Zeal – Hearts

This character may spend **1 SP** when making a physical attack. They add double their **Spirit** bonus to this draw instead of **Body**. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with each level adding to the cost and multiplier of the effect.

Utility Advantages

Acrobat – Clubs

In the draw step of a fate draw involving extreme movement (running a great distance, swinging, leaping a chasm, etc.) this character may draw an additional card, but may only play a number of them equal to their skill. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Ass Pull – Diamonds

This character may spend **1 LP** during their action. They immediately draw two cards, then discard two cards. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Bloodlust – Clubs

When this character deals damage to another character's **BP**, draw a card. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Conviction – Hearts

While in **Desperation**, when this character takes damage to their **SP**, reduce that damage by 1. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, adding cumulatively.

Criminal – Diamonds

This character may play an additional card on **Stealth** or **Influence** draws. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Cunning Linguist – Spades

This character may play an additional card in any social attack draw. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Cynic – Spades

When this character suffers damage to their **MP**, they may spend a **Wildcard** to reduce that damage by 5. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, stacking cumulatively.

Devil's Own Luck - Diamonds

Increase this character's **LP** by 5. This Advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Discipline – Clubs

During the draw step, this character may pay 1 **BP** to use their **Body** in place of **Luck** when determining how many cards to draw.

Faith – Hearts

When this character takes damage to their **SP** from another character, they may draw a card. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Fervor – Hearts

While in **Desperation**, this character uses **Spirit** in place of **Luck** when determining how many cards to draw.

Fortunate – Diamonds *

This character begins every scene with an additional **Wildcard**. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Hearty – Clubs *

This character may play an additional card on **Athletics** or **Dexterity** draws. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Large – Clubs *

Large characters can use any human-size weapon in one hand. The first time a melee attack from this character hits in a scene, add a card from the top of the deck to the resulting damage. This **Advantage** is active even if the **BP** of this character is 0.

Mental Fortitude – Spades

Increase the **MP** of the character by 5. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Perfect Defense – Clubs

When this character takes damage to their **BP**, they may spend a **Wildcard** to reduce that damage by 5. This advantage can be taken up to five times, stacking cumulatively.

Quick-Witted – Spades

During the draw step, this character uses **Mind** in place of **Luck** to determine the number of cards they draw.

Resolve – Hearts

Increase the **SP** of the character by 5. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Second Wind – Clubs

This advantage is usable once per scene. If this character's **BP** reaches 0, they may immediately spend a **wildcard** to recover 5 **BP**. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, adding cumulatively.

Speedy – Spades

This character may replace their initiative card during their action without sacrificing the action to do so. Reduce the character's initiative by 1. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, stacking cumulatively.

Tenacity – Clubs

When this character sustains damage to their BP from another character, they may draw a card. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

Thick Skin – Clubs

Reduce the damage this character takes to their **Body** pool by 1. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, adding cumulatively.

Toughness – Clubs

Increase the **BP** of the character by 5. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Follower Advantages

Friends: This character does not have to spend a wildcard to use the **Reinforce** indirect action. Extras summoned by this character have the **Loyal** advantage and a weapon of this character's choice. Dead members of the group are replaced next scene – if all members of a group die, however, the character loses 1 level of this advantage, and must pay twice the XP cost to regain it, stacking each time this occurs. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, allowing the summoning of an additional squad per level.

Inspiring Presence - Hearts

Allies of this character add 1 to all opposed draws while this character is present. This Advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

Loyal – Hearts

Characters with this advantage can't be persuaded to turn against current allies.

Mastermind – Spades

This character may use their **wildcards** to boost the draws of **Followers** and **Extras** under their control. This advantage does not require the character to **Appear** in the scene to be in effect. **Followers** and **Extras** under this character's control increase their **Power Rating** by 1. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times.

vii. Disadvantages

Disadvantages penalize a character in exchange for granted extra **XP** that can be spent

elsewhere. Characters may only choose to gain new disadvantages at character creation, however **Disadvantages** may be inflicted upon a character that is **Wounded**. **Disadvantages** marked with an asterisk(*) are **permanent** and cannot be later removed by spending **XP**.

Clubs Disadvantages

These Disadvantages typically inflict penalties upon physical actions. Most of these disadvantages can be mitigated somewhat by a prosthetic of some sort.

Old *

- Ancient *

One Arm *

- No Arms *

One Eye *

- Blind *

One Leg *

- No Legs *

Weak Constitution

Spades Disadvantages

These Disadvantages generally inflict penalties on social actions. A few can be hidden, but most of these Disadvantages are always in full effect. Spades **Disadvantages** can often be

Addiction

Bad Reputation

A character automatically gains this **Disadvantage** when they inflict a **Permanent Disadvantage** upon a different character. This **Disadvantage** costs twice as much **XP** to remove every time it is removed with **XP**(So the first time is 1 **XP**, second is 2, third is 4, etc.). A character with a **Bad Reputation** suffers -5 to all **Influence** draws for every rank in this **Disadvantage**, gaining the same amount as a bonus instead to **Influence** draws used to **Intimidate**. This **Disadvantage** can be stacked up to 5 times. This penalty does not apply to **Influence** draws involving other characters with this **Disadvantage**.

Other players may spend a **Wildcard** during an **indirect action** to force a **Touched** character opposed to the character with this **Disadvantage** to appear in the Scene. This character has a **Power Rating** equal to the level of this **Disadvantage** and one weapon of the active player's choosing. At rank 3 and 4, they enter the scene with 1 **squad** of 5 **Extras** with the same **Power Rating**. At rank 5, it becomes 2 squads. All of the squads have 1 weapon of the active player's choosing.

Examples of the severity of this **Disadvantage**(These are just examples; players are encouraged to theme the NPCs however they wish):

Rank 1 – A Local bully. Opposed Character: Concerned Citizen, or Character's Mother.

Rank 2 – Known troublemaker or criminal. Opposed Character: Vigilante, family member seeking revenge.

Rank 3 – Well-known villain, infamous criminal, known con artist or fraudster. Opposed Character(s): Police Forces, B-List Superhero, Competing Rival, Assassin

Rank 4 – Violent Gang Leader, Leader of Rogue Troops, CEO of a corrupt corporation. Opposed Character(s): Rival Gang Leader, A-List Superhero, SWAT Team.

Rank 5 – Legendary ne'er-do-well. Known war criminal. Leader of an active revolution in a fascist country. Adolf Hitler. Opposed Character(s): Expert killer, Military Kill Team, The Great Lakes Avengers

Noticeable Mark

Ugly

Hearts Disadvantages

These Disadvantages inflict penalties on the character's ability to motivate themselves. They could also represent a loss of Faith, or anything else related to the character's mood and psychological well-being.

Apathetic

This character may only spend **Wildcards** on opposed draws.

Delusion *

– **Psychosis ***

Defeated

Depressed

Nervous Habit

Unstable

Diamonds Disadvantages

Misfortunate

2. Core Mechanics For Non-Opposition

i. Setting up a Scene

Shuffling

The deck is shuffled at the beginning of every **Scene**(beginning an **Opposition** is considering a new **Scene**).

ii. Fate Draws

Fate Draw

Draw Step.

Play Step.

Betting Step(P2)

Betting Step(P1)

(Continues until both players can't or don't want to play any more cards)

Reveal Step.

Consequences.

Shuffle all cards back into deck.

Skill Hand – When a player uses a skill that is not directly opposed by another player, they play a hand against a **Fate Draw**. The player draws a number of cards equal to their rank in skill and adds the relevant trait as a straight numerical bonus to the card they choose to play from that hand. The player representing the arm of Fate, in this case, plays the same number of cards as the player's skill, but from the top of the deck. No bonuses are added to Fate's hand.

3.

Face Cards carry the following values, much like in the game of **Blackjack** -

J = 11

Q = 12

K = 13

A = 14, or 1 for init

Joker – When a player draws a **Joker**, they increase their number of **Wildcards** by 1 and shuffle the joker and all discarded cards back into the deck.

Example

Carlton, a mechanic in a Space Opera setting, is attempting to do basic repairs on his spaceship. He doesn't have opposing forces in the area of space he's in, so this is a simple **Skill Hand**. Carlton has a Mind of 3 and a Repair of 2 – So he will draw 2 cards and add 3 to the card he plays. **The Dealer** draws 3 cards(6 minus **Carlton's** Mind of 3) and attempt to beat **Carlton's** roll. **Carlton** manages a 9(12 after adding his Mind) and beats the dealer's Jack(Worth 11).

Difficulty Modifier

If a player attempts something that is decidedly more difficult than a simple **Skill Hand**, either the Dealer or the players may decide the draw should have a **Difficulty Modifier** between 1 and 20. Add this number to the opposing hand during the **Skill Hand**.

Here are some guidelines:

+1 – Minor increase in difficulty, minor annoyances that interrupt the work – attempting to work in cramped conditions, while being bitten by mosquitoes, etc.

+3 – Noticeably difficult. Things like performing delicate work while missing a few fingers, working in extreme heat or cold without proper gear, arguing about a subject you don't know anything about, etc.

+5 - Significant challenge. Reloading a gun while being attacked by five guys in melee range, or attempting to pick a lock or fix a car with improvised tools.

+7 - A serious undertaking, not likely to succeed without great hardship. Leaping a chasm while carrying a decently sized goat. Trying to make a shirt out of fishing line. Lifting a car off someone.

+10 – A challenge requiring the peak of human ability. Towing a truck with your genitals.

Inventing a new type of Math. Making a repair with no tools at all.

+15 – Basically impossible. Lifting a car over your head. Driving two boats at once. Climbing up the slippery wall of a giant beehive while being savaged by said giant bees.

+20 – The stuff of legend, impossible until you just did it. Convincing the Pope that there is no God. Building a computer out of rocks and clams. Leaping the Grand Canyon on a motorcycle. While on fire.

4. Core Mechanics for Opposition
 - i. Indirect Actions

Suggested Dramatic Actions:

Appearance: If the character is invested enough in the **Opposition** then they may choose to make a personal appearance to settle matters. This does not cost a wildcard but the character is now in a **Direct Opposition**, which comes with its own dangers. Note that while the player can force their character to appear, it may not necessarily mean the character is able to immediately work to end the **Opposition** -they must still find the other involved character if they are hiding, resolve any fights going on, etc.

Distance: This action is used at the beginning of the scene. The character involved may spend a wildcard to have all further characters enter the scene at some significant distance – Medium for 1 wildcard, Long for 2. Only one player can use this action for any given scene.

Everything is Terrible: Every player must spend a **Wildcard** to use this action – it is not to be taken lightly. Generate a **Monster**(or choose a pre-gen). The **Monster** immediately enters the scene – players should take some time describing how, the monster's appearance, and give every character a chance to react to it. NPCs not under the players' control will flee the scene immediately(or at least try – of course, describing the fight as being surrounded by terrified people could be good too) and will not interact with the combat. So long as the players win, they'll be fine. Oh, and about that. **Monsters Are Dangerous.** Even the most slapdash monstrosity has a decent chance of kicking your ass. If you choose the right set of **Advantages**, you might even unleash something you can't beat, and be forced to be the people that fled and let the thing eat all of the innocent schoolchildren. If you do choose to **Flee**, keep the monster's stats around – you'll be seeing them again.

Flee: This can only be used during a character's action. The character may decide the **Opposition** has gone on too long, or be bleeding out, but for whatever reason the jig is up and the time to leave is now. They describe the direction the character heads for, possible mode of transit, and maybe a stinging last line about getting the hero next time. This action does not cost anything, however any opposing character in the scene may spend a **Wildcard** to **Give Chase**, starting a new **Opposition**.

Give Chase: This action can only be used after a character used the **Flee** action. A character may spend a **Wildcard** to change the opposition to a **Chase** opposition. Any number of characters may use this action.

Involve: A player may spend a wildcard to get two **Touched Followers** involved in the scene with a **Power Rating** equal to that player's character's highest Trait. They come with one weapon of their controller's choice each and a number of **Advantages** equal to their **Power Rating**.

Reinforce: A Player may spend a wildcard to have an opposing group of 5 **Extras** enter the scene under that player's control. They can be themed in any way appropriate to the setting, representing anything from societal forces(like the police) to the character's own underlings(like a group of thugs in a gangland kind of setting). Their **Power Rating** is equal to the highest trait of their controlling player's character. The player may choose a single weapon type for the group to all possess, which must have a

damage bonus equal to or below the group's **Power Rating**.

Skill Check: If a player attempts any action that has logically associated difficulty(picking a lock, sneaking past guards, etc.) then any player may ask them to make an appropriate **Fate Draw** using the skill. This can be done for free, but should be used judiciously – no one likes making five draws to cook breakfast.

Time Passes: All players involved must agree to use this action. They should also decide on a length of time to pass – a few hours at least, probably no more than a few months, maybe a year depending on what happened last scene. The players should each take a turn describing how their character spends the time – training, doing research, relaxing in one's private villa, whatever. The game itself should take a break for 5 or 10 minutes when this action is used. During this time, players may spend any accumulated XP in addition to handling more mundane tasks like getting something to drink or using the bathroom. Every game is different, but most of ours indicate this action should be used every hour or so.

The End: All players involved must agree to use this action, generally at the end of the session. It's a doozy, so everyone should take a few minutes to prepare, spend all of their remaining XP, get a drink, etc.

ii. Opposition

A. Combat

a. Turn Order

1. Draw Step.
2. Player with lowest init draw or mulligan step.
3. Player active phase. Non-round actions(like drawing a weapon), flavor, etc.
4. Player declares action (+ target if needed) or sacrifices action to use ability.
5. Play Step vs. all affected.
6. Betting Step(affected) & declare relevant ability use.
7. Betting Step(current player)
8. 6 & 7 until no more cards will be played.
9. Consequences. Usually success = damage to appropriate pool = difference between cards.
10. Player end step. Optional time to add flavor to results, indicate character end state, etc.
11. Repeat 2 – 9 with next highest init.
12. All players have played. End of round. Return to 2, restarting with lowest init.
13. When characters wish to stop(or change the type of oppositions, or fall unconscious/die), end opposition. Every character directly involved gains 1 XP.

b. Initiative

At the beginning of a direct opposition, after the deck is shuffled, each player draws a hand of 5 cards. They then choose one of these to be played as their **Initiative**. The players then act in order from whoever plays the lowest card. A player's initiative remains this played value for the rest of the Opposition. During the player's turn, they may sacrifice their action and replace their initiative card with a different one from their hand, discarding the old card.

c. Quick Actions(Stuff that doesn't use up your action)

i. Talking

- ii. Drawing a prepared weapon(like a sword in its scabbard)
- iii. Trading in-hand items with an ally
- d. Opposed Draws

When a player's initiative comes up, they draw cards equal to their **Luck** from the deck, and they may discard a card. If unsatisfied with their cards, they may **mulligan** by sacrificing their action in the hand, discarding all of their cards and drawing five new cards. When a character takes an action that directly affects another character, each chooses a relevant skill to use. The active character plays a card face down, followed by the defending character. The characters then enter the **Betting Step**, and take turns playing cards face up until they either decide to stop or have played a number of cards equal to their chosen skill. At this point, players may choose to spend any number of **Wildcards** to draw and play more cards face up from the top of the deck. If a character is targetted that does not have any cards remaining, they may play the top card of the deck, and can still add **Wildcards**. The action succeeds or fails by the difference between the aggressor's play and the defender's. In the event of a tie, the victor is determined by the suit of the last card played, using the following priority:

Clubs < Spades < Hearts < Diamonds

The consequences of the draw vary depending on the exact action, but for standard attacks subtract the difference from the defender's relevant **Trait Pool – Body** for physical attacks, or **Mind** for mental or psychological ones. Damage exceeding the points remaining in the **Trait Pool** does not “roll over” to damage further pools.

e. Reflexive Actions

f. Player States(desperation, knocked down, asleep, dead, undead, etc.)

Desperation – Triggered when a character has emptied any 1 trait pool. Damage in this case does not “roll over” from one pool to the next. A character that is desperate immediately draws a number of cards equal to their **Spirit or Luck**. Any hand played while in **Desperation** uses the character's **Spirit OR Luck** bonus instead of any other <trait>.

Knocked Out – Triggered when a character has emptied 2 trait pools. A **Knocked Out** character cannot take actions and may not play any cards. If all but one side of an opposition is **Knocked Out**, the opposition ends.

Wounded – A character is **Wounded** if 3 trait pools are empty. If a player **Wounds** another character, they may spend a **Wildcard** to inflict a **Disadvantage** on the character. This **Disadvantage** can be in any suit the **Wounded** character currently has an empty trait pool in.

Killed – A character with all 4 trait pools empty has been **Killed**. This is sad, but not the end of the world. A player whose character is **Killed** may immediately generate another character using the standard rules and half of the XP accumulated by the late character. This new character cannot **Appear** until at least the next **Scene**. A player may still perform **Indirect Actions** using the dead character's remaining wildcards during the current **Scene**.

Knocked Down – Triggered by special combat actions. A knocked down character plays 2 fewer cards(min. 1) on all reflexive actions(including defense hands). A character may spend their turn to **Stand Up** and negate this status.

g. Sustained Opposition

When the deck runs out in a sustained opposition, the players should take a moment to consider whether or not it is worth it to their characters to continue. If so, shuffle the discarded cards back into the deck and continue as normal. Otherwise, the players may consider a shift in the type or opposition, a tactical retreat, or talking the situation out.

h. Situational Rules

Fighting with Two Weapons – a character may use a weapon in each hand. They lower the rank of the related skill(s) of the weapons involved by 2. The character may then make a separate attack draw for each weapon during their action. These penalties do not apply to characters fighting unarmed.

Items in the environment – A character may spend an action during their turn to pick up a weapon or some other object on the ground. They can choose to wield it or put it away in the same action. Drawing a weapon on the character's person that is readily accessible (like a sheathed sword or holstered gun) does not require an action, but any item that is not prepared in such a way (like something in a backpack) does still require an action to retrieve.

- B. Chase
- C. Debate
- D. Demonstration

- 4. The Charts
 - i. Weapons
 - ii. Armor
 - iii. Stuff and what it costs
- 5. Followers, Henchmen, and Dealer Specific Rules

Followers/Henchmen (Touched/Extras)

A **Follower** is any character that while not **Fated** is in some way swept up by the tides of fate, and thus either brought into **opposition** with the players or their enemies. They are not as impressive as the **Fated** in these conflicts but may nonetheless provide some valuable support.

Every **Follower** is given a **Power Rating**, with 1 being an inexperienced or non-combat sort of character and 5 or above being a character nearly on par with one of the **Fated**. **Followers** draw a hand equal to their **Power Rating** at the beginning of any **Opposition** in which they are involved, and are considered to have their **Power Rating** in any relevant traits or skills they may need (using a weapon, avoiding traps, etc.). Followers have a single **Power Pool** that absorbs all of the damage done to the follower regardless of intended pool, and they are **Knocked out** when that pool is empty, or **Killed** when they take damage equal to double their **PP**. Most **Followers** will be controlled by the players **Indirectly Involved**, but some characters may gain advantages granting them **Loyal Followers** that they control directly.

Henchmen (Extras)

Extras are background characters, or nameless thugs assisting an enemy **Fated**, or any other basically faceless cannon fodder role. Like **Followers**, **Extras** are assigned a **Power Rating**. **Extras** operate in groups of up to 5, with the number of members determining the max size of the group's hand, and the **Power Rating** the number of cards they may play in attack/defense actions, as well as the number of cards they draw each turn. When an opponent deals damage to a group of **Extras**, they lose 1 member for every 4 points of difference (so if the opponent plays cards totaling 14, and the extras only manage a

5, they lose 2 members). Extras armed with weapons gain the damage bonus of the weapon on attack hands. **Extras** cannot use skills, and cannot wield weapons with a damage bonus higher than their **Power Rating**.

Monsters

Monsters are the results of the Fate's Game gone awry. They are fierce and unpredictable, and while a player may summon one they will have a great deal of difficulty keeping it under control. Monsters are often built as **Fated** by a **Dealer**, but one can be generated in-game by using the following stats:

Power Rating: Equal to the highest trait of the player characters'. Like **Touched**, the monster thus has only a single **Power Pool** to draw from. Unlike **Touched**, a monster's **PP** is determined by multiplying their **Power Rating** by 10.

Suit: One player should draw a card. This card becomes the monster's **Suit**.

Monsters gain **Advantages** by each of the players taking a turn to pick an advantage of the chosen suit to add on to the beast, until it has a number equal to its **Power Rating**. A monster does not have to spend a wildcard or any points to use an **Advantage**, does not have to sacrifice cards on the draw or add negative penalties to draws, and never has to sacrifice its action. **Advantages** that specify a weapon are always for the monster's **Unarmed Skill**. If a monster gets an **Advantage** that affects ranged weapons, they gain a natural ranged weapon with these stats:

Damage: +**PR** Range: Melee (-10) - Short(0) – Medium(-5) – Long(-10) Ammo: Infinite

If a Monster gains the **Spellcaster** advantage, the players should take turns picking a number of **Spells** equal to the monster's **Power Rating** from the appropriate **Suit's Spell List**. Also see: **Uncontrollable**

Monsters cannot have the following **Advantages**: **Acrobat, Ambidextrous, Ass Pull, Criminal, Defensive Stance, Disarm, Discipline, Fervor, Fortunate, Friends, Hearty, Mind Over Matter, Quick-Witted, Speedy, Study, Trip**

Monsters also gain the following Advantages automatically:

Abomination: A monster represents a Fate's power running wild, and as such they are not nice things to look at. Magic has warped them in strange ways that all players are encouraged to describe. Either way their otherworldly appearance grants them an **Aura of Terror**. Upon viewing the monster's hideous form for the first time, all characters must make a **Guts Fate Draw** off of **Spirit**, with the opposing hand playing a number of cards equal to the monster's **Power Rating**. This **Advantage** has additional effects based on the monster's **Suit**:

Clubs: Monsters of this suit are general bestial in nature, usually an over-muscled version of some less abominable creature if that creature had spent some time in Hell. The monsters tend to have a **thickened hide**, reducing all damage to its **PP** by its **Power Rating**. In addition, these monsters have huge claws, giant teeth, a freakish horn or some other natural weapon which adds its **Power Rating** to all physical melee damage. **Clubs** monsters are always **Berserk**(see Advantage), but are not restricted to only using offensive **Advantages**.

Spades: The monster has a hugely developed brain and its head has swelled to compensate, almost resembling a squid's. The monster gains the **Aquatic Advantage**, as well as tentacles on its arms, legs,

body, or head which serve as a number of **Additional Limbs** equal to the monster's **Power Rating**. Additional limbs may be used to make an additional attack just like with two weapon fighting, but suffer a -5 cumulative penalty for each attack. When a character takes physical melee damage from a **Spades** monster, they discard a card.

Hearts: Monsters of this suit are amongst the most rare and definitely some of the most disturbing, they appear to be a freakish combination of human and insect, frequently butterfly and moth-type hybrids, but everything from the common fly to more exotic stag beetles has been spoken of in myths and legend. The **Hearts** monster is obsessed with cleaning the world, in the most natural sense, starting with the pesky humans in front of it. All **Hearts** monsters have a proboscis as a natural melee weapon. Attacks with the proboscis ignore armor and shields, and if the monster deals damage, it regains half that damage in **PP**. They also have wings, granting the **Flight** advantage. **Hearts** monsters summon a number of **Giant Insect Swarms** (a group of 5 extras) of their type equal to their **Power Rating** as their first action in every combat opposition. These swarms have a **Power Rating** equal to the monster's.

Diamonds: Monsters of this suit are less intimidating than others at first glance, but have powerful effects on the fates of those nearby. **Diamonds** monsters tend to take human shape, often wearing the form as a strange kind of mask as they make the body move in impossible ways or fire needles out of its mouth. They have a limited ability to blend in in populated areas: a **Diamonds** monster begins every scene with the **In Hiding** indirect action. It will attack immediately if possible, getting **The Drop**(see combat) on the first character it targets if it can beat the target in an opposed **Stealth** off of **Power** vs. their **Perception** off of **Mind**. **Diamonds** monsters always have a ranged attack with damage equal to their **unarmed strike** and if outnumbered in melee will retreat to fight at range. That said, a hit in melee from a **Diamonds** monster is one of the most feared abilities – Those “touched by Fate” immediately change their **Suit** to the next one up the priority chain – so a **Diamonds** character becomes **Clubs**, **Clubs** becomes **Spades**, and so on. Swap the two **traits** indicated by this shift. This change is permanent(unless one wants to risk additional tangles with these sorts of beasts to get it fixed). A character hit by this attack must make an immediate **Guts Fate Draw** off of **Spirit** or lose their next action.

Challenging: Monsters do not play **Initiative**. Monsters take an action each turn(complete with draw step/movement/etc.) for every two characters or 2 groups of extras that take an action, immediately after the second character's action is ended. If there is only one character opposing the monster, it takes its action immediately after that character's. When this monster is killed, surviving characters in the scene gain XP equal to its **PR** + 5. When a character is **Knocked Out** by a **Monster**, they are automatically considered **Wounded** and choose a pool to drop to 0 and a disadvantage to gain.

Steady: Monsters cannot be knocked down, grappled, or have their movement impeded in any conventional way. Monsters can attack even if they sacrifice their action.

Uncontrollable: Monsters cannot be guided, coerced, or otherwise persuaded away from killing whatever they have most recently decided needs killing. A monster attacks every time it gets an action so long as it has something in range to attack. To determine who the monster attacks, every character in the attack range of the monster should draw a card. Whoever draws the lowest card is the lucky recipient of the hell-beast's wrath. Monsters will always use the highest damaging attack they can that has the needed range to hit the chosen target. *A Monster will always target a character that is **Knocked Out** over any other.* Monsters always use **Advantages** whenever able to, prioritizing those that cause the most damage or prevent the most. They will use multiple **Advantages** on an action if at all possible,

to the maximum amount allowed by the **Advantage**.

If the monster has the **Spellcaster** advantage, it will cast a spell every other action, beginning with the top of its spell list and proceeding alphabetically cast the others on subsequent actions. Offensive spells target a random character in range in the same way normal attacks do. Beneficial spells target the Monster.

Unpredictable: Monsters do not keep a hand in opposition. When a monster acts, it plays a number of cards equal to its power rating for the action from the top of the deck face down, adding its **Power Rating** to the resulting draw. Any effect that would cause a **Monster** to draw cards restores its lost **PP** instead, by 2 for each card. Discard effects have a similar effect, damaging the creature's **PP** by 2. If a monster should draw a **Joker**, the monster explodes with magical energies and its next offensive action targets every character in the scene, though it does not add to the draw.

What the Game Needs to Succeed (Beta 1.0 goals)

1. Introduction & Game Tone

Design Goal : To create a lightweight, minimalist pen and paper role playing game utilizing a standard deck of cards to maximize portability and varied outcomes. A game with real complexity and depth that can be played spontaneously with or without a GM and requires the least supplies, accessories, and space possible.

Secondary Goal(s):

To develop a setting that fits naturally with the aforementioned mechanic, encourages friendly competition between players(or outright conflict), not to the point of disruption but as a means of increasing investment and reward for achievement. To function both as a long-term campaign-type role-playing system and as a pick-up travel or party game.

Needed Materials:

2x deck of cards(Jokers included)

Character sheets(Index Cards)

A reference sheet of rules for play

(Optional) This book for more in-depth rules questions, suggested Skills, setting information, and glossary.

2. The Setting

i. The Four Fates

ii. Magic

iii. Specific Advantages

iv. Advantages for High XP Play

3. Dealer Section

4. Layout

5. Examples for everything(preferably in comics form²)

What the Game Needs to be Finished (Pre-Release 1.0 goals)

² Time permitting.

1. Aaaaart.
2. Testing
3. Kickstarter
4. Wiki
5. Advertising
6. Player feedback & independent testing

Release 1.0