

## 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, 10 XP, and \$200. 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, skill, or advantage above rank 3.*<sup>1</sup>

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 art of **Transmogrification**, or endurance tests(running a few miles, holding one's breath underwater). In addition, a character may only use weapons with a damage Trait less than or equal to their **Body** in one hand. Anything above requires both hands to wield.

**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),

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

attempts at trickery or influence(lying, bribery, haggling), reflexive hands(defense hands, dodging traps, taking cover), mental contests(chess, psionic influence, repartee, or performance), many crafting skills, and the related language-based magic of **Arcana**.

**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 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 **Vitalization** magic skill, and if your character is **Desperate**, a number of combat hands.

**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** Trait on other skills as well as defense and attack hands. **Fortunes**, **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

Skills define what your character is good at. Every skill starts at rank 1, with each additional rank costing 1 XP. When a character actively uses a skill, they may choose the relevant trait to add to the draw – Other players have every right to question the trait choice if they believe it nonsensical or to not adequately fit the action. Reflexive draws are almost always off of **Mind**, however.

##### **Athletics**

This skill is used any time your character runs, jumps, dodges an attack or trap, attacks or uses a **Combat Trick**(detailed below) while unarmed, performs some form of exercise, or any kind of extreme movement or acrobatics. Characters automatically use **Athletics** reflexively against melee attacks unless they choose to parry with an appropriate weapon skill, ranged attacks, attacks with

splash damage, some spells, and the effects of traps.

### **Combat Training(Weapon)**

This skill is used both to attack and defend with the chosen weapon type. In addition, characters gain the use of all **Combat Tricks**(listed below, detailed further in **Combat**) with the chosen weapon, and may take **Specialties** to increase their ability to perform them successfully. This skill may be used reflexively to parry melee attacks.

**Combat Tricks** are special actions taken that have mostly non-damage effects. A character using a **Combat Trick** may not make any additional attacks with other weapons on hand, or through the use of advantages like **Savage** or **Gun Fever**.

**Bind** – Declare a weapon or limb on an opponent. If this character's melee attack is successful, the target loses the use of the targetted weapon or limb until they use an action to attempt an opposed **<Weapon> draw** off of **Body** to break the bind. This character, likewise, cannot use the weapon initiating the bind until it is broken.

**Break** – This character may play 1 fewer card on an attack. If successful, damage is dealt to the opponent's equipped weapon of the character's choice instead.

**Called Shot** – This character chooses a body part to target, losing cards on the draw depending on the part(1 for the torso, 2 for the arms and legs, 3 for the head, and 4 for the neck or other small vulnerable areas). If the resulting damage reduced the target's **BP** to 0, they lose the use of the targetted part until the end of the scene(see the **Blind**, **One Leg** and **One Arm Disadvantages**). A **Called Shot** to the head deals double damage. A **Called Shot** to the neck or other sensitive areas deals triple damage.

**Charge** – The character may declare a charge to combine their movement and attack actions. They must target an opponent not currently in their melee range that they can reach by proceeding in a straight line, though said line can involve swinging on chandeliers and other such novelties. They may double the amount of distance normally covered by a movement action. If the attack fails, this character is **Knocked Down**.

**Disarm** -Make a physical melee attack off of **Mind**. If successful, the attack deals no damage, but the opponent drops their weapon. If the character elects to play 1 fewer card on this draw and still succeeds, 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.)

**Feint** – Make an attack. If successful, no damage is dealt, but your opponent plays 1 fewer card on their next reflexive defense draw against you.

**Grapple** – Make a melee attack. If successful, no damage is dealt, but the character is now **Grappled**. **Grappled** characters must make a successful **Athletics Skill Draw** off of **Body** to move, attack, or draw a weapon. A **Grappled** character may spend an action to attempt an opposed **Athletics** off of **Body** to break the **Grapple**.

**Hurl** – This character may play 1 fewer card on their attack to throw a weapon that does not have a range listed a number of inches equal to their **Body**.

**Stunt** – This character performs some trick, throwing their sword in the air and catching it with panache, or swallowing the blade down to the hilt, or twirling both pistols with the skill of an old west gunslinger. Make a **<Weapon> Skill Draw** off of **Luck** – if successful, the character gains a **Wildcard** which is discarded if not used by the end of the **Opposition**.

**Tag** – This character attempts to land a non-damaging hit on their opponent, slicing off buttons or slicing a “Z” into their opponent's shirt. If the attack lands, the target takes no damage but loses a **Wildcard** until the end of the **Opposition**.

**Trip** - During a physical melee attack, this character may 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**.

### **Craft(Product)**

This skill related to the creation of something, anything from a work of art to a weapon, automaton, or vehicle. A mundane small object can be crafted for free through the use of a skill draw during the **Time Passes** action, and may be added to the character's inventory immediately. Items with a listed cost generally require half that cost in materials, while works of art, writings, and other such products are free to create. To determine the monetary value of such an item, multiply the result of its skill draw by 10. Of course, getting that kind of money still requires finding someone to purchase the play or symphony, which requires legwork and negotiation best expressed in-game. Artistic products can be produced over the course of several draws, stacking the results of each draw to determine the value.

### **Crafting Armor & Weapons**

Crafting items of greater than average quality takes a bit more than just the time and materials. The talented crafter can add a number of modifications to the item equal to their rank in the related skill, spending 1 **XP**, \$10, and a subsequent **Time Passes** action for each one(if a lot of time is being passed, the group may rule that the item can be completed all at once). Stacking the same modification doubles the cost for each additional point. These modifications can be just about anything that is not deemed too ridiculous by **Consensus -1**, but here are some examples:

#### **Armor & Clothing Modifications**

**Hidden Pocket:** The item can conceal objects with a damage bonus equal to the level of this modification, requiring a **Perception Skill Draw** off of **Mind** to detect.

**Reinforced:** Armor Bonus + 1

**Sturdy:** Increase this item's **PP** by 10.

#### **Weapon Modifications**

**Keen Edge:** Damage Bonus + 1

#### **Crafting Automatons**

#### **Crafting Magic Devices**

#### **Crafting Structures**

#### **Crafting Tools**

#### **Crafting Vehicles**

### **Guts**

This skill is used most often reflexively, to resist attacks on the character's mind or constitution, like witnessing a **Fate** in action or catching a good whiff of a **Spades Monster's** special **Aroma**.

### **Influence**

This skill is used for attempts at socializing, whether on the personal level, or in front of an audience. Characters use this skill reflexively during social oppositions, and indeed most “attacks” in such oppositions, be they intimidation, linguistic trickery, or actual debate use this skill as well. Like physical forms of combat, the skilled negotiator has some non-damaging tricks to make use of.

#### **Social Tricks**

**Charm**

**Confound**

**Intimidate**

**Seduce**

**Taunt**

#### **Knowledge(Subject)**

This skill is used when researching, experimenting, or teaching the related subject. Many subjects, like **Business** or **Theatre** may be used actively for a variety of goals.

#### **Meditation**

This skill is used to recover from mind-altering effects(like **Berserk**, or the **Charm Dust** of a Maidenfly), or it may be used actively outside of **Oppositions** to regain **MP** or **SP**, in an amount equal to the related trait.

#### **Perception**

This skill is used to find hidden things, entrances, and people, most often reflexively, though a character may choose to do so actively if they are suspicious of the area or people they are near.

#### **Stealth**

This skill is used to conceal – whether its a dagger in your sleeve, your whole body in a dark alley, or your company's expenses in the yearly tax report. When used, other characters in the scene generally get an opposed reflexive **Perception** draw to detect your actions.

#### **Technology**

This skill is used to make use of vehicles, auto-devices, difference engines, anything with a user interface of some sort.

### **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).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

Once per turn. 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. This Advantage can be taken up to 5 times, allowing additional uses per turn.

### 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 2 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. This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, allowing an additional use each turn.

### 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.

### **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 with 1 less card on the draw. 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 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 with one less card on the draw (min. 1). This advantage can be taken up to 3 times, with the penalties and cost for each attack stacking cumulatively.

### **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.

### **Aquatic – Spades**

This character, through some strange magic accident, twist of fate, or monstrosity, gained the ability to breathe underwater. Human characters that take this advantage gain the **Noticeable Mark Disadvantage** due to the gills. **Aquatic** characters also play 1 card from the top of the deck during all opposed actions while underwater.



### **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.

### **Attractive – Body**

This character is terribly nice to look at. **Attractive** characters play an additional card from the top of the deck during opposed social draws. 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.

### **Business – Spades \***

This character owns their own store, part of a partnership or co-op, or stock in a corporation(or several, if they're smart). This **Advantage** can only be bought with **XP** at character creation. Further ranks must be purchased with equivalent levels of **Capital**. At the end of each month, this character makes a **Knowledge(Business) Skill Draw** off of **Mind**. If it succeeds, they gain \$2000 for each rank in this advantage. If it fails, they lose \$2000 for each rank. A character loses this advantage if they are unable to pay for their losses between ranks of **Capital** and their cash on hand.

### **Capital – Diamonds**

This character has money in some easily-accessible form, though not necessarily on them at the moment. This **Advantage** can only be purchased with **XP** at character creation. Characters gain a level in this **Advantage** automatically when they find treasure, or otherwise gain a significant amount of cash. A level may be sacrificed at any time to gain its value(listed below) in **Cash on Hand**. Some examples of monetary value:

0 – Count the money in your wallet. That's about where your character is at the moment, too. Food isn't too big of a problem, but every purchase is significant – and probably not in your budget if you want to plan long term. This character is limited purely to their **Cash on Hand**.

1 – Enough money to get by for right now. Character can buy reasonable amounts of common goods and food without worrying too much, but any larger investments will require funding from elsewhere. In modern money, this level is \$1000 in a bank account and enough cash to get by until your pay day.

2 – A little bit extra, enough that the character is accumulating wealth in some small way. \$2,500 in the bank for emergencies and the upcoming family vacation.

3 – A comfortable amount, with plenty of room for emergencies and even some luxury goods. This character doesn't have to worry about blowing a few hundred dollars on a weekend coke binge, and has some form of stable middle-class income. \$5,000 in the bank and some nice antiques just in case.

4 – Decidedly well-off. \$10,000 saved up and a recent promotion.

5+ - Double the previous level's value. These characters are definitely part of the middle to upper crust, and generally don't have to worry about where to find the money for their latest scheme.

### **Conviction – Hearts**

While in **Desperation**, when this character takes damage to their **SP**, reduce that damage by 2. This

advantage can be taken up to 5 times, adding cumulatively.

### **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 10. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, stacking cumulatively.

### **Devil's Own Luck - Diamonds**

Increase this character's **LP** by 10. 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.

### **Good Reputation(locale) – Spades \***

Ranks of this **Advantage** are frequently rewarded to those that succeed in **oppositions**, complete widely beneficial objectives, or gently apply well-disguised lies to key figures. A character with a **Good Reputation** is well-liked, known in the community, or otherwise has achieved previous social success. A character adds twice their rank in this **Advantage** to opposed social draws in their chosen locale.

### **Landed – Diamonds**

This Advantage may only be purchased with XP at character creation. Often levels of this **Advantage** result from completing **Objectives**, or by spending equivalent levels of **Capital**. This character has productive land somewhere accessible, which produces income each month, starting at \$1000 per level of this **Advantage**. This character may call in the accumulated **Capital** when needed, though this often necessitates visiting the place, gaining the **Cash on Hand** or equivalent levels of **Capital**.

### **Large – Clubs \***

**Large** characters can use any human-size weapon in one hand, and extras or followers with this **Advantage** are not limited by their **Power Rating** when it comes to what weapons they can use. The first time a melee attack from this characters 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 10. 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 10. 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 10. 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 10 **BP** before dropping into **Desperation**. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, adding cumulatively to the amount recovered.

### **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.

### **Stubborn – Hearts \***

This **Advantage** can be used once per scene per level of the **Advantage**. If this character would be **Knocked Out**, they may immediately make a **Guts** draw off of **Spirit**. If they succeed, they immediately regain 10 **SP**. This **Advantage** is active even when this character is at 0 **SP**. This **Advantage** can be taken up to 3 times.

### **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 2. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times, adding cumulatively.

### **Toughness – Clubs**

Increase the **BP** of the character by 10. This advantage can be taken up to 5 times.

## **Follower Advantages**

### **Friends - Hearts**

This character does not have to spend a wildcard to use the **Reinforce** indirect action. Extras added 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 rank 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 addition of an additional squad per level.

### **Hired Hands - Diamonds**

This character has access to paid assassins, mercenaries, personal bodyguards, etc. Whenever they add **Extras** or **Followers** to a scene, they may add a number of them equal to their **Capital**. **Followers** and **Extras** added by this character have an additional weapon of their choosing. When one of these characters or squads are wiped out, this character loses a level of **Capital** in fees to their associates.

### **Inspiring Presence - Hearts**

Allies of this character add 2 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 **Wildcard**s to boost the draws of **Followers** and **Extras** under their control.

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

### **Successor – Spades**

This character does not have to spend a **Wildcard** to use the **Involve** action. When the character buys this **Advantage**, they build a 5 XP **Follower** with a **Power Rating** equal to the rank of this **Advantage**. This **Follower** gains XP for every scene they are **Involved**, spent as normal. If the character with this **Advantage** is ever killed, the player may choose to immediately make the **Successor** a proper **Fated**, gaining the **Suit & Traits** of the killed character, which may be moved around as desired. The **Successor** has two weapons of this player's choosing. If the **Successor** is killed in a scene, this character loses all ranks of this **Advantage**.

## 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 \***

This character is past their physical prime, though they may still be sharp as a tack mentally. **Old** characters play 1 fewer card on all opposed physical draws, but may play an additional card on social draws or those involving intellectual pursuits. Characters may not apply this **Disadvantage** to

others. Generally this **Disadvantage** is for characters in their late 30s to early fifties, depending on personal vitality and fitness.

– **Ancient \***

This character is exceptionally venerable and likely has a great deal of physical difficulties, causing them to play 2 fewer cards on all opposed physical draws, though they may play 2 additional cards on social draws and those involving intellectual pursuits. Characters may not apply this **Disadvantage** to others. Generally this **Disadvantage** is for characters in their late fifties and beyond, quite rare in many non-modern settings.

**One Arm \***

This character has but one grasping limb to make use of. They can use only a single weapon, and play 1 fewer card on any action that normally requires two hands, like climbing, many crafts, swinging on ropes, or swimming.

- **No Arms \***

This character has no grasping limbs and cannot use weapons. Most people who make do with this disability make excellent use of their mouths as a substitute manipulator, allowing them to play 2 fewer cards but still manage most actions that one would typically use hands for.

**One Eye \***

This character plays 1 fewer card on ranged attack draws and **Perception** draws at long distances due to a loss of depth perception.

- **Blind \***

This character plays 3 fewer cards on all targeted attack draws. Lacking sight strengthens the other senses, however, allowing this character to play an additional card on all **Perception** draws.

**One Leg \***

This character plays 2 fewer cards on all draws involving movement. This penalty can be reduced by 1 by use of a peg or more sophisticated prosthetic.

– **No Legs \***

This character has serious difficulty getting around, playing 3 fewer cards on all draws involving movement, which may be reduced by 1 by the use of proper prosthetics or a wheelchair.

**Poor Senses**

This character has bad eyes, a partial hearing loss, or some other handicap. They play 1 fewer card on **Perception** draws involving the related sense. In many settings this disadvantage can be mitigated by the use of appropriate hardware(glasses, hearing aids, etc.)

– **Deaf \***

This character cannot hear. These characters are automatically assumed to be able to read lips and thus do not suffer penalties to social draws, but automatically fail **Perception** draws based off of sound.

**Weak Constitution**

This character plays 1 fewer card on all **Guts** draws.

**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.

### **Addiction**

This character has a dependency on a substance or act. At level 1, it is easy to get, legal to possess, and not that offensive to others. At level 2, it is a controlled substance, rare, or seriously harmful. Other players may spend a **Wildcard** to have this character experience **Withdrawal** – playing 1 less card on social draws per level of this **Disadvantage** until they can get their fix or the end of the scene.

### **Bad Reputation(Country)**

A character automatically gains this **Disadvantage** when they inflict a **Permanent Disadvantage** upon a different character, tied to the country they're in. 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

### **Mute**

This character cannot speak, at least not intelligibly. They automatically lose opposed **Influence** draws dependent solely on speech, though may of course make their argument through the use of writing or in modern settings computer speech synthesizers. In favor of not making play tedious, the Player need not literally write down everything their character says, simply keep in mind that they are always using alternative means of communication(sign language, a chalkboard, etc.)

### **Noticeable Mark**

This character is easy to pick out of a crowd, due to a prominent scar, deformity, or other superficial abnormality. They play 1 fewer card on stealth draws in populated areas, as well as attempts to disguise themselves.

### **Ugly**

This character is just not very nice to look at. This need not be a permanent condemnation, but often results from poor health, severe injury, or a lack of attention to one's appearance. This character plays 1 fewer card on attempts to seduce or charm.

### **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.

### **Depressed**

This character just doesn't see the point, really. Other players may spend a wildcard to stop this character from using **Wildcards** on opposed draws.

### **Delusion \***

This character accepts something as part of reality that does not actually belong there. Once per scene, other players may spend a **Wildcard** to force the character to fail an unopposed action, distracted by the activities of the CIA thought reading devices installed in their workplace, or having a desperate need to wash their hands for the next hour.

### **– Psychosis \***

This character is only tangentially connected to reality. Once per scene, other players may spend a **Wildcard** to force the character to fail their current action and shift their attention to the effects of their psychosis, be it that the zombie horde outside just wants hugs or that life is a giant illusion in the mind of the World Turtle. A character being actively attacked will still fail their current action but will not stop fighting.

### **Defeated**

This character has suffered some major public loss, be it martial, business-related, or academic. Other players may spend a **Wildcard** to negate any ranks of **Good Reputation** the character has for the remainder of the scene.

### **Nervous Habit**

This character bites their nails, loudly chews gum, speaks slightly too loudly, or has some other sort of social habit that others find annoying or gross. Once per scene, other players may spend a **Wildcard** to cause this character to fail a social draw.

### **Unstable**

This character has especially potent anxiety, or some other mental disorder that results in a lack of predictable emotions. Other players may spend a **Wildcard** to cause this character to freak the hell out. The exact effects of this are up to this player, but generally should involve some sort of immediate, often physical action – a particularly insecure character, might, for instance, upon hearing that his lover is cheating on him, immediately beeline to his house and break in just to make sure nothing is going on.

## Diamonds Disadvantages

### Misfortunate

This characters begins each **Act** with 1 fewer **Wildcard**.

### Poor

This character loses 1 level of the **Capital Advantage**. If they lack that advantage, then they lose all of their **cash on hand**.

### Debt

This character owes somebody a large amount of money, starting at around \$1000 for level 1 and doubling for every level after that. This advantage cannot be removed with XP – Instead the character must sacrifice a level of **Capital** every time the **Time Passes** action is used, removing 1 level of this **Disadvantage** each time they are able to do so. If a character with this **Disadvantage** cannot pay their **Debt**, any player may spend a **Wildcard** to cause a 5-person **Extra** squad per level in this **Disadvantage** to **Appear** once per scene that this character **Appears** in. These **Extras** are considered **Hostile**, and all carry a weapon of the player's choosing. Any player with the cash on hand can pay the debt immediately to dismiss these **Extras**.

## 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.

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**, it may be decided the player is attempting to do something especially challenging, and thus the draw should have a **Difficulty Modifier**. Add a card to Fate's hand for each level of difficulty, decided by consensus. Here are some examples:

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

+2 – 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.

+3 – 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.

+4 – 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.

+5 – 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.

>+5 – 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.

## 3. Dramatic Actions

### i. Indirect Actions

These actions can be used even when the character isn't in the scene. Indirect actions do not necessarily originate from your character, even if you are playing a criminal mastermind. Rather, players should view them as the limits of the outside world, the obstacles one encounters when one tries to impress one's will upon the universe. In that regard use of these actions should be frequent but not to the point of being annoying, unfun, or nonsensical – bandits aren't going to attack every single scene, it doesn't take a difficulty + 4 **Skill Draw** to put on one's clothes in the morning, etc. When in doubt, remember that the point of a lot of these actions is to keep the game moving – so if you're bored, make something happen!

**Appearance:** If the character is invested enough in the **Scene** then they may choose to make a personal appearance to settle matters. This does not cost a wildcard but the character is now **Directly Involved**,

which comes with its own dangers. The player should take a moment to describe how their character got to the scene/heard what was going on/etc, possibly add a line of dialogue to acknowledge familiar people around, and anything else that establishes their presence. A character entering during an **Opposition** plays their **Initiative** card immediately but may not act until next turn.

**Banditos!:** This action can only be used once per **Scene**. A 5-person **Extra** group of hostile raiders, bandits, thieves, or vagabonds immediately enter the scene for every player in the game. These **Extras** have a **Power Rating** equal to the highest trait of the characters, and all come equipped with a weapon as chosen by the player using this action with a damage bonus less than or equal to their **Power Rating**.

These **extras** will generally be controlled by the jerk who isn't in the scene who used this action – but in case they have no controller, they are considered **Hostile**(meaning that they determine the target of their attacks by having every character in range draw a card, with the lowest being the recipient of the attack. Hostile **Extras** have a hand of cards that is kept face down – they always play their full **Power Rating**(or as close as they can) on every draw, with players choosing cards at random to play from their hand.

**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**, but need not do so at the same time. When every character has offered a **Wildcard**, Generate a **Monster**(or choose a pre-generated one from the **Bestiary** section). 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.

**Involve:** A player may spend a wildcard to get a **Touched Follower** 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**. **Followers** that enter a scene during an **Opposition** play their **Initiative** card immediately but may not act until the next turn. Each player may only use this action once per scene.

**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**. **Extras** that enter a scene during an **Opposition** play their **Initiative** card immediately but may not act until the next turn. Each player may only use this action once per scene.

**Set the Scene:** This is the first action of any scene. All players are encouraged to contribute. The

players should decide on the location it is taking place in – for starters, if it is in a **City/Town/Populated Area**, some form of **Ruins, Cave, Large Forest or other Dangerous Area**, or **On a Ship/Train/Wagon Enroute** somewhere else. The setting develops from there – mechanically this does not mean much, but a more detailed setting will result in a much deeper connection to the action therein. Characters choosing to **Appear** at the beginning of the scene should describe how they got there, and why they've bothered. More detailed mechanics for those interested in them are in the **Setting** chapter in the **Advanced Rules** section of this book, as well as some examples and pre-generated settings. Also note that these categories are not necessarily exclusive – some of the bad parts of say, Oakland, CA are definitely **Dangerous Areas** despite also being **Populated**.

**Populated Areas** are where your character will be most of the time. Generally in these areas combat opposition outside of the occasional bar fight is met with resistance from local authorities. If a character is seen attacking another character with a weapon, NPCs will rush to tell someone to break it up. At the beginning of the third round of any combat opposition in a **Populated Area**, a number of 5 member **Extra** squads equal to the number of combatants will enter the scene. They have a **Power Rating** equal to the highest trait of the characters involved, and all carry a weapon of a non-involved player's choosing. See: **Some Time Alone**

**Dangerous Areas** are full of hazards, hostile creatures, and all sorts of fun things. Most artifacts, treasures, lost caches of pirate gold, and ancient secrets seem to gravitate to these places, somehow. The **Banditos!**, **Reinforce** & **Involve** actions can be used for free in these areas, however they always add **Extras or Followers** that are **Hostile** to any characters **Directly Involved** in the scene. This does not include **Loyal Extras or Followers** added through the use of **Advantages**.

Characters that fail **Fate Draws** in these areas are affected by hazards, traps, or some other danger and take damage to their **BP** based on the amount they failed by.

When a character enters a **Dangerous Area**, the group should decide how many **sub-areas** the place contains between the character's current position and their **Objective**, whether it's the treasure chest at the bottom or simply the other side of the woods. Each **Sub-Area** should be described as the players proceed through them, and counts as a separate **scene** only for the purposes of **XP** and the use of **Indirect & Direct Actions**. *Note that this means that players do not regenerate damage to trait pools in these areas.*

More mechanics for those that want them can be found in the **Dungeon** section of the **Setting** chapter.

**Enroute** scenes take place while traveling long distances. The **Banditos!**, **SOS**, and **Rough Weather** Actions can be used in these scenes without spending a **Wildcard**. NPCs added in these scenes either have their own vehicles or make use of the player's as appropriate. Also, see: **Fighting on Moving Objects**

**Rough Weather:** This action may only be used once per scene. The player using it chooses the sort of weather- heavy rain, snow, heat waves, hail, frogs, etc. While outdoors, characters in this scene play 1 fewer card on all actions.

**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.

**SOS:** This action costs 1 **Wildcard**. Someone has a problem. By the very nature of their roles as **Fated**, your players have stumbled upon it and are therefore involved. A **Touched** enters the scene with a **Power Rating** equal to the lowest trait of the characters' and no weapons. This **Touched** carries an **Objective** that the group should decide upon. If the **Objective** is completed, all of the characters involved gain a level in the **Connections Advantage**. Another player may spend a **Wildcard** to make the circumstances more dire and the NPC's life at risk – they may spawn a 5-person group of **Extras** at any point during the following scenes, adding a group for each scene after the first, until the **Objective** is complete. These **Extras** have a **Power Rating** equal to the character's highest **trait** and one weapon of the player's choosing.

**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.

Every character gains 2 **Wildcards**.

If any monsters have survived the session, they are undoubtedly going to appear in this **Scene** – in fact, they will appear the first time a character spends a **Wildcard** or draws a **Joker**. If multiple living monsters are still around they will all appear at once, causing an especially problematic situation.

Every player character must **Appear** in this scene at some point, even if it is just to gloat and give their character's **Epilogue**. **Indirect Actions** during this scene don't cost **Wildcards**. The scene plays out as any other, though players are obviously intended to be focused on achieving their major **Objectives** or finishing their personal story(at least for now) in some way. Sometimes not every **Objective** is completed, and players are urged to remember that that is also a valid ending to a story – last note of regret or wonder on the edge of your character's achievements. At the end of this scene, every player should give an **Epilogue** for their character – what their ultimate result was, what they go on to do(before next session or for the rest of their lives, depending), how many kids they have and so on.

Afterwards, you're done! Congrats! Go back to living your life, confident that you have gotten your bastarding out for a while. It'll still be here when you're ready to come back.

## Direct Actions

These actions can only be used by characters that are **Directly Involved** in a scene.

**Consult:** This action can only be used in **Populated Areas**. The character decides to seek out something – this should be something specific. It can be an item or some kind of information, but it should be named now. On a successful **Perception Fate Draw** off of **Mind**, the character is able to find

the expert they are looking for, and the other players determine an **Objective** for the character to gain: It can be anything as mundane to gathering a whole bunch of cash, to sneaking into someone's house to steal an item, to spending three hours trying to find the ancient text which details to location of the lost treasure. The **Objective** is added to the character's sheet. Once it is achieved through further action, the character gains whatever they were seeking.

**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 has 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.

**Now We Fight!:** Sometimes a character goes too far, or a point has to be made, and the quickest route to doing so is violence. Or a witty insult. Either way, a character may use this action for free, immediately starting an **Opposition** with the character of their choice(see **ii. Opposition**). Other characters in the scene may join in. This is used both for social oppositions – like a spirited debate or freestyle rap battle – as well as the more obvious sort – hitting people with swords and so on.

## 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 action to **Stand Up** and negate this status.

## g. Situational Rules

### Ejection

If a player is removed from a scene against their will (like falling off a train, or being knocked out and kidnapped), they do not choose when to next **Appear**. Instead, the player responsible for their **Ejection** may choose when to place them in the scene, and what state (tied up, in a cell, etc.).

### Fighting on Moving Objects

Sometimes you've just got to hit someone, and they happen to be standing on top of a rushing train car. Characters atop moving objects play one fewer card on all draws as they devote some attention to staying upright. If a character is **Knocked Down** while atop a moving object, they must immediately make an **Athletics Fate Draw** off of **Mind** or risk falling off, causing them to be **Ejected** from the scene.

### 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.

If a character decides to attempt to destroy an item on the ground, they may deal damage to it with an attack draw like normal – the weapon has a **Power Pool** equal to its **damage bonus x 5** before breaking, and naturally plays no defensive cards.

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

### Rewards

In one way or another, rewards are the reason we do most of the things we do, at the core of many of our motivations. During a game of **Bastards**, **Rewards** are the stakes, generally the recipient of whom is determined by the result of an **Opposition** or completion of an **Objective**.

**Objectives** are gained by use of specific actions (see: **Consult**) or by simple declaration of intent. This should be a clearly achievable action or goal – like stealing a boat or finding your father's murderer. Players should use **Consensus – 1** to determine the opposition (if any) to any given an **Objective**. If achieved, the character gains an appropriate reward also determined by **Consensus – 1** – it could be anything from the vehicle sought, to a cache of long-lost treasure, ranks of **Good(or Bad)**

**Reputation**, a clue to further mystery and thus another **Objective**, points of **Intrigue**, simple cash or a reunion with a supposedly dead sibling. Players should look to the time, resources, and thought involved in accomplishing the **Objective** and add related rewards that they feel the character deserves based on their actions.

**Intrigue** is a frequent reward from completing **Social Oppositions** or **Objectives**. It is dirt on other characters involved in the proceedings, known peculiarities, embarrassing secrets, or simply gossip. A point of **Intrigue** may be spent to add a card to a single social draw against the related character(s).

4. The Charts
  - i. Weapons
  - ii. Armor
  - iii. Stuff and what it costs
5. Followers, Henchmen, and Advanced 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**.

#### **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. Extras forced to use a skill use their **Power Rating** for its rank. When an opponent deals damage to a group of **Extras**, they lose 1 member for every 5 points of difference (so if the opponent plays cards totaling 15, 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 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 add 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 5, then by the number of players.



**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, Capital, Landed, Vehicle**

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 generally 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**. Due to their size and huge reach, **Clubs** monsters attack every character in their melee range when they use a melee attack.

**Spades:** **Spades** monsters are humanoid, always identifiable by the long putrid stringy mass of seaweed topping their head and likely covering their shoulders and hips as well. Their skin is rubberly and tough in some way, some particularly terrifying examples possessing shark skin or thick scales. Long dead sea critters are often lodged in the mass of "hair", adding to the creature's **Aroma**. The **Aroma** of a **Spades** monster ranges from rancid meat disgusting to sickeningly overbearingly sweet, with strong notes of a plethora of packed-in molds. Every other turn it has a painful effect on all characters out to Medium range from the beast, requiring a successful **Guts** draw off of **Spirit** at **Difficulty + 1** to resist. Those that fail this draw lose their action this turn, often vomiting, trying desperately to hold their breath, or crying uncontrollably. **Spades** monsters are always **Aquatic**, but this does not mean character's are safe inland – Monsters are well known to cause and ride huge tidal waves, hurricanes, and severe storms that can carry them right to, as it were, your character's doorstep. These monsters will prioritize retreat if at 10 **PP** or below, using the **Flee** action at the beginning of the next turn. 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 probiscus as a natural melee weapon. Attacks with the probiscus 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 add 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. These monsters will prioritize retreat if at 10 **PP** or below, using the **Flee** action at the beginning of the next turn. Characters targeted by physical attacks made by **Diamonds** monsters use their **Luck** for their **Reflexive Defense** instead of **Mind**. 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.

**Joker:** The monster is a **Automaton** that has lost its reasoning functions. Or reasoned that humanity must be destroyed. Either way, it gains the **Construct Advantage**, the **Sentient Advantage**, and may have **Advantages** of any suit(including **Automaton Advantages**, minus: ). These rogue machines frequently repair and rebuild themselves, resulting in a heavy armor plating that reduces damage equal to the monster's **PR**. Unlike normal **Automatons**, these monsters cannot be controlled by manipulation of their **Arcanum Spring**. The monsters cannot have the **Spellcaster Advantage**.

**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**.

**The Worst Part:** If a monster kills a **Fated**, that **Fated** is in for a terrible ride. Unless the body is burned, the dead character will rise again in 24 hours, becoming a monster of their suit and keeping all of their **Skills**, **Traits**, and **Disadvantages**. Incompatible **Advantages**(listed above) are lost but the rest are kept, and the new monster gains all of the **Advantages** a monster of its **Suit** is entitled to – including this one. Characters that go through this process always count as **Hostile NPCs** and will always **Appear** at **The End** if left alive. Their memories seem to be somewhat intact, and it is not uncommon for them to curse their former allies, attempt to trick them into coming closer, or beg for release. **Construct** monsters do not gain this **Advantage**.

**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.

## Advanced Rules

### Settings

In addition to a basic type(outlined above), players may choose to give their settings extra definition through the use of **Qualities**. These are broadly defined characteristics that add to the way the game plays while in the defined city, dungeon, or sea route. **Qualities** add both positive and negative effects, and players are free to add as many as the group can agree on – but too many can difficult to remember and ultimately detract from the experience, so be judicious.

### Advanced

#### Classic

#### Clean

#### Confusing Layout

#### Crowded

**Filthy**

**Good Times**

**Martial Law**

**Place of Ill Repute**

**Port**

**Severe Deficit**

**Thought Out**

**Understaffed**

## **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**

### **Kranos**

**Kranos** is Nature, personified. It is his hand that brings bounty during harvest season, his judgment that brings droughts, and his wrath that creates mountains and earthquakes. Kranos is generally depicted as the herder of the particularly stubborn goat known as humanity, complete with a huge straw hat concealing his eyes, crude sandals on his weathered knobby feet, and a weighty crook made of oak. He selects those of his herd that are exceptional, mankind's most impressive, and without care throws them to the wolves. The **Fated** tied to Kranos proves themselves early on, and reap a lifetime of struggle for their efforts – but through struggle comes improvement. Followers of Kranos

become masters of their bodies, ready to meet any challenge life can find for them. When these wayward goats return to Kranos, the blood of wolves on their horns, he simply smiles. “That’ll do.”

Of course, it is ultimately Kranos' gentle, if forcible hand that gets humanity's collective head unstuck from the fences of progress. Nature thus far has managed to recover from the damage the newly industrial human race has wrought. Kranos, however, has his eyes on the long term, and his plays in the Great Game clearly indicate a desire to preserve the balance of nature – without mankind, if necessary.

**Kranos** appears to his followers in their dreams after some serious emergency, disaster, or near-death experience. Some claim to have gone so far as to die, only to feel the heavy smack of hard oak on their forehead and told, in soft but authoritative tones, “Live!” Those that have felt his touch know nothing but to give their all, even if they must test their body's limits. There are tales of those that were caught in collapsed buildings, or cave-ins, that claw themselves out of the wreckage two days after they'd be declared dead. Mothers that lift fallen wagons off of their children. These are the people that Kranos favors, and they are intensely aware of it.

**Aiyala**

**Loressa**

**Esme**

ii. Magic

**Transmogrify**

**Arcana**

**Vitalize**

**Fortunes**

a. Spellcaster Advantages

b. Spells

iii. Setting-specific Advantages

iv. Advantages for High XP Play

v. **The World of Korssent**

15<sup>2</sup> countries – Present Year 1855, just at the beginning of its Industrial Revolution. A long-held aristocracy of magic users attempt to hold on to their nobility and benefits as technology-proficient commoners and merchants began to gain sway and power in their communities.

**Eastern Hemisphere**

Dufraine -Remains of huge expansionist empire modeled off of post-Louis Napoleon Bonaparte France. The empire fell 2 years ago, Chauvaille III's coup failed, and there is little functional large-scale government. Dufraine is beset by foreign interests in economic and territorial terms,

with a few cities hanging on through interim revolutionary socialist governments floundering in poor economic times. Dufraine is where the real bastarding is taking place, and the core book will reflect this emphasis, with the other countries getting only basic information, with supplements to flesh them out to the same degree later.

Scyllia – Italy, but instead of kicking the Muslims out, they came to better terms and incorporated them into their society, resulting in a highly learned culture of scholars, arcanists, philosophers, artists, inventors, and teachers, a natural meeting place for those tied to **Spades**.

Midgart – Recently unified Germanic Territories, but under Austria-Hungary's dual monarchy sort of government. Highly religious and the most numerous of **Loressa's** followers. **Hearts**.

Fresia – Based on India, a land with countless myths, legends, mysteries and enigmas resulting in a variety of local faiths, with their own heroes and villains, often sharing names but little else with the tales of neighboring villages' faith. A place blessed with fertile land for the most part but a dire shortage of metals, meaning many in the nation get by with bronze even in this age, lacking the money for imported iron or steel. An innovative people, always able to work around a problem and search out alternative methods, flexible thinkers that don't sweat the small stuff. The people of Fresia generally tie their faith to **Esme**, and thus **Diamonds**.

Quinok – Egypt in the opposite climate, that of Russia. Ancient and advanced civilization tied to a central river and its attached arable land. The people of Quinok are hearty, determined people, self-motivated to a fault and honest. They can, however, but a bit forceful. **Clubs**.

Eurston – Turkey at the height of the Ottoman period.

Hamash – Israel during the early settlement period. At war with Krestfalo, because...

Krestfalo – Palestine during said invasion period. Claim native inheritance of the land and thus don't appreciate the sudden influx of Hamashis and their imported rifles.

Arcadia – Greece, some 800 years after Rome fell. Threatened by expansionist Eurston, but nonetheless a bastion of democratic thought and history.

## Western Hemisphere

Indigenous Nations of the Northern Continent

Indigenous Nations of the Southern Continent

Gaell

Chalpas

Havana

Kossov Union

3. Dealer's

4. Bestiary

5. Layout
6. Examples for everything(preferably in comics form<sup>3</sup>)

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

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

### **Release 1.0**

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<sup>3</sup> Time permitting.