

KINGDOM

a role-playing game about communities, by Ben Robbins



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Dedicated to my Mother, Carole Robbins,
who taught me to always look at things from the
other person's point of view even when I really
didn't want to.

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WHAT IS A KINGDOM?

Kingdoms Are All Around Us...

Groups are stronger than individuals. In a Kingdom, we can work together to do great things.

But we may not agree what path our Kingdom should take or what it should stand for. Can your vision of the Kingdom work with mine? Can everybody get what they want?

Because if you're part of the Kingdom, it makes demands on you too. You're pressured to do what it thinks is right. The question becomes: do you change the Kingdom or does the Kingdom change you?

We Make Our Kingdom Together

A "Kingdom" is the game term for the community or organization that is the focus of our game. Any kind of community works, and we'll decide what kind of Kingdom we want to play together. Our Kingdom could be...

- ... a frontier town in the Old West
- ... a colony ship crawling towards a distant star
- ... or the teachers and students of Sunnybrook Elementary School

Each of us will play a character who is part of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is what ties our characters together. It's the center of all our lives.

And Watch It Burn

The game is about seeing what happens to the Kingdom and the people in it. How the characters change the Kingdom and how it changes them.

As players, we all have equal authority to influence the game. It's up to each of us to push the Kingdom in directions we find interesting.

What will our Kingdom do? What will it become? Will it burn or flourish? Will it stay true to its ideals—our ideals—or will it become some twisted shadow of our dreams?

The Kingdom's fate is in our hands.

(take turns reading this page aloud)

What Do You Need To Play?

Kingdom works with two to five people, but three or four is best—particularly if you are playing it for the first time. There are special instructions in the back of the book for playing with only two players.

You need:

- ◆ The rules you are reading right now.
- ◆ A character sheet and all three Role sheets for each player.
- ◆ One blank sheet of paper and about ten index cards.
- ◆ Pencils or pens.
- ◆ A token to show whose turn it is. I use a chess piece, but you could write “current player” on an index card.

If you don't have character sheets and Role sheets, you can write your character on a blank sheet of paper and put your character name and Role on folded index cards so other players can see them.

You'll want at least three or four hours to play. You can play a single session or return to the same Kingdom for multiple games, exploring how the characters grow and change or even how later generations keep the Kingdom going.

Learning the Game

At least one person should read the rules ahead of time and help teach everyone else how to play.

The rules are written so that you can read sections aloud instead of trying to explain them in your own words. Black pages with paragraphs of white text are intended to be read aloud by the group. The first (on the preceding page) introduces the concept of the game. The second (at the beginning of the Play chapter) describes how to play the game.

There are more tips for teaching Kingdom in the back of the book.



STARTING A NEW GAME

Make the Kingdom

Follow these steps to create your Kingdom together. Write your answers on a blank piece of paper so all the players can refer to it while you play.

Step 1: What is your Kingdom?

Brainstorm a concept for your Kingdom. It can be any community or any group of people with a common cause or shared identity. Give your Kingdom a name.

Cactus Flats is a frontier town in the Wild West. There are ranchers, rustlers and gunslingers. The Sheriff wears a badge, but law mostly comes from the barrel of a gun.

Pick a Kingdom that you want to see make decisions and confront difficult choices. Your Kingdom is what ties the game together, so make sure you pick something everyone is interested in.

Your Kingdom should include at least twenty or thirty people so that it is larger than just the characters you play, but there is no upper limit. A Kingdom could have millions of people.

If you want to get started quickly, you can use one of the Kingdom seeds in the back of the book.

Step 2: Threats

Brainstorm three threats to the Kingdom. These are external or internal forces or pressures that would upset the status quo. They may be brewing or looming, but they aren't actively endangering the Kingdom yet. They are on the horizon. They may never materialize.

The hospital is losing money. There are malpractice lawsuits. Good doctors are going to other hospitals.

The peasants are unhappy and could revolt. There's a bellicose neighbor to the east who could invade. A poor crop has raised the specter of famine.

It is best to have a mix of threats. If you already have two threats about external problems, consider making your third threat something inside the Kingdom.

Threats get everyone on the same page about what the Kingdom is worried about when the game begins, but they are only a starting point. They may give you ideas for trouble to introduce during play, but they may not be the real problems you wind up confronting.

Step 3: Locations

Each player describes two places in the Kingdom where characters are likely to be found and to interact. This will give you places to role-play later on and help everyone visualize the Kingdom.

Players can go in any order. Each player should come up with one location. Once everyone has made one, each player goes again and makes a second.

Locations in our feudal nation include the “windswept battlements overlooking the sea”, the “old chapel in the great keep” and “deep in the mossy forest where the nobles hunt stag.”

Give the locations names that people in the Kingdom would use so you can refer to them when you role-play.

Cactus Flats

a frontier town in the Wild West

Threats

- 1) Outlaws and lowlifes have been drifting into town.
- 2) Railroad is not coming thru our town after all.
- 3) Drought. A long dry spell has made the rivers run low, making it harder to water cattle or crops.

Locations

- 1) Taproom of the Old Saloon
- 2) Boot Hill, the graveyard
- 3) Sheriff's office & jail cell
- 4) Hanging Tree, lonely oak south of town
- 5) On the dry banks of the Cahoga River
- 6) Treacher's Canyon, surrounding the road north to Fort Brook
- 7) Honest Cartwright's dry goods
- 8) Abandoned mission on the edge of town, its adobe walls crumbling

Make Your Characters

Each player creates a character they will use to explore the fate of the Kingdom. Follow these steps to make your character:

- 1) Role
- 2) Character concept
- 3) Locations
- 4) Wish or Fear
- 5) Issue
- 6) Bond

Complete each step together. Don't skip ahead. Discuss your choices with the other players so that they understand your character and you understand theirs. Your goal is to make an ensemble of characters who can interact in interesting ways.

Step 1: What is your Role?

There are three Roles that describe a character's place in the Kingdom. They are a critical part of the game. Pick one of these as the starting point for your character.

POWER

You have authority over the Kingdom. You decide what the Kingdom does and what it doesn't do.

PERSPECTIVE

You understand the Kingdom, both its merits and flaws. You can foresee the consequences of the decisions the Kingdom makes.

TOUCHSTONE

You reflect the desires of the people of the Kingdom. Your attitudes show us what the populace wants and how they are reacting to what is happening.

Players can pick any combination of Roles so long as everyone does not pick the same Role.

The Role you pick describes your character at the start of the game, but during play you can switch to a different Role if your character's nature or situation changes. Your decision now does not limit your choices later on.

You can only have one Role at a time. When you change to a new Role, you lose your old one.

Step 2: Who are you?

Each player should come up with an idea for their character. Your description should include:

- ◆ What do you do in the Kingdom? What's your job? What are your duties?
- ◆ What do you look like? Man or woman, young or old?

Your character must be part of the Kingdom and all the characters must be able to interact with each other, even if they come from very different circumstances.

Pick a concept that fits the Role you choose. Some Roles might seem to have obvious fits (the president has Power, the advisor has Perspective), but you can also pick less obvious combinations: the weak king who understands his people (Touchstone), the vagrant who leads the mob (Power), the loyal general who obeys orders even when he knows it's bad for his country (Perspective).

Do not make a character who doesn't care about the Kingdom or who would be unaffected by the vicissitudes of the Kingdom. That's against the rules. Plus you won't have any fun. You can make a character who hates being a part of the Kingdom, but simply walking away should not be an option. You must be able to explain why they could not or would not leave. If you think another player has made a character who is not solidly part of the Kingdom, point it out to them.

Izun Runeskull is part of the circle of sorcerers at World's End. He could just change into a crow and fly off, but he is sworn to protect the Balance of magic. He can't just walk (or fly) away.

An accountant at Rosewater International might hate the company, but not have any chance of getting a job somewhere else right now. She's stuck.

If you don't have an idea, start by thinking about what kind of person in the Kingdom would have your Role. Kick around ideas and brainstorm with the other players.

Step 3: Locations. Where are you found?

Each player picks two places where their character would be found from the list of Kingdom locations. Say what you do in these locations or why you picked them. You are telling the other players that these are good places to have a scene with your character.

Try to pick at least one location that no other character has, but don't worry if you don't. Feel free to add new locations if you need them. Write your character name next to the locations you pick, for easy reference.

The hospital director is likely to be in his office, but the player chooses the cafeteria because that feels like a more interesting place to have encounters with other characters.

Step 4: Wish or Fear?

State either a wish or a fear your character has about the Kingdom's future. A wish is something you hope the Kingdom will do or become. A fear is something you dread.

Pick something that you want to explore in play. Your choice tells the other players what issues you want to see the Kingdom confront, whether that's building towards something wonderful or fighting to prevent something terrible.

Hrotmund, Laird of the Ironwolf Clan, fears that the people will turn away from the old gods and embrace the religion the missionaries spread. Hrotmund doesn't want this to happen, but Hrotmund's player is waving a big flag at the other players saying "I want to see this conflict in the game!"

No two characters can have the exact same wish or fear. You are allowed to have a wish that is exactly the same as someone else's fear or vice versa.

Your wish or fear cannot be about a specific character. If you mention any specific person, your wish or fear is probably invalid.

"I wish to be the CEO" or "I wish to be rich" are both illegal because they're about you, not the Kingdom. "I wish the Kingdom would make tons of money" is a perfectly good wish even if you're wishing it because your character wants to be rich.

Fearing that Lord Varney will take the crown is a bad fear because it is about a specific character. But fearing that the Kingdom will follow a depraved and weak leader works great because it's general.

Deciding whether to pick a wish or fear shows whether your character is hopeful or fearful. A character with a wish is hopeful, looking forward to a positive change, while a character with a fear dreads something they don't want to come to pass.

Step 5: Issue. What's your problem?

Name a personal issue that holds your character back. It could be a personality flaw or a difficult personal relationship. Pick something you are interested in playing. Your character would probably be happy to be rid of their issue, but as a player it should interest you.

Father Jacobi doubts his faith.

The editor of the Daily Sentinel has a drinking problem.

Your issue is not about outside forces stopping you. This is something about you that sabotages you. If it's a relationship, it's a relationship you cannot bring yourself to sever even if that would be best for you.

*Sheriff Lowe has a good-for-nothing older brother, Gabe.
No matter how many mistakes Gabe makes, Lowe can't
bring himself to turn his back on him.*

Your issue will be grist for the mill while you play. It gives everyone at the table insight into what your character is about and tells them what problems you are interested in having your character confront.

Step 6: Bond. What is your relationship?

Describe your connection to the character to your left. It can be a personal relationship or the way your duties in the Kingdom require you to interact. It could be a friendly relationship or it could put you at odds. What do you need from them? Discuss it with the other player to make sure it makes sense.

Sheriff Lowe is to the left of Doc Wallace. The old doctor confides in the lawman and has admitted his own shameful outlaw past. He needs the Sheriff to keep his past a secret and to give him absolution for his youthful misdeeds.

The player to your right will also create a bond with you, so you will have connections to two characters.

After making your character, if a different Role seems like a better fit, you can switch right now. Otherwise, you're ready to play!

Sheriff Lowe

NAME _____

NAME _____

Sheriff Lowe

Your KINGDOM: Cactus Flats

POWER

You are in charge. You decide what the Kingdom does.

PERSPECTIVE

You understand the Kingdom. You can foresee consequences.

TOUCHSTONE

You reflect the people of the Kingdom. They feel the way you do.

Your ROLE determines what you can do. Circle one. You can change later on.

Pick other details about your character that you want to see in the game. Complete each step together.

WHO ARE YOU?

Easygoing town Sheriff, keeps the peace, doesn't want trouble in his town

BOND

Duty or Relationship

Marsden:
Sheriff needs
the wealthy
cattle-baron to
keep his ranch-
hands in line

Create a Bond with the
character to your left

WISH or FEAR

I wish / fear the Kingdom will... (circle one)

... become a nice quiet town
where folks can live in peace

ISSUE

What flaw or relationship holds you back?

Gabe, his good-for-nothin' brother

BOND

Duty or Relationship

Doc Wallace:
Friend, Sheriff
knows about
Doc's outlaw
past

Write down the Bond created
by the player to your right

LOCATIONS

Sheriff's office

Honest Cartwright's dry goods

Doc Wallace

NAME _____

NAME _____

Doc Wallace

Your KINGDOM: Cactus Flats

POWER

You are in charge. You decide what the Kingdom does.

PERSPECTIVE

You understand the Kingdom. You can foresee consequences.

TOUCHSTONE

You reflect the people of the Kingdom. They feel the way you do.

Your ROLE determines what you can do. Circle one. You can change later on.

Pick other details about your character that you want to see in the game. Complete each step together.

WHO ARE YOU?

Old town doctor, secretly wanted for murder he committed decades ago when he rode with outlaws

BOND

Duty or Relationship

Sheriff Lowe:
Friend.
Confided his outlaw past,
needs him to keep it a secret.

Create a Bond with the character to your left

WISH or FEAR

I wish / fear the Kingdom will... (circle one)

... get too civilized and no longer be a good place for a man to hide from his past

ISSUE

What flaw or relationship holds you back?

Haunted by his outlaw past,
afraid it will catch up with him

BOND

Duty or Relationship

Father Jacobi:
Castigates Doc for "consorting with sinners"
(treating harlots and outlaws)

Write down the Bond created by the player to your right

LOCATIONS

Taproom of the Old Saloon

"Boot Hill" graveyard



PLAYING THE GAME

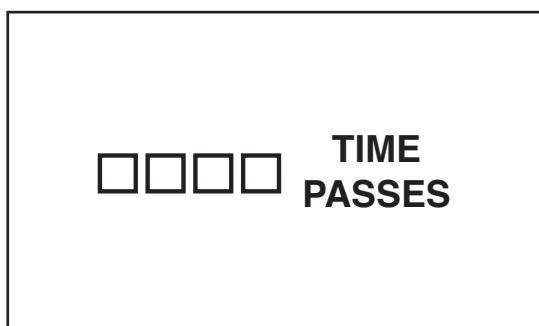
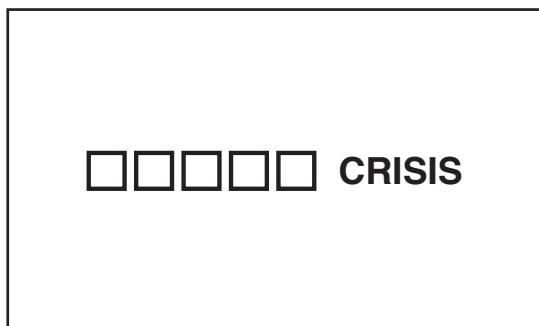
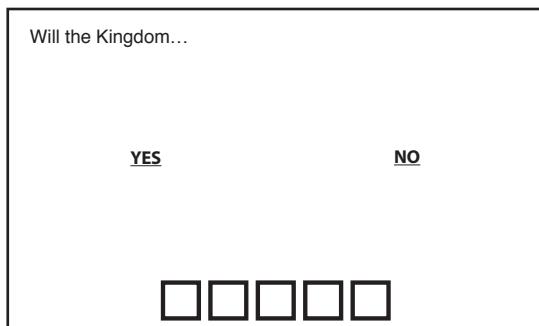
Starting the Game

Each player should fold their character sheet and Role reference sheet so that the other players can see their name and Role. Put your Kingdom sheet with your Threats and Locations in the middle of the table where everyone can refer to it.

Set out three blank index cards:

- ◆ Write **Time Passes** on one card and draw a line of checkboxes *equal* to the number of players.
- ◆ Write **Crisis** on another card and draw a line of checkboxes *one greater* than the number of players.
- ◆ The third card will be your first **Crossroad**. We don't know what the Crossroad is yet, so just write "Will the Kingdom..." in small letters along the top. Leave space for the question, then make Yes and No columns and draw a line of checkboxes *one greater* than the number of players along the bottom.

Starting cards for a four-player game:



Kingdom in a Nutshell

*Read these two pages aloud. It is an overview of how the entire game is played.
Read one column and then pass it to the next person to continue.*

Crossroads

We've got our Kingdom and we've got our characters. Now we're going to play to see how our characters shape the Kingdom and how the Kingdom shapes them.

As players, we're going to confront our Kingdom (and our characters) with Crossroads: critical decisions the Kingdom must make, decisions that may change the Kingdom forever. Does the Kingdom invade its neighbor? Does it outlaw the new religion?

Crossroads are the major arcs of our game. They are the chapters of the story we're making. It's our job to make Crossroads that push the Kingdom and the characters into territory that interests us. Never make a Crossroad that doesn't interest you! You might even introduce a Crossroad that your character dreads, but that you think would be interesting.

Scenes & Cards

Before we see the final decision the Kingdom makes about the Crossroad, we'll take turns creating scenes and role-playing them together. We'll explore the Crossroad and see what our characters think and do about it. We might find out the situation is a lot more complicated than we thought.

Each of the three cards on the table is a countdown. On your turn you get to pick which to check and move closer to completion. When all the boxes on a card are checked, we'll pause and play to see what happens.

[point to each card as you describe it]

- ◆ When all the boxes on the **Crossroad** are full, we play to see what choice the Kingdom makes and what the consequences are.
- ◆ When all the boxes on the **Crisis** card are full, we'll see whether the Kingdom survives the Crisis or is destroyed. Characters may flee the Kingdom.
- ◆ When all the boxes on the **Time Passes** card are full, there is a break in the action when our characters can rest and reflect. Months or years will pass.

When we finish a card, we start a new one.

Roles

Each Role gives you a different way to influence the Kingdom and the Crossroad:

- ◆ **Perspective:** You can predict the consequences of picking different sides of the Crossroad. It's your job to show us what's really at stake.
- ◆ **Touchstone:** You decide how the people of the Kingdom feel and what they want. You can instantly define the Kingdom and show us how the people react to what is happening.
- ◆ **Power:** After seeing those consequences and hearing what the people want, you get to decide what the Kingdom actually does.

That doesn't seem fair, does it? Only Power gets to decide what the Kingdom does? No, it isn't fair, but it might be balanced. Power makes the choice, but Perspective and Touchstone determine the consequences.

Challenge & Overthrow

Eventually someone is going to do something to the Kingdom that you don't like. You can do something about it:

- ◆ You can **Change your Role** if you want a different voice in the Kingdom or your old Role doesn't seem like a good fit anymore.
- ◆ You can **Challenge** another character to stop something they do or establish. If Power arrests someone, bust them out of jail. If Touchstone shows that the people are angry, give a speech to calm the mob.
- ◆ But if Challenging them isn't enough—if you want to stop what another character is doing with their Role entirely—you can **Overthrow** them and take their Role for yourself. Storm the capitol and take away their Power.

These options are listed at the bottom of your Role card.

But be warned: nothing can take a player out of the game. A character you usurp just picks a different Role and keeps influencing the Kingdom in a different way. Take away someone's Power and they might return as Perspective and predict a dire future...

(end reading aloud)

Overview of Play

Choose one player to go first and begin the game. This player will introduce the first Crossroad confronting our Kingdom and role-play the first scene. Give them the current player token.

On your turn, follow these steps. Each is explained in detail later on.

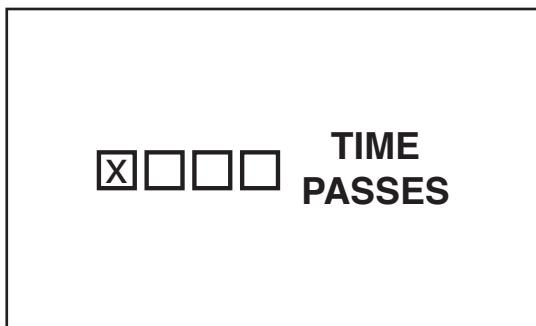
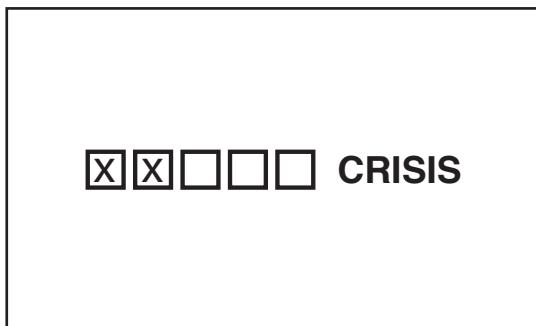
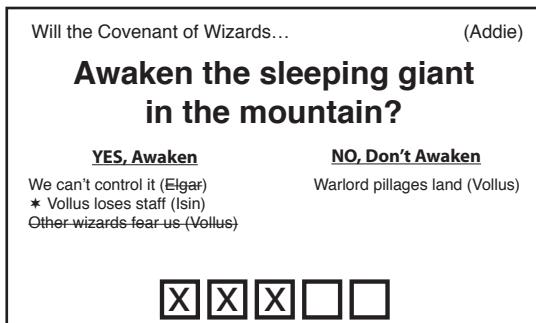
- 1) If there is no Crossroad, introduce one: But if you have already made a Crossroad and someone else has not, the nearest left-hand player who has not made a Crossroad makes one instead. Then you continue your turn.
- 2) Play a Scene: Make a scene focusing on what your character thinks or does about the Crossroad. Role-play together.
- 3) Reactions: Any player can briefly narrate how their character reacts to the scene. It must be a direct reaction to what just happened. Each player can make one and use it to do or show one thing.

Anyone in a scene or reaction can use their Role to influence the Crossroad: Perspective makes predictions, Touchstone shows what the people of the Kingdom feel, Power decides what the Kingdom does. If your Role does not fit you anymore, you can Change it. Characters can also Challenge to stop something another character did or established or Overthrow to take away another character's Role.

- 4) Advance a card: After your scene, pick which card you want to move closer to completion. Checking a Crossroad box is the default, but you can check Crisis if you think the Kingdom is in trouble or Time Passes to draw out the Crossroad and move closer to a break in the action.
- 5) Resolve cards that are full: If you checked the last box on a card, stop and resolve it before the next player takes their turn. If more than one card is full, resolve each one in this order: Crossroad, Crisis, then Time Passes.
- 6) Next player: Pass the current player token to the person to your left (clockwise). They go next. Start again from the top.

That's the whole game. Keep repeating until your Kingdom becomes a paradise on Earth, collapses in flames or everyone has to go home.

Example cards after several turns:



Crossroad

A Crossroad is an important decision the Kingdom must make. It is a fork in the road: will the Kingdom go one way or the other? The decision may change the Kingdom forever, for better or worse.

When a Crossroad is introduced, it is only a question. We won't know which choice the Kingdom is going to make until we've played some scenes and explored it.

A Crossroad must be something the Kingdom does or decides, not something that is done to the Kingdom. The Crossroad may be a reaction to outside forces or situations, but the question is always about what the Kingdom chooses.

Deciding whether or not the Kingdom is invaded by barbarians is not a valid Crossroad. Deciding whether to bribe the attacking barbarians is.

Each Crossroad is a major arc in the story of your Kingdom. It is the next chapter you are going to explore. The Crossroads you introduce determine what kind of story you are going to play. As the game continues, each player will get to introduce Crossroads they want the Kingdom to confront.

You can introduce Crossroads that could reverse previous decisions the Kingdom made, but you can never erase what has already happened.

A previous Crossroad enslaved the nomadic tribes of the desert and put them to work building monuments to the Sun God. A new Crossroad could set them free, but it can't undo the fact that they were slaves. They are unlikely to forget the years they spent toiling for Pharaoh...

There is always exactly one Crossroad in play. After the Crossroad is resolved and we find out what the Kingdom does, a new Crossroad is introduced.

Make Crossroads That Matter to You

Interesting Crossroads are essential to the success of your game. There is no point introducing a Crossroad if you don't care about it or if it doesn't interest you. Ask yourself: Do you care how this Crossroad will turn out? Will the other players care?

Need a good idea for a Crossroad? Look at a character's Wish or Fear (your own or another player's) and make a Crossroad that puts the Kingdom right on the path that character wants or dreads. Play to see what they'll do to make it happen or to stop it.

Making Stuff Up

When you create a Crossroad, you are allowed to invent situations and details the Kingdom needs to confront. Dream up droughts, attacking armies or fiscal crises. Just don't decide what the Kingdom does about it yet: that's what you find out in play when you resolve the Crossroad.

Introducing a Crossroad

Players take turns making Crossroads. If the current player already made a Crossroad, the next player who has not made one yet does so instead. Once every player has made a Crossroad, the count resets and you start again.

If you do not have a good idea for a Crossroad, you may pass and let the next player make one instead. You are still the current player so you make the next scene. But if everyone except you has already made a Crossroad this time around, you must take your turn and make one.

To make a Crossroad, follow these steps:

- 1) State the Question: Pose a simple Yes or No question about something the Kingdom may do, usually starting with "Will the Kingdom..." Don't go into detail yet.

Will Cactus Flats outlaw liquor?

Will the Isle of Sorcery allow the Sun-tribe refugees to settle here?

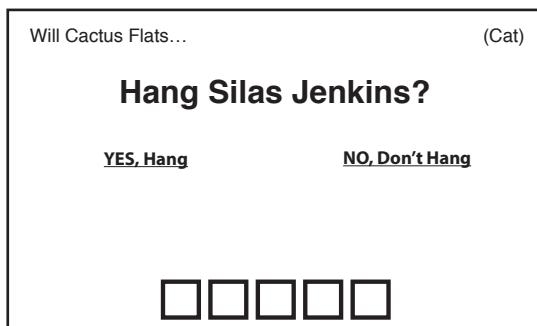
- 2) Check Interest: Ask the other players if this Crossroad interests them. Is it something they want to explore? If not, scratch your idea and try again. Not everyone will be excited by every Crossroad, but at least a few players (including yourself) should be interested. You can ask for input, but the final decision about what Crossroad to introduce belongs to you.
- 3) Paint the Picture: Now that you're committed to the Crossroad, describe why this decision is confronting the Kingdom. What is happening? A good option is to describe the situation or problem that the Crossroad is an answer or response to. Paint a clear picture.

Do not specify the consequences of choosing Yes or No. Consequences emerge during play. Do not include any main characters in your description.

Write the Crossroad on an index card with columns for Yes and No. Along the bottom draw a line of boxes *one greater* than the number of players. Write your name in the upper right corner so you know who made each Crossroad.

The Yes and No columns are where you will write down the consequences of choosing either outcome. As you play, Perspective characters can make predictions and Power characters can give orders for what will happen if either choice is picked.

Instead of writing just Yes and No, it can be useful to add labels that summarize the choices described in the Crossroad ("Yes, attack" and "No, don't attack"). That lets you see the result of each choice at a glance and helps avoid confusion.



You are not allowed to include consequences as part of introducing a Crossroad. Saying "and if we don't attack we'll be invaded" as part of your Crossroad is illegal. Consequences are added later when Perspective characters make predictions. When you paint the picture, you can describe things that have happened to explain why the Crossroad is confronting us ("the tribes have been attacking our borders"), but do not include definite results.

Do not include any main characters in your description of the Crossroad, not even yourself. We will see how the characters are involved as we play scenes. The Crossroad is bigger than the characters: even if they all vanished, the Kingdom would still be faced with this decision.

The Crossroad must be something the characters know about before the first scene is played, not something they find out about during play. Describe the Crossroad so it makes sense for all of the characters to already know that this decision is confronting the Kingdom.

No one is allowed to answer a Crossroad prematurely. Even if all the characters are in agreement and the answer seems obvious, we only resolve the Crossroad once all the boxes are checked. Things may happen in play that make the decision harder than we thought.

EXAMPLE: MAKING A CROSSROAD

Our Kingdom is a Roman Legion in foreign lands far from home, surrounded by hostile tribes and kings. The last Crossroad was just resolved, so the current player proposes a new one:

"Does the Legion put everyone in the town to the sword?"

The current player checks to see if the other players are interested in this idea. One character is weary of bloodshed and has been advocating for making peace with the barbarians. So even though this may be bad news for the character, the player is excited to explore it. Everyone else is thinks it could turn out to be interesting too, so they give it the thumbs-up.

Now that the idea is approved, the player making the Crossroad paints the picture:

"The Legion has made its way through the mountain passes constantly harassed by barbarian skirmishers. Now we've descended into the forest valleys where an allied tribe, the Veteri, dwell.

"But when we sent heralds ahead to tell them of our approach and remind them of their oaths to the Roman people, the Veteri hid behind their walls and refused to honor their promises. They fired arrows at our heralds to drive them off, killing one Centurion. The rest of the delegation bore him back on his shield and his bloody corpse was laid before the assembled soldiers.

"Even weakened by our many battles, there is no doubt the Legion could conquer the town. Do we make an example of them to teach all barbarians the cost of treachery against Rome?"

The Crossroad maker can't set consequences, but he can certainly describe intentions like striking fear into the hearts of the other tribes in the area. But is that what will actually happen if the town is sacked? That's up to Perspective to predict. The Crossroad maker also implied that conquering the town was something the Legion

could accomplish, but that was already a given: since the question is whether the Legion puts the townsfolk to the sword, it must be something the Legion could do.

The Crossroad is ready to go, so he writes the question down on the card and labels the two possible outcomes "Yes, slaughter" and "No, spare", then writes his name in the corner so we know he made the Crossroad.

Roles

Your Role is both a description of your character's place in the Kingdom and the definition of what you can do as a player to affect the game.

You only ever have one Role at a time: you are always either Perspective, Touchstone or Power. Only main characters have Roles. There are lots of other people in the Kingdom, but only the main characters of the players have this influence.

Each Role gives you very different ways to influence the Crossroad and the Kingdom. Each has its strengths but also lacks exactly what the other Roles have:

- ◆ **Power** characters decide what happens, but they can't control what the people want or foresee the consequences of their decisions.
- ◆ **Perspective** characters can see the truth, but they can't guarantee that anyone else recognizes it or does the right thing.
- ◆ **Touchstone** characters show us how the people feel, but they can't give the people what they want or make sure those desires don't have terrible consequences.

Even when you aren't using the rules to do something with your Role, your Role tells us who your character is: a Perspective character has insight, a Power character is in charge, and a Touchstone is a normal person of the Kingdom. Role-play your Role.

More than one character can have the same Role at the same time. You may completely disagree with other characters who have the same Role.

Want to get something done, but don't have the Role you need and don't feel like you're ready to change (or just plain don't want to get your hands dirty)? Role-play asking another character for help. Get a Power character to arrest someone for you. Ask a Perspective character if the Kingdom can win the war. Convince a Touchstone character that the revolution is a good idea.

If you feel like you should be playing your character in a way that doesn't match your Role, it is probably time to switch to a different one.

PERSPECTIVE

When you have Perspective, you understand the Kingdom, both its merits and flaws. You can foresee the consequences of decisions the Kingdom makes. You can see the truth, whether or not anyone else believes you.

When you're in a Scene or Reaction...

You can **predict** the consequences of the Crossroad. Pick either Yes or No, then declare something that will happen if that outcome is chosen. The prediction can be good or bad for the Kingdom as you wish. Make predictions about the Kingdom, not specific characters.

The Crossroad is "Does the colony ration food?" A Perspective player adds a prediction on the No side: "Some people starve." So if the colony decides not to ration food, some people will starve. A different Perspective player adds a Yes prediction: "Riots break out." So if food is rationed, there are riots. If it isn't, some people will starve.

Write the prediction in the Yes or No column of the Crossroad card, followed by your character's name so everyone know who controls it. There can be any number of predictions on a Crossroad.

When a Crossroad is resolved...

You decide if your prediction comes true. Predictions are accurate by default, but things may have changed enough that you no longer think it should happen.

The truth is not your fault. The Perspective character is seeing the truth, not making it happen, even though you as a player are. A player with Perspective can intentionally introduce catastrophic predictions all while having their character remain completely innocent or even horrified at the possibilities. You can intentionally make predictions you know other characters will want to stop just to see how far they will go to fix them. Will they heed your warning or ignore you at their peril?

If someone who does not have Perspective says what they think is going to happen, you are in a position to say whether they are right or wrong. If you like their idea, make it a prediction. Otherwise it holds no weight.

If another player wants to prevent the consequences you are describing, they can try to Challenge your prediction. If they want to prove you wrong, they must Overthrow your Role and take Perspective away from you. If you feel like you do not understand the Kingdom or the consequences of the Crossroad, it is time to Change your Role.

TOUCHSTONE

When you're a Touchstone, you reflect the desires of the people of the Kingdom. How you feel is how the people feel. What you care about is what the people care about.

When you're in a Scene or Reaction...

You decide how the people of the Kingdom feel by showing how your character feels. As soon as we see your character react or express an opinion, we know that is the **attitude** of the people too. You can instantly change the entire Kingdom.

The Crossroad is "Will the haven give shelter to the refugees from the ray-wastes?" During a scene, one character talks about seeing these poor devils with nothing but rags, but the Touchstone character is less sympathetic. "Sure I feel bad for them, but we've got to look out for own first, don't we?" We now know that is how the average person in the Kingdom feels.

On your turn...

After playing your scene, you have the option to check Crisis if you think the Kingdom is going down the drain or erase a Crisis check if you think things are calming down. This is in addition to the box you normally check at the end of your Scene (you could even check Crisis twice). Describe the change you see in the Kingdom.

When a Crossroad is resolved...

You show how the people of the Kingdom react to what happened by checking or unchecking Crisis.

Moral of the story: don't make the people angry. Touchstone can rapidly destroy the Kingdom. Much like Perspective, a Touchstone character is not responsible for what the people think: the player is. The character is not influencing the people or controlling them. He or she just happens to have a point of view that most people share. Silencing a Touchstone character or locking them in a dungeon will not stop them from being accurate indicators of public opinion. A Touchstone character might not even know that their attitudes are the norm. Touchstone is allowed to have attitudes the people do not share, if they want.

If another player wants to sway the people, they can try to Challenge the public attitudes you described. If they want to prove you are wrong about the people, they have to Overthrow your Role to show that you aren't really a Touchstone after all. If you feel like your character has opinions that the people would not share, it is time to Change your Role.

POWER

When you have Power, you have authority over the Kingdom. You decide what the Kingdom does and what it doesn't do. You tell people what to do and they do it.

When you're in a Scene or Reaction...

You can use your **authority** to make the Kingdom do something to another character: throw them in jail, give them a raise, etc. Describe how you make it happen.

After the ace pilot mouths off during a briefing, the Commander (Power) uses her authority to ground him. He's flying a desk until she says otherwise.

You cannot use Power to control another player's character, but you can threaten or bribe characters to make them do what you want. Power does not let you change another character's Role. You can throw a Perspective character in prison, but that does not stop them from being right.

You can also give orders that are only carried out if the Crossroad result you specify is chosen. Pick Yes or No, then declare what you order the Kingdom to do to someone if that outcome is chosen. Write it in the appropriate column on the Crossroad card, followed by your character's name. Put an asterisk in front to show that it is an order, not a prediction.

If the realm goes to war (Crossroad = Yes), the Duke promises the lowly knight an influential command.

When a Crossroad is resolved...

You decide whether the Kingdom says Yes or No to the Crossroad. Your decision is final unless other Powers disagree or Power is taken away from you.

After hearing the consequences (Perspective) and what the people think (Touchstone), Power decides what the Kingdom actually does. Can you ignore what everyone else says and just do what you want? Absolutely—as long as you're willing to suffer the consequences. Upset people enough and they may take Power away from you.

Power might be the most straightforward Role to play. Unlike Touchstone or Perspective, when a Power player makes something happen, it is clearly their character doing it. Everyone knows who to blame (or thank).

If another player wants to stop something you made the Kingdom do, they can try to Challenge your authority. If they do not want you to be in charge

anymore, they have to Overthrow your Role and take Power away from you. If you feel like you aren't really in charge or you do not want to tell the Kingdom what to do, it is probably time to Change your Role.

Change Your Role

As your character grows and changes, you may eventually want to change your Role. Maybe you need a different Role to do the things you want to do in the Kingdom. Or maybe your old Role just doesn't feel like a good fit anymore.

Changing your role is a decision you make as a player. It may be something your character wants and makes happen, or it may be totally out of their control, something that happens to them. It could even be something your character hates even though you, the player, are making it happen.

Your character is a leader in the revolution who enjoys her Power. But you want to change to Perspective. You describe her followers getting worn out by her zeal and turning away from her. Disillusioned and bitter, she at last sees the revolution for what it truly is. Yes, that's you describing your own character involuntarily losing her Power.

When you want to Change to another Role, follow these steps:

- 1) Show Us Your Change: Declare you are changing. Role-play or narrate the change in your character. Show us how you are taking on your new Role and/or losing your old one. If you cannot describe how the new Role fits your character, you cannot take it.
- 2) Pay a Price: Describe something you lost or leave behind because of the change, other than the Role itself. Do you have regrets? Do those you care about disapprove? If you need ideas, look at your Issue or ask other players for suggestions. You must pay a price to change Roles.

Anything you established with your old Role remains, but you no longer control it. If it is written on the Crossroad card, cross off your name to show you no longer control it.

You predicted that, if your fellow bandits robbed the wealthy pilgrims, the pious villagers would turn against your band. After you change Roles that prediction can still come true, but you no longer have the option to change your mind and say it does not.

Changing Roles must always be accompanied by role-playing and narration that shows us how your character or their situation is changing. You can't just say you're switching from Power to Perspective. You have to show us what's happening or what's different about your character and how your new Role makes sense. Paying a price is part of that process: it requires you to shed more light on your character.

There are two rules limiting how you play and switch Roles:

- ♦ **One Scene Minimum**: You cannot voluntarily switch Roles unless you have held your current Role for at least one entire scene—not a turn, a scene (you had this Role at the start of a player's scene and kept it through the end of that scene). It does not matter if you were in the scene.

Someone else could take your Role away from you sooner, but you cannot initiate changing your Role.

- ♦ **One Role Per Scene**: You can never use the abilities of two Roles in the same scene. If you already used your previous Role in this scene, you cannot use your new Role yet.

Changing Roles is an important moment in a character's life. We're seeing that the character is no longer the person we thought they were, that their fundamental connection to the Kingdom is not what it used to be. Take your time and explore the implications. Don't rush it.

If you see another player who doesn't seem to be embracing their Role anymore, feel free to ask them if they want to switch. Doing it or not is entirely up to them.

EXAMPLE: CHANGE ROLES

Master Cogwharton has grumbled about everything that's wrong with Winterhook's School of Wizardry for as long as anyone remembers, but that's okay because just about everyone in the school grumbles and groused about everything. Cogwharton is a Touchstone, so that's just how wizards behave here: they grumble.

But after recent events, Cogwharton's player has strong ideas about what the Crossroad would do to the Kingdom. He wants to change from Touchstone to Perspective so that he can make predictions. The player describes how Cogwharton has been troubled by the growing suspicion that his fellow wizards really are a pack of prattling fools who wouldn't know a harpy if it bit them.

What price is Cogwharton paying? The player decides that his concerns are distracting him from his own arcane studies. If Cogwharton had his druthers, he would spend his days locked in his crooked tower with his nose pressed into his scrolls and tomes. But even when he does, his mind wanders and he starts worrying about the future of the school.

The character doesn't want or like anything about this change. But the player wants it to happen even though it's bad for his character.

When Roles Disagree

When two characters have the same Role, they may establish things that completely contradict each other.

One Touchstone shows that the people love our traditions, but another shows the people are sick of the old ways and want change.

If these contradictions are not resolved by the time the Crossroad is resolved, they can impact the Kingdom. The effect is different for each Role:

- ♦ When Powers disagree, the Kingdom is pushed in opposite directions. If the Powers cannot agree what to do when the Crossroad is resolved, the Kingdom may be caught in a stalemate, unable to make a decision.
- ♦ When Perspectives make predictions that directly contradict each other, one of them must be wrong. When the Crossroad is resolved, we will see who is right.
- ♦ When Touchstones contradict each other, it means the people of the Kingdom are divided. When the Crossroad is resolved, those schisms move the Kingdom closer to Crisis.

You can Overthrow another character and take away their Role to end the disagreement.

Hey! That's not your Role!?!

Your Role is a very important part of the game. It determines what you are allowed to contribute and what parts of the game you control.

So what do you do when someone acts like they have a Role that they don't have? It's an easy mistake to make in the heat of the moment. You're role-playing, having your characters argue about the future of the Kingdom, and then you start talking about what's going to happen if those fools decide to go to war. You're talking like you're making predictions, but you don't have Perspective. The danger is that other players may think what you are saying has the weight of the rules behind it when it does not.

If you see someone playing the wrong Role, do them a favor and say so. It doesn't matter if you not involved in the current action. Just say "Hey, that sounds a lot like you have Power/Perspective/Touchstone. But you don't, right?"

If they honestly want that Role, they can just Change and take it. Problem solved.

But there's another option: they can embrace the idea that their character is wrong. They think they have a Role but they don't. A character might think they understand the Kingdom even though they don't have Perspective. A character might think they're running the show even though they don't have Power. And a character might blindly think everyone agrees with them even though they aren't a Touchstone.

The important thing is that, while the characters can ignore the truth or even actively attempt to deceive each other, *the players must always be clear about what is true*. Never ignore another player's authority or try to sneak in authority you don't have.

If you are playing your character going against their Role, tell the other players exactly what you are doing. Don't be subtle about it. You may think it's obvious, but other players may think you're ignoring the rules. Say "yeah, I know you have Perspective and your character is right, but my character thinks she knows what's best and that your guy is clueless. My character is totally wrong."

It goes the other way too. A character might not recognize or be confident in their own Role. You can have Perspective without being sure that you know what's really going on. You can have Power without feeling certain anyone will listen to you. You can be a Touchstone without having any idea that everyone else thinks the same way you do.

The young Princess has Perspective, but her Vizier is the real Power. During a scene the Vizier starts talking down to her, describing the intricate workings of state that she (supposedly) does not understand. But no matter what the Vizier says, if the Princess thinks he's wrong, he is. She has Perspective. He doesn't. The players know it even if the characters do not.

Does the Princess doubt herself and let herself get lectured by the Vizier even though she feels in her heart he's wrong? If she does contradict him, does he believe her? Or does he arrogantly scoff at the impetuosity of youth even though we (the players) know he's entirely wrong?

The Princess has finally had enough of the Vizier and his petty schemes. She orders the guards to march him to the dungeon. She's acting as though she has Power and can make the Kingdom do things to people, but she doesn't: the Vizier does. Those poor guards are in an awkward situation.

So what happens? By the rules, the guards represent the Kingdom, so they answer to Power. She has Perspective, so she can't order the Kingdom to arrest him. Does the Vizier openly mock her feeble attempts? Does he brush it aside as a joke? Or does he maintain appearances and let the guards walk him out, perhaps even letting himself be locked up (for now) because it suits his purposes to humor the young monarch? That's up to the Vizier's player.

Your character can ignore someone's Role, but as a player you should always respect it. If you really think someone should not have their Role, Overthrow them and take it for yourself.

Scenes & Reactions

During Scenes we role-play together to find out what the characters think and do about the Crossroad and what is happening in the Kingdom.

Players take turns making scenes. Your scene should always focus on what your character thinks or does about the Crossroad. Even if you decide to make a scene about your personal life instead of the affairs of the Kingdom, the Crossroad is looming in the background, casting shadows on everything that happens. Sometimes you will create a scene with an idea of what you want to do ("This is the scene where I arrest the council and take Power!"). Other times you'll just set up a situation and role-play to see what happens. Either way works.

To make a scene, follow these steps:

- 1) Read Crossroad Aloud & State Your Role: Remind everyone what we are exploring and your place in the Kingdom.
- 2) What's Happening? Describe the situation. What's going on here and now? Are the characters here for a reason? Did something just happen or are they expecting something to happen? A clear situation makes it much easier for everyone to role-play the scene.

Senator Muldoon has called a press conference to announce his resignation.

Vicar Ixor is confronting the Duchess about the incriminating letter he found.

- 3) Who's There? Your character must be in the scene, but you can add any other characters you want, including other players' main characters or supporting characters someone volunteers to play temporarily.

Other players can ask to participate, but you have final say over who is in your scene.

- 4) Where Does It Take Place? Describe where the scene is taking place. If you need an idea, look at your locations or the locations of other characters in the scene.

You may do these steps in different order. That's okay. As long as you describe what, who and where, you have got enough information to start playing your scene.

Making Stuff Up

When you create a scene, you are allowed to make stuff happen and invent new situations or events. You can describe things happening in the Kingdom, but don't describe the Kingdom making big decisions: that's what Crossroads are for. And don't say what other main characters do.

Making a scene is a decision you're making as a player, not as your character. You may even introduce things that are bad for your own character if you think it creates interesting situations to play.

My character is the Chief of Medicine, but I frame a scene with protesters rioting and throwing rocks through my character's window. My character obviously doesn't want that to happen, but I think it's good material that highlights what's at stake in the Crossroad.

Playing a Scene

When you are playing your main character in a scene:

- ◆ Tell us what your character does, says and thinks about the Crossroad. Find out what other characters think or do about the Crossroad.
- ◆ Use your **Role** to affect the Crossroad and the Kingdom.

Most of the time that is all you need. But situations may arise where you want to do more:

- ◆ Want your character to have a different voice in the Kingdom? **Change your Role**.
- ◆ Want to stop a specific thing someone else did? Have your character **Challenge** it.
- ◆ Don't like what another character is doing to the Kingdom with their Role? Want to prove them wrong? **OVERTHROW** them and take their Role for yourself.

If you are not playing a character in the scene, sit back and watch. But pay close attention: what's happening now will almost certainly shape how you play later on and you may want to React after the scene.

End the scene when the action has played out. Cut earlier rather than later. If you are about to change locations or start a new conversation, it is a pretty good sign that it is time to end the scene.

Reactions

After the main scene, any player can narrate a short reaction to show what their character thinks or does about what happened. A reaction lets you respond immediately instead of waiting for a later scene.

The trade-off is that you are only allowed to narrate a short moment, a vignette that shows us what your character is seeing or doing right now. Instead of role-playing or going into detail, you simply summarize what is happening and move on.

After a scene where the rebel leaders argue that they shouldn't take any risks, Cally's player decides to take matters into her own hands. She narrates reacting to the scene: "Cally is with a small team of partisans in a utility tunnel beneath the invader's landing field. She places a bomb and blows the whole place sky-high." Done.

Even though your description must be very brief, it can encompass huge things that would take a lot of time but which can easily be summarized instead of played out.

Sek-hotem is surveying the fallow lands outside the city. He oversees the construction of a web of aqueducts to make the fields fertile again.

You are not allowed to role-play with other characters during a reaction: it is strictly solo narration. If you want to interact, wait for a scene. Even if there are other characters present, summarize what you do instead of role-playing. Do not describe what other main characters do. If another character wants to respond to something you did in your reaction, they have to make a reaction of their own.

To make a reaction, first say where you are. Then say what you see, think or do. That's all:

- 1) Where are you?: Describe where your character is in a single sentence.
- 2) What do you see/think/do?: Narrate what your character sees, thinks or does. Again, it should only take one sentence.

You can react even if your character was not in the scene, but your reaction must respond to what happened in the scene. You are not allowed to use it to do something unrelated.

You can perform a single action as part of your reaction: use your Role (make a prediction, give an order, show a popular attitude), Challenge something, Change your Role or Overthrow someone else's Role. But you

can only do one. Follow the appropriate steps even if it takes longer than a normal reaction would.

After a scene where the Legate commanding the Legion revealed his brutal plan for placating the barbarian tribes, a player narrates a reaction where his Centurion character comes to the Legate's tent and resigns his command and Changes to Perspective. The player describes how the Centurion will fight because he swore an oath, but he won't lead his men to commit this cowardly slaughter. He has to pay a Price, so he describes how the Centurion is no longer proud to serve Rome.

Even though the Legate is standing there listening to this, his player can't respond unless he wants to make a reaction of his own. If they want to interact or have a prolonged conversation, they have to wait for a scene.

Supporting Characters

The players' main characters are the focus of the game. Anyone else in the game is a supporting character, not a main character. It does not matter how important you would expect them to be in the Kingdom. If no one decided to play the Emperor during character creation, then the Emperor is, by definition, only a supporting character in your story.

If you are playing a supporting character in a scene (anyone other than your main character), your job is to shed more light on the main characters and the Kingdom.

Only main characters have Roles which means supporting characters never have the ability to influence the Kingdom the way the main characters do. No matter how logical it seems, supporting characters never have the authority of Power, the insight of Perspective or a Touchstone's ability to determine popular attitudes. Treat them exactly like a main character who does not have that Role: they can say whatever they want, but they do not have the weight of the rules behind them.

No one decided to play the Mayor during character creation, so when a player includes him in a scene he is a supporting character. The person role-playing the Mayor has him gush about all the plans he has to revitalize the city and how he is going to oppose these budget cuts (the Crossroad) with his last breath, but the players all know that the Mayor is a supporting character, so he does not have Power. He can't actually accomplish anything.

You may play a variety of supporting characters. When you introduce a new supporting character, write their name down on the Kingdom sheet so you can remember them.

Supporting characters can contribute a lot to the game by fleshing out the world, but the story isn't about them. They are there to bring the Kingdom to life and help us explore the main characters.

EXAMPLE: PLAYING A SCENE

Addie, Bors, Cat and Dennis are playing Kingdom. Dennis has played before and is helping them learn the rules. Their Kingdom is the Wild West town of Cactus Flats. Addie is playing Doc Wallace (Perspective), a washed-up old drunk with an outlaw past. Bors is playing Sheriff Lowe (Touchstone), a reluctant lawman with a good-for-nothing brother. Cat is playing Carl Marsden (Power), a wealthy rancher. Dennis is playing Father Jacobi (Touchstone), a firebrand preacher.

The Crossroad is "Will Cactus Flats hang Silas Jenkins?". When the Crossroad was introduced, it was established that Jenkins is a low-life who rides with the Sutton gang, one of the most notorious bands of outlaws in these parts. He got drunk and shot an unarmed man in the saloon, and now he's locked up in the jail. Addie already made a prediction that, if they hang him, the gang is going to tear up the town. Big surprise.

It's Cat's turn. She reads the Crossroad aloud to remind everyone what they should be focusing on.

Cat (Rancher, Power): "I make a scene, right?"

Dennis: "Yep. Show your character dealing with the Crossroad."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Right. I've got Power. Hmm, I think it's time I threw my weight around. I want a scene with the Sheriff. Sure he's wearing the badge, but I want to remind him who really runs this town. Let's have the scene at the jail house. Marsden is coming to see the Sheriff."

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Uh oh."

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "Can Doc Wallace be there too? I'd be lurking in the back, checking on the prisoner's

injuries. I don't really want to be in the conversation. I just want to eavesdrop."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Sounds like that would make this confrontation even more awkward for the Sheriff. Works for me! Dennis, do you want Father Jacobi to be in this scene too?"

Dennis: "No, it's better if we're not all in every scene."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Cool. Marsden comes swaggering in. The floorboards creak as he steps up onto the porch and then stands in the doorway, blocking out the hot sun. He's rich, but he's not soft. He's a big man who made his fortune working cattle his whole life. He's earned what he's got."

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Sheriff Lowe does not look particularly happy to see Marsden, but he tries to hide it."

They talk and Marsden makes it all too clear that he wants the prisoner released. Trouble with the Sutton gang is bad for business. He'd rather pay them off than turn the town into a shooting gallery. The Sheriff squirms, but he can't just let a killer go free for no reason.

Cat (Rancher, Power): "I've got Power, right? Can't I just use my authority to make the town let him go?"

Dennis: "Normally yes, but since hanging him is the Crossroad, we are not allowed to decide the answer until we've checked all the boxes. If you're still Power when the Crossroad is resolved, that may be exactly what you do."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "What do you mean IF I'm still Power? I'm Carl Marsden! I own this town!"

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "Easy there, chief!"

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Fine. Marsden glowers at Lowe. He isn't used to not getting what he wants. 'What do you reckon, Sheriff? That these folks are going to stand by you when the Sutton gang comes riding into town? The only thanks you'll get out of them is a nice pine box.'"

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "Hey, I call foul! Cat, you're Power, not Touchstone. You don't get to say what the people think."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Oh, definitely. This is just Marsden talking. He thinks it's true, but more so he's trying to put a scare into the Sheriff. But I'm not saying that's really what the people of Cactus Flats think."

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Actually, I think it is. Hearing Marsden talk, the Sheriff isn't sure that he wouldn't just lay low or run away if he wasn't saddled with this badge. He's not sure he would stand up and fight if there was an easy way out. I'm Touchstone, so that's how the people feel too: they would weasel out of a fight if they could."

Dennis: "Whoa! That worked."

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "Aww, c'mon Cactus Flats! Get it together!"

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Marsden can see the doubt in the Sheriff's eyes. 'Let's not forget ourselves, Sheriff. The town pays your salary and that means you work for me. You find some way to let him go.' He looks around at the pitiful little building. 'Not like a man couldn't bust out of here, now is it? Jenkins scampers back to his outlaw friends and we put this all behind us.'"

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "Doc has shuffled out from the back and is washing his hands in the basin. He's right there, but he's not making eye contact, trying to stay invisible."

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Great, a witness to my shame. The Sheriff doesn't look particularly resolute, but he sticks to his guns. 'He'll get a fair trial, Mr. Marsden. Right before they hang him.'"

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Hmm, I think I need to let this simmer for a while. Marsden gives a grim smile. 'You just think about what I said, Sheriff.' He nods at Wallace. 'Doc.' Then he walks out."

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "You think he's right, Sheriff? Think if we let him go, they'll just let it be? That'll be the end of it?"

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Hey, Addie, you're Perspective, not me!"

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "I know, but Doc trusts your opinion."

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Fine. 'Sure. Why not. No reason to think they won't just let bygones be bygones.' But he's not convincing anyone, not even himself."

Dennis: "And that's what the people think?"

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Yep."

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "Doc shudders a little. 'Men like that... the kind of men I used to ride with, the kind of man I used to be... you give an inch and they just take more and more.' And that's a prediction: If we don't hang him, the Sutton gang will think they can do whatever they want in town. They'll have the run of the place."

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Didn't you already predict that if we do hang him they'll tear up the town? This sounds like a lose-lose!"

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "I know, right? Don't blame Doc Wallace. He just calls 'em like he sees them. If you don't like it, get out there and do something about it."

Dennis: "Troublemaker."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "And that's that. End scene!"

The scene is over. Each player can make one reaction to what happened if they want.

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "I've got a reaction. That night, Sheriff Lowe is in the office, the door is bolted, and he's got rifles and shotguns and revolvers out on the table. He's checking them and loading them. He's afraid trouble is coming his way and he's getting ready to fight."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "I can react to my own scene, right? Hey, Bors, what was the Sheriff's issue again?"

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Uh... his good-for-nothing brother, Gabe."

Cat (Rancher, Power): "R-i-i-ght. I can use my Power to make the Kingdom do things to people, right? The obvious bad guy move would be to send some of my ranch hands to rough up Gabe to send the Sheriff a message..."

Bors (Sheriff, Touchstone): "Aw, that's mean!"

Cat (Rancher, Power): "Hey, you asked for it when you made him your Issue! But, instead, I'm going the other way. Marsden is on his ranch giving Gabe a job. I get him cleaned up and respectable looking and put some money in his pocket... at least for now. Maybe you're more interested in keeping me happy now, hmm Sheriff?"

Addie (Doc, Perspective): "Touché!"

A Beginner's Guide to Making Scenes

The secret to making a good scene isn't coming up with an amazing or surprising idea. The secret is painting a clear picture so players know exactly what is going on. Being able to visualize the situation clearly—where you are, why you are there—enables you to play your character like a real person.

That's the cardinal rule. It doesn't have to be exciting; it has to be clear. Exciting things may emerge as the scene plays out, but it is much harder for that to happen if the players aren't sure what's going on. Playing your character in the moment, even when nothing dramatic is happening, is the foundation for good role-playing.

With that in mind, if you don't have a good idea for a scene, you just need to answer three questions clearly: who, where, what.

First, pick a character you think it would be interesting to have your character talk with about the Crossroad. It does not have to be someone *your character* wants to talk to—this is an interaction you want to see, not necessarily a situation your character wants to be in. Talking to or even arguing with someone you disagree with is a great way to see what the characters really think. When in doubt, pick someone who has a relationship with your character that you understand well, whether that's friendship or enmity. You'll find it easiest to talk to them.

Second, look at the locations on your character sheet and theirs. Pick one that you can picture and describe well. It should also be some place you can explain being.

Finally, ask yourself: what are you both doing here? Are you meeting each other intentionally? Why? Who invited who? Or is there something else that brought you to the same place at the same time, something related to the location?

This last ingredient—what are you doing here—is critical and often overlooked. If you don't know why your character thinks they are there, you don't know where to start. The answer can be trivial ("we're picking up the weekly shipment of grain"), but it should be crystal clear.

Congratulations! You've just framed a scene!

Challenge

Sooner or later, someone is going to do something your character does not like. Power might abuse their authority or have the Kingdom make a decision that you oppose. Touchstone might show the people to have an attitude you can't stand. Perspective might make a prediction you do not want to come true.

You can do something about it. You can Challenge something another main character does. Just describe what your character does to stop or avert it.

Commander Holtz used his Power to have the leader of the striking labor union thrown in the brig. You want to Challenge his imprisonment and free him, so you describe your character leading an angry mob to bust him out. You could have just as easily described getting a pardon from an old friend on the council or showing that the arrest violated the colonial constitution.

Do you succeed? Is what you do enough to get the job done? That is up to the player whose actions you are Challenging to decide. If your solution makes sense to them, they can say it succeeds, but they can also demand that you do more or just say you fail. The more your approach makes sense to them, the more likely they are to say yes.

You can Challenge anything a main character does or anything they establish with their Role. You can Challenge something regardless of your current Role, but your Role might influence whether the other player thinks you should succeed.

When you want to Challenge something, follow these steps:

- 1) Declare: Announce what you are Challenging and who did it or established it. That player is the defender.
- 2) Show Us How You Challenge It: Role-play or narrate what you do to stop what the defender did or established.
If you are Challenging something the defender did with their Role and they no longer have that Role, they do not control it and you succeed automatically. You're done.
- 3) Good Enough? The defender gets to decide if what you did works. This is a decision the player makes, not the character. They choose one of these three replies:

Yes: Success. You stop or cancel it. If it is something written on the Crossroad card like a prediction or authority, cross it off.

No: Failure. Your efforts do not stop it.

Yes If: The defender specifies additional steps your character must take to get the job done. It must be something the character could reasonably do to succeed. If you agree and take these steps, you succeed. If you say no, you fail.

If you fail and you were Challenging something the defender did with their Role, you can either accept failure or immediately escalate and try to Overthrow the defender's Role, taking it away from them entirely (see "Overthrow Their Role"). Overthrowing someone lets you nullify everything they did with that Role during this Crossroad, including the thing you were Challenging. Keep that in mind when someone Challenges you: if you set the bar too high, they may try to take away your Role entirely.

You plead with the courts to free a political prisoner (Challenge Power's authority), but when Power says that it is not good enough, you raise a mob to storm the capitol and overthrow the government (escalate to Overthrow their Power).

Challenge Details

You can only Challenge something that a main character does, or something that a player could only do because of their Role (a Perspective's prediction, the popular attitude established by a Touchstone, etc.). You cannot Challenge the setup of a scene or the introduction of a Crossroad because those are not things the character does. Likewise, you cannot Challenge a player advancing a card after their scene, but you could Challenge the additional check/uncheck that a Touchstone made on Crisis (on a later scene when you were allowed to Challenge) since that is part of their Role.

If you Challenge a popular attitude a Touchstone established, you change the people's minds but not necessarily what the Touchstone character thinks. That's up to the player to decide.

You can Challenge something you established yourself, such as a prediction you made which you do not want to come true. Since you are also the defender, you decide if your actions succeed. You can even Challenge someone else's Challenge: step in and prevent them from stopping or changing something. You do not need to Challenge supporting characters: you succeed automatically, though another main character could try to stop you (Challenging your Challenge).

Want to work together to Challenge something? Just make one Challenge and explain how the other character is helping (with their permission). The defender can require either or both of you to do more to succeed.

You can Challenge several things at once if you can explain how what you are doing would stop them all. Each defender gets to respond separately and decide whether what you did succeeded against each thing. If you cannot think of one approach that would address them all at once, you can just Challenge each, one at a time. Challenging once or several times only makes a difference when you are limited to only doing one thing, such as during a reaction or when resolving the Crossroad.

EXAMPLE: CHALLENGE TOUCHSTONE

Ensign Flanders tries to hide it, but he's worn out and ready for shore leave on some tropical island, not spending weeks chasing an elusive French man-o-war. Of course, he's Touchstone which means all the sailors on His Majesty's Ship Rubicon feel the same way.

First Mate Byrd, the tough old sea dog, decides to Challenge that attitude and change the crew's mind before the Touchstone starts checking Crisis for a mutiny. He drops hints among the men about the rich plunder the man-o-war would have aboard and that the Captain would doubtless give each man a pretty share.

Does Ensign Flanders' player think that works? Yes, definitely: attitude canceled, morale restored. He likes it because he knows it puts the Captain (who wasn't even in this exchange) in an awkward position which will be interesting to play later on.

EXAMPLE: CHALLENGE POWER

Starfall's weapons have no equal in known space. With their arms, the Warlords of Hanat shattered three populated planets to cow their foes. Only a tattered fleet of refugees escaped their doomed worlds.

Now Starfall has guilt. Doctor Kane (Touchstone) wants to make amends and give the refugees shelter on Starfall's world-clave, but Director Wells (Power) has forbidden it. Wells has ordered the shields closed. Kane Challenges her authority, speaking before the assembly and saying that Starfall must accept responsibility and let them land.

Wells' player wants to see how far Kane is willing to go to do what's right, so she says that just giving a speech won't work. Kane has to sneak in and sabotage the shields so the refugees can land (Yes If). Once they are on the ground Wells would have no choice but to accept matters. Of course, sabotaging the shield leaves Starfall defenseless...

EXAMPLE: CHALLENGE PERSPECTIVE

A technician (Perspective) on Moon Base Tycho predicts that they'll overload the power grid if they go ahead with the new sensor array (Crossroad = Yes). A determined scientist (Touchstone) Challenges to prevent that prediction from coming true. She rolls up her sleeves and spends a few days crawling around in the utility tunnels, repairing weak junctions and rerouting cables so the grid will hold.

The Perspective player says no way, that would not solve the problem, so the scientist gears up to Overthrow the technician's Perspective and prove he doesn't know the base's systems as well as she does. If she succeeds, she'll take away his Perspective and prove that his prediction was wrong all along.

EXAMPLE: CHALLENGE

Young Cenric wants vengeance on the Sheriff's men. He decides to go to the edge of the forest and put arrows into a few soldiers as they ride nearby.

Arleigh's player narrates that she is afraid that Cenric is going to bring down retribution on the villagers if he attacks the Sheriff's men. Arleigh could go to the bandit leader, Captain Shaw (Power), and ask him to stop Cenric, but she doesn't trust him. She declares that she is going to Challenge Cenric's dangerous plans herself.

Instead of using force, she tries persuasion. She describes Arleigh confronting Cenric as he gathers up his gear and prepares to slink out of camp and telling him not to go. Really they are just talking and role-playing, but by declaring a Challenge she invites Cenric's player to tell her what she needs to do to succeed. He thinks for a minute and decides, yes, that would work... if Arleigh pretends she's doing it because she has feelings for Cenric.

Overthrow Their Role

Sometimes Challenging and countering what a character did is not enough. You may want to Overthrow them and take their Role away entirely. Strip them of their authority or prove they do not have the insight we thought they had.

But you can only Overthrow someone by stepping into their shoes and taking their Role for yourself. If you have a different Role, you have to give it up and switch. Only Power can take away someone's authority. Only Touchstone can show that someone does not represent the people. Only Perspective can show that someone does not understand the Kingdom.

If you succeed, you can choose to undo everything they did with their Role during this Crossroad. You can prove a Perspective's predictions wrong, countermand Power's authority, or show that the people of the Kingdom do not have the attitudes Touchstone demonstrated. Overthrowing someone is a powerful way to fight back against the direction they are pushing the Kingdom.

Father Jacobi (Touchstone) thinks the natives are savages that have no souls. They're beasts, not men. Unfortunately, that means the people of the town feel the same way. You don't want the townsfolk to be a bunch of backward racists, so you decide to Overthrow him and take his Role away. If you succeed, you can show that he was wrong: the people don't think the way he said they did. It was just him.

Just like with a Challenge, the defender decides whether you succeed or if you need to do more. But unlike a Challenge, they do not have the option to just say no.

Being Overthrown is the only way a character can lose their Role against their player's will. It forces the defender to take a different Role, but it does not reduce their influence in the game. They always have the means to strike back with their new Role. You have been warned.

You took Touchstone away from Father Jacobi, proving that the people of Cactus Flats don't agree with his hateful ranting. But he switches to Perspective and predicts that the natives can't be trusted and will attack the town if they aren't driven off. Drat!

To Overthrow someone's Role, follow these steps:

- 1) Change to their Role: Declare who you are Overthrowing.
That player is the defender.

If you have a different Role than the defender, switch to their Role now. If you cannot switch to the same Role as the defender (because you have not held your current Role for a full scene), you cannot Overthrow them.

If you already had the same Role as the defender, or if the defender only acquired their current Role during this player's turn, the defender can choose to try and Overthrow you at the same time (see "Overthrow Duel").

- 2) Show Us How You Overthrew Them: Role-play or narrate to show how the Role is now yours, not theirs. Tell us why they do not have the Role we thought they had.
 - ◆ To Overthrow **Power**, show how your character takes away the defender's authority or why the defender does not have the authority they think they have.
 - ◆ To Overthrow **Perspective**, have your character show us what the defender is wrong about. Confront the defender, tell someone else or just reflect on their mistakes.
 - ◆ To Overthrow **Touchstone**, show us what your character feels that does not agree with the defender. Show how the people reflect your character's attitude, not the defender's.

If you switched Roles, include that change in your description. As usual, you have to **pay a price**: include something you lose or leave behind in your description. Anything you established with your old Role remains, but you no longer control it. If it is written on the Crossroad card, it stays but cross off your name.

- 3) **Good Enough?** The defender gets to decide if what you did to Overthrow them works. This is a decision the player makes, not the character. They choose either:

Yes: Success. The defender loses their Role.

Yes If: The defender specifies additional steps your character must take to succeed. It must be something the character could reasonably do that would Overthrow the defender. Impossible or improbable demands are not allowed. If you agree and take these steps, you succeed. If you say no, you fail and the defender keeps their Role—both characters now have the same Role.

If your Overthrow failed, you are done. Otherwise continue:

- 4) **Cancel what they did?** You can choose to immediately cancel anything the defender established with their old Role for this Crossroad. Predictions are crossed out, attitudes are proven wrong, and authority they used is countermanded. If it is written on the Crossroad card, cross it out. If something has already been resolved (such as during a previous step of Crossroad resolution), it cannot be cancelled.

If you choose not to cancel something, the other player still loses control because they changed Roles. If it is written on the Crossroad card, cross out their name.

- 5) **Defender picks a different Role:** Defender gives a brief epilogue explaining the change in their character and why their new Role fits. They do not pay a price.

Overthrown characters are free to retaliate and try to take back their old Roles later on. The normal restriction applies: you cannot Change your Role until you have had your current Role for a full scene.

You can try to Overthrow multiple characters at once so long as they all have the same Role and you can explain how it makes sense. Each defender gets to respond separately and decide whether you succeed or need to do more. You might succeed versus some and fail versus others.

Overthrow Duel

If two characters start with the same Role, they may both want to Overthrow the other. Instead of just letting the player who speaks first seize the day, the defender is allowed to turn the Overthrow into a Duel and try to take the attacker's Role away at the same time.

A defender can also choose to Duel if they only got their Role during this current player's turn—if you try to oust someone who barely got a chance to use their Role, it may cost you.

A defender who meets either criteria can Duel even if they would not normally be able to start an Overthrow (because they were in someone else's Reaction or they had already interrupted during a Crossroad resolution).

Follow the normal procedure for Overthrow, except each player completes each step together, once as attacker and once as defender. Both complete each step before either goes on to the next one. If the players cannot agree on order, the first player who declared Overthrow goes first in each step. If both Overthrows succeed, both characters lose their Roles. Maybe neither of them understands the Kingdom or no one is left in charge...

EXAMPLE: OVERTHROW

The partisans of Rigel IV have waged a bitter resistance against the alien invaders who took over their colony world, but they are hopelessly outmatched. The Crossroad is “Will the partisans raid the invader’s arsenal?” Looting a stockpile of alien weaponry could certainly give them the firepower to hit back.

The partisans look to Anders (Power) for leadership, but he’s hesitant. A direct attack just seems too risky. He’s not Perspective, so he can’t establish what the consequences would be. But, as a character, he’s afraid too many good people would be lost.

Barden (Touchstone) is sick of hiding. She wants to hurt the invaders for everything they’ve done. Her Issue is the family she lost in the invasion and her anger outweighs her caution. Because she’s Touchstone, that’s what the average partisan wants too: they want to attack.

There’s a lot of grumbling because Anders is dragging his feet. Barden’s player decides that she can’t wait any longer. She declares that she is Overthrowing Anders. She switches to Power, then describes how during a strategic meeting she calls out Anders in front of everyone and demands to know when (when!) they’re going to stop cowering and take the fight to the aliens.

Because she Changed Roles, Barden has to pay a price. Her player decides that Barden has become consumed with hatred of the aliens. She wants vengeance more than she wants to liberate the colony. If she has to sacrifice the

lives of some of her fellow colonists to hurt the invaders, she'll do it without hesitation.

(Good Enough?) Anders' player gets to decide whether Barden's fiery confrontation is enough to undermine Anders' authority as a leader. Anders' player declares that it would succeed, but only if Barden promises the rebels an easy victory, whether she believes it or not. Would Barden do that? Her player decides yes, she would. She'd lie if she had to, just to get the rebels to stop cowering and act. She narrates telling the assembly how all this talk of the arsenal being too well defended is just an excuse. They would never expect an attack so it will be an easy win. She successfully takes Power away from Anders.

(Cancel) Earlier during this Crossroad, Anders used his authority to arm the partisans. He opened the remaining weapons caches and distributed firearms, hoping to show that they had enough weapons even without raiding the arsenal. Barden could countermand this and take the weapons back, but she would rather let it stay and keep the partisans armed.

(New Role) Anders gets to pick a different Role, either Touchstone or Perspective. He doesn't feel like he's on the same page as his fellow partisans, who sounded pretty aggressive when Barden described them a minute ago. Legally he could take Touchstone and show how popular attitude has changed in the wake of Barden's take-over, but it doesn't feel right to him. On the other hand, Perspective feels like a perfect transition. Anders was already worried about the consequences back when he had Power and now he sees the pitfalls confronting the partisans all too clearly. He describes Anders grimacing silently as he watches Barden making plans to attack.

In a reaction to the scene, Anders makes his first prediction: if they raid the arsenal (Crossroad = Yes), the partisans will suffer severe casualties. It will be a bloodbath, just like Anders feared all along, except now it's an established fact. Anders' player heard what Barden's player said about her price and suspects Barden won't bat an eye. Anders doesn't want the rebels to walk into a slaughter, but Anders' player loves how this shines the spotlight right on Barden's critical flaw and puts the Kingdom in a vise.

Advance & Resolve Cards

On your turn, you get to decide which of the three cards you want to check: Crossroad, Crisis or Time Passes. Checking a card moves it a step closer to happening

Which card you check and advance is up to you, but you must check one:

- ♦ Checking the **Crossroad** is the default choice. You just played a scene exploring the situation, so now you are one step closer to seeing what the Kingdom decides to do. When in doubt, check the Crossroad.
- ♦ If you think the Kingdom is starting to come apart or is in danger, you can check **Crisis**. Just as checking Crossroad doesn't mean we're seeing the decision now, checking Crisis doesn't mean the Kingdom could collapse right now. Until the last box is checked, it only moves us one step closer to a potential disaster.
- ♦ If you want to slow things down and extend the Crossroad, you can check **Time Passes**. When the card is full, we will pause the action and a substantial amount of time will pass in the Kingdom while the characters reflect. Checking Time Passes does not make more time pass after your scene: that does not happen until the last box is checked.

When all the boxes on a card are full, we interrupt the normal order of play to resolve the card and find out how things turn out. Crossroad, Crisis and Time Passes each have their own steps you follow to resolve them.

When you are resolving a card, special rules limit what you can do. You cannot use your Role or take any other actions like you would in a scene unless the instructions specifically say so.

Instead of role-playing freely the way you would in a scene, when you resolve a card, narrate only short moments to summarize what happens, much as you do in a reaction:

- 1) Where are you?: Describe where your character is in a single sentence.
- 2) What do you see/think/do?: Narrate what your character sees, thinks or does. Again, it should only take one sentence.

A lot can happen when a card is resolved and narrating brief moments lets everyone contribute and still cover a lot of ground quickly.

Resolve: Crossroad

When all the boxes on the Crossroad are checked, we find out what the Kingdom does. Lots can happen as the Crossroad is resolved. But instead of playing full scenes, you'll use short narration to describe the action. If you need to role-play, keep it brief.

Each player gets to contribute to what happens. Your Role determines how you can affect the outcome of the Crossroad and when you act. But if you don't like what's happening or you want a different voice, you have one last chance to take a stand and change the outcome. You can interrupt the process to Challenge something, Change your Role, or Overthrow someone else's Role. But each player only gets to interrupt once. Make it count.

Follow these steps to resolve the Crossroad. After each step is completed, there is no going back. If you want to interrupt and change the results, you have to do it before you start the next step.

- 1) End Game?
- 2) Set the Stage
- 3) Decision (Power)
- 4) Orders (Power)
- 5) Predictions (Perspective)
- 6) Popular Reaction (Touchstone)
- 7) Reflection
- 8) Check Time Passes

If more than one character gets to participate during a step (usually because they have the same Role), players can go in any order they agree on. You might want to resolve things in a particular order, such as seeing what one character does before seeing how another reacts. If players can't agree on order, start with the player who created the Crossroad and go around the table to the left (same order as normal play).

Step 1: End Game?

Decide together if this is going to be the end of your game. This does not change how the Crossroad is resolved, but it may change what players decide to make happen. If resolving the Crossroad fills a Crisis and/or Time Passes card, continue and resolve them before you stop play.

Step 2: Set the Stage

Read aloud the Crossroad and all the items in the Yes and No columns to remind everyone what is at stake.

Step 3: Decision (Power)

Each player with a Power character declares whether they are making the Kingdom decide Yes or No on the Crossroad. No one else gets to vote. Describe how your character makes it happen. If you can't explain how your character uses their Power to affect the outcome, you can't vote.

Count the votes. The majority wins. Unless someone changes the outcome by interrupting to Challenge someone's vote, Change their Role to Power or Overcome someone's Power, the Crossroad is now decided. There's no going back. Circle that answer on the card and cross out the other column: everything on that side is moot.

Stalemate / Power Vacuum:

If the end result is a tie, it is a stalemate and the Crossroad won't be decided yet. The Crossroad remains in play. If there are no Power characters (and no one decides to take Power), the Crossroad stalemates automatically: no one is in charge to make a decision.

Skip all remaining steps of Crossroad resolution and follow these steps instead:

- 1) Add two more checkboxes to the Crossroad card. When those boxes are both checked, you'll try to resolve this Crossroad again.
- 2) Predictions remain in place. We won't find out what happens until the Crossroad resolves.
- 3) Each Touchstone decides how people react to this impasse. Each Touchstone may check or uncheck Crisis.

Stop resolving the Crossroad and return to the normal order of play. This Crossroad remains in play. The same Crossroad can stalemate over and over again.

Now that we know what the Kingdom is doing, we'll explore the consequences.

Step 4: Orders (Power)

For each order a Power character put on the winning side of the Crossroad, the Power player who controls it decides whether to let it happen or cancel it. If you cancel it, describe what you do to stop it. If you do not cancel it, show your character seeing it happen.

During this step you can only decide whether the order you set earlier comes true, not make new ones. If no one controls the order (because that character no longer has Power), it happens automatically.

Power Disagreement:

If multiple orders take effect that contradict each other, they cancel each other out as directly as possible.

Step 5: Predictions (Perspective)

For each prediction on the winning side of the Crossroad, the Perspective player who controls that prediction resolves it.

- 1) Decide whether your prediction comes true. You cannot change your prediction or make a new one: you're simply picking yes or no. Things might have happened that changed your mind. You can point to something we've already seen that averted this outcome or simply say you were wrong.

If you don't have Perspective anymore, you have no control over your prediction. It automatically comes true.

- 2) If the prediction happens, narrate your character seeing your prediction coming true right now. Say where you are and what you see. Do not describe some new outcome you did not predict. What happens should be what you said would happen.

If a Perspective character *never* made a prediction for this Crossroad, they can make one now and have it come true immediately. This includes characters who interrupt to switch to Perspective now or who had Power taken away from them when the Crossroad was decided and became Perspective: they didn't get to use their Power, so they get to use Perspective.

Perspective Disagreement:

If a Perspective character made a prediction that blatantly contradicts another Perspective's prediction, one of them must be wrong. Check these cases, in order, until you find the one that applies:

- ◆ If one prediction was made by a character who is no longer Perspective, that prediction was wrong and the other comes true.
- ◆ If one Perspective concedes that their prediction is wrong, the other comes true.
- ◆ If any character Overthrows one of the Perspectives and cancels their prediction, the remaining prediction comes true.
- ◆ If neither Perspective concedes and no one Overthrows, neither prediction comes true.
They are both wrong.

A character could interrupt and Challenge to prevent one of the predictions from coming true, but that does not change the fact that one of them must be wrong, so you still follow these steps. Challenging averts the prediction but does not disprove it.

Perspective Vacuum:

If no one has Perspective, no one understands the Kingdom well enough to predict what's going to happen. We may be in for a surprise. Each player simultaneously holds out one or two fingers (choose randomly).

- ◆ If everyone holds out the same number of fingers (all one's or all two's), nothing unexpected happens.
- ◆ If the total is even, there is a minor unexpected consequence.
- ◆ If the total is odd, there is a major unexpected consequence.

The player to the right of the person who made the Crossroad invents the unexpected consequence of the Kingdom's decision. It should always be something bad for the Kingdom, either a minor or major impact, as indicated. Make this decision as a neutral arbiter. It has nothing to do with your character.

Step 6: Popular Reaction (Touchstone)

Each Touchstone decides whether everything that has happened during the Crossroad resolution (the decision, the outcome of predictions, etc.) has brought the Kingdom closer to disaster or calmed the situation down.

- 1) Show what your character thinks about what has happened. Say where you are and what you think. This shows us what the people of the Kingdom feel.
- 2) If you think the situation is bad for the Kingdom, you may check a Crisis boxes. If you think it is good, you may uncheck a Crisis boxes. Or do nothing if you prefer.

Different Touchstones may describe completely conflicting attitudes, but that will bring the Kingdom closer to Crisis:

Touchstone Disagreement:

If two or more Touchstones describe contradictory popular reactions ("the people hate the draft!" "No, the people love the draft!"), it shows turmoil and division within the Kingdom. After they have both gone, check another box on the Crisis card for each Touchstone involved in the disagreement. This is in addition to any Crisis boxes each Touchstone opted to check or uncheck.

The only way to avoid this strife in the Kingdom is for one of the Touchstones to concede and retract their statement or for someone to Challenge or Overthrow one of them.

Touchstone Vacuum:

If there are no Touchstones, we don't know what the people want and we won't find out until it's too late. To see out how the people react to the Crossroad, each player simultaneously holds out one or two fingers (choose randomly).

- ◆ If everyone holds out the same number of fingers (all one's or all two's), the people are not troubled by how the Crossroad turned out. No change to Crisis.
- ◆ If the total is even, the people are mad about it. Check one Crisis box.
- ◆ If the total is odd, the people are really mad about it. Check two Crisis boxes.

Step 7: Reflection

One at a time, read your Wish or Fear aloud. Is that still what your character is thinking about? If not, you can change to a different Wish or Fear (including changing from a Wish to a Fear or vice versa). Tell us what made your attitude change.

Step 8: Check Time Passes

Check a box on the Time Passes card. Every Crossroad brings us closer to a break in the action.

The Crossroad is now resolved. Turn the card face down or set it aside. If all the boxes on either the Crisis or Time Passes card are full, resolve it now before you introduce a new Crossroad and the next player takes their turn. If both are full, resolve Crisis first, then Time Passes.

Interrupt: Take a Stand

If you don't like how the Crossroad is turning out, you can do something about it. You can interrupt the normal steps of the Crossroad resolution to Challenge something, Change your Role, or Overthrow another player's Role. Usually you wait and hear what other players are doing with their Roles and then decide whether to interrupt.

The Duchess (Power) is pushing the Crossroad towards war with no opposition. A Perspective character doesn't want that, so he interrupts to Change his Role to Power and then votes No to create a stalemate. He could have tried to Overthrow the Duchess instead and take her Power away.

Much like the limits on using and switching Roles in normal scenes, there are limits during the Crossroad resolution:

- ♦ Each player can only interrupt once. The exception is that if you Challenge and fail you can immediately opt to escalate and Overthrow that character.
- ♦ Each player can only affect the Crossroad resolution with one Role. If you are Overthrown and your action is stopped, you do not count as having used a Role yet. If you are Challenged and stopped, you do still count as having used your Role.
- ♦ You cannot switch Roles after you have successfully used your Role to affect the Crossroad resolution.
- ♦ As always, you cannot voluntarily switch your Role unless you have spent a full scene with your current Role (and

there are no scenes during the Crossroad resolution). So if you are Overthrown and pick a different Role, you cannot chose to switch again during the Crossroad resolution. You are stuck with the Role you picked.

The net result is that each player will only get to make a difference in the Crossroad resolution as one Role. You either decide what the Kingdom does (Power), say how predictions turn out (Perspective), or decide how the people react (Touchstone). Never more than one. If you started to use your Role, but then another player successfully Overthrew you and prevented you from contributing, you do not count as having used a Role.

A Power character declared the decision for the Crossroad, but another player interrupted and Overthrew their Power. The original Power character has not had an effect on the Crossroad resolution yet and is free to act as Perspective or Touchstone.

But if someone successfully Challenges what you did, you do count as having used your Role: you made something happen with your Role but another character took action and stopped it. As a player you permitted it since you agreed that their Challenge was successful.

Since you can only interrupt the Crossroad resolution once, make sure you use it for something that matters to you. If you know there is something later on that you want to stop, you can choose to abstain from using your Role so that you are free to act later.

What Happens Now?

Resolving the Crossroad shows us what the Kingdom decides to do. But that does not always show us the outcome of that decision. We might know that the Kingdom decided to go to war, but not know whether they win or lose.

It is Perspective's prerogative to predict the consequences of decisions the Kingdom makes. But what if no one made a prediction to answer that question? The player making the next Crossroad gets to decide where to pick up the action. They might create another Crossroad that addresses what happened.

EXAMPLE: RESOLVING THE CROSSROAD

The Kingdom is Eshbal, the Door of Hardship, a fortress-city guarding the Empire from the barbarian civilizations beyond its borders.

The Crossroad that Bors introduced is "Will the city stamp out the foreign religion?" A barbarian faith, worship of the Three-Faced Mother, has become popular among common folk and aristocrats alike. Citizens have turned away from the Imperial religion, the Eternal Flame.

Addie's character is a level-headed Minister of the city (Power) who avoids using his authority rashly. Cat's character is a wealthy merchant (Touchstone) who prospers from all the foreign trade that flows through the city. Dennis' character is a Commander of the Imperial garrison (Power), a military officer whose first order of business is keeping the peace. Bors' character is a priest of the Eternal Flame (Perspective), an ardent believer of the faith, which is why he wanted this Crossroad in the first place: the problem is right up his alley.



Bors has already made several predictions foreseeing dire consequences if the foreign faith is not crushed. Addie's Minister has tried to placate the faithful by promising more and greater festivals of the Eternal Flame to balance out the new religion's rising popularity. Cat's merchant, the Touchstone, has shown that the people of Eshbal just want to live the good life and enjoy luxury. But he also believes in the barbarian god and prefers the new religion which means the people of the city do too. Uh oh.

On his turn Dennis checks the last box on the Crossroad card, so it's time to resolve it and see what the Kingdom

does. They agree that they are not going to end their game here. Bors reads the consequences on the Crossroad card out loud to remind everyone what is at stake.

It's time for Power to decide what the Kingdom does. There are two Powers, Addie and Dennis.

Cat (Merchant, Touchstone): "Who goes first?"

Dennis (Commander, Power): "We can go in whatever order we agree on. I don't think anyone is wondering about my choice, so I'll go first if that's okay. The Garrison Commander is voting Yes, squash the foreign religion. He's ordering the soldiers to harass worshipers, break up gatherings and tear down any foreign idols they find. He's bringing back the peace with a heavy hand. Addie?"

Addie (Minister, Power): "Hmm, the Minister wants peace too, but he thinks such rash action creates more problems than it solves. He's voting No, leave it alone. So we have a tie, right?"

Dennis (Commander, Power): "Yes. So unless someone interrupts and does something, the Crossroad will stalemate for now."

Bors (Priest, Perspective): "My character is definitely stepping up. He's Challenging the Minister's vote. If I succeed, that means the only vote is Yes, so the Crossroad is decided, right?"

Dennis (Commander, Power): "Right. Tell Addie how you're stopping the Minister from having a say in the Crossroad decision."

Bors describes his priest speaking out against the Minister's scandalously lax attitude towards this issue, putting the Minister in an awkward political position so he won't have the clout to weigh in. Addie says yes, it would work—if the priest makes a secret deal with some of the influential aristocrats who have embraced the foreign religion.

Addie (Minister, Power): "I want to see whether your priest is a true believer or a political schemer."

Bors (Priest, Perspective): "Yeah, there's no way he'd do that. He's a true believer. And he's got Perspective: he knows these foreign influences are an evil root burrowing their way into the Empire. He's not about to ally himself with heretics."

Cat (Merchant, Touchstone): "Ooo, you said heretics!"

Dennis (Commander, Power): "So your Challenge of the Minister's vote fails and it's still a stalemate..."

Bors (Priest, Perspective): "I can escalate to Overthrow the Minister as part of the same action, right? I'm switching to Power. The priest takes to the streets and leads a mob of outraged faithful straight to the Minister's palace. They're protesting and shouting. Some radicals are even calling for the Minister's head. The Minister is losing Power because the people have turned against him."

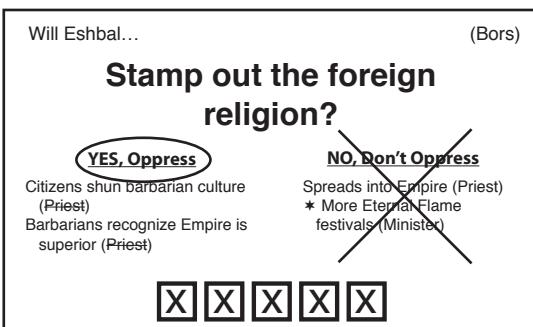
Dennis (Commander, Power): "What personal price do you pay when you change from Perspective to Power?"

Bors (Priest, Power): "Oh, right. The other elders of the priesthood aren't pleased with him. They think he's a little too incendiary."

Addie (Minister, Power): "I think your Overthrow succeeds. The Minister isn't about to go out and confront an angry mob. He'll stay inside where it's safe. You win. I lose Power. As the Minister peeks out and sees the burning hate on the faces of the crowd, he recognizes just how fragile our society is. And I'm taking Perspective."

Bors votes to squash the foreign religion—the angry mobs join forces with the soldiers in smashing any worship of foreign gods. Cat could interrupt if she wanted to try to sway the result, but she doesn't.

The Crossroad is now officially decided: the city is stamping out the foreign religion. Now they see the consequences.



Addie's Minister had an order, but it was on the No side of the Crossroad, so it is moot. Even if it hadn't been, Bors' priest could have cancelled it when he took her Power away.

Predictions are the next step. Addie's Minister has Perspective now and never got to make a prediction, so he gets to make one now.

Bors (Priest, Power): "I don't control my predictions since I switched Roles, but they still come true now, right?"

Addie (Minister, Perspective): "Actually, let me go first because I think I'm going to contradict your predictions."

Dennis (Commander, Power): "Narrate your character seeing your prediction coming true."

Addie (Minister, Perspective): "The Minister is laying low, hiding out in his palace and sipping fine wine as the mobs are stomping around the city. He can't shake the feeling that nothing makes a religion flourish like organized oppression. And that's my prediction: worship of the foreign gods becomes even more fervent and attractive."

Dennis (Commander, Power): "How do you catch a glimpse of it happening right now?"

Addie (Minister, Perspective): "I think he notices two of his servants stealthily giving each other the hand sign of the faithful. It's gone underground. And I think that totally contradicts the prediction the priest made about citizens shunning barbarian culture."

They check the conditions for predictions that contradict. Bors changed Roles, so he doesn't control his predictions anymore. His prediction loses automatically.

Cat (Merchant, Touchstone): "Too bad, buddy."

Bors (Priest, Power): "Actually, I like it. My priest is all about stamping out heresy, so now I'm happy to keep this going. My character doesn't like it, but I think it's great."

Addie (Minister, Perspective): "Yeah, I thought you would. It's a good conflict for the Kingdom."

Bors' other prediction ("Barbarians recognize Empire is superior") comes true even though he doesn't control it. Addie does not think her prediction contradicts that.

Dennis (Commander, Power): "Time to see what the people think about all this. Cat, you're our only Touchstone."

Cat (Merchant, Touchstone): "The merchant is caught in the middle of a crush of people at the plaza where soldiers and fanatics and unlucky bystanders are all colliding. As he sees an idol being torn down and set on fire by soldiers, he doesn't care about faith or gods. He just wants to get home safely and save his own skin. It's better just to pay lip service to whatever religion has the biggest stick and stay out of trouble."

Bors (Priest, Power): "So much for the pious citizenry!"

Cat (Merchant, Touchstone): "And yeah, I'm checking Crisis. This is a mess."

Bors (Priest, Power): "I would preach to the people and Challenge that attitude, but I already interrupted, so I can't do it again. Anyone else?"

Dennis (Commander, Power): "Are you looking at me? Oh no, that attitude is exactly what the Commander wants: everybody just do as you're told. But I will try to Challenge the check on Crisis."

Dennis describes the Commander sending more troops into the city to keep the peace and restrain the more violent religious mobs. The foreign faith is stamped out, but in a more orderly fashion. Cat agrees that would work if the Commander orders a broader lockdown. Martial law, basically. He agrees so the Challenge succeeds and Crisis isn't checked.

Everyone reviews their Wishes and Fears and some players make changes. Then they check Time Passes. This Crossroad is over. It's Addie's turn next, so she would get to introduce the next Crossroad but she already made one. So did Bors, so the next person in rotation is Cat. After the Crossroad is introduced, Addie will continue her turn and make a scene.

Resolve: Crisis

The Kingdom is not invulnerable. It can be destroyed, either by those within who have come to hate it or by the dangerous forces of a harsh world.

When all the boxes on the Crisis card are checked, you play to see if the Kingdom survives or falls. Just like when you resolve a Crossroad, instead of playing out scenes, you narrate short moments to build a montage of the action unfolding.

Each player gets to describe what they see happening during the Crisis and what their character does to save or destroy the Kingdom. The players then vote to decide the Kingdom's fate, so what you describe will influence whether your fellow players think the Kingdom should survive or crumble.

For each step where all players contribute, players go one at a time, in any order. If you cannot agree on an order, start with the person who checked the last Crisis box and go around to the left (normal order of play).

Follow these steps to resolve the Crisis:

- 1) End Game? Decide together if this is going to be the end of your game regardless of whether the Kingdom survives or falls. This does not change how the Crisis is resolved, but it may change what players decide to make happen. If the Kingdom is destroyed, the game ends whether you planned to stop or not.
- 2) What is the Crisis: If it is not entirely clear, describe the nature of the Crisis threatening the Kingdom right now. The person who checked the last Crisis box can start, but all the players should agree to the general nature of the Crisis. Do not go into detail or take action yet.
- 3) What Do You See: Each player paints a picture of the Crisis by describing what their character sees happening around them. Say where you are and then say what you see. Do not have your character take action yet.

*The Vicar is in the bell tower, looking out over the city.
He watches fearfully as the mobs rush through the
streets, crying for vengeance for the dead Queen!*

- 4) What Do You Do: Each player describes what their character does (or doesn't do) in the Crisis. You can try to save or destroy the Kingdom, or save your own skin and escape. Say where you are and what you do.

The Vicar has locked himself in his chambers. He knows he should address the crowd to soothe its savage temper, but he's too afraid. He pours himself another goblet of wine.

All characters who are part of the Kingdom share its fate. If it falls, you fall with it. If you want out, you can try to **escape**. Show your character giving up on the Kingdom and fleeing instead of trying to save or destroy it. Abandoning the Kingdom always weakens it: your vote is automatically thumbs down (Kingdom destroyed) in the next step.

A character that flees the Kingdom leaves the game. If the game continues, that player makes a new character after the Crisis is over.

If another character wants to stop you, they can Challenge your attempt to escape (but cannot escalate to Overthrow). If your escape is foiled, you remain and share the fate of the Kingdom, but you must still vote for destruction because you tried to flee.

- 5) **Outcome:** Based on what has been described, each player decides whether they think the Kingdom should stand or fall. This is a decision you make as a player, not as your character.

Each player sticks out a hand and votes simultaneously: thumbs up if the Kingdom should survive, thumbs down if it should fall, hand flat if you're neutral. If your character tried to escape, you must vote thumbs down. Add up the result: plus one for each thumbs up, minus one for each thumbs down.

- ◆ If the result is positive, the Kingdom survives.
- ◆ If the result is negative, the Kingdom is destroyed.
- ◆ If the result is zero, the Crisis calms for now but has not really been resolved. It could flare back up. Add two more boxes to the Crisis card. Introduce new characters for anyone who escaped then stop resolving the Crisis and return to normal play.

Describe the outcome of the Crisis together based on what you have already seen. If the Kingdom was destroyed, decide if something new might rise in its place or if only a smoking crater remains.

If the Kingdom is destroyed, each player may briefly describe what happens to their character. Remember: if you did not escape, your fate is tied to the Kingdom.

If the Kingdom is destroyed, or you agreed to stop playing after the Crisis, your game is over. Otherwise, continue with these steps:

- 6) **Death or Retirement:** Each player who wants to retire their old character and start a new one should say so. Narrate a brief epilogue for your departing character. You can also have your character die in the Crisis if that seems fitting. Don't say anything about your new character yet.

If another player wants to switch and play a character that is being retired, they may do so if the original player allows it. In that case, do not narrate a retirement epilogue.

- 7) **Introduce New Characters:** If your old character fled, retired or died, follow the steps to make a new one. New characters might be new arrivals in the Kingdom or characters who were already here that we didn't focus on before.
- 8) **Make new Crisis card:** Draw one more checkbox than the number of players.

Continue with the normal order of play.

Death & Dying

A player's character is the tool they use to influence the game. Because of that, the rules do not allow anyone to remove another player's main character from the game without their consent.

That means you can't kill someone's main character or make it impossible for them to participate in the Kingdom. If you describe situations that could kill their character, they survive automatically, if they want. The other player can describe surviving any way they want or can require you to do it.

Throwing characters in jail, etc. is perfectly fine. Most Roles are not hampered by imprisonment or other restrictions, so the character can keep influencing the Kingdom, even from a dungeon, and escape is as simple as deciding to Challenge your imprisonment.

Switching Characters

If you want to change characters to explore a different facet of the Kingdom, you are allowed to switch as part of a Crisis or Time Passing. You can describe your character retiring from the limelight, leaving the Kingdom, or even dying if you want.

Keep in mind that when you switch characters you're changing the game for the other players as well as yourself. Their characters have personal connections, enmities and ongoing plot threads that depend on your character. When you remove your character, you take all that material away from the other players. You're requiring them to build new relationships and plots from scratch. That's why you normally only change characters during large transitions in the Kingdom.

Of course, if you're so unhappy with your character that you're not enjoying the game, just break this rule and switch characters on your next turn. Retire your old character and spend your scene introducing your new character. But try discussing it with your fellow players first. They might be able to help you have more fun with your current character.

Resolve: Time Passes

When all the boxes on the Time Passes card are checked, we take a break from the action and let some time go by in the Kingdom. It is a lull in the drama that gives the characters a chance to reflect on their lives.

Follow these steps to resolve Time Passing:

- 1) End Game? Decide if this is going to be the end of the game so that everyone knows whether or not this is an epilogue. Don't introduce new characters if the game is ending.
- 2) How Long: Discuss and agree how much time will pass before play resumes. It should be at least several months, but you could also have years or decades go by.

Depending on the nature of your Kingdom, it might be fun to jump to a whole new generation of characters or skip ahead hundreds or thousands of years...

- 3) Retire Characters: Each player who wants to retire their old character and start a new one should say so. Narrate a brief epilogue for your retiring character, or describe them passing away or leaving the Kingdom. Don't say anything about your new character yet.

If another player wants to switch and play a character that someone else is retiring to keep them in the game, they may do so if the original player allows it. In that case, do not narrate a retirement epilogue.

- 4) The Good & The Bad: Each player who did not retire their character narrates what their character's life is like during this hiatus.

Tell us something good in your life and something bad in your life. Keep it personal. You can reflect on how changes in the Kingdom have impacted you, but the goal is to focus on your character, not the Kingdom. You can describe new developments in your own life (marriage, kids, etc.), but do not introduce new developments for the Kingdom except extensions of what we have already seen.

Read your Wish or Fear aloud and decide if you want to change it. If you change it, explain why your character's attitude is different now.

- 5) **Crisis Fades:** If there are any checked boxes on the Crisis card, players get to decide whether the situation in the Kingdom has calmed down during the break. Your decision may be influenced by how other players described their characters' lives during the hiatus.

All players simultaneously hold out one hand, pointing a finger for each check they think should be removed (zero to five, zero being a fist). Take the lowest number from among all the players, even if that's zero, and erase that many checks from the Crisis card.

If you agreed to stop playing, your game is over. Otherwise, continue with these steps:

- 6) **Introduce New Characters:** If your old character left, retired or died, follow the steps to make a new one. New characters might be new arrivals in the Kingdom or characters who were already here that we didn't focus on before.
- 7) **Make new Time Passes card:** Draw as many checkboxes as there are players.

Continue with the normal order of play.

Ending the Game

A Kingdom game has no preset endpoint, but it is usually best to stop right after resolving a Crossroad, a Crisis or Time Passes. If you know when you need to stop playing, it is best to agree when a Crossroad is being made that it will be your last. That way everyone knows they should build toward a suitable finale.

After the game is over, you may have a lot of ideas about what would have happened next in the Kingdom. It's fun to compare notes with the other players about things you would have introduced later or plot threads you were hoping would emerge. If you are excited enough to keep talking about the game after it is over, that is a good sign that you played a great game together.

You may totally disagree about what the future held for the Kingdom. That's okay! Having different ideas is part of the fun of gaming together. There is no right or wrong answer. Because you aren't going to play it out, you will never know for certain. Everyone can imagine what they would like.

Don't forget to tell the other players about the things they did during the game that you thought were great. They may already know because of how you reacted during play, but it never hurts to tell them again. They may not even realize how much you liked something they did.

Multiple Sessions

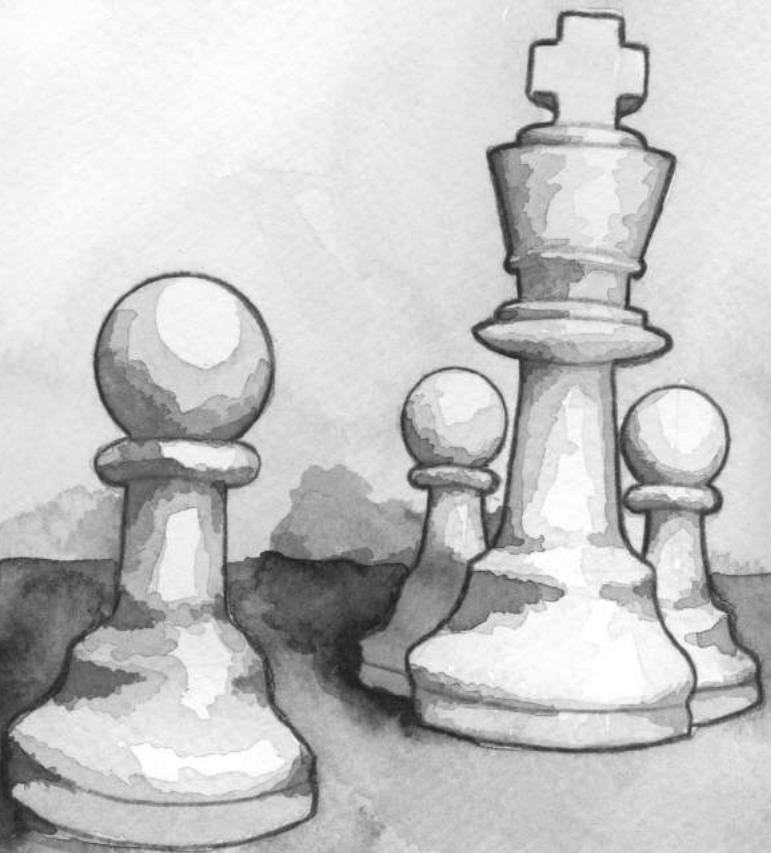
You can play Kingdom as a one-shot game, but you can also return to the same setting across multiple sessions, exploring how the characters weather the changes their Kingdom goes through.

If you are going to continue your game, make a note of the players' seating arrangement and who is the current player so that you know where to pick up later.

You can even play the same Kingdom across different eras. How will the organization carry on its ideals in years to come? Who will be the leaders of tomorrow? You can take long Time Passes breaks and play future generations in the same Kingdom. Play your own heirs. Play each others' heirs.



*That's the end of the rules. The rest of the book
includes advice, discussion and material to
make your game better. Have fun!*



DISCUSSION & ADVICE

Play Advice

We've played Kingdom a lot. Here are some of the tips and tricks we've learned that can help you get the most from your game.

Making the Perfect Kingdom

Picking the right Kingdom can make or break your game. The Kingdom is the center that ties the characters and the action together, so it's a good investment to take the time and make sure you've picked something that's going to work well.

The ultimate test is your interest. Are you interested in seeing the decisions this Kingdom makes? Do you think it will be engaging to see whether it goes down one road or another? If you do, it's a good basis for a Kingdom. If you don't, you're wasting your time: pick something else.

It is not enough to have a Kingdom that's an interesting backdrop. The Kingdom isn't just a backdrop. It's the shared heart of the game. In a way, it's another character in the game, a character all the players are fighting to control and play.

The back of this book is full of starting seeds for Kingdoms, but here are some things to double-check to make sure you have a good starting point for a Kingdom:

- ♦ Agree on Tone: The kind of Kingdom you pick is going to heavily influence the tone of your game. It's good to discuss tone upfront and make sure everyone expects the same thing. Do you want your Kingdom to be serious and grim? Light-hearted and zany? If you can't agree about the tone of your game, you are not going to have a good time. It's better to find that out as soon as possible.
- ♦ Simpler Is Better: When in doubt, choose something less exotic. The more fantastic the setting or characters become, the harder it will be to understand their issues or motives. If you can't put yourself in the characters' shoes, you'll have a hard time playing. That's true for any role-playing game, but perhaps more so in Kingdom since you have to speak to the issues that affect an entire community. You can play a Kingdom of talking trees. It works. But understand from the start that it will be more challenging than playing a village or a motorcycle gang.

- ♦ Clear Boundaries: Everyone at the table should understand what counts as part of the Kingdom and what doesn't. Not just physical boundaries, but a clear definition of who counts as members of the Kingdom and who doesn't. When someone says "the Kingdom", we may disagree about what we want the Kingdom to do, but we should be completely clear who we're talking about.
- ♦ Not Too Small: Your Kingdom must include a lot more people than just the characters you play. Practically that means your Kingdom should have at least twenty or thirty people. There is no upper limit. A Kingdom could have millions of people.
- ♦ Anyone Can Be Replaced: The Kingdom must be able to exist without your characters. There should be no one the Kingdom can't exist without, no matter what your propaganda says. The Emperor may tell his subjects the sun rises to please him, but if he died, someone else would just take the throne. A Kingdom that *requires* one of the characters to exist or participate is a bad Kingdom.
- ♦ Decision Maker: A Kingdom does not have to be completely independent, but it must be able to make decisions about its own behavior. Most Kingdoms are part of something greater than themselves: a hospital is part of the city around it which is part of a country which is part of the world. Any of those (hospital, city, country, world) could be your Kingdom.

As you set up your Kingdom, you may realize that the group you're really interested in is within or encompasses the Kingdom you thought you wanted to play. You thought your Kingdom was a city, but the more you think about it, the more you realize you really just want your Kingdom to be the police force of that city, or the nation around that city. Perfectly good. Go back to step one and adjust.

The Kingdom is the group whose decisions you are interested in playing out.

I Dare You to Challenge Me

When you push for things someone else's character doesn't want, but their player is interested in, you are doing that player a huge favor. You're shining a huge spotlight on what they care about and laying the groundwork for their character to fight for what they believe in. That's great stuff.

You may have your character do things that you know will drive other characters to Challenge or even Overthrow you. Don't be shy about it. Tell the other player "Yeah, I'm totally doing this because I know your character won't like it. I want to see what you're going to do about it." Dare them to stop you.

A Challenge or Overthrow might seem like a conflict, but since they only succeed when the challenger and the defender agree about what would work, it's actually about arriving at a consensus. That's really what a Challenge does: it creates a discussion between the two players to determine what it would take to get the job done. When you Challenge you put forward your plan, but you're also inviting the defender to agree or set a bar of their own.

Challenging something doesn't necessarily mean you don't like it. It means you care enough to do something about it. If you are driving the other players to act, you're doing something right.

Ask Questions, Think Out Loud

To play a good game, it's critical that you understand the characters—not just your own character, but everyone else's character as well. If there's something about a character you don't understand—why they are doing something or what they really think about a situation—just ask.

If a player asks a question about your character, answer honestly! Even if it is something your character is keeping secret, your game will be far more interesting and enjoyable if the players understand what is going on inside the character's heads. You may find that just thinking about the questions other players ask helps you understand your character better.

The smuggler captain is promising the authorities the coordinates of the rebel depot if they give her back her ship. But that would betray the people we thought she cared about.

She might do it. She might not. We'll find out later. But right now one of the players wants to know whether she's just pretending in order to fool the authorities or if she really is tempted to betray her friends. It's a pretty important insight into the character and the player is curious about what makes her tick.

If the smuggler's player tells the other players that, yes, she secretly would sell out the rebels, the other characters still won't know it. But in a later scene where the idealistic young rebel admits how much he idolizes the smuggler and wants to be just like her, as players we are riveted because we see the tragedy unfolding. That's good stuff.

Revealing what your character thinks is a powerful way to show the other players what your character is all about. But don't talk about what you are planning to have your character do in the future. Don't pre-play the game. Talk about what your character is thinking or feeling now.

Telegraph Your Role: Raise Your Hand

If you want to make it clear you are using your Role to make something happen, not just talking, raise your hand like you are taking an oath. This alerts the other players without breaking the flow of play. The other option is to reach toward the middle of the table and put your hand palm down: you are laying down truth. Either works so long as it's clear.

Characters in a scene can't necessarily tell the difference between idle talk and a Perspective character making a prediction or a Touchstone describing the mood of the people. Sometimes it's more entertaining if they don't. But the players need to know when fact is being established.

"If we cut power to Pod 6, it'll be a disaster! The whole sensor grid runs through there!" A Perspective character is talking, but the player doesn't want to declare a prediction yet. They're just warming up.

"Do you think we're idiots, Ryder? You know the secondary conduits will compensate for the load." This character has Power and the player is hoping to describe things in a plausible way so Perspective won't predict trouble.

No such luck. Ryder's player solemnly raises her hand to show that she is making her prediction. "Those circuits haven't been overhauled in years. If you run that much juice through them, they'll blow and black out the whole station."

No matter what the other character says, that's now an accurate prediction: if the Crossroad decision is Yes, there will be a blackout. The other player knows it, but decides his character is in denial. "What a load of crap, Ryder. You're just mad because Carter won't approve your pet project..."

Teaching Kingdom

You know who's awesome? People who teach other people how to play games. They are the unsung heroes of our hobby.

Make no mistake: teaching a game can be a lot of work. It requires you, the person who has read the book, to paraphrase the rules and communicate it to the other people at the table, hopefully quickly and efficiently enough that they do not get bored waiting to play. No pressure!

Kingdom is designed to make teaching as easy as possible. Important concepts are described in sections you can read out loud, saving you the time and energy of trying to put the rules into your own words. Each part of the game also follows explicit step-by-step procedures so you always know what to do next when a rule is invoked without hunting through the text.

This section includes additional tips for playing Kingdom with a group for the first time that will make your life easier and ensure your game goes as smoothly as possible. It's based on my personal experience sitting down to play Kingdom (and tons of other role-playing games) with lots of different people.

Yes, teaching people to game can be hard work, but you are providing a great public service. Don't worry! You're going to do fine.

Sitting Down

Before you even get to Kingdom, here are some basic tips that help with starting any game.

If you are sitting down with people who have never played the game before, I recommend being conservative about the number of players. For Kingdom that's three or four players total (including you). Each additional person disproportionately increases the complexity of teaching and learning the rules. It's no fun turning someone away, but adding more players potentially sabotages everyone's fun, including the person you are trying to include. That extra player is better off going and playing a different game now and playing a good game of Kingdom with you later.

Another solution you might consider is sitting out to make room for another player and then just teaching the group without playing: don't do it. *The best way to teach is by example.* If you are in the game, you can play well and demonstrate how things should work. If you aren't playing, you have to keep interrupting to make suggestions or corrections. I don't recommend it.

Seating arrangement is important but often overlooked. People role-play the best when they can face each other. The best option is a small table with

each player sitting on a different side so that each person can see everyone else. When players sit on the same side of a table, they can't see each other's reactions without turning all the way to one side which makes it harder for them to communicate and read each other. That can lead to awkward interactions.

If you are playing with strangers, take the time to go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves. Have each player fold an index card into a tent and write their name on it in big letters so everyone can read it. It's a simple but valuable tool: you may remember each other's names right now, but when the action starts and you are focused on what's happening in the game, it's easy forget to who is sitting across from you. You walk away from a game remembering the character they played but not their real name. Everyone should write their name on both sides of the card (as odd as that seems) so that anyone to the side can see their name too. Someone will joke about how that keeps them from forgetting their own name. Good. That means people are on the ball.

Introduce the Game

Have the players read the "Kingdoms are all around you..." introductory page aloud. Each player should read one section, then pass it to the next player. There are three sections, so if you have four players, each will read one while you sit quietly and listen.

Having them read aloud saves you the trouble of trying to explain the game. Instead you get a chance to relax and catch your breath. Your players may already know something about Kingdom: read it anyway. It gets everyone on the same page and it also has two more subtle benefits: it gets the players talking which warms them up for participating instead of sitting silently listening to you and it also gives you a chance to listen to them and hear how they communicate. If they're strangers, they might have barely said two words to you before this. Listening can tell you a lot about who you are dealing with.

Making the Kingdom

The big decision is whether to use a seed or build a Kingdom from scratch. If the group already has an idea for a Kingdom they want to play, by all means use it. Otherwise, you are probably better off using a seed to narrow the options and get started faster, particularly if you are playing with a group of strangers or you have a limited time slot.

The fastest way to pick a Kingdom seed is to select the genre first: fantasy, science fiction, historical period, or real world. Once everyone agrees on the genre, have them pick from that sub-list. Picking from only five or six seeds is much easier than brainstorming from a world of possibilities.

If they seem hesitant to choose, ask if there are any genres or seeds they strongly dislike. If anyone at the table strongly dislikes a particular choice, remove it from the list. You can narrow down choices quickly this way. You may not arrive at something that is anyone's first choice, but you should wind up with something that everyone is comfortable playing.

Avoid picking an exotic setting or Kingdom. It will be easier for the players to create and contribute if they can easily wrap their head around the situation and the people in it. The more exotic the setting, the harder that becomes. Save those ideas for later games of Kingdom after everyone understands how the rules work.

Making Characters

Complete each step together. Make sure each player tells the group what they have decided and that the players listen to each other. If players aren't paying attention or are skipping ahead to fill in the rest of their character, stop and explain that it's important that players make their characters together, both because each decision influences the next choice and because the game is ultimately a collaboration. If you don't understand the other characters, you can't play the game well.

If people are stumped for ideas, encourage them to just go with something obvious. Characters gain complexity and depth as you play.

Your Character

Because you are busy teaching and helping other players, you may be too distracted to give a lot of thought to your own character. That's normal.

- ♦ Take either Perspective or Touchstone, preferably Perspective. Don't start off with Power.
- ♦ Make an obvious character who is directly involved in what the Kingdom does. Don't be afraid to start with a stereotype. If there's a figure that no one has chosen, consider taking that character. To be honest, you'll probably be distracted for most of the game, so sticking to something simple will make it easier for you to play.

There are two reasons to take something other than Power. First, you are teaching the rules so you're already in a position of authority. Starting off as Power overemphasizes that dynamic. Players are already looking to you to

verify that they are playing correctly, so if you also have Power in the game, they may be uncomfortable challenging your character.

Second, and more importantly, Power is the most obvious Role to play and needs the least explanation. Playing Perspective or Touchstone lets you demonstrate how they work. Also, Perspective gives you a lot of opportunity to create trouble for the Kingdom if things are going too smoothly and to demonstrate how a player can introduce things that their own character might not like.

Play

Fill out the starting cards and put them on the table, then read the “Kingdom In a Nutshell” section out loud, taking turns just like before.

You can make the first Crossroad yourself or ask if anyone has an idea. Personally I like to let someone else make the first Crossroad, but you may have to do some handholding to make sure the Crossroad is valid (it’s a decision the Kingdom is making, not something that happens to the Kingdom) and that it’s something that interests everyone.

For the first few scenes, don’t worry about Challenges, Changing Roles or Overthrowing. Let players get used to their Roles and the setting. Let them role-play and get in-character. The whole first Crossroad is likely to be a learning experience. Once the players see how their actions impact how the Crossroad resolves, they are likely to start playing more aggressively.

The two big mistakes to watch for are people acting as though they have a Role they don’t have and making scenes that do not relate to the Crossroad. If someone is using a Role they don’t have, point it out. Make it clear that they can say whatever they want, but if they do not have Perspective, it isn’t a fact, etc. Make it clear that Roles have mechanical power.

If players start to drift and make scenes or invent plots that do not relate to the Crossroad, remind them that the Crossroad is the topic we’ve all agreed to explore right now. Save other ideas for later Crossroads.

Ending the Game

It’s best to end the game by resolving either a Crossroad, a Crisis or Time Passes. Keep an eye on the time. If you think you only have room for one more Crossroad, point that out when the player is creating it so everyone at the table knows this is going to be the last chapter of your game.

Have fun!

Discussion

Roles are the core of the game. They define your character and how you, as a player, can interact with the game. But each Role plays very differently. Each puts unique tools in your hands.

Power

Without a doubt, Power is the most obvious and direct Role: you have your character tell the Kingdom to do something and it obeys. Your character is taking action to get what they want.

But because of the friendly and social nature of gamers, Power players are sometimes hesitant to actually use their authority. The crux of your Role is that you're in charge, but a player at the table may balk at throwing their weight around. It may feel antisocial.

Is that okay? Can you still have Power if you never do anything with it? Sure. It's actually a fairly common situation in the real world. Power isn't *required* to do anything until the Crossroad resolves and even then you can opt to not vote. A weak leader who refuses to make a decision has the same effect as a Power vacuum. If the player can't visualize how their character could wield authority, sooner or later they probably should change Roles just so they have a Role that lets them contribute to the game.

It's easy to forget that you can just as easily reward people for doing what you want as punish them for opposing you. Power does not have to be abrasive. You have carrots as well as sticks. Want some insurance? Give orders to reward characters if the Crossroad turns out the way you want. That gives them a reason to go along with you and keep you in Power, just like in the real world.

In some ways, Power's real job is to keep the Kingdom intact. Think about it. The Kingdom is the basis of your authority. If the Kingdom falls, you lose that authority. Keep the people happy and avoid dangerous predictions and you get to stay on top. If Power decides that they don't care if the Kingdom survives, it is a recipe for catastrophe. All the normal checks and balances go out the window.

Touchstone

Some people see Touchstone as the weakest of the three Roles, but it has the greatest raw power to instantly define the Kingdom. With a single utterance you can change who we are. All a Touchstone character has to do is mutter "Eh, sure I do the rituals, but I don't really believe in any of that religious stuff" and instantly the Kingdom is a lot less pious than we thought. Power

can make the Kingdom do things, but it can't control what the Kingdom thinks or believes. It's a world of difference.

Unlike Perspective's predictions, Touchstone's influence is immediate. Attitudes take effect as soon as you speak. Predictions are true as soon as the Perspective says them, but they only bear fruit when the Crossroad is resolved.

A classic Touchstone mistake is to think your character has to say what the people think ("I heard people grumbling about the elections...") instead of just showing what your character thinks ("I'm mad about the election!"). Here's a tip: play your character like they don't even know they are a Touchstone. Don't have them talk about what other people think. Just have them talk about what they think. As players, we know that reflects the popular attitude.

Why don't we write popular attitudes down on the Crossroad card? For one, they don't depend on the Crossroad resolving. They can also be extremely volatile, changing whenever Touchstone's attitude changes. But there's another reason and it's one of Kingdom's dirty secrets: the game intentionally makes it easy to ignore the people. Yep, it's true. You have to make an effort to keep track of what the people want. You can't just look at the card. It may seem trivial, but watch what happens when you play. Touchstone also goes last during Crossroad resolution, so if you make them mad, they can retaliate by burning the Kingdom down with Crisis. Which is exactly how it should be: if you forget that you only have a Kingdom because people agree to be part of it, you're in trouble. It's a mistake Kingdoms have made since the dawn of time.

Perspective

If you want to cause trouble and generate drama, Perspective is the Role for you. You are the best equipped to create friction for other characters and push them to make hard decisions. And because your character is not responsible for what you predict, you can get away with murder without being the bad guy.

Perspective gets to decide what the Crossroad is really about. We all know the question that was stated when the Crossroad was introduced, but predictions show us the real consequences and issues involved. The Crossroad asks whether we will open a new wing of the hospital, but Perspective shows us that the decision will decide whether the hospital attracts fresh talent or withers in obscurity. Perspective gets to slap a big price tag on the Crossroad and ask if the Kingdom is really willing to pay it.

But be warned: even if it's not your character's fault, just like in the real world, people may feel a strong urge to shoot the messenger, possibly even more so because they know that you (the player) are making the prediction true. They may want to unfairly punish your character for the decisions you make as a player.

Just like Power, you don't always have to predict trouble. You can predict good outcomes too. Reward behaviors you like. Or maybe reward really bad choices just to tempt people to do horrible things. You can use a carrot for evil and you can use a stick for good.

An Enlightened Despot

There's a question that Kingdom players always ask: if you can only ever have a single Role, how can you be a wise and compassionate ruler? If you have Power, then by definition you can't have Perspective or Touchstone. Leaders in Kingdom seem doomed to be ignorant and out-of-touch.

The solution is simple. All you have to do is agree with everything the Perspective and Touchstone players establish.

When Perspective warns that raiding the lowlands will lead to war, agree that they're absolutely right. By the rules they're already right, but by agreeing you show that your character sees the truth too. That shows you are wise.

When Touchstone says that no foreign warlord is going to scare them off from raiding the lowlands and therefore the people of the Kingdom feel the same way, say you feel the same too. If you have the same attitudes as the Touchstone character, you share the same attitudes as the people just like they do.

You still have Power, but you also understand the Kingdom and are in sync with the people. You're an enlightened ruler. Easy.

The difference is which player calls the shots. Your Power character might foresee the same things the Perspective character does and feel the same way the Touchstone character does, but it's the Perspective player who is predicting what's going to happen and the Touchstone player who's deciding the attitude of the people. You're just following along and dancing to their tune.

The moral of the story is that your character can be a perfect ruler—if you are willing to let the other players take control.

Musical Chairs, Sans Scarcity

Kingdom is designed to emulate the way real organizations work. I divided people up among the three Roles, not just because they create an interesting dynamic in play, but because they seem (to me) to reflect the dynamics of actual groups—which is probably exactly why they are interesting in play.

But first and foremost, Kingdom is a game. Modeling the real world takes a back seat to play. And as a game, it's critical not to confuse the experience of the characters in the Kingdom with the experience of the players at the table.

In a real organization, a person might have their input ignored, their voice taken away or be stepped on by those in authority, and all that can happen to characters in a Kingdom. But as a player, it's reasonable to expect that your contributions will have an impact on the game and that you won't be ignored. You are there to play, so nothing should take away your ability to contribute.

Even when someone usurps your throne, burns down your castle and locks you in the darkest dungeon, you are still an equal participant in the game. If they Overthrow your Role, you immediately take another with full rights to contribute, just in a different way than before.

In many ways the game is musical chairs, but without scarcity. If you lose one seat, there is always another waiting for you. Nothing in the rules can kick you out of the game or take away your ability to play.

The flip side is that we all share (and potentially fight over) the Kingdom. The entire structure is a balancing act between players. The rules let each player push as hard as they want to make the Kingdom be what they want, but go too far and the other players push back.

What's Your Kingdom For?

There is an unspoken question at the heart of every Kingdom game: What is your Kingdom for? What does it exist to do?

In early versions of the rules, each player decided what their character thought the Kingdom was for during character creation (the "Charter") with no two answers alike. Just like Wishes/Fears, those differences highlighted different expectations the characters had about the Kingdom.

But over time it became clear that was backwards. "What's our Kingdom for?" was the center of the game, the axis everything revolves around. The whole game is about asking that question and fighting over the answer. It's the fruitful void. Just writing it down as a line on your character sheet defeated the purpose.

Game Variants

You can play a whole variety of Kingdoms in different settings, genres and tones. But even beyond playing different kinds of Kingdoms, there are alternate ways you can play the game.

Two-Player Kingdom

Kingdom is designed for three to five players, but you can play it with only two players with slight modifications.

Increase the checkboxes on all cards by one (as though there were three players instead of two). When you create the Bonds between your characters, each player should make something different. That will give the characters two different connections to each other and build a more interesting relationship between them.

Because there are only two characters, at least one Role will be a vacant during every Crossroad resolution. It's unavoidable. Part of the pressure the characters face will be deciding which Role they leave uncontrolled. Power vacuums will stalemate and prolong the Crossroad. Touchstone and Perspective vacuums can harm the Kingdom, but because there are only two players, there is a 50/50 chance that both players will pick the same number of fingers, resulting in no bad outcome.

Pawns, Not Kings

Power is the only Role that requires a character to have a specific relationship with the Kingdom: you have to be in a position where other characters in the Kingdom would listen to what you tell them and obey your orders. Perspective and Touchstone, on the other hand, are entirely internal. No one else in the Kingdom has to recognize that you have Perspective or Touchstone for it to be true and your character does not have to interact with the Kingdom in any particular way to have those Roles. You could be anyone.

This distinction becomes important when you consider the station of the characters in the Kingdom. If you want to play a star-spanning empire containing thousands of worlds, the logical conclusion is that, to have Power, you have to be someone who could tell the empire what to do: an emperor, minister, etc. You have to be at the top. But a Touchstone or Perspective character could be anyone in that empire, from the emperor down to a lowly mechanic on an isolated mining asteroid. They don't have to be important people within the Kingdom to fulfill those Roles.

It's essential that all the main characters can interact, so if some have to be at the top to be Power, it follows that all the characters have to be

near enough to the top that they can have relationships. It can be hard to imagine scenes where the Emperor of Known Space hangs out with the rugged asteroid prospector.

But there's another option. Instead of playing Power characters that have authority themselves, you can play "pawn" Power characters who represent the authority above them. They have Power because the off-screen chain-of-command vests it in them. As a player, you decide what that authority above you commands, but as a character you are merely agreeing and carrying out orders.

With "pawn" Powers, you can play huge Kingdoms from small points of view. You can play a vast stellar empire while restricting all the characters and the action to a single station on a remote world in that empire. A "pawn" Power could be the security officer of the base who reflects the decisions of the entire empire. The local action reflects the entire Kingdom.

Playing a "pawn" Power character is advanced Kingdom. It's not for beginners. There are some critical requirements that must be followed for it to work:

- ♦ The authority your character answers to must be off-screen. No one else is allowed to play a supporting character that's above you in the chain-of-command because that would let them tell you what to do and undermine your Power as a player.
- ♦ Your character must agree with the decisions that you (as a player) are handing down. If your character does not agree with their orders, they aren't Power anymore.
Change Roles.

If you decide to play a "pawn" Power, make sure to tell the other players what you are doing. Explain where your Power is coming from.

Always be clear what your Kingdom is. It's completely valid to play a Kingdom that is a single station inside a vast stellar empire, just as it's valid to play a Kingdom that's a vast stellar empire, but focus all the action inside a single station (using pawn Powers). The Kingdom you pick is the group whose decisions you are interested in playing out.

Mixing with Microscope

Kingdom and Microscope are very different games. They take entirely different approaches to how players contribute and interact at the table.

But even though they fill different niches, each can potentially complement the other. You can use Microscope to follow the repercussions of your Kingdom's decisions or explore the world that made the Kingdom what it is. And you can use Kingdom to examine a specific chunk of your Microscope history, to drill down and play out the action in a particular place and time.

A lot of this applies to combining Microscope with any other role-playing game. One of Microscope's strengths is that you can create a whole history as a setting for another game. But Kingdom is a closer fit than most other role-playing games because it explores the decisions and changes of a community or organization, not just the actions of individuals. The critical decisions made at Crossroads tie right back into historical turning points that you would highlight in a Microscope game.

Do you start with Kingdom and then zoom out to explore the larger world with Microscope, or do you start with Microscope and then zoom in to explore a particular part of your history with Kingdom?

Kingdom first, then Microscope

So you've played a game of Kingdom, but the Kingdom you made is too interesting to walk away from. Maybe you want to zoom out and see what happens next, or maybe you want to go back and see how the world got to where it was when you played.

Basically there are three options for creating a Microscope history based on your Kingdom game:

- ◆ Future History: You want to explore what happens next, so you have your Microscope history start after your Kingdom game ended. Your history could start immediately afterwards, or it could be years or centuries later, as you prefer.
- ◆ Past History: You want to explore the events that led up to your Kingdom, so you make a Microscope history that precedes your Kingdom game. What happened in your Kingdom game comes after your final Microscope Period.
- ◆ Surrounding History: You want to explore before, after and maybe even during your Kingdom game, so you put it somewhere inside the Microscope history. Your Kingdom game took place during some Period of the Microscope history you're going to make. It might be square in the middle of the history, or it might be toward the middle or the end. You might have no clear idea yet, but either way you'll be able to build all around your Kingdom.

If you use the third option and put your Kingdom timeline inside of your Microscope history, you have the option to put your Kingdom game in the start or end Period. That may seem the same as putting it before or after the history but it isn't: if the events of your Kingdom game are inside the Microscope timeline, even if it's in the bookend Periods, anyone can make Events that happen during your Kingdom game.

Because you already know a lot about the world you're making, you'll probably find that setting up your history is easy. The flip side is that you might have very strong ideas about what you want to happen. That's okay, but remember the cardinal Microscope rule: by playing you are giving up control. You are going to be surprised.

Stick to the normal procedures. Don't let setup expand into pre-playing the game. The Palette is an important checkpoint, as always. That's where you're going to decide how many new and surprising concepts you want to bring into your game, things you might not have known about the world from your Kingdom game. Remember: after the palette there shouldn't be any surprising content.

If your Kingdom game is inside one of the Microscope Periods, then right after you finish Palette but before the First Pass, place your Kingdom game in the history. If your Kingdom is inside a Period other than the bookends, brainstorm and create that Period now. Also put down at least two or three Event cards that describe important incidents you played out in your Kingdom game. Crossroads and Crises are obvious choices, but any major change in the Kingdom works, like someone taking Power and Overthrowing the government. You don't need to recreate your entire Kingdom game, just put down a few placeholders to work with.

During play, consider anything that happened in your Kingdom game to have the same validity as something that happened during your Microscope game: you cannot contradict it.

If the Kingdom is inside the history, players can add Events or Dictated Scenes that recount things you played out during the Kingdom game with the caveat that they are not allowed to change or twist what happened. Unlike normal Microscope contributions, if someone is making history that describes what happened in the Kingdom game, other players can participate and discuss to make sure the description is accurate.

You could even play Microscope Scenes to explore things that happened in your Kingdom that you had not seen before—creating new content instead of just recounting things that you had already played out. As always, you can't change what you already know to be true, so a Scene right before the big election can't change what happens next.

One caveat is that, if you make a Scene including the main character someone played in the Kingdom game, that player has first dibs to play

their own character regardless of the normal order of play. No one can play another person's Kingdom character without that player's consent.

Your history might relate heavily back to your Kingdom or it might spin into new territory. That's up to you. The Foci you choose will strongly influence which way you go.

Microscope first, then Kingdom

You might have played a Microscope game and been so fascinated by some part of it that you want to jump in and play it as a Kingdom. Or it might have been your plan all along to play Microscope to create a setting for another game.

Either way, you've already got a history made and now you're going to play Kingdom to explore some part of it. You probably already have an organization or community from your Microscope history to play as your Kingdom, but double-check to make sure it meets all the qualifications of a good Kingdom. Is it large enough? Does it have clear boundaries or membership? Are you interested in seeing the decisions the Kingdom makes and how it changes? This last one is important: it isn't enough for it to just be a cool or interesting setting. It has to be a setting you want to see change.

Just like before, you have three options: play after the Microscope history, play before the history, or play within the history.

If you are playing inside the history, decide exactly where your game is starting. Pick a Period and imagine you're putting down a new Event as the start of your Kingdom game. If appropriate, you might also note when the Kingdom was founded.

Before you follow the steps for making your Kingdom, take some time and review what has happened in the history leading up to this point. Then pause and review what you (as players) know is *going* to happen in the future, the things that your characters don't know but which will definitely occur. There might be things in the history that are going to have direct and possibly drastic impacts on your Kingdom. You might know about things that will destroy or utterly transform your Kingdom or the world around it.

But here's the important thing: you don't want to absolutely know how your Kingdom is going to turn out. You want to make sure you've got enough room to make meaningful decisions during your game. There has to be some unknown for you to explore.

For now just review and take note. Don't discuss what might happen in your game or how those future elements might arise. They might inspire Threats or Crossroads you confront later on, but don't pre-play your Kingdom game.

Facts about the future from your Microscope game may seem to doom or protect your Kingdom. But if you think of it in Microscope terms, it actually doesn't limit what happens in your game. If your history shows that your Kingdom is destroyed later on, that does not protect it from being destroyed earlier. It just means that, if the Kingdom is destroyed, it is going to rise from the ashes in some form only to be destroyed again later. Its descendant could be a much different beast than you thought, the same Kingdom in name only. The opposite is true as well: just because you know the Kingdom survives until much later doesn't mean it can't be destroyed now, only to rise again in some form later on.

Just like when you play Microscope, you may know a start and an end, but the middle may turn out to be more complicated than you expected. You may see that the road from point A to point B took a lot of twists and turns instead of going in the straight line you anticipated. Those surprises are the point of playing, after all.

...Or Back and Forth

If you want something even more experimental, you can go back and forth between Microscope and Kingdom, interweaving the present action of Kingdom with the past / future / larger world of Microscope. Alternate sessions or play both in the same sitting, playing through a Focus after each Crossroad.

Will it work? Or will it blow your mind? Give it a try.



KINGDOM SEEDS

Using Kingdom Seeds

If you do not have time to brainstorm an idea for a Kingdom from scratch or you just need something to get you started, you can use one of these seeds to get going quickly.

But these seeds are not complete Kingdoms. There are questions you have to answer and blank spots you have to fill in. They provide material to get you started, but they still depend on you to contribute and customize them to make a Kingdom you want to play. That is intentional because building your Kingdom together is an important part of the process. When you are finished, it will be *your* Kingdom, something everyone at the table owns, not just something you read out of a book.

Once you have picked a seed, read the introductory text aloud so that everyone has a good sense of what the Kingdom is about. Each seed starts with a list of questions to customize your setting. The whole group should read each question together and pick an answer, or make up answers of your own instead of picking one. The important part is that everyone discuss and agree.

After that, follow the normal procedure for starting your game. At each step, use the lists provided to give you ideas to choose from. For example, when you brainstorm the threats to your Kingdom, you could pick or modify the ideas provided or make up your own. Some lists have a lot of choices, some only a few: they vary based on how many examples seemed useful. Not all lists have enough items to go around, so you will have to start coming up with ideas and making the Kingdom your own.

Each seed also includes a few ideas for Crossroads your Kingdom could confront. Some may seem more or less fitting depending on how you have customized your Kingdom. Again, use them, modify them, or make entirely different Crossroads of your own. Some Crossroads also include longer descriptions you can use to paint the picture of how and why the Crossroad is confronting your Kingdom. If you use a Crossroad that does not include a description, improvise your own!

All the Kingdom seeds are presented in alphabetical order, but they are listed here grouped by setting so you can choose a Kingdom that suits your interests.

To pick a seed, agree on a genre first (real world, historical period, sci fi or fantasy) and then only look at the choices in that category. That narrows down your options and gets you playing quickly.

REAL WORLD

Daily Sentinel

A newspaper that's a bastion of old school journalism. Can it survive in an age of digital media and sound-bite reporting?

Grottos & Griffons

The grandfather of all role-playing games. What's next for G&G? Edition Wars and retro-clones! Corporate takeovers and open gaming licenses!

Kid's Television Workshop

A small studio devoted to making positive children's programming. With muppets!

Kuligar Wildlife Refuge

A sanctuary in the African veldt protecting endangered species from poachers and encroaching development.

Sawyer Memorial Hospital

Dedicated doctors trying to make a difference and still make enough money to keep the doors open.

HISTORICAL PERIOD

Banana Republic

A Central American nation in the 1950s, exploited by foreign investors and its own corrupt government. Viva la Revolution!

Bandits in the Sheriff's Wood

Robbing from the rich and (maybe) giving to the poor. Longbows and Lincoln green.

Cactus Flats

A frontier town in the Old West. Rustlers and ranchers. Settlers and outlaws.

HMS Rubicon

A British frigate flying His Majesty's colours halfway around the world in the age of cannon and sail.

Lost Legion

Countless leagues from Rome, a single Legion faces a long march home through a sea of foes.

SCI FI

Battleship Orion

A rag-tag fugitive fleet seeking a new home for the last remnant of humanity.

Lost in Luxury Space

Disaster has left a cruise ship adrift among the stars. Will the passengers lift a hand to help or just keep slurping down tropical drinks and playing shuffleboard?

Mech-Police

Cops fighting crime with giant robots.

Partisans of Rigel IV

Alien invaders have taken over the colony, but the resistance refuses to yield the world they made their home.

Starfall

Weapon-smith to the galaxy, their creations have no equal in known space. The new calculus of war is simple: the side that Starfall arms, wins.

FANTASY

Banner of the Black Serpent

Mercenary knights fighting for gold or glory.

Dwarf Mountain

The dragon drove them out, but now the dwarves have returned to rebuild the realm of their forefathers.

Eshbal, the Door of Hardship

Wealthy and cultured border city that guards the Empire from foreign “barbarians”.

Eye of Osiris

Idle rich dabbling in séances and mysticism in the cosmopolitan 1920s.

Hammer of the Gods

Deities and demi-gods toy with the fate of mortal heroes.

Santa's Workshop

Santa's on vacation and the elves are in charge. Can they carry on Xmas without him?

Winterhook's School for Wayward Wizards

Is it a hidden sanctum to protect the gifted from the dangers of the world or a prison to protect the world from them?

BANANA REPUBLIC

A small country in Central America in the 1950s. Its entire economy depends on one crop: bananas. They are harvested at plantations and carried to the port where they are loaded on foreign ships and sold in foreign markets by foreign companies who pocket the profits. The military, the corrupt politicians and the wealthy landowners are paid huge kickbacks to keep those profits flowing out of the country.

Foreign dollars build railroads, better ports, better military bases: everything they need to keep the profits flowing efficiently and keep the country under control. There is one major city, the capitol, which is also the port where exports flow out to fill foreign coffers.

That foreign money keeps the elite in power. The people? They get next to nothing.

That's a banana republic. The bananas must flow.

For the US of A, it's a win-win: an American company makes a lot of money and (with a little help from the CIA) makes sure that the people in charge are pro-American, not some Communist beachhead fermenting South of the border. But if the Revolution came and the Communists did take over and free the workers from the shackles of their oppressors, would they really have the people's interests at heart? Or would it be just another puppet regime with someone else pulling the strings?

The Kingdom is the country and the people who are part of it, from the wealthy regime to the poor workers in the fields. It also includes the American businessmen in the country and CIA advisors assigned to keep the country in friendly hands because they are all committed to the fate of the Kingdom and the decisions it makes.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Our fictional Central American country is [Costa Carena | Anchuria | Costaguana | Santa Bandura]
- The nation's whole economy hinges on the export of one crop: [bananas | coffee beans | cotton | tobacco]
- The foreign company that controls the produce industry is [United Produce Company | Standard Imports | World Farmers United], usually referred to simply as "The Company".

THREATS

- Blight has been hurting the crops. It's going to be a poor harvest.
- Underground press. Revolutionary leaflets have been appearing all over the capital.

- Rebels have been causing trouble in the backcountry. They attack and then fade back into the hills.
- Wealth disparity. The workers get nothing. The elite get everything.
- Police corruption. They spend more time cracking down on labor organizers and dissenters than enforcing the law.
- The last election was cancelled.
- A United States Navy destroyer, the *Cunningham*, is sitting outside the harbor. Just... sitting there. A graphic reminder of foreign power.

LOCATIONS

- Grand Ballroom of the Presidential Palace. Pull a huge table out into the middle of the floor and it's a great place for meetings or audiences.
- Harbor. Where crates and crates of exports are loaded onto foreign ships bound for foreign ports.
- Military barracks. Protects the capital but also keeps it under control.
- Police station and jail. You're more likely to get thrown in jail for speaking out against the government or The Company than for committing a crime.
- Radio station. Is it the propaganda arm of the government or a seditious voice of the people?
- Fountain square in the center of the capital.
- Cathedral. A gleaming white beacon of hope right in the middle of the city.
- Plaza cafe. Sip coffee, complain about the weather, talk about revolution. Quietly.
- Plantation near the city.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- El Jefe. The boss. The military dictator running the country. General something or other.
- El Presidente. Were you elected honestly or was it just a nice bit of theatre?
- Military leader. A General or Colonel commanding the armed forces but not necessarily the head of the country. Yet. (If the dictator calls himself General, you're a Colonel. Otherwise, you could be a General.)
- Chief of Police. Root out revolutionaries. Arrest troublemakers. Oh, and enforce the law. The line between the police and the military might be quite blurry, depending on who is running the government.
- CIA advisor. You can't go home until you finish the job here. Anyone can spot you as an American from a hundred yards away.

- Wealthy landowner. Your plantations run themselves, giving you time to enjoy the finer things in life and socialize with your fellow elite here in the capital.
- Silver spoon. Heir to a substantial fortune built on the backs of the workers. You will never have to work a day in your life. You may or may not be happy about that.
- Labor organizer. United we stand; divided we fall. It's a dangerous occupation.
- Educated intellectual. Schooled overseas in the writings of all the great thinkers. An armchair revolutionary or regime apologist?
- Black sheep revolutionary. Committed to the revolution, but closely related to someone in the regime or the corporate profiteers selling out the country. Awkward.

If you have both a dictator and a president, you will have to sort out whether they are initially in collusion, are rivals or one has been deposed. The Roles you pick will tell you a lot.

NAMES

Female: Alma, Berenice, Bonita, Carmen, Clarissa, Consuela, Dolores, Esmerelda, Lucila, Soledad, Teresa

Male: Arturo, Carlos, Cesar, Ernesto, Gilberto, Hector, Javier, Jorge, Miguel, Quito, Raul

Surnames: Aguilar, Alvarado, Castillo, Cruz, Dia, Guzman, Mendez, Morales, Pena, Perez, Reyes, Rivera, Segura, Soto, Torres, Vega

Americans: Baker, Carter, Hayes, Honeycutt, Madison, Simms, Smith, Thorpe, Wilder, Wilson

CROSSROADS

- Hold Presidential elections?
- Give the workers the week off for the festival celebrating the nation's birth?
- Remove the Chief Justice, the highest judge in the country? He has recently upheld the rights of citizens to freely gather, protest and strike.
- Allow the USA to build a naval base here?
- Nationalize the export crop? Seize all Company assets in the country and hold the profits for the nation.

- Kick villagers out of their homes to make room for another plantation?

NOTES

There may be characters in this Kingdom who are in direct opposition: it seems unlikely that Communist revolutionaries would have any common ground with a military dictator selling out the country to foreign Capitalists, but you might be surprised how events unfold. Some characters may also seem to clearly be “the bad guys”: just consider that a challenge to flesh them out more and make them interesting people. Can you play a military dictator or CIA operative and show how their actions might really do the Kingdom some good or at least prevent an even worse fate than the system they’re supporting? That’s good character development.

Inspired by Major Wesely's fourth Braunstein game (circa 1968), starring Dave Arneson as the crafty student revolutionary, not to mention all the real banana republics of the world.

BANDITS IN THE SHERIFF'S WOOD

The Sheriff's tax collectors squeeze the last penny from every village and hamlet. Those that protest are dragged to the dungeons by his mailed men-at-arms. But under the eaves of the so-called Sheriff's Wood, the tables are turned and it is the Sheriff's men who walk in fear for the bandits there are free men who defy the tyrant and his unjust laws.

The common folk for miles around look to them as heroes and gleefully whisper the latest tales of how they made a fool of the hated Sheriff. But are the bandits truly rebels defying the tyranny of an unjust lord, or common criminals hiding from justice and greedy for loot? Sure, they're robbing from the rich, but are they remembering to give to the poor?

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Our band of outlaws formed [slowly as renegades hiding in the wood drifted together and found common purpose | when one voice defied the Sheriff and called others to join the fight | when a whole gang of the Sheriff's prisoners made a fortunate escape]
- The weapons of the day are swords and spears for melee, but at range one uses [longbows | longbows or crossbows, if you are wealthy | crude muskets]
- The realm is [missing its true and just King who is crusading overseas | divided by bickering Dukes with no clear heir to the crown | under the thumb of invading lords from across the sea]
- People of the realm feel the Church to be [the unshakeable root of faith | merely another tool for the mighty to lord over the weak | a foreign intruder driving out the old traditions]

THREATS

- The Sheriff has spent lavishly to hire more soldiers to hunt us down.
- Villagers expect us to protect them even if that means fighting in the open.
- Church has threatened to excommunicate us.
- We are fewer and fewer. Deserters slink away in the night every week.
- We are growing too numerous to remain hidden.

LOCATIONS

- Fiddler's Glen where criminals were hung from the old oak.
- A high bough of the lookout tree where bandits hide and watch the main road leading through the wood.

- Bonfire circle in the center of the bandits' camp.
- Saint Rudold's shrine. Abandoned chapel, covered with moss.
- Old stone well, deep in the forest.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- Young villager bent on vengeance. Got this scar from the Sheriff's men.
- True criminal. A highwayman who robbed travelers long before joining this band. Do the others know?
- Noble, unjustly stripped of his title and lands
- Friar. Leads the bandits in prayer and prays for forgiveness after cracking heads.
- Poor hunter. Condemned for poaching in the King's forest, now puts his arrows in other prey

NAMES

Female: Arleigh, Beda, Blythe, Edda, Faye, Hailey, Hazel, Hedda, Lil, Nell, Scarlet, Tamara

Male: Alric, Cenric, Cuthbert, Edric, Godric, Harper, Hausley, Heath, Layne, Oswin, Penn, Pike, Shaw, Tate, Wyatt, Wynne

CROSSROADS

- Rob the wealthy pilgrims who pass through the forest bound for Rome?
A declaration from Rome has led many to seek the pilgrim's road. The Bishop of Exeter has decreed that pilgrims walk under the Church's mantle no matter what road they travel and no god-fearing man should hinder them.
- Try to rescue our fellow bandit Rurik from being executed?
Rurik was captured by the Sheriff's men while he was dallying in a village. Now the Sheriff has proclaimed far and wide that the bandit scum will be publicly beheaded so that all may witness that no one escapes the long arm of the law. The execution is to take place within the walls of the Sheriff's heavily-guarded keep.
- Give some of our hard-won loot to the struggling villagers?

NOTES

Inspired by assorted stories and movies of Robin Hood and the Merry Men of Sherwood Forest.

BANNER OF THE BLACK SERPENT

The Banner of the Black Serpent is an order of knights who fought valiantly for the realm. As a reward for the blood they shed, they were granted lands, strongholds and the right to bear arms in the realm, yet they stand beholden to no other lord.

Now they are an army apart from the normal feudal hierarchy. Do they protect the throne that rewarded them? Or do they sell their swords to the highest bidder? Do they fight for gold, glory or the honor of the Banner?

The Kingdom is the order of knights and all their men-at-arms and associated servants. Their holdings are inside the realm they fought for (a feudal kingdom with a lower case 'k'), but in play you will explore the decisions and fate of the Banner, not the realm around them.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- The Banner was granted its own charter and lands [ten years ago in the days of the previous king | decades ago | last year]
- The knights of the Banner were rewarded for [defending the realm against invaders | helping the king crush usurpers within his realm | crusading in foreign lands | clever political maneuvering: they played the nobles against the king who finally bought the knights' loyalty back.]
- Chivalry and the code of honor in battle is [dead and forgotten: knights are warriors and soldiers | still embraced by some knights but not all | the standard all knights hold themselves to] Note: Not having a chivalrous code of conduct does not mean there is no personal honor.

THREATS

- Dukes want us disbanded. We threaten their power.
- Our patron, the King who favored us, has died.
- Our glory is in decline. Our knights are fewer and less valorous than they once were.
- Bad blood. There is much feuding and rivalry within the Banner.
- We hunger for war. It has been peaceful for too long.
- A great war is spreading towards this realm.

LOCATIONS

- Hall of Brothers. Banquet and meeting hall where all knights of the Banner speak with equal voice.

- Black Tower. Highest tower of the castle, where the leaders of the Banner hold private council on matters of war and command.
- Chapel of the Sword. Resting place of the founder's sword. Knights come here to swear upon it and one stands vigil over it day and night.
- Hall of the Fallen. Lined with statues of great heroes of the Banner (some may predate its technical founding).
- Field of Arms. Courtyard where knights practice, train and spar.
- The Armory. Chamber after chamber packed with sword, spear, mail and shield. Steel enough to gird an army.
- The stables. What's a knight without a horse?
- On the battlements. Looking out over the lands or up at the grey sky.
- Forest of Kederic. Where knights go to hunt, ride or simply be away from their brothers.

Many of these locations are set in the castle that is the Banner's primary stronghold, but the Banner does not have to be limited to a place. If the whole Banner marched to war, you could have scenes in command tents and on the field of battle.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Grizzled knight-commander. Bastion of the old-guard. Believes in the traditions the Banner has always followed.
- Veteran knight who has won many victories but never sought station beyond his own sword.
- Zealous knight. A true believer who sees a higher purpose than the Banner should follow.
- Warrior-chaplain, leads the knights in prayer and then rides with them to smite the enemies of the Banner. A true believer or merely following traditions?
- Indulgent knight. Now spends more hours conquering mutton and wine than with lance, sword or horse.
- Son of a Knight. Can he live up to his father's achievements in the Banner? Is his father still here, casting his shadow over his son?
- Scheming man-at-arms. Not a knight but sworn to their service. Few secrets escape his ears.

NAMES

Amleth, Anwell, Baden, Gaius, Gareth, Kell, Mallus, Mangrin, Noman, Ostreck, Percival, Prynn, Sigun, Torman, Whelan

CROSSROADS

- Sell our swords to an enemy of this realm?
- Attack Duke Gorsedd?

The Duke is no friend of the Banner. He has spoken against us publicly, claiming our charter makes a mockery of age-old traditions and should be abolished. Even now, he tries to provoke his fellow Dukes to band against us, but he has not yet drawn sword. Should we strike first and ride to war against him even though he is a lord of our same realm?

- Allow foreign knights to enlist in the Banner?
- Drive off the war refugees squatting on our lands and seeking our protection?

NOTES

Originally played with Ashley Cook, Caroline Hobbs and Jonathan Borzilleri.

BATTLESHIP ORION

The Colonies have been annihilated, but a rag-tag fugitive fleet has escaped to start a new life beyond the stars. Can the refugees find a world to call home, somewhere far away and safe from the enemies who would destroy them? Or will they turn against each other and extinguish the last hope for humanity?

The Kingdom is the entire Fleet, a chaotic mix of civilian and commercial starships that were lucky enough to escape the destruction of the Colonies. Their sole protector is the warship *Orion*, the last (known) survivor of the mighty Colonial armada.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- The Colonies were destroyed [in savage sneak attack, completely unforeseen | at the end of a protracted, but hopeless war | after a desperate military gamble to turn the tide of war left them defenseless]
- The enemy are [androids that can pass as humans | a mysterious alien race no human has ever seen in the flesh | implacable machine-juggernauts bent on eradicating all organic life]
- The Fleet is [fleeing blindly in uncharted space | heading for a distant but known planet that could be a new home]
- The *Orion* is [a tough old ship, a veteran of many battles | an experimental state-of-the-art design | over the hill and nearly obsolete]

THREATS

- Resources are scarce. Food, fuel, medicine, replacement parts, etc. are all at critical levels.
- Disagreement whether the military or civilian government should be in control.
- Military is spread thin. We don't have new recruits to replace lost soldiers.
- Uneven living conditions are causing unrest. Some ships are overcrowded and squalid, others are state-of-the-art luxury vessels.
- Lost in space. A bad jump has landed the Fleet in an uncharted nebula, unable to get a fix on stars and plot a jump out.
- Enemies who destroyed the Colonies are close on our heels.

LOCATIONS

- Bridge of the *Orion*, nerve center of all military operations
- Fighter bay of the *Orion*, always bustling with techs repairing the battle-scarred ships and pilots rushing to the cockpits

- Officers' lounge on the *Orion* where pilots and ship's officers unwind, play cards, and sometimes punch each other
- Prison (brig) deep in the *Orion*. Contains disobedient soldiers, political prisoners, and the rare POW.
- Refugee housing. Cargo bay of the *Orion* turned into cramped temporary quarters for civilians who couldn't fit on other ships. Constant thrum of nearby machinery.
- Observation deck of the luxury liner *Atalanta*, now used as the President's office and civilian seat of government (also used for press conferences)
- Domed arboretum of the *Serenity Reef* eco-science ship
- Refining bay of the *Osprey*. Ore-mining ship that produces fuel for the Fleet.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- Commander of the *Orion*
- XO (executive officer), second-in-command of the *Orion*
- Ace pilot. Worn out from flying endless patrols and watching for the enemy.
- Crew chief of the flight deck on the *Orion*
- Medical doctor, one of the few left in the Fleet
- Acting President of the Colonies. Appointed, not elected.
- Popular community leader. Holds no office, yet.
- Reporter. Broadcasting the truth to the fleet or a government mouthpiece?
- Political prisoner. Locked up before the Colonies were wiped out, but does any of that matter now?

NAMES

Aster, Aurin, Bale, Carelle, Cray, Eve, Grace, Hauser, Isley, Karse, Kollard, Lukas, Marks, Marris, Pike, Rogin, Simms, Sojor, Teese, Vail

Ship names: *Alamar, Auburn Dale, Black Sheep, Canassus, Ganymede, Harp, King Cole, Lyle's Choice, Lucky VII, Magnus, Meadowlark, Walker, Venture*

Types of ships: cargo haulers, commercial transports, luxury liners, maintenance & repair ships, mining vessels, private yachts, science & observation vessels, survey ships, tankers, tugs

CROSSROADS

- Investigate signals that seem to be coming from an uncharted friendly outpost?
- Give up searching for a perfect home and settle planet Mnemosyne?
- Split up the fleet to search for resources faster?
- Backtrack and search for the transport ship *Goodwin* that disappeared after the last jump? A quick scout search found nothing.
- Abandon ships that don't have efficient faster-than-light drives?
- Enter and try to navigate the Draco Nebula to elude pursuit?
- Move all civilian refugees off of the *Orion*?
- Ration supplies to civilian ships so the military can maintain maximum readiness?
- Institute mandatory military conscription?
- Postpone Presidential elections?
- Enact martial law, suspending the Colonial constitution and abolishing civilian government?

NOTES

Inspired by *Battlestar Galactica* (2004).

Any time you play a Kingdom with physically-separated locations (like the different ships of the Fleet) make sure it's easy for characters to interact in person. There has to be easy transport between ships or you risk all your scenes turning into boring phone calls.

CACTUS FLATS

In the dusty, sunbaked frontier of the Old West, the measure of a man is the measure of his gun. And his horse. And his hat.

Cactus Flats is a lonely town in the middle of the bad lands. It's a time of cowboys and cattle rustlers, gunslingers and outlaws, homesteaders and prospectors.

But when the only law comes out of the barrel of a gun, can you carve a niche of civilization out of the savage wilderness? Or do men resort to the law of the wild? Can Cactus Flats have peace and justice or is it only might that makes right? Do the people in the town even want to live in a law-abiding town?

CUSTOMIZE (*pick one answer for each*)

- Our game is [the cinematic Wild West of gunslingers and cowboys | realistic, grim and gritty]
- Cactus Flats is [a decent town with decent people living in it | a rough frontier town where you have to protect what's yours | a wicked den of outlaws and gunslingers]

THREATS

- A long dry spell has made the rivers run low, making it harder to water cattle or crops.
- Range wars. Farmers have been putting up fences that prevent cattle from grazing on "their" land.
- More and more outlaws and lowlifes have been drifting into town.
- The Sutton Gang has been hanging around near the town.
- There are rumors of gold in them thar hills—no gold, just rumors. Would-be prospectors are starting to prowl around homesteads.
- A lot of good folk have pulled up stakes and moved on.

LOCATIONS

- Taproom of the Old Saloon
- Sheriff's office & jail cell
- Honest Cartwright's dry goods
- Abandoned mission on the edge of town, its adobe walls crumbling
- Boot Hill, the graveyard
- On the dry banks of the Cahoga River
- Hanging Tree, lonely oak south of town
- Treacher's Canyon, surrounding the road north out of town

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Sheriff. The only law in town. That star on your chest might well be a bullseye.
- Wealthy Rancher. A cattle baron who owns a huge spread on the edge of town.
- Doctor. You might spend more time prying out bullets or stitching up knife wounds than delivering babies or treating fevers.
- Firebrand preacher. Bringing the faith to a town of sinners. Does the preacher care or does the preacher just judge?
- Haunted gunslinger. Have killed more men than you care to remember, but you can't outrun the past.
- Saloon owner. It's hard enough to make ends meet without riff-raff tearing up the place.
- School teacher. Folks might not put much stock in book learning.
- Simple business owner. You run the general store, the stables or some other storefront in town.

NAMES

Female: Anna, Arizona, Belle, Blanche, Bonnie, Emma, Harriet, Hannah, Jane, Maddie, Molly, Sally, Thelma

Male: Beau, Buck, Dean, Dusty, Jake, Jesse, Judd, Lucky, Red, Seth, Silas, Ty, Wade, Wes, Willard

Surnames: Billings, Carter, Cooper, Daly, Farnsworth, Keene, Lowe, Marston, McCoy, Miller, Pope, Sawyer, Wallace

CROSSROADS

- Hang Silas Jenkins? He's part of the Sutton gang and he shot an unarmed man dead in the saloon.
- Outlaw wearing guns in town? Visitors would have to hand in their guns at the Sheriff's office.
- Run the new farmers off their homesteads? They have been putting up fences to keep cattle from grazing on "their" land.
- Stop neighboring herds from watering at the river?
- Close the brothel that just opened up?
- Run William Moss out of town?

Moss settled in Cactus Flats about a year ago. He's a quiet man who mostly keeps to himself minding his own business and expecting others to do the same. Now there's a rumor that his real name is William Cutter and

*he's wanted up north for shooting his partner in the back.
No one's sure if it's really him, but if it is him, one of our
neighbors is a cold-blooded murderer.*

- Close the saloon on Sundays?
- Rebuild the church?

NOTES

The crux of a Wild West town is establishing law and order in a wilderness where there is none, being civilized when there is no society around you to make you be civilized.

DAILY SENTINEL

"News is something somebody doesn't want printed; all else is advertising" –William Randolph Hearst

In an age of digital media, sound-bites and factoid reporting, traditional journalism and in-depth reporting is in danger of becoming obsolete.

The Daily Sentinel has been a bastion of journalistic integrity for over a hundred years, committed to bringing the truth to the people. Now it is on its last legs, a dinosaur in this modern age. Will it be forced to close its doors, another ghost of a bygone time when people wanted real news, or can it reinvent itself to match public demand and still pay the bills, all while remaining true to its ideals?

The Kingdom is the newspaper and everyone who is a part of it. That includes journalists, like reporters and editors, as well as the owners and managers who care more about the business side of things.

Obsolescence and the threat of changing technology is just one theme that you can explore about journalism and its place in our society as the sample threats and Crossroads demonstrate.

CUSTOMIZE (pick one answer for each)

- We want the tone of our game to be [a serious examination of real world issues | serious but dramatic | soap opera, focused more on the characters than the issues | situational comedy]
- The Daily Sentinel is owned by [the same family that has owned it for generations | a corporation whose sole business is the paper | a media conglomerate that acquired it a few years back | an employee co-op formed to keep it open]
- The paper is distributed [nationally | regionally | only in the local area]
- What city is the paper in? [New York | St. Louis | Baltimore | another major city of your choice]

THREATS

- Public cares less about in-depth journalism. They just want sound-bites or quick headlines.
- Social media. People are turning to random sources on the web to get their news.
- Heavily-biased "news" franchises are giving real journalists a bad name.
- Scandal. One of our reporters was caught making up a story. They were fired, but the damage is done.

- Government oppression. Authorities are clamping down on journalists' rights and persecuting would-be whistleblowers.
- Talent drain. Good journalists have been fleeing the sinking ship and getting jobs in other sectors.
- Losing advertisers. Ads are the paper's primary source of income, but they're taking their business elsewhere.

LOCATIONS

- Newsroom. Where calls are made and stories are written. A field of desks without dividers. In its heyday, it was a vibrant, chaotic place. Is it too quiet now? Are too many desks empty?
- City desk. Department that handles local news, city politics, crime, etc. This is where reporters on this beat get assignments, compare notes, file stories, etc.
- National desk. Handles national stories. The smaller the paper, the less important this department.
- International desk. Most international stories are just reprints of what comes in over the Associated Press wire. Or does the Sentinel still have the budget to send reporters overseas?
- Editorial Board. Humble meeting room where the heads of the departments meet to decide what goes in the paper and what doesn't, each and every day. It is where the real decisions are made.
- The Presses. Sprawling and deafening when they're running. The Daily Sentinel still prints its papers in the basement with its own presses. Might be part of why it is losing money.
- Loading dock where papers are shipped out. A perennial spot for smoke breaks or grousing.
- The nearest bar. Sutherland's is the local watering hole for Sentinel staff, around the corner from the paper.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Ambitious reporter. You can taste that Pulitzer Prize.
- Older-but-wiser reporter. You covered a lot of stories in your days. Nothing ever changes.
- Cautious editor. Now is not the time to take risks.
- Old school editor. You've worked in journalism all your life and you'll be damned if you are going to change now.
- Innovator. Technology could turn this paper around. We have to embrace it, not fear it.

- Someone's Niece/Nephew. You got your job because you are related to someone at the top (the family that owns the paper or the board of directors). You might have some good ideas, but everyone assumes you are useless.
- Photographer. Whoever said "a picture is worth a thousand words" did not set your pay rate.
- Columnist. Writes regular opinion pieces. A smart columnist would get a book deal and get out of here. Why haven't you? Or why can't you?
- Management. Money is the bottom line. Maybe you even care about journalism, but good intentions don't keep the lights on.
- Ombudsman. Represents the interests of the public and investigates questionable activity within the paper.

NAMES

Characters can use any real world names.

CROSSROADS

- Bury a story that would embarrass our advertisers?
- Do a story that showcases one of our advertisers? It's dangerously close to an advertisement disguised as news.
- Cut the budget for investigative journalism? We need to save money somewhere.
- Go digital? Stop printing newspapers and only put content online.
- Run an important story without confirming all the sources? It's a fantastic scoop, but every day we wait, someone else gets closer to beating us to it.

DWARF MOUNTAIN

The dragon is dead. The dwarves have returned to the halls of their forefathers, mining and toiling to rebuild and claim glory anew.

But hard-won gold is hard-kept. There is treasure in abundance, mounds of gold and jewels from the dragon's horde, stolen from the dwarves of old and now returned to their descendants. Treasure enough to slake even the lust of dwarves... or fire their greed and fear of thieves within and without. No doubt even our sworn allies and neighbors secretly covet the riches of the Mountain King...

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- These ancient mountain halls [were carved by our forefathers long ago | were the realm of our goblin foes—we slew them and took the mountain for our own | were carved by unknown hands in ancient days and stood abandoned when dwarves discovered them]
- Before it was slain, the dragon held the mountain [for decades while the dwarves who it drove out lamented in exile | for seven days and nights of terror after it swooped out of the sky and rained fire down upon the dwarves | for decades, receiving tribute from the cowed dwarves to withhold its fury]
- The dragon was slain [by the wrathful axe of the dwarf king who died beneath its claws | by poison slipped into the pools where it drank | when it flew out to raid other lands and perished by unknown hands, never to return]
- Our neighbors are [men | elves and men | other dwarves]
- The mountain is named [Guloddin | Isil | Durkandor | Glost-harkad], but it is also called [Silver Rock | Hammerhome | White Peak | Glimmerhorn]

THREATS

- There are too few dwarves to restore and maintain the countless halls.
- Outer fortifications are in disrepair. The mountain is vulnerable to attack.
- Others crave our treasure. Thieves surround us. Even our neighbors and allies watch us cunningly.
- Our craft can't match that of our forefathers.
- Different bloodlines press conflicting claims to the throne of the mountain king. Who shall sit on the throne of the Mountain King?
- Unseen perils lurk in the deep mines.

LOCATIONS

- Throne of the Mountain King, carved from the living rock in the heart of the kingdom.
- Hall of the Silvermirror, grand chamber bisected by the channel cut for the eponymous underground river before it cascades out of the mountain.
- The Hammer Gate, main entrance to the fortress looking out on the vale below and the encircling wall.
- Bridge of Dukkarin, spans a bottomless chasm dividing the dwarven halls.
- Hall of Fire, glows red with the molten ore that is smelted down for the smiths to work.
- Tomb of Hurrad-King, crypt of the first king under the mountain.
- Hall of the Unburied, shattered chambers haunted by the spirits of the dwarves incinerated by the wyrm. Many lost friends linger here.
- The Black Gate, cavern opening into the unexplored deep mines. Always guarded.
- The Deep Pools, silent cave lake in the roots of the mountain where the water supply is kept. A fine place for lonely contemplation.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- Fiery heir to the dead king. Who dares deny the throne of the Mountain is rightfully his?
- Reluctant pretender. Others support his strong claim to the throne, but he does not relish the heavy burden.
- Conservative elder. A voice of caution and a hand behind the throne. Preserving the clan comes first.
- Exile. A noble refugee from a distant clan now calls the Mountain his home. Did he commit some heinous crime or lose a struggle for power?
- Captain. Proud leader who has been an unyielding pillar for his people, guiding them through the times of trouble.
- Young warrior. Envy the glory of elder days. The mountain now seems petty and hemmed in, a shadow of its former self.
- Hoarder. Known by all to be the wealthiest dwarf in the Mountain. Keeps his precious treasures in locked vaults.
- Delver. Has the roots of the Mountain in his bones. Knows the secrets of the deep caves, but knows there are secrets even he does not know.
- Master Smith. Crafts wonders out of iron, silver and gold. But do these rival the works of the ancestors?

NAMES

Gannin, Gildun, Gnor, Indvi, Kagin, Kale, Laud, Mauglin, Morduk, Nessel, Nord, Odon, Revik, Urik

CROSSROADS

- Yield the priceless jewel Oglamir to the elves?

Emissaries of the Elven King have come to the Mountain demanding the Oglamir's return. The elves claim they gave the jewel to the dwarves to put in a necklace just before the dragon attacked and it is rightfully theirs.

- Take the fell Axe of Hurrad from its resting place on the breast of the dead king so that a dwarf leader can bear it to glory?
- Invite our cousins from the Black Hills to come live here and swell our numbers?
- Give treasure to our allies, the men of the neighboring Losen Dales, so that they may rebuild their struggling realm?
- Send a strong expedition to reclaim the lower mines and drive out the evils there?

NOTES

Inspired by J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* with just a dash of Dwarf Fortress.

ESHBAL, THE DOOR OF HARDSHIP

Squatting on the border of the Empire is the fortress-city of Eshbal, the famed and feared ‘Door of Hardship’. Its nom de guerre is well-earned: the city is both gateway and guardian, protecting the gleaming civilization of the Empire from the “barbarian” lands beyond. Its twisted streets and magnificent plazas welcome travelers and spices from far-off lands, but its looming walls declare in no unclear terms “behold the might of the Empire and despair!” It is the sieve that lets in wealth and riches but bars enemies like a wall of iron.

The road that runs through the city and into the heart of the Empire bustles with caravans guarded by swaggering warriors, palanquins bearing emissaries to or from distant lands, and travelers of all kinds: the haughty, the hopeful and the humble. A beggar sitting in the dust will witness a thousand miraculous sights pass through its gates before the sun climbs to noon. The Empire is a refined culture, united in its worship of the Lord of Fire (the one true god who gave His Word to the seven Prophets, but whose face has never been seen), but in barbarian lands a myriad of other religions and cultures vie for dominance.

The Kingdom is the city, not the Empire as a whole. The city is ruled by a Byzantine bureaucracy of ministers, magistrates and captains, all of whom serve the distant Emperor. On paper, no one official rules the city, but practice is another matter.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- The Empire is [recognized far and wide as the center of the civilized world | once mighty but now somewhat faded | crumbling under the weight of its own corruption and decadence]
- The most magnificent thing about the Empire is its [military might, bright lances and proud fleets | fabulous wealth in spices and jewels | code of law | philosophy and art, embodied in its sages and poets]
- The so-called “barbarians” are [foreign nations, some not that much less civilized than the Empire | mostly savage and warlike tribes | a mix of fledgling nations and tribes]

THREATS

- Bribery is rampant among the city officials and military. Any favor can be bought for the right price.
- Foreign culture has become fashionable within the city: exotic garb, arts and even worship of other gods.

- The garrison of the city is under-manned. Troops have been drawn away to fight in distant wars, leaving few to guard the city.
- Drought has raised the specter of famine. The wealthy are still well-fed, but commoners are tightening their belts.
- Invasion looms. Barbarian armies are readying to once-again test the strength of our walls.

LOCATIONS

- Palace of the Ministry. Seat of the city bureaucracy.
- Temple of the Eternal Flame. Gilt ziggurat to the Lord of Fire. Every Imperial city has one. Only the purified may enter within.
- Imperial Garrison. A fortress within the fortress-city.
- Garden of the Seven Pools. Lush garden in the midst of the city, surrounding the eponymous reflecting pools.
- The Dog Market. A maze of stalls and hawking merchants, crowded and busy. Named for the barking of the sellers.
- The Scribe's Market. The place to go to have something written or read. Rows of scribes squat on their carpets, waiting to take dictation. Quiet except for the scratching of numerous quills.
- The Baths. Enormous public building with numerous elaborately tiled chambers. A rare place where social strata becomes meaningless. Naked people all look alike.
- The Lion's Gate. Where the outer road pierces the city wall. Tall and narrow framed with the bas relief of two enormous lions, chipped and scarred from past sieges.
- The Lotus Gate. Leads into the Empire on the opposite side of the city of the Lion's Gate.
- The Shackles. Ghetto where poor non-Citizens who have entered the city but not been given permission to go into the Empire have carved out homes in limbo.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Minister of Spices. Overseer of trade that passes through the city.
- Minister of Time. Traditional overseer of matters scheduled to happen at particular times (a typically Byzantine Imperial distinction).
- Vizier. Advisor to the heads of state. A font of wisdom.
- Court gadfly. Thrives on gossip and rumors.
- Spymaster. Sends reports to the Emperor's court.
- Warden of the Threshold. Captain of the gate guard, more concerned with policing who enters or leaves the city than military command.

- Commander of the Garrison. Protects the city, keeps the peace. Answers to the Imperial Army, not the city's Ministers, at least in theory.
- Captain of Chariots. Prestigious military title usually awarded to those of high birth. A war hero or merely well-liked?
- Priest of Eternal Flame. A true believer or a comfortable sinecure?
- Rakish good-for-nothing. Offspring of good family exiled to this far corner of the Empire to be kept out of trouble or, at least, to only cause trouble where no one would notice.
- Prosperous merchant. Grown wealthy from shrewd trading with distant lands.

NAMES

Female: Asal, Ava, Bahar, Delkanna, Farrin, Gita, Golnessa, Malakeh, Parassu, Sada, Salima, Soga

Male: Artan, Azbeck, Danush, Emar, Kaveh, Mehrab, Omid, Quezra, Sanjal, Sharam, Vellis, Zaybar

CROSSROADS

- Allow public holy festival of a foreign god? This alien faith has become popular among many in the city.
- Stamp out the foreign religion that is becoming popular in the city?
- Allow the horde of foreign refugees into the city? They have been driven from their land by barbarian invaders, but there may be more than the city can hold.
- Bribe the approaching barbarian horde to not attack the city?
- Draft citizens to bear arms and defend the city?
- Conscript foreigners into labor gangs? Make them work on civic projects like roads, canals and wall repair.

NOTES

Eshbal was originally from the Promised Land campaign where the Empire was one of several civilizations in collision. Instead of a European or Roman feel, the Empire was inspired by the high culture and learning of a combination of Persia, Assyria and medieval Islam.

A core issue of this Kingdom seed is cultural identity: the Empire is a society with well-established traditions exposed to (or imposing itself upon) new and foreign communities and their cultures. Which culture wins? Do the barbarians adopt the Empire's ways or do the Empire's citizens become like the barbarians?

EYE OF OSIRIS

Wealth, affluence, culture, grace—they've got it all. But they crave something more. They crave that serenity that comes from seeing beyond the veil, from knowing that their destiny is written in the stars and they are watched over by higher powers beyond this mortal coil. That they have a special place in the universe. That they are special.

The Eye of Osiris (or more formally “The Illuminated Order of the Undying Eye of Osiris”) is an exclusive fraternity of high-society elite who fancy themselves mystics, believers and truth-seekers in the cosmopolitan 1920s. Membership is discreet but not secret, *per se*. At some parties it might be quite fashionable to brag that you are one of the few.

But are they true believers, idle rich who dabble in mysticism to wile away the boredom, or charlatans putting on airs to fleece the unwary? Is it merely a pretentious social club or a doorway to true power?

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Magic is [a way to see the truth hidden in the world around you | just a philosophy: spells and rituals don't really do anything | powerful and dangerous even for the enlightened few who dare to use it]
- The Order is located in [New York | Chicago | London | Buenos Aires, crowded with American and European expatriates]
- The rituals of the Order employ [hieroglyphs and re-enactments from Egyptian mythology to invoke the attributes of Osiris and the other gods | séances to speak with the spirit world and learn their wisdom | trance and meditation to unlock past incarnations]

THREATS

- Exploitation. Charlatans are representing themselves as members of the Order and exploiting the unwary (worse still, they may actually be part of the Order).
- Scandal. Distasteful rumors of members of the Order engaging in orgiastic rituals. Is there a grain of truth? Or is it mere gossip?
- Troubled visions. The spirits are angry with the Order. Magic is failing.
- Exposure. The Order is not truly secret, but it is discreet. Its existence and activities have come under the gaze of gossip columnists and disapproving non-believers.
- Waning glory. Membership and interest has declined.

LOCATIONS

- Hollinger House, opulent manor bequeathed to the Order by old man Hollinger and now tended by his estate. Site of many private gatherings.
- Mattinger Opera House. The place to see and be seen. The grand stage is used for private rituals.
- The Tomb of Ra, a detailed recreation of an entire Egyptian crypt built in a private park.
- The Obelisk of Nut-khem. An authentic monument carried back from Egypt and set in the middle of a city park decades ago, surrounded by benches and pigeons. Only the Order recognizes its true spiritual significance.
- Shepherd's Cross. An exclusive club. Members only like it says on the brass placard. Drink brandy, read the paper, smoke a cigar.
- Gray's. A sedate yet tastefully scandalous lounge in the heart of downtown, all dark wood and smoky mirrors.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- Matronly dowager. Bastion of propriety. Misses her dead husband tremendously.
- Elderly mogul and robber-baron who has turned to spiritualism in the face of his mortality.
- Rakish reprobate, prodigal heir of a well-established old money name.
- Sponsored protégé. Outsider who does not belong in high society, but is a member because of the "vast spiritual potential" their sponsor sees in them. Either way, it's a huge step up. Others might tolerate them as a mascot or resent them as an unworthy interloper.
- Mysterious Eastern European medium.
- New money. Barely tolerated by the old money. The feeling may be mutual.
- Museum curator currying the favor of wealthy would-be donors.

NAMES

Female: Elizabeth, Grace, Helen, June, Lillian, Lucille, Mitzy, Pearl, Theresa, Verna, Violet, Virginia, Vivian

Male: Alexander, Arthur, Clayton, Clinton, Dale, Edmund, Frederick, Julius, Marshall, Maxwell, Saul, Vincent, Virgil, Ward

Surnames: Cross, Elder, Elsner, Forbes, Forrest, Hatcher, Kimball, Kinney, Lynch, Locke, Madison, Mayfield, Patterson, Pearce, Porter, Rutherford, Shaw, Strong, Warner, Westin, Woodhouse

CROSSROADS

- Grant an interview to society columnist Darla Durdan to combat rumors about the Order and set the record straight?
- Admit Trevor Carlson to the Order? His family has powerful political connections, but many consider him a boor and a lout.
- Pay off a blackmailer threatening to expose the secrets of the Order? There are photographs and personal letters.
- Forbid these new rituals that appeal to Set, brother and murderer of Osiris? Someone dug them up recently, but they're just in bad taste.
- Pull strings and pay bribes to acquire a collection of rare Egyptian antiquities being donated to a museum? Includes an actual mummy! It's not exactly stealing since the museum is getting the money, but it's not what the donors intended.

NOTES

Here's a crash course in pseudo-Egyptian mythology so you have material to riff off of, not to be historically accurate.

Osiris is the revered god of life and death because he was brought back from the dead by his wife and sister, Isis, after being murdered and chopped into tiny bits by his jealous brother Set. All three are the grandchildren of Ra, the sun god, who created all the gods from himself.

Dying is an important part of life and requires a lot of preparation to do it right. To journey safely into the afterlife, you have to learn how to deal with the many obstacles and hazards that stand between the newly dead and blissful eternity. The Egyptian Book of the Dead is the instruction manual for how to overcome those obstacles.

People have five different souls all of which have specific functions. After death some hang around the grave (or wallow in filth if you do it wrong), others go to the afterlife and others do menial labor to provide for the other souls so they can have a good time.

If you want to name drop other gods, Horus is the son of Osiris, Anubis judges the dead, Thoth is wise, Bast likes cats, and Sekhmet is a lioness warrior.

GROTTOS & GRIFFONS

Welcome, heroes! I am the Grotto Master! Your destiny is in my hands! Now prepare to enter the fantastic world of... Grottos & Griffons!

The game that started it all, Grottos & Griffons, is adored by fans worldwide, which might explain why so many people would fight tooth and nail over its fate. The Kingdom is the entire G&G community. That includes the company that publishes the game, the ardent fans who spend tireless hours on their campaigns, struggling game store owners, online pundits, convention organizers—everybody who cares deeply about the game.

Edition wars! Retro clones! Lucky dice! And possibly a short-lived Saturday morning cartoon. Can you bring peace to the game table? Or will your Kingdom be consumed in the fires of Edition Wars?

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Our game begins [in the early years when G&G was still being published out of the basement | when G&G is a meteoric success and a household word with millions of copies sold | after the heart of the game has been usurped with soulless corporate vision greedy for the flood of cash | in a brave new world as G&G struggles to return to its roots and recapture the love of gamers everywhere]
- The time is [now | the mid 90s before the internet took off | back in the 70s or 80s]
- Grottos & Griffons is owned by [the same company that invented it | the game company that bought the original company | no one: it's in legal limbo]
- Right now, Grottos & Griffons supplements can be legally published by [only the company that owns G&G | anyone using the revolutionary Free Gaming License | anyone so long as it is printed or web-hosted on the isle of Guernsey (off the coast of France) due to an obscure legal loophole]

THREATS

- Fragmentation. Lots of people hate the new edition of G&G. But lots of other people think it's The. Best. Edition. Evar!
- Video games are siphoning away players. Pen & paper can't compete with the cutscenes and the blinking lights.
- Mothers Against Dungeons (MAD). Concerned parents and religious groups loudly protest that G&G promotes witchcraft, drug use and poor SAT scores.
- Grognards are scaring off new blood.

- G&G isn't cool anymore. Cool kids play hip indie games and they don't let anyone forget it.
- Dice recall! Luckily they are only toxic if you put them in your mouth, but lawsuits may follow.

LOCATIONS

- The Salamander's Cave. Old-school friendly local game store in a friendly local city. It's been selling G&G products since the very beginning. Dig around in the back room and you might still find some first edition stuff buried under dusty airplane model kits.
- Adventurer's Guild. Brand new venue that sells games but also provides state-of-the-art play space, for a price. Fancy. Shiny. Clean.
- CRIT.COM. The online gaming discussion forum. If you want to list everything you would fix in G&G to a bunch of other people who have lists of their own, this is the place to do it.
- GrottoCon convention hall. Home of the annual G&G convention and smaller quarterly events.
- Rules Wizards HQ. Corporate headquarters of the company that makes G&G, Rules Wizards Inc (RWI).
- "The Dungeon". Colloquial name for the cubicle farm and offices in the corporate headquarters where the game designers actually work on the game.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- The Creator of G&G. You invented the game. But are you still in charge?
- The Other Creator of G&G. Do you get credit for your work? Does anyone remember what you did?
- Staff designer. You work on books, adventures and other G&G supplements.
- Forgotten designer. Everyone used to love the stuff you wrote. Now it is considered quaint, at best.
- Popular fan author. You write material and post it for free. Everyone loves it! Or hates it.
- Devoted GM. You've been pouring your heart and soul into your game world for years. It could be your magnum opus.
- Game store owner. You mortgaged your house to keep the doors open.
- Game store employee. You may have a burning desire to be a game designer. Who doesn't?

- Online forum moderator. No one understands G&G anymore. No one.
- Convention organizer. You work all year so the hordes can game for three days straight. Do you even game anymore?

NAMES

Characters can use any real world names. If your character games, feel free to come up with the name of the G&G character your Kingdom character plays.

CROSSROADS

- Sue the makers of Basements & Basilisks, an obvious rip-off of Grottos & Griffons?
- Create a Saturday morning cartoon based on Grottos & Griffons?
- Change the rules to eliminate classes and switch to a point-buy system?
- Nerf druids? They are perpetually overpowered.
- Make the new version of G&G more like a board game to cater to casual players?
- Split G&G into separate rule systems with varying complexity? Amateur, Intermediate, Experienced and Pro versions of G&G would all be maintained simultaneously.
- Remove all morally-objectionable material like evil characters and demons?

NOTES

This is a very experimental Kingdom. The members are all over the place, in all walks of life, connected only by this common interest. There could be relatively large gaps of time between scenes as play jumps from online discussions to the next gathering of a major convention. It may seem hard to explain how characters could change Roles, but a humble game store owner really could get a job with the publisher and then move up to run the company.

And, yeah, it's satire, but it comes from the heart. Admit it: we all love D&D.

HAMMER OF THE GODS

From the splendor of their eternal realm, the gods and demi-gods toy with the fate of humanity and its heroes. Are those pesky mortals getting too big for their togas? Failing to pay homage in the time-honored fashion? Release the kraken!

Despite all the gods have done for them, it seems to be man's curse to bring down the wrath of the heavens upon themselves. Fickle is the favor of the gods even to those they love: one day a shining hero, the next a lightning-scorched crater.

The Immortals forged the world with the Hammer of the Gods. With a blow they could shatter it again if it no longer pleased them, returning man and all his works to chaos. But are the gods truly so fickle or does some greater purpose guide their sometimes cruel hands? Is the world a plaything or a priceless treasure?

The Kingdom is the pantheon of gods and demi-gods as well as their divine servants like the terrible monsters they can unleash upon humanity. The Kingdom is not the world or nations of men: you could wipe out all of civilization and raise a new one in its place, if you so desired.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Our pantheon of gods are the [gods who created the world | upstarts who overthrew the creator-gods]
- The home of the gods is [atop the tallest mountain of the world | on a blessed isle no sailor can find | the sun: a golden city in the sky of such brilliance that it blinds the eye and chases off the night when it passes overhead. Sunbeam-bridges descend to earth.]
- Gods [procreate and father new gods, much as mortals do | are eternal and have no progeny except heroes and monsters]
- A god can only be slain [by another god | by certain weapons of great magic even if mere mortal hands wield them | when the doom of the world is upon us]
- In the mortal world, the gods [walk as mortals do, concealing their divinity when they wish | tower over mountains and forests, spanning rivers with their strides | cannot enter physically, but only watch and manipulate from afar]

THREATS

- Mortal hubris. Some liken themselves to the gods. Kings have built temples to themselves.
- There is war between nations we love. No matter which is victorious, some we favor will suffer and cry to us in vain.

- Nature is turning wrathful without our doing. There are days when winds blow, seas churn and earth shakes, unbidden.
- A monster that even the gods fear stalks the land. It broke from its eternal prison and roams free.

LOCATIONS

- Seats of the Gods. Where the immortals sit in a ring and hold council.
- Garden of Paradise. Eternally pleasant bower where the gods may take their ease or slake their lusts.
- Golden Fields. Meadows of heaven where the gods may roam, ponder or engage in contests.
- Thunder Anvil. Divine forge in the molten heart of a volcano. A place to craft weapons fit for gods... or their heroes.
- Iron Doors of the Underworld. Where the dead pass, never to return.
- Burning Rocks. Desert that bakes by day or night. Enemies of the pantheon are chained here for ages that they may learn the futility of opposing the gods.
- The Hammer. Resting place of the fabled relic that forged the world. Broken mountains and shattered cliffs circle it for miles. Few gods even dare look upon it.
- Edge of the World. Beyond it earth and sea tumble away into endless night.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Allfather/mother of the gods. In name only or truly the creator of the world?
- Overshadowed god. As mighty as the mightiest but surpassed long ago. Bitter at always being second?
- Idle god. Enjoys indulging in all the pleasures of heaven and watching man strive and fail and strive again.
- Craftsman. Creations unrivaled in all the world whether they be weapons or jewels of captivating beauty.
- Troublemaker. Revels in sowing strife and mischief among men and immortals as well.
- Hero-god. Not content to watch from afar, this god finds satisfaction only in deeds.
- Demi-god. Scion of a mighty god but not fully divine. A second-class citizen among immortals or a favored heir?

- Dark Destroyer. A hideous monster born of the gods. Terrifying to behold but a useful servant they send to inflict their wrath on mortals they would punish. Its body is bestial, but its soul may not be.

Pick two or three aspects for your god: Chariots, Falcons, Fire, the Forge, the Flute, the Harp, the Harvest, Healing, the Herd, Horses, Hounds, the Hunt, Lies, the Loom, Love, Masonry, Mothers, Revelry, the Sea, Secrets, Song, Sorrow, Stags, Storms, Travelers, Treasures, the Underworld, War, Wedlock, Wine, Winter, Wrestling

NAMES

Adras, Arus, Canas, Dargon, Esti, Eurymon, Helethe, Helias, Iolanthe, Magun, Nedra, Omlar, Pelurin, Polemai, Teres, Ulmara, Urus, Wuld

CROSSROADS

- Release the hydra to destroy the vain city Tamarin whose princes dare equate themselves with the gods?
- Topple a nation that has been faithful to us so that a hero we favor may settle his people there?
- Give the hero Atrean the Spear of Might to defeat his nemesis? It is a weapon fit for the gods...
- Chain the goddess Epheme to the burning rocks for an age because she helped her son to defy us?
- Raise the sea to flood the world and destroy mankind?

HMS RUBICON

Halfway around the world from the shores of England, the British frigate *Rubicon* proudly flies His Majesty's flag in the age of sail and cannon.

The *Rubicon* faces dangers without and within. Enemies of the Crown sail in these same tropical waters and, even though there are ports in friendly colonies in the vast expanse of ocean, a lone ship is very much on her own against enemy cannon and tempest alike. Perhaps the even greater danger is the absence of any external threat, anything to unite the crew and turn their hands against a common peril. There is nothing more deadly than to sit becalmed on a glassy sea where the relentless sun and stillness turns idle hands to mutiny!

The Kingdom is the ship, its officers and crew (about 300 hands all told), not the British navy or Empire as a whole.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- How much do we care about historical accuracy? We want to [generally match the setting, but without sweating details | pay careful attention to period detail | ignore historical facts and make up what we want]
- Britain's enemy is [France under Emperor Napoleon | King Ferdinand of Spain | civil war with each British colony siding with one party or the other]
- Britain [is at war with the enemy | is technically still at peace, but war is brewing | just made peace after a long war]

THREATS

- Enemy warships in these waters bear more guns than we do.
- We are losing the war.
- No shore leave likely for some time.
- After many leagues and battles, the *Rubicon* is the worse for wear. She is overdue for drydock repairs.
- Some key positions lack skilled hands. Inexperienced substitutes are filling in (decide which positions are poorly staffed after you make characters).

LOCATIONS

- Bridge deck. High in the rear of the ship where the ship's wheel controls the helm.
- High amid the rigging. Looks far out over the ocean and down on the ship. Nimble seaman scale the rigging to trim the sails even in a storm-tossed sea.

- Main deck. Topside towards the center mast. A common place for all crew to be found or to cross paths.
- Gunnery deck. Rows of cannons sit at the ready to give a broadside.
- Armory. Muskets and side-arms are kept secured until needed. An armed but idle crew is an invitation to mutiny...
- Captain's cabin.
- Officer's cabins. Smaller shared quarters.
- Crew's berths. A tangle of net hammocks in the dark bowels of the ship where common hands bunk. If there's rumblings of mutiny, this is the place for it.
- Aft cabins. Shared quarters near the crew berths where noteworthy non-officers bunk (surgeon, quartermaster, etc.).
- The hold. Deep in the bowels of the ship.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Captain. Every ship needs a captain. Final authority at sea. Is your Captain a salty veteran or a green new officer?
- Lieutenant. Answers to the Captain.
- Midshipman. An officer-in-training or prospective future officer. May not make the grade.
- Captain of marines. Commands the marines, but answers to the captain of the ship. Marines are specialist soldiers, not sailors. They only fight.
- Mates. Various mates supervise different functions of the ship.
- Seaman. Numerous crew aboard ship.
- Sailing Master. Subordinate to the captain. Attends to the sailing of the ship.
- Quartermaster. Responsible for the supplies and provisions of the ship. A vital role on long voyages.
- Surgeon. Skilled physician or clumsy butcher?
- Gunner. A keen eye with a cannon.
- Ship's Carpenter. Can make repairs of all sorts while at sea.

What happens if no one plays the Captain? He is a supporting character and has no Power. On paper he commands the ship, but for whatever reason he is not the one who influences decisions: it's whoever takes Power.

You could also decide the Captain was recently lost (in battle or to illness). A lieutenant should step up as acting Captain, at least until you return to port.

NAMES

Alder, Briggs, Canliss, Caper, Christian, Hawkins, Hopper, Joyce, Lewis, Lively, Miles, Mills, Pew, Sands, Scott, Smollett, Wellesby

CROSSROADS

- Round the storm-tossed Cape?
- Chase the more heavily-gunned French man-o-war, the *Harpy*?
- Delay returning to port for repairs so that we can pursue enemy merchant vessels?
- Lash seaman Hoggs for falling asleep on his watch? Regulations demand it, but he was exhausted from working around the clock to mend damaged rigging.
- Cut the crew's rum rations?

NOTES

In the early 1800s, King George III is on the throne and the British Empire is a dominant naval power. England is at war against Napoleon's France. A frigate (like the *Rubicon*) is a flexible warship one step below a main ship-of-the-line. Naval discipline is often notoriously strict since it is the only thing maintaining order on this isolated floating community a thousand miles from home. Rigid discipline is the bulwark against chaos and mutiny.

Like any Kingdom with a chain of command, things can get interesting when unexpected characters have Power or when characters who should have Power, like the Captain, don't. Remember the two cardinal rules: you cannot use a Role you don't have and you can only have or use a Role if you can describe it. Your lowly seaman can take Power, but only if you can describe how that makes sense.

KID'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP

Children and television have always been a dangerous combination. But the Kid's Television Workshop (KTW) is a small studio devoted to making positive children's programming—shows that educate and inspire instead of talking down to kids or trying to ram the latest toys or sugary cereals down their throats.

KTW creates and produces shows for syndication on public broadcasting (and maybe any other market that will take them). Each show has its own set that gets wheeled out or reconstructed under the spotlights of Studio B when it is time to shoot. The energetic staff of KTW mixes puppets and live actors, stories and song, adventures and quiet "me" time into a colorful whirlwind of fun and thinking.

So come sing along with the gang at Helicopter Junction or drop in for a visit at Little Blue House on the Corner, where there's always an extra chair just the right size for you!

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- We want the tone of our game to be [a serious and sincere story about people trying to make a difference | a humorous story about serious people who don't recognize how funny their situation is | a whacky but basically light-hearted romp | whacky but potentially quite dark. Kid-friendly on the surface, but, behind the scenes, who knows.]
- KTW is [syndicated and broadcast in markets nationwide, a major producer of children's programming | syndicated in a few markets but still struggling | shown on local channels only, including the entire Tri-County Area!]
- The line-up of programs is [fairly stable but with new shows emerging from time-to-time | practically set in stone. There are a select few winners that no one dares change. | constantly changing. If a show lasts six months without a complete retool, it's a new record.]

THREATS

- Our ratings are going down the tubes. No one is watching.
- A corporate competitor has launched the most vapid kid's show ever, starring a singing, dancing dinosaur. And it's a hit.
- We're losing our funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.
- Are we out of good ideas? Our puppets are starting to look alike and our songs sound the same.

LOCATIONS

- Studio B. Where all the shows are shot (Is there even a Studio A? Is it just used for storage of other sets and props?)
- Control Room. Where the filming is monitored and editing is done
- Fabrication Shop. Filled with drills, band saws, lumber, paint and everything else you would need to build all the sets and props
- Play Room. A glass enclosed play area for kid visitors, but staff frequently come in here to decompress with blocks, trucks and plastic dinosaurs.
- Wardrobe. A choked maze of sartorial wonder. Legend has it that one of the first KTW interns may still be lost back there somewhere, surviving on rainbow boas, tuxedo jackets and cowboy hats.
- Under the Volcano. An eight-foot tall set piece that never got taken apart and is still hauled out periodically for background appearances. The hollow interior makes a great hideout (alone or for a tiny creative retreat) and the red gels of the lava top make the light funky.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- Lead actor on a show. The face of a KTW staple character.
- Actor who is only doing the job for the sake of the work and the fame.
- Puppeteer. Does the voices for half-a-dozen main characters.
- Managing Director. Director in the business sense, not the film sense. Probably tired of explaining that.
- Accountant who really wants to be involved creatively. Might have mad puppet skills. Or a great singing voice.
- Janitor. Spends more time helping with the shows than cleaning up.

NAMES

Characters can use any real world names.

Show character names: Astronaut Amy, Duck Mallard Drake Detective, Esteban, Maestro Fazoo & Tiny Kazoo, the Pogo Twins, Sally Sable, Woody Tiger (aka Woodridge Watermane the Third, the Most Educated Tiger)

Show names: *Helicopter Junction*, *Little Blue House on the Corner*, *Vroom!*, *I Spy With My Eagle Eye*, *The Timely Treehouse*, *One Plus One Is You*

CROSSROADS

- Sell a line of toys based on popular KTW shows?
- Put product placements in shows?
- Perform a live broadcast?

- Sign a pledge pushed on them by a family values group promising not to include sex education in shows? [Not that KTW had the slightest intention of doing that. It's the principle of the thing.]

NOTES

Kid's Television Workshop is inspired by the wealth of wonderful children's programming that public television has provided for decades.

KULIGAR WILDLIFE REFUGE

The African veldt. Thousands of miles of natural wilderness. Animals living as they have lived since the dawn of time: the lucky ones, anyway. The ones that are not shot by poachers or whose habitat is not bulldozed by developers digging for precious minerals.

The Kuligar Wildlife Refuge is a sanctuary set aside to protect the native species from those who would destroy them, knowingly or carelessly. Conservationists and scientists come from around the world to try to make a difference. The park is a refuge, a center for research and a tourist attraction: visitors also come from around the world on sight-seeing safaris to witness the splendors of native Africa. Their money helps fund the park.

The refuge is home to a wide range of wildlife. Some are on the brink of extinction, their entire population numbering a hundred or less. There are elephants and rhinos, lions and leopards, hippos and zebra, giraffe and antelope, warthogs and water buffalo, and the occasional crocodile lurking in a watering hole—not to mention all the species of birds, bugs and rodents.

The Kingdom is the organization that runs the park. The government owns the land and allows the refuge to operate, but the staff of the park and the researchers who work there are an independent organization. The base of operations is a compound of buildings inside the park with a nearby area for visitors, all fenced-in to protect against wildlife. Outside that fence you are in the wild.

The refuge is a small chunk of Africa, but it is still huge. It spans miles and miles of savannah. You could walk out into the wilds and get lost without ever leaving the park. Easily. The borders of the park itself are not fenced in: animals can come and go as they please and so can the intruders who would exploit or destroy them.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- The park is in [Kenya | Botswana | South Africa | a non-specific fictional African nation]
- The refuge [has been here for decades | was established less than ten years ago | just opened a few months ago]
- In addition to themes of conservation and environmentalism, there are potential issues of race as Americans and Europeans come to help run an African wilderness preserve. In our game, we want issues of race to [not be a part of our story | be included, but not too heavily | be explored heavily]

THREATS

- Poachers. Rhino horn and lion pelts sell for mere dollars, but that's a fortune here.
- Tourism is declining. It will hurt our budget.
- Endangered species. Pick one or two species that are dwindling despite all our efforts. We see fewer each year.
- Valuable mineral deposits were found in the refuge. The government may allow developers to move in.
- Violence. Rebels from the neighboring country cross the border and hide out in the refuge. We run the risk of bumping into armed gunmen or having the neighboring military come looking for them.

LOCATIONS

- Veranda of the main building. Sit and look out over the camp and the wilderness beyond.
- Visitor bungalows.
- Infirmary. The place to treat human injuries with an adjoining room for veterinary care.
- Watch tower. Open frame wooden tower that looks out beyond the camp fence. Also a weather monitoring station.
- Pavilion. Open-air shelter for outdoor gatherings, dinners, etc.
- Out in the veldt. Either on foot or in a Land Rover, there is a lot of wilderness to go around.
- The spotter plane. Either on the field getting repaired or swooping low over the savannah.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Researcher. You've spent years observing and collecting data in the refuge. What species are you studying?
- Naturalist tour guide. You show visitors around the refuge and explain the fauna and flora.
- Director of Operations. A lofty title for someone who spends so much time hiking around in the baking sun or elbow deep in the engine of a stalled Land Rover.
- Bush pilot. You fly the spotter plane and keep it running.
- Native guide. You grew up in this country. The park pays well, but you could make more as a poacher. Why don't you?
- Deserter. Fought in the neighboring rebellion. Fled and found work as a guide. You're in the country illegally, but the refuge is your refuge. Is your past a secret? Did you find peace here?

- Reformed big game hunter. Back in the day, you decorated your trophy room with beasts from three continents. Why the change of heart?
- Wealthy investor. You made your money in big business. Now you are putting it in the park. Do you really care or is this good publicity?
- Writer / journalist / photographer. The world needs to know what goes on here. You're the one who gets the story out.

An important character decision is whether you are a native to this country or someone who has come here to work in the refuge.

NAMES

Non-African characters can come from anywhere in the world, so any name that fits their country of origin will do.

Swahili female names: Amina, Binti, Hadiya, Nia, Sauda, Samira, Tawa, Zuri

Swahili male names: Alama, Basi, Betoto, Bin, Fumo, Kitwana, Kwasi, Mosi, Sefu

Generic Western names: Burns, Carlson, Caruthers, Fiske, Green, Hooper, Lowry, Nichols, Sanders, Walker, Williams

CROSSROADS

- Capture several animals and send them to a zoo? They will be part of the Species Survival Plan and be bred in captivity to ensure genetic diversity of the species. Pick a species when you make the Crossroad.
- Have the military patrol inside the park? They can protect against poachers, rebels and deserters.
- Hunt and kill a rogue elephant that has been unusually destructive?
- Let wealthy visitors get closer to the animals than we normally allow?
- Conceal that a particular species is no longer endangered? Endangered species draw donations. If animals are thriving, the park is less necessary.
- Allow a reality television series to film in the park?

NOTES

The primary theme is one of conservation but the setting is also ripe with issues of race and the shadow of colonialism. Wealthy, educated Americans and Europeans traveling half-way around the world to tell Africans how to manage the land they were born in. Discuss how much you want those issues to be part of your game when you make your Kingdom, as described in the customization section.

LOST IN LUXURY SPACE

The luxury cruise ship *Intrepid Princess* suffered a catastrophic hyperdrive malfunction, hurling the vessel and all her passengers and crew into unchartered space.

But why let a disaster ruin your vacation? After all, if your cruise ship malfunctions and you are lost in space—for months or even years—aren't you technically still on vacation? You paid for a cruise. And until the ship reaches its destination, you are a passenger and guest of the cruise line. So have a tropical drink, soak up some artificial rays and relax! Swim in the zero-gravity pool! Dance the (eternal) night away in the Grand Nebula Ballroom! Play shuffleboard!

What about fixing the ship? Finding a way back to civilized space? That's a job for the crew. That's what they're paid for.

The Kingdom is the ship and everyone on board. That includes passengers and crew. Successfully finding your way home would, of course, end the game and dissolve your Kingdom.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Your ship is christened the [*Intrepid Princess* | *Galactic Queen* | *Duchess of Space* | *Astral Swan* | *Unicorn*]
- The accident that threw the ship off course happened [three years ago | six months ago | a few weeks ago]
- The tone we want for our game is [dry satire | whacky comedy | kind of serious. No really, kind of serious!]

THREATS

- We're running low on tropical drinks!
- Boredom. We've seen all the movies in the ship's library. Over and over again. We need new entertainment!
- Madness. A few of the passengers have started acting... oddly. Probably nothing to worry about.
- Not enough crew to run the ship. Passengers are not getting timely service.
- Ship's critical systems are in danger of failing.

LOCATIONS

- Cabana Bar. Tiki themes and tropical drinks with tiny umbrellas.
- Grand Nebula Ballroom. Dance the night away beneath the stars.
- Horizon Deck. Promenade, deck chairs and shuffleboard. When there isn't a nearby star, the artificial sky creates light for sunbathing.

- Neptune's Grotto. Zero-G swimming pool (water floating in mid air), hot tubs and adjoining bar.
- The Bridge. Crew only. Unless there's a tour.
- Engine room. Belly of the ship.
- Crew commons room. Cramped, barely functional and entirely less glamorous than the passenger areas.
- The Hole. During the accident a section of the ship simply vanished. What's behind those sealed bulkheads? We don't talk about it.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Wealthy widower. Could she find love again on a romantic cruise?
- Middle manager who finally got to take some time off. More time than expected, as it turns out.
- Young passenger who has become a teenager while lost in space. Worst. Childhood. Ever.
- Captain. Technically Acting Captain since the real captain was lost in the accident.
- Cruise Director. Someone has to keep the passengers' schedule packed with fun and distracting activities.
- Bartender. Possibly the most valuable member of the crew as far as the passengers are concerned.

NAMES

Female: Alice, Coco, Esmeralda, Gladys, Hilda, Piper, Sally, Wilma, Ursula

Male: Antonio, Burt, Clay, Frank, Henry, Lars, Morris, Riley, Roscoe, Stanley

Surnames: Baker, Bastibul, Claypool, Cooper, Cortez, Farney, Fisher, Fitzgerald, Idle, Marx, Ripley, Smalls, Sutherland, Tanner, Wolcott

CROSSROADS

- Draft passengers to help the crew run the ship?
- Institute a rationing system to conserve vital resources like booze?
- Erase the data in the navigation computer? A clean start could make it possible to find our way back. Or ensure we never return.
- Cannibalize entertainment systems to repair essential parts of the ship?

NOTES

Originally played with Megan Brown and Evan Silberman at Story Games Seattle.

LOST LEGION

Countless leagues from home, a single Legion stands amidst a sea of foes who hunger for Roman blood...

The Romans came to fight and support foreign kings who swore allegiance to the Empire, but those allies have fallen and their armies are scattered, leaving the Romans with no friends or safe harbor. Villages and towns that gave the Legion welcome and shelter before are twice as vehement in their refusal now, all the better to prove that their allegiance is with the victors.

But even though they are hemmed in by danger on all sides and facing overwhelming odds, the might of Roman steel remains unconquered, for now. Can the Legion march home, hewing a path through a sea of foes? Or must it seek alliance and sow division between its many enemies? Or will the once-proud soldiers give in to despair and let their standard fall into the mire?

The Kingdom is this one Legion, originally five thousand soldiers strong, cut off from their homeland. It could take years for them to return to Roman territory, if they return at all. Your game could be a running battle as they march back to Rome or a century-long epic of the colonies the legionaries and their ancestors build or conquer along the way.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- How much do we care about historical accuracy? We want to [generally match the setting, but without sweating details | pay careful attention to period detail | ignore historical facts and make up what we want]
- The Legion came here [to defend the lands of foreign allies of Rome | to expand Roman territory by conquering new lands | to further the interests of a selfish Roman politician, not the good of the Empire]
- We lost the battle that led to the destruction of our allies because [we were grossly outnumbered | our commander made a terrible tactical mistake which cost him his life | we were betrayed by our allies]
- Right now we are countless leagues from Rome in a land of [steep mountains and black forests | burning desert | fertile plains and rivers | rocky beaches and the vast ocean that separates us from our homeland]

THREATS

- We're surrounded by enemies.
- The Legate, our commander, is dead, slain by a barbarian spear.
- Morale is low. The men despair that they will ever see Rome again.
- Our soldiers are praying to foreign gods.

- We are lost. With no native guides, we don't know what lies ahead or what our best path is.
- Rations are low. Food is scarce.

LOCATIONS

A Roman legion is trained to build a new fortified camp at the end of their march every day with all the tents in the same arrangement so each location might be taken down and rebuilt in the same relative positions every day when the Legion is on the move.

- Commander's tent ("praetorium") in the center of the camp.
- The Eagle Guard. The Legion standard is planted in the center of the camp and guarded vigilantly. It's a good place to dwell on the past and the future.
- Legate's Shrine. Our fallen commander's sword and tattered armor are hung here in his memory, still crusted with his blood.
- Shrine to a foreign god. A new addition to the camp.
- The ramparts. The earthen berm that surrounds the camp. Soldiers stand guard here, look out into the darkness and wonder what the future holds.
- Around a camp fire. Soldiers gather to eat food, play dice or grumble about their fate.
- Soldier's tent. Eight men share a tent. The strongest cohorts are placed in the forward section of the camp, facing the enemy, with the weakest in the rear.

CHARACTER SEEDS

A Roman legion has a complicated command structure, but you only need to focus on the main characters you choose to play.

- Legate. Overall commander of the legion. The Legate appointed by Rome is dead. Has someone else stepped into the position?
- Tribune. Upper-class citizen officer, often more popular but less experienced. Main Tribune is second-in-command beneath the Legate, though a handful of other Tribunes serve as lesser officers.
- Prefect. Long-standing veteran promoted up from Centurion. Third-in-command.
- Centurion. Tough veteran soldiers elevated to command a century of men (100 legionaries). Top Centurions lead each of the Legion's ten Cohorts (500 men each).
- Primus Pilus. Senior centurion of the whole legion and commander of the First Cohort.

- Officer with friends in high places. Could be a lower rank but has powerful connections back in Rome.
- Standard bearer. A position of great honor. The Eagle must never fall or be lost.
- Hero of the hour. Common soldier who acquitted himself valiantly, saving the life of many of his comrades.
- Proconsul. Roman governor of this province before it fell. Not technically part of the Legion. You lost everything. It may all be quite a shock.

NAMES

A Roman can have three or even four names, but for simplicity just pick a first and last name. It is not uncommon to have the same first name as someone else (e.g. Gaius Livius and Gaius Decius).

First: Aulus, Decimus, Gaius, Gnaeus, Lucius, Manius, Marcus, Publius, Quintus, Tiberius, Titus

Last: Aurelius, Atilius, Bantius, Cantius, Cincius, Decius, Flavius, Galerius, Livius, Memmius, Octavius, Pinarius, Pontius, Rufius, Varius

CROSSROADS

- Sell our services to a local warlord?
- Settle down and found a colony in this fertile valley?
- Stamp out the foreign religion spreading among the troops?
- Pillage this town even though it surrendered without a fight? It could strike fear into others who would oppose us.
- Execute the legionaries who were captured trying to desert?

NOTES

Originally played with Dale Horstman, Matthew Klein and Neil Pinkerton at Go Play NW 2012. It was heavily inspired by Xenophon's *Anabasis*, an account of a Greek mercenary army caught in foreign territory.

There is a wealth of information available about the Roman military, but this seed includes just enough material to orient you and get you started.

As a variant, you can play a Roman legion that was part of a would-be Emperor's failed coup in Rome. They lost and must now make their way in the world with no place to call home.

MECH-POLICE

As times change, crimes change. Law enforcement has to adapt or fall behind. With grid-gangs and synth cartels on the rise, ordinary police were too often outnumbered and outgunned. The Special Response Division (SRD) was formed to give the police the firepower they needed to take on these new threats: mechs. But not everyone is a fan. After all, when you send a thirty-foot tall armored walker to battle perps in the streets, do you re-establish law and order or do you turn the city into a war zone?

The Kingdom is the Special Response Division, a single branch of the city police department, not the police force or the city as a whole.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- The city we protect is [Detroit of the future, a battered hub of industry | the domed capitol of Mars | in the biosphere of a space station]
- The Special Response Division [is brand new | has been around for a few years | is over the hill and outdated]
- Our mechs are [lumbering and cumbersome | fast and agile]

THREATS

- Gang violence is on the rise. They're better armed and organized every day.
- Budget cuts. Fielding police mechs is expensive. Taxpayers are tired of shelling over their hard-earned credits.
- Malfunctions. The latest models of police mechs are fraught with bugs. The price of going with the lowest bidder or a corporate cover up?
- Police strikes. Cops city-wide are up in arms about poor conditions and funding. There's talk of a strike. Would the department follow?

LOCATIONS

- Vehicle Bay. Docking alcoves hold *Sabre 7* patrol mechs, half of them ready for action and half ripped apart by Maintenance.
- Firing Range. Used for both mech and side-arm practice.
- Simulator. An actual mech cockpit connected to a VR rig, but you can't stop crime in the simulator.
- Gym. Pump some iron or hit the bag. Also used for hand-to-hand combat training. Sparring's allowed, but let's keep it friendly, people!
- Skyhook C&C. Onboard one of the command and control choppers used for observation and ground coordination. Our eyes in the sky.
- Helipad. On the roof of the building. A good place to look out over the city and think deep thoughts. Or get in a helicopter.
- Detention cells. Short-term holding before perps are moved to prison.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Rookie cop, freshly promoted to mechs. Still getting the hang of walking twenty tons of steel down the street.
- Hot shot. You were born to pilot a mech. Or do you just think so?
- Peace officer. You joined the Force to help people, not shoot them.
- Survivor. Lost your partner. Was it your fault? Or do you just think so?
- Retired veteran. Came out of retirement to help the department. Can you teach these kids something?
- Captain. When you're not keeping cops in line, you're fighting political battles to keep the Division running. Lucky you.
- Chief Mechanic. Someone has to keep these things running.
- Dispatch. The eyes, ears and some would say brains of the SRD. Monitors city-wide surveillance and feeds critical data to cops in the field.
- Internal Affairs. Who watches the watchmen? You do. You make sure cops behave like cops, not criminals.

NAMES

Characters can use any real world names. For some quick cop-sounding names, try: Berkowitz, Carter, Cruz, Dieter, Degrassi, Foster, Gates, Hawkins, Lang, Lubin, Myers, Otterson, Singh, Vasquez

CROSSROADS

- Do we assault CHOK-13's gang headquarters?
Informants have given up the location of the notorious grid-gang's hideout, but it's practically a fortified bunker deep underground in the city's utility tunnels. They also said that CHOK-13 has been smuggling in heavy weapons and could have a lot of firepower at their fingertips.
- Replace our current mechs with the new models?
The new Riker-Valls haven't been field-tested, but there's strong pressure from city hall and corporate backers to put them on the street and show what they can(?) do.
- Go on strike? The police are walking out all over the city. Do we support them or stay at our posts?
- Put rookies in the cockpit? We're low on experienced personnel so cutting back on training is the only way to get all our mechs in action.

PARTISANS OF RIGEL IV

The colonists that came to Rigel IV set out to make a world they could call home, but then the invaders came and took their world away from them. Now life in the colony goes on, but the people live and work under the watchful eyes of their new alien masters.

But some refuse to kneel. A secret group of partisans continues to fight back against the occupation, risking everything to strike the invaders where they are weakest. The odds against them are staggering. Can they win? Or are they just delaying the inevitable? Will the day ever come when the rest of the colonists rise up and cry "For Rigel! For Freedom!"?

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Rigel IV is [a garden spot, lush and verdant | a strange world we've labored hard to tame | a barren world that won't support life outside of the eco-domes until decades of terraforming runs its course]
- The invaders are [emotionless, silver-eyed and frail, but armed with technology we cannot begin to comprehend | voracious chitinous warriors with an elaborate caste system | starfish-like parasites inhabiting the tall green bodies of the last race they conquered]
- They view humans as [a rival species | a labor pool | heretics | primitives they need to educate | food]
- Their race [was never encountered by humans before this | has had distant contact with humanity | waged bitter wars against humanity]
- The aliens took over our world [because it was isolated and far from any notice or aid | as part of a larger invasion of human space]

THREATS

- We lack weapons, tools, materials... everything except determination.
- We can't even trust our own neighbors: some colonists would sell us out to buy their own safety.
- Invaders are experimenting with crude mind scanners. How effective are they? We don't know.
- More alien reinforcements are arriving every month.
- ID scanners and checkpoints are going up all over the colony, tracking our every move.

LOCATIONS

- Colony's one starport, now an alien military base. Colonists still work here.
- Listening post. Hidden utility niche high up a broadcast tower where the rebels can eavesdrop into the communications network.

- Wreckage of the *Betsy Virgo*. A spaceship that crashed in the wilds in the early days of the colony. Now a secret partisan base.
- Service tunnels beneath the colony
- Detention camp. Force field-walled compound where dissidents (laborers? political prisoners? food?) are kept, but rebels can get in and out with forged passes.
- Public school. Children of the colony still go to classes, but what do the invaders allow them to be taught?

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- Community leader. Publicly appears to collaborate with the invaders but is secretly working with the rebellion.
- Veteran. One of the few rebels with a military background. Survived the war and retired to Rigel IV thinking the days of fighting were behind you.
- Doctor. Tending to the sick and injured is a passport through many invader checkpoints.
- Teacher. Has seen first-hand what the schools are now teaching.
- Maintenance engineer. Jury-rigging bombs and weapons.
- Xenophobe. The only good alien is a dead alien. Any alien.

NAMES

Anders, Arie, Cooper, Dean, Hagel, Hobbs, Lang, Peterson, Smith, Tvechy, Williams

CROSSROADS

- Blow up the starport even though colonists work there?
- Raid the heavily guarded arsenal to steal weapons?
- Eliminate a colonist who betrayed one of the partisans (Carter) to the invaders? Carter was killed trying to escape arrest.
- Halt all attacks and retreat from the area until invader vigilance dies down?

NOTES

The idea of a partisan resistance struggling against a powerful occupation could fit a variety of real world settings: French (or Dutch or Polish) resistance in World War II, Jewish rebels fighting Rome, or any number of wars in Afghanistan.

SANTA'S WORKSHOP

"He's making a list, checking it twice. Gonna find out who's naughty or nice."

Jolly old Santa is taking a much-needed break! Time to trade his big red coat for some Bermuda shorts and wiggle his toes in the sand at Cabo. But never fear, children of the world! He's leaving his trusty elves in charge of his workshop. Xmas will go on! Probably.

What do the elves do when Santa decides to take a vacation? Just hammer out more toys? Or start making something the kids really need like vaccines and text books? Either way, there's a Santa-shaped hole in their hearts. The elves could just sit around moping about how much they miss him... or they could build a Robo-Santa and turn to it for love and leadership. But beware: nothing can soften the hard iron of Robo-Santa's lap... or his heart.

The Kingdom is Santa's Workshop and all its toy-making elves with the notable exception of Santa himself: he's out of the picture, at least at the start.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Santa is [taking a vacation someplace warm where they put little umbrellas in the drinks | holed up in his den, sitting on the couch eating salty snacks and binging on reality TV | gone mysteriously. No explanation. He just left a note to carry on until he gets back.]
- Santa's elves are [immortal (or at least incredibly long-lived). These elves are the same ones who have served Santa for centuries | magical creatures animated from gingerbread | the proud few chosen from the hidden villages of elves each generation. Every young elf hopes to be chosen by Santa to come work at the North Pole!]

THREATS

- Global warming is making Xmas a lot less of a winter wonderland.
- We miss Santa! How can we go on without him?
- Kids don't believe in Santa anymore. They think it's just a myth their parents made up so they'll be good. The nerve!
- Kids want violent toys.
- Kids don't play with toys. They're too busy with video games and the internet.
- Modern military radar makes flying around the world delivering presents a lot more risky. Santa's sleigh might catch an anti-aircraft missile when it intrudes on a nation's air space.

LOCATIONS

- Workroom. Where the toys are made. Long wooden tables with hammers and saws. Usually bustling with activity.
- Attic. Packed with old decorations and unused toys. A good place to hide out and be all alone. Or do some organizing.
- Reindeer pens. They can fly, but you still have to clean up after them.
- Xmas tree forest. A sea of pines in the snow, each neatly trimmed with decorations.
- Santa's Command & Control. The NORAD of the North Pole. Walls of monitors chart the weather and follow the sleigh's progress across the globe. Who said elves can't have technology?
- Frozen lake. It's solid ice all year around. Go skating! Play games!
- The Dump. Icy chasm filled with rejected toys and/or toys that were made for kids who turned out to be naughty. No toys for naughty girls and boys.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Believer elf. Loves Santa and Xmas and making toys!
- Handy elf. Makes the very best toys.
- Clumsy elf. Accident prone. Really not that good at making toys.
- Stern elf. Thinks we go far too easy on bad kids.
- Activist elf. Toys are a placebo of the masses! Kids need education and health care!
- Boffin elf. We need to keep up with the latest technology. Let's get some transistors in that jack-in-the-box!
- Popular elf. But are you using your charisma for good or bad?
- Management elf. Makes sure things go by the numbers. May require elves to stay late to fill out reports.

If you want to mix things up, include talking reindeer as a character option.

NAMES

Brandy, Brite, Doodle, Flora, Glo, Jingle, Meriwether, Mint, Ogg-Nog, Sassafras, Scrumblebritches, Sparkle, Tingle, Tumblefin, Whim, Widget

CROSSROADS

- Cancel Xmas this year?

We can't have Xmas without Santa! Who will deliver presents? Who will decide who's been naughty and nice?

Who will laugh with a belly like a bowl full of jelly? Should we just skip it this year or do we step up and do Santa's job for him, somehow?

- Give toys to naughty children too?
- Switch to digital downloads instead of physical toys?
- Expand the workshop? Bring in new elves and increase production.
- Outsource present delivery? Put the reindeer out to pasture and partner with a shipping company.
- Replace the flying reindeer with ramjet engines on the sleigh?
- Partner with company execs and make toys with commercial tie-ins?

Toy company executives slogged all the way to the North Pole to present this deal. After snowmobiling through countless miles of arctic blizzard, they knocked on the door of Santa's Workshop and proposed a partnership that they say will give the kids toys they will love.

NOTES

Originally played with Caroline Hobbs, Jess Downs and Sam Ashwell at Story Games Seattle.

SAWYER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Sawyer Memorial was founded to help people, but it has fallen on hard times. It is too busy in all the wrong ways, treating critical cases that could have been a lot less severe if there had been some preventive healthcare sooner.

A new doctor's internship is like going to war. They barely sleep, work around the clock and then have to make life or death decisions without hesitation. And no matter what their seniority, doctors are sometimes forced to fight or cheat the system to actually help people in need. But in the end, you can't do any good if you can't pay the bills and keep the doors open.

The Kingdom is the hospital and the people who work there and keep it running: doctors, nurses, administrators, orderlies and janitors. But make no mistake: the doctors wear the stethoscopes. They know they are in charge. Even if they're not.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- We want the tone of our game to be [a serious examination of real world issues | serious but dramatic | soap opera, focused more on the characters than the issues | situational comedy with (maybe) a heart of gold]
- Sawyer Memorial Hospital [has been around for years | is a brand new state-of-the-art facility | is old and poorly maintained]
- The hospital is in [the middle of the city | an underprivileged urban community | the suburbs]

THREATS

- We're swamped. We don't have the time to really care for each patient. It's fast food healthcare.
- Residents learn here but then go take jobs at more lucrative practices. We're not getting the new talent.
- We've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on high tech machines we never use, money that could have been better spent on basic resources or more staff.
- There have been a lot of easily avoidable mistakes lately.
- A big malpractice lawsuit was filed against the hospital. The board of directors may settle to avoid it going to trial.
- Prescription drugs have been going missing.

LOCATIONS

- Emergency Room. Where the unexpected walks in the door. It's bad when it's busy but even worse when it's slow.
- Nurse's station. Nerve center of the ward. The crossroads of the floor.
- Surgery. Doctors and nurses can have heart-to-hearts over the open heart of an unconscious patient—if you don't mind talking through a surgical mask.
- Cafeteria. Staff and visitors all eat there.
- Break room. Where doctors can unwind or collapse in off-moments.
- Supply closet. The fortress of solitude for many fragile interns. Now get back out there!
- Roof. A good place to look out over the city/neighborhood/trees and wonder whether you're making a difference. Or smoke.
- Loading dock. Another good place to smoke. Or shoot hoops.

CHARACTER SEEDS

- The doctor who cares about the patients.
- The doctor who cares about prestige and career.
- The doctor who just doesn't care anymore.
- The hotshot resident too good to be working here. Is it true? Are they the only one who thinks so?
- The nurse who's been there longer than (almost) anyone.
- The administrator who has to answer to the board and keep the hospital funded.

If you're a doctor, decide if you're an intern, resident or veteran. Interns are first-year trainee doctors. They are just out of medical school but cannot practice medicine yet without supervision. After internship a doctor continues training on-the-job as a Resident for several more years before getting to decide what to do with their medical career.

A patient would not make a good main character since they should be leaving the hospital as soon as possible.

NAMES

Characters can use any real world names.

CROSSROADS

- Forbid staff from volunteering at the community clinic?
- Fire Dr. Vaughn, an incompetent Intern who is also the nephew of a major donor?

- Cut nurses' pay?
- Prescribe the name-brand drugs the pharma reps are pushing instead of the cheaper generic brands? Insurance is paying, so who cares?
- Keep patients in the hospital longer than strictly necessary after operations?

NOTES

If any of the players works in healthcare or is particularly familiar with the field and how a hospital works, discuss as a group how much you want to bring those details into the game and how accurate you want your Kingdom to be. It can be helpful to use that knowledge to bring the environment to life, but you do not want to stifle other people's input or make them feel like they cannot contribute because they do not understand how things "really" work. It is better to have everyone enjoy themselves than to be one hundred percent accurate.

STARFALL

A hidden world-clave of scientists and technocrats, Starfall is the ultimate arms dealer to the planets. It is both corporation and independent nation-state, the humble and discreet kingmakers of interplanetary affairs.

Starfall's weapons have no equal in known space. They don't win battles, they end wars. They are tools of mass destruction on a planetary scale. Hurl moons out of orbit. Boil oceans. Turn the sky into a lens of fire.

Starfall claims to be neutral with no agenda of its own, but is that the whole truth? Do they cunningly play planet against planet to ensure a market for their goods? Or are they secretly idealists who aspire to a galaxy where war is a thing of the past and even their own weapons are no longer needed?

Whatever their true motives, the new calculus of war is simple: the side that Starfall arms, wins.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Starfall's home is [a sunless mobile planet pulled free of its star and hidden in the depths of space | an artificial world-station locked in the folds of warp space | a flowering utopia carved from the hollow core of a seemingly barren moon]
- Their technology is far more advanced than the rest of the galaxy because [during recent centuries of decline and barbarism, Starfall remained a hidden bastion of civilization | they unlocked science hidden in the relics of a dead alien race | since their earliest days they have carefully and quietly recruited the best and brightest from across all the worlds]
- In all the known galaxy, humanity is [the only (living) intelligent species | one of the five great races | just one of a myriad of intelligent species]
- Across the planets, Starfall is said to be [neutral in all matters, providing decisive weapons to the highest bidder | an arbiter of peace, ensuring that no planet overshadows another | unwilling to allow any power to arise that might eclipse its own unique place in the galaxy]

THREATS

- Looming galactic peace could make Starfall irrelevant.
- Concerns that we should be using our technology to create instead of destroy.
- Infiltrators inside Starfall may be stealing tech for planetary governments.
- The planets resent our unique position. They may unite against us.

- We have detected probes that seem to be hunting for Starfall's hidden location. Who sent them? We don't know.

LOCATIONS

- The Forge. Construction factory capable of generating fusion forces comparable to the heart of a star.
- The Lathe. A walk-in space-simulator for modeling weapons' effects on virtual planets or stars.
- The Vault. Hyper-secure storage for decommissioned weapons. The whole chamber is shifted into parallel warp space. Too dangerous to use? Or too effective?
- Bungalows on the white sand beaches of an indigo sea. Pleasant housing for the employees of Starfall.
- The Cathedral. Vast observation deck and lounge looking out on the stars.
- The Promenade. Garden plaza/park where citizens mingle and relax.
- The Embassy. Virtual conference room for holo-communication with dignitaries of customer governments around the galaxy.
- The Stones. Alien stonehenge. Were they found here or transported from a distant world? Do they hold the secrets of alien technology or are they purely decorative?

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- Scientist. Unlocks fundamental secrets of the universe and figures out how to destroy things with them.
- Technologist. Designs and fabricates weapons using the principles unlocked by scientists.
- Emissary. Part diplomat, part client relations. Negotiates contracts and contact with planetary governments.
- Development Director. Oversees design and implementation of a particular weapon.
- Deployment Director. Oversees setting up Starfall weapons in the field.
- Impact Analyst. Models and studies the effects of weapons on real and virtual settings, analyzes past "deployment" data.
- Ethicist. Part of the Committee of Values entrusted with providing independent insight on the moral and ethical basis of what Starfall does.
- Archaeologist. Unlocking ancient alien secrets (if there are any).

NAMES

Borsley, Cross, Hayden, Kane, Nemura, Phellin, Sallace, Soren, Taven, Wells
(prefix with a title like "Doctor" or "Director")

System names: Alletics, Cassil, Corsono, Debari, Foltus, Glade, Gram, Hanat, Kudaro, Mossul, Tokumar, Waver, Vix

CROSSROADS

- Provide weapons to the Warlords of Hanat? They have already enslaved two free planets.
- Provide weapons to the rebels of Foltus? The rebels are a slim minority of the world's population.
- Build and donate terraforming technology to the struggling colonists on Glade to make their world more livable?
- Punish planet Ivix? We caught them sending spies to steal our technology.
- Go forward with construction of the Sun-Eater, perhaps the most powerful weapon we have ever imagined? It is designed to cause a chain-reaction collapse of nearby stars.

NOTES

Starfall was the third Kingdom we played. It was originally played with Fred Lott, Marc Hobbs and Shuo Meng.

The dilemma facing the Kingdom is a moral one: given their vast technological superiority, how do they use their power?

WINTERHOOK'S SCHOOL FOR WAYWARD WIZARDS

Some say that great wizards are born, not made. But dangerous wizards are born too and without guidance they can grow up to be darkly-perilous.

Winterhook's is a school to mentor and shape these young magicians, to keep their idle hands from becoming a devil's playground. It is hidden away from the mundane world, a mystical sanctuary where students can learn to safely master their Art before it becomes their undoing.

At least that is the claim. A less charitable interpretation would be that it is nothing more than a prison to protect the mundane world from the horrors these fledgling wizards might become. What is the truth? Is it a school or a prison? Or does it start as one and become the other?

The Kingdom is the school and everyone in it, including the teachers, students and servants of both the mundane and far more arcane variety.

CUSTOMIZE *(pick one answer for each)*

- Winterhook's exists in [the modern world | early industrial society, cluttered with smoke stacks and belching steam engines | a medieval world of castles, knights and serfs]
- The school was created as [a charitable organization to shelter and help masterless wizards | a prison set up by a populace fearful of wizards | a secret place where magically-gifted children are hidden because magic is forbidden]
- The school itself is [in a wooded hinterland leagues from the nearest town | on a lonely isle far from prying eyes | hidden in the very heart of a thriving city, behind seemingly mundane doors or at the end of twisted paths]
- Your potential for magic is [something you inherit from your ancestors; it's in the blood | decided by the stars you are born under | only revealed once you are exposed to some source of mystical power]

THREATS

- Students have been secretly passing around a crumbling copy of the Scrolls of Canos despite the masters forbidding the ancient text.
- Master Numosrin was driven mad by his magic and had to be imprisoned. Is he merely the first?
- Some students are more powerful than the teachers expected, perhaps more powerful than the teachers can handle.
- Three students escaped the school right under the masters' noses.

- The local [lord | burgermeister | mayor] is a secret partner and protector, but he is reconsidering allowing the school to operate in his domain.

LOCATIONS

- The Labyrinth. The school's library is a maze of cramped chambers, each piled with a clutter of tomes and scrolls. Riddles and wards hide the innermost chambers from all but the most gifted mages.
- Tower of the Moon. Moves with the lunar cycle. Finding it to attend classes is the first test.
- Chamber of Mirrors. Students meditating here can see possible future selves reflected. May also be a mystical trap the masters use to extract and imprison dangerous aspects of a student's spirit.
- Hall of Secrets. Catacombs where a thousand voices whisper secrets to the wise and lies to the unwary.
- Blackhenge. Circle of standing stones in a cave beneath the school. A place of great power and peril. Only the Masters may tread here.
- The stream Ouroborous. Flows through the school grounds without beginning or end. Follow it long enough and you come back to where you started.
- Trees That Walk. A serene grove that wanders around the school grounds, but never when you're watching. Sometimes it even turns up indoors. Nap here and you may wake up somewhere else. (Yes, even if Winterhook's is hidden in the middle of a city, there can be forests and gardens inside its walls. Magic!)

CHARACTER SEEDS

- Master who thinks students are a menace that must be contained.
- Master who cares for the students.
- Master who wants to be left alone to do magic.
- Master who is himself a prisoner of the school.
- New student, seemingly incompetent.
- New student, prodigy.
- Senior student, eager to move up and out.
- Popular student, social ringleader.
- Shade-spy, pretends to be a student but really a magical creation of the masters to spy on them.
- Warden, keeper of the doors and gates of the school.

NAMES

Students: Beris, Erasmus, Foley, Gill, Hodge, Joll, Kell, Morus, Newt, Pearl, Petrov, Samber, Staden, Trum, Widdy

Masters: Anthus, Barrobinge, Black, Cogwharton, Greygazen, Hookling, Lilymane, Isleyladen, Malzebrooke, Olinosprey, Rook, Telmarin, Wirin

Students are given new names for the duration of their apprenticeship. When they become masters or graduate, they are given full sorcerous names.

CROSSROADS

- Expel the three students caught trying to tap the power of the Blackhenge?
- Fashion soul talismans for all students so the masters can use magic on them no matter where they go?
- Allow students to take holidays away from the school grounds?
- Teach students the powerful sorcery contained in the Writings of Azuul-mani?
- Have students magically duel each other to test their skill?
- Strip Master Mamply of his magic for raising the spirits of dead masters of the school to learn their secrets?

NOTES

Some elements inspired by our Covenant of Librum Nox game at Go Play NW 2013, played with Doug Bartlett, Kynnin Scott and Tony Dowler.



AFTERWORD

Thanks

When you work on a game for three years, it goes through a lot of phases. Different people help move it along at each stage. If you look at that big list of playtesters, a lot of them provided essential nudges at critical points along the way, sometimes without realizing it.

Throughout the entire process I've relied heavily on the Kingdom brain trust: Caroline Hobbs, Marc Hobbs and Pat Kemp. When I've wondered whether something would help or hinder Kingdom, these are the people I've asked. When I wanted to try something new, these are the people I played with. They have been instrumental to its birth.

Kingdom has also gone through many, many revisions. My tireless editor, Carole Robbins, reviewed draft after draft after draft. It simply would not have gotten done without her.

Like other role-playing games, Kingdom owes a huge debt to numerous games that preceded it. Jason Morningstar and Emily Care Boss are just two designers whose work had a distinct influence. There are many more.

But without a doubt, the single biggest impact has been sitting down with people and playing—and not just Kingdom, but lots of different role-playing games. Sitting down every week at Story Games Seattle—often with total strangers—has been a PhD course in how people game. There is no better way to understand game design than to play.

I've been absurdly fortunate to play Kingdom with a lot of wonderful people. But among all those great games, there are a few that were pivotal in how I thought about Kingdom. These are the players that made that happen:

Ashley, Dale, Evan, Fred, Jess, Jonathan, Matthew, Megan, Neil and Sam who were already mentioned for the Kingdoms that went on to be seeds.

Caroline, Marc, Pat and Shuo for the unexpectedly landmark Pizza Kingdom (and about a zillion other Kingdoms as well).

Andy, Feiya and Pat for the troubled but beautiful Sanctuary of Arcadia, one of my favorite Kingdoms, hands-down.

Sev, Tayler, Dion and Seth for Moebius Station, the first “external” playtest.

Abi, Jamie and Mike for KBQX Albuquerque.

Martin and Jacqueline for uplifting the culture of Clio.

Dani for bravely playing the first two-player Kingdom game, Pine Bend.

And Mike and Trey for the Olympus Dawn colony ship, the game that convinced me that Kingdom was finally ready.

Thanks to every single one of you.

Playtesters

If you enjoy Kingdom, these are the people you should thank. They made the game what it is now. Each playtester is listed by the first version of Kingdom they played.

Versions One & Two

Caroline Hobbs, Feiya Cook, Fred Lott, Marc Hobbs, Pat Kemp, Shuo Meng

Version Three

Abi Nighthill, Alanor Vuylsteke, Alessio Rossi, Andrew Gause, Andy Michael, Anton Trauner, Ashley Cook, Barak "El Presidente" Lightning, Barbara Fini, Brad Walker, Brian Ballsun-Stanton, Camilo Caceres, Carlos Mendez Chang, Cheryl Trooskin-Zoller, Chris Crewdson, Chris Eng, Christopher Smith, Crystal, Dale Horstman, Daniel Wood, David Fooden, Dion Sorenson, Ethan Trooskin-Zoller, Geoff Matheson, Ian Zeilstra, Jamie Brasington, Jamie Fristrom, Jason Ziglar, Javier Soto, Jeff Winokur, Jess Downs, Jess Perez, Jessica Beckett, Johnstone Metzger, Jonathan Bearup, Jonathan Borzilleri, Jonathan Newhall, Jorge Lopez Guerra, Julius Fildes, Kriss Morton, Krystal Hammar, Leandra Trout, Louie Brennan, Mac Hume, Mark Levad, Mark Wyler, Markus Haydn, Martin Ryan, Martin Silva, Matthew Klein, Matthias Papuschek, Michael McDowell, Mike Sugarbaker, Neil Pinkerton, Nia Miyu Haydn, Niall Sullivan, Nicholas Chan, Orion Canning, Paulo Rivas, Raffaele Manzo, Richard Choi, Robert Bruce, Russell Moore, Seth Magdich, Shaun Brasington, Simone Lombardo, Sohum Banerjea, Stephen Locke, Stuart Updegrave, Tayler Stokes, Todd Meder

Versions Four & Five

Aaron Herbert, Adam Drew, Ade Hill, Adrian Dyson, Alasdair Sinclair, Albey Amakiir, Alex Cooley, Alex Guerrero-Randall, Bob Krol, Brian Hunter, Chris Roosenraad, Chris Steinitz, Dani Laney, David Berg, David Redcorn, Derek Grey, Doug Bartlett, Epistolary Richard, Eric Nolan, Eric Spohn, Evan Silberman, Garth "The Shadow" Rose, Geoff Vogel, George Austin, Greg Pearson, Henry Gnau, Jacek 'Darken' Gołębowski, Jacqueline Ashwell, Jan Laszcak, Jeff Hosmer, Jenna Povey, Jobe Bittman, Joe Iglesias, Joe Tyne, John Carr, John Knight, Jonathan Davis, Jordan Mingus, Joshua Unruh, Julia Gentlestrength, Juliusz Doboszewski, Kayla, Kim Voynar, Konrad 'Erni' Mazurek, Kynnin Scott, Liam Mehl, Loren Lassiter, Maciej Sabat, Mark Causey, Mark Dickinson, Matt Butler, Matt Repp, Matthew Gagan, Megan Brown, Michael Arrington, Mike Frost, Mike Schmidt, Mit Mehl, Morgan Stinson, Neil Smith, Nick Cole, Nick Grimm, Nick Tebby, Padraig Bracken, Paul Lowrie, Peter Adkison, Piers Connolly, Piotr Stankiewicz, Richard Lutz, Rob Brennan, Robert Rees, Rohit Ramnath, Sam Ashwell, Steve Conard, Steve Hickey, Terry Booth, Terry Daly, Terry Frangiadakis, Thomas Demkey, Tim Ballew, Tony Dowler, Trey Marshall, Veles Svitlychny

NAME

NAME

Your KINGDOM:

POWER

You are in charge. You decide what the Kingdom does.

PERSPECTIVE

You understand the Kingdom. You can foresee consequences.

TOUCHSTONE

You reflect the people of the Kingdom. They feel the way you do.

Your **ROLE** determines what you can do. Circle one. You can change later on.

Pick other details about your character that you want to see in the game. Complete each step together.

WHO ARE YOU?

BOND

Duty or Relationship

WISH or FEAR

I wish / fear the Kingdom will... (circle one)

BOND

Duty or Relationship

ISSUE

What flaw or relationship holds you back?

Create a Bond with the character to your left

Write down the Bond created by the player to your right

LOCATIONS

POWER

PERSPECTIVE

TOUCHSTONE

POWER

PERSPECTIVE

TOUCHSTONE

You are in charge. You tell the Kingdom what to do.

If you don't think your character is in charge anymore, it's time to change your Role

When you're in a scene...

You can use your authority to make the Kingdom do something to another character (throw them in jail, give them a raise, etc.). You must describe how you make it happen. Threaten or reward other characters to make them do what you want.

You can also use your authority to give orders that are only carried out if the side of the Crossroad you specify (Yes or No) happens.

When the Crossroad is resolved...

Power decides what the Kingdom does.

You understand the Kingdom, both its merits and flaws. You can foresee the consequences of decisions the Kingdom makes.

If you don't think your character understands the Kingdom anymore, it's time to change your Role.

When you're in a scene...

You predict the consequences of the Crossroad. Pick either Yes or No, then describe something that will happen if the Kingdom makes that choice ("Will the Kingdom go to war? If Yes, we will suffer huge losses"). Make predictions about the Kingdom, not specific characters.

Complicate the Crossroad by predicting problems we didn't expect. Pressure other characters by predicting things they would want to stop.

You reflect the desires of the people of the Kingdom. You show us what they want and how they feel.

If you don't think the people of the Kingdom feel the same way you do, it's time to change your Role.

When you're in a scene...

You decide what the people of the Kingdom feel. As soon as we see your character react or express an opinion we know that's the attitude of the people too. You can instantly change the nature of the Kingdom.

On your turn...

In addition to your normal check at the end of your scene, you can opt to check Crisis if you think the Kingdom is in trouble or erase a Crisis check if things are calming down. You could even check Crisis twice.

CHALLENGE a character
to stop something they do or establish.

OVERTHROW a character
to take their Role for yourself.

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to take their Role for yourself.

START A NEW GAME

To start a game, follow these steps:

- 1) Read Intro
- 2) Make Kingdom
 - a) Kingdom concept
 - b) Threats (three total)
 - c) Locations (two per player)
- 3) Make Characters: Complete each step together.
 - a) Role
 - b) Who are you?
 - c) Locations
 - d) Wish or Fear
 - e) Issue
 - f) Bond
- 4) Write starting cards
- 5) Read "Kingdom in a Nutshell"
- 6) Pick first player: They will make first Crossroad.

MAKE SCENE

Show what your character thinks or does about the Crossroad.

- 1) Read Crossroad & Role aloud
- 2) What's happening?
- 3) Who's there?
- 4) Where?

CHALLENGE

Stop something another character does or establishes with their Role.

- 1) Declare your target
- 2) Show how you Challenge
- 3) Defender decides outcome: Yes, No, or Yes if you take steps they specify
- If you Challenge someone's Role and fail, you can immediately escalate to Overthrow them.

PLAY

On your turn, follow these steps:

- 1) Make Crossroad: If there isn't one. Next player does it if you already made one.
 - 2) Scene: Show what your character thinks or does about the Crossroad.
 - 3) Reactions: Each player can say where they are and what they see/ think/do. Short solo narration.
 - 4) Advance a Card
 - 5) Resolve cards that are full (Crossroad, Crisis, Time Passes)
 - 6) Next Player clockwise
- In a scene you can use your Role, Challenge, Change Roles or Overthrow someone else's Role. In a reaction you can only do one.

REFERENCE SHEET

This is a brief outline of the rules. You can use it as a quick reference or overview, but follow the complete instructions given in the book.

For more information about Kingdom visit lamemage.com.



MAKE CROSSROAD

Crossroads are the critical chapters of your game. Always make Crossroads that interest you.

- 1) State the question
- 2) Check interest
- 3) Paint the picture

RESOLVE: CROSSROAD

- 1) End Game?
 - 2) Set the Stage
 - 3) Decision (Power)
 - 4) Orders (Power)
 - 5) Predictions (Perspective)
 - 6) Popular Reaction (Touchstone)
 - 7) Reflection
 - 8) Check Time Passes
- Each player can interrupt once.

RESOLVE: CRISIS

- 1) End Game?
- 2) Describe Crisis
- 3) What do you see? (each character)
- 4) What do you do? (each character)

- 5) Outcome
- 6) Dead or Retiring characters
- 7) Introduce New Characters
- 8) Make new Crisis card

RESOLVE: TIME PASSES

- 1) End Game?
- 2) Decide how much time passes
- 3) Retire Characters
- 4) The Good & The Bad
- 5) Crisis Fades
- 6) Introduce New Characters
- 7) Make new Time Passes card

CHANGE ROLES

- 1) Show change
 - 2) Pay price
- You cannot voluntarily switch your Role unless you held it for one full scene. You can only use one Role per scene.

OVERTHROW

- Take a character's Role for yourself.
- 1) Change to their Role
 - 2) Show how you Overthrow them
 - 3) Defender decides outcome: Yes or No
- Yes if you take steps they specify
- If you fail, stop. Otherwise:
- 4) Cancel what they did
 - 5) Defender picks new Role

Kingdoms are all around us...

Communities tie us together. When you play Kingdom, you'll sit down and make a community together and then strive to make it live up to your ideals... or watch as it burns.

Your Kingdom can be any group or organization that interests you. You could make a Wild West frontier town, a colony ship crawling to a distant star, or a sprawling Empire holding conquered peoples beneath its thumb. As you play, you'll confront your Kingdom with Crossroads, critical decisions that may change your Kingdom forever. Does the frontier town hang the outlaw without a fair trial? Do the colonists settle on an inhospitable world? Does the Empire grant conquered provinces their freedom?

What will your Kingdom do? What will it become? Will it stay true to its ideals—our ideals—or will it become some twisted shadow of our dreams?

The Kingdom is in your hands. The question is: will you change the Kingdom or will the Kingdom change you?

A role-playing game by Ben Robbins, creator of Microscope. For two to five players. No GM. No prep.



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Kingdom Rules Update

May 29, 2014

Uncontrolled Orders & Predictions

Overview: During Crossroad resolution, if a prediction or order is no longer controlled by the character who made it (because that person no longer has that Role), the players who currently have that Role decide if it happens instead.

Old text is crossed-out, followed by the replacement text.

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~~If no one controls the order (because that character no longer has Power), it happens automatically:~~

"If the player who made an order does not have Power anymore, a current Power can adopt that order and describe it being carried out. It becomes their order. If there are Powers but no one adopts the order, it is cancelled. But if there are no Powers the order is carried out automatically unless Challenged."

~~If you don't have Perspective anymore, you have no control over your prediction. It automatically comes true:~~

"If the player who made a prediction does not have Perspective anymore, a current Perspective can adopt that prediction and describe it coming true. It becomes their prediction. If there are Perspectives but no one adopts the prediction, it is cancelled. But if there are no Perspectives the prediction comes true automatically unless Challenged."