

Vigilance

Vigilance, Anticipation, or Interest.

With Rage: yields Aggressiveness.

With Ecstasy: yields Optimism.



*Discard and shuffle into related
cards*

Rage

Rage, Anger, or Annoyance.

With Loathing: yields Contempt.

With Vigilance: yields Aggressiveness.



*Discard and shuffle into related
cards*

Loathing

Loathing, Disgust, or Boredom.

With Grief: yields Remorse.

With Rage: yields Contempt.



*Discard and shuffle into related
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Grief

Grief, Sadness, or Pensiveness.

With Amazement: yields Disapproval.

With Loathing: yields Remorse.



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Amazement

Amazement, Surprise, or Distraction.

With Terror: yields Awe.

With Grief: yields Disapproval.



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Terror

Terror, Fear, or Apprehension.

With Admiration: yields Submission.

With Amazement: yields Awe.



*Discard and shuffle into related
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Admiration

Admiration, Trust, or Acceptance.

With Ecstasy: yields Love.

With Terror: yields Submission.



*Discard and shuffle into related
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Ecstasy

Ecstasy, Joy, or Serenity.

With Vigilance: yields Optimism.

With Admiration: yields Love.



*Discard and shuffle into related
cards*

Undead

"Not so much fell as fell apart..." -- Basler

Being sustained by dark magic, the undead are equally vulnerable to it.

Many cannot abide holy objects, places, or effects. Others are bound by orders to only guard a certain place, or do a certain thing.

You can avoid the challenge of an Undead threat if you learn what raised them and why, and use that knowledge to outsmart or dispel them.

An Undead threat may:

- Weaken or expire in the presence of the sacred or the pure
- Fall prey to tricks or traps a thinking being could avoid
- Have limitations its creator didn't anticipate



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Toxic

"My arrows can fly farther than its spit." -- Woody

Poison is not selective. It will harm anyone, friend or foe.

Some toxins have antidotes, or may not penetrate some kinds of defense. For example, a snake's fangs might be deflected by armor.

You may avoid the challenge of a Toxic threat if you discover its secrets or thwart its method of delivery.

A Toxic threat may:

- Inadvertently harm allies, or themselves if they are not immune
- Be unable to deliver its poison if you find adequate protection
- Fail to harm something or someone with a natural or acquired immunity



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Tense

"You mean the real villain all this time was...?!" -- Emory

If you discover the reason for a Tense situation, you can often find ways to diffuse things.

If you don't get caught up in the tension, maybe you can talk the others down, or pacify them.

You may avoid the challenge of a Tense situation by getting all the facts and making careful choices in your approach.

Beings in a Tense situation may:

- Hold the key to a secret or a misunderstanding
- Exchange their trust for support
- Overlook past beliefs and opinions in the stress of the moment



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Spectral

"I'll have a magic circle up in a moment!" -- Tana

Spectral beings came to the waking world for a reason, whether for mischief, malice, or other needs. The bonds holding them to life are tenuous, and if they're given what they want, or can no longer get it, they might be forced back.

Spectral encounter may not pose a challenge if their objective is obtained, threatened, or destroyed. A Spectral threat may:

- Be forced back into the other world by applying arcane lore
- Be weakened or repulsed by warding rituals
- Make a compromise to achieve its objective



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Portentous

"They're going the same way we are. Come on." -- Woody

The Portentous is the first step on a larger road. It both surprises characters, and prepares them for what is next.

You may avoid the challenge of Portentous encounters by meeting the future they suggest with your eyes open.

Portentous encounters may:

- Reveal an important clue or suggest a strategy
- Unlock a hidden strength or personal conviction



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Notorious

"Save the beak. We need it to claim the reward!" -- Basler

Fame has its price.

If the stories that have gotten around are accurate, you might know how to take on this encounter - maybe.

Sometimes tales are false, and notorious things prove to be very different than you expect.

You may avoid the challenge of a Notorious threat when you correctly leverage its lore, or when you look at it with fresh eyes and discover the truth behind the stories.

Notorious threats may:

- Behave or react just as the legends say
- Draw unwanted attention to themselves in the region
- Hold a deeper, unsung truth



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Monstrous

"Whoever corrupted this creature will pay. Let's press on."

-- Woody

A Monstrous threat is powered by its rage or aggression, but those can be its downfall as well.

Monstrous creatures often lack a sense of self-preservation, fighting relentlessly when others would retreat.

You may avoid the challenge of a Monstrous threat by taking advantage of its twisted, feral nature.

Monstrous threats may:

- Lose themselves in their own ferocity
- Fall into traps when skillfully goaded
- Misunderstand those not driven by similar instincts



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Large

"Just as long as it doesn't fall on us." -- Basler

You may have trouble engaging with a Large encounter due to the size difference, but that trouble goes both ways. It can be hard for Large things to perceive or target smaller foes.

You may counter the challenge of a Large encounter by exploiting your respective sizes somehow.

A Large threat may:

- Lose track of small details or targets
- Be easily targeted due to its size
- Move slowly or clumsily



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Hybrid

*"That thing was terrifying! Your kingdom is messed up!" --
Basler*

Not every hybrid has a perfect command of its own nature. Hybrids must also obey the rules of all their component parts.

A Hybrid may not pose a challenge if the characters exploit its weaknesses.

Hybrid beings may:

- Suffer the vulnerabilities of any of their contributing parts
- Become confused by conflicting impulses or instincts



*Flip to see ways the encounter
challenges the PCs.*

Gang

"Sounds like fair odds to me. Have at you!" -- Emory

The strength of a gang is in its numbers. Dealing with individual members can be very different from confronting the gang as a whole.

While an assembled gang acts instinctively, individuals can be made to consider actions more carefully.

You may avoid or circumvent the challenge of a gang by disrupting the group, or by addressing individual members.

A Gang may:

- Have competing impulses or mixed sympathies or agendas
- Fall apart if a leader is weakened or shamed
- Follow a new leader or impulse that better matches its agenda



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Flying

"Meet my best girl, Annette! A net, get it?" -- Basler

Wings require lots of energy to sustain flight, and are often fragile. Magical or elemental sources of flight can be counter-spelled or negated. Turbulent air can thwart flyers, forcing them to ground, where they might be vulnerable.

You may avoid the challenge of a flyer by disturbing its source of flight or forcing it into situations where its flight won't help.

Flying threats may:

- Become entangled, trapped, or confined in ways that negate flight
- Be unable to lift heavy loads or fly under difficult conditions
- Suffer great harm if they fall a great distance



*Flip to see ways the encounter
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Elemental

"They had some nice gemstones too!" -- Basler

The elements represent a complex system with rules that can be exploited.

Each element is usually weak to another element, such as fire being weak to water. Elements are also bound to their natures. Fire needs some sort of fuel to persist, for example.

You can weaken or neutralize an Elemental threat by exploiting its vulnerabilities or using its nature against it.

Elemental threats may:

- Be vulnerable to their element's normal vulnerabilities or rules
- Require a nearby source of the element to control, or just to survive



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Diabolical

"Basler, stop cringing. He's not talking about you." -- Woody

Evil hasn't won, though it keeps trying. Powers from beyond are bound by their own rules too, and can be defeated accordingly.

Characters who arm themselves with occult lore or divine blessings may circumvent or neutralize a Diabolical power.

A Diabolical encounter may:

- Be susceptible to folk incantations or rituals
- Recoil from the pure of heart
- Flee to fight another day



Flip to see ways the encounter challenges the PCs.

Base

"Next time, I'll let my sword do the talking." -- Emory

While Bases can be big and imposing, their nature can work against their occupants.

Tents, side-passages, stacked crates, and many other things can help a character even the odds. Camps have a lot of supplies that can be looted or bargained for.

A Base may:

- House something you're looking for, or something unexpected that can help you
- Rely on infrastructure that can be destroyed or disrupted
- Give up secrets about the plans and activities of its occupants



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Armored

"You know what metal does? Heats up. Fireball!" -- Tana

Every armor has a weakness or comes at a cost, like making someone slower or something heavier. Some armor has weak spots or is vulnerable to a specific attack. Armor can also suffer if not regularly maintained.

You can confront an Armored obstacle without a challenge if you can find and exploit one of these weaknesses.

Something armored may:

- Have limited senses that can be exploited by nimble, stealthy, or evasive opponents
- Be forced to shed the armor if it's heated, if they sink, etc.
- Be susceptible to area-effect attacks or those of a particular type (magic, psychic, electric, etc.)



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Impeded

"I can't feel the grimoire! I can't feel ANY magic!" -- Tana

A sense or faculty you normally depend on has been temporarily lost. You might have pushed yourself past a limit, or been affected by a disease or magical effect.

You are unable to use the affected abilities. If your mind or senses are affected, you may make important mistakes in judgement.

What do things change for you, in practical terms and in your attitude? What new understanding do you gain? What hard truths do you deny? Whose support is vital during your recuperation?

- Temporarily blind, deaf, or mute
- Unable to cast spells or use other special abilities
- Suffering a breakdown or phobia
- Driven by unstoppable fury or sorrow



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Ungeared

*"The flood washed away our campsite! Now what?" --
Basler*

Your gear has been broken, lost, or taken, or you are out of some important resource.

You must scavenge for substitutes, or make do with barely-adequate improvisations. If you lack basic necessities like food, you must hunt for them soon.

Where must you go to get what you need? Who has it, and what do they demand for it? How do you change habits or tactics to deal with the problems cause by what you lack?

- Equipment lost in floods or other calamity
- Stripped of weapons by enemies
- Magical tools disenchantd
- Completely without rations or shelter



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Transformed

"Aww, the doggie is barking!... Basler?!" -- Tana

You've been physically remade into something new by powerful magic. You can still function, but it's a big adjustment. Your new form's abilities don't match your old one's.

People may flee or attack at the sight of you. You may be unable to speak or explain yourself to them.

Who, or what, can undo the baneful magic you're under? What must you do or obtain or discard to return to normal? Who now hunts or fears you?

- Polymorphed into an animal
- Changed into a monster
- Zombified



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Cursed

"That berry was delicious. Hey, who are all of you?" -- Emory

A powerful and baneful magic has you in its grip. You might be under a geas or other powerful compulsion, to act or not act in a certain way.

The rules of the curse may be a mystery. You may suffer pain or great misfortune violating them.

What quest does lifting the curse entail? What sacrifices or dangers do you brave to undo it? Must someone else pay a price on your behalf?

- Ill fortune or calamity follows you
- A taboo against doing some common thing
- Love potions, gibberish speech, or other maledictions



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Pursued

"They definitely saw us!" -- Basler

You are being actively hunted, by someone or something that wishes you ill.

You must stay hidden from searchers, conceal or disguise yourself when in the open, or take other steps to avoid attention.

Your pursuers might have some idea about your immediate goals, and work to thwart them as well.

What new discoveries does your escape lead you to? How do you change your identity or habits to escape notice? What threatens your sanctuary that's just as dangerous as your pursuers?

- Wanted posters or official notices
- Guards raised an alarm
- You're in enemy territory or surrounded



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Indebted

*"I kinda told the thieves' guild I'd take care of something" --
Basler*

You have significant debts that demand your time or attention. The stakes may be higher, or just more immediate. You may risk notoriety or condemnation.

Your patron is watching closely and may try to threaten or coerce you further. Other interested parties or powerful forces may interfere, perhaps to stop your task or hurt your patron.

Do you have to lay low, face the heat, go on the run? Who offers a devil's bargain to make this go away?

- Get something to someone right now
- Deal with several complex problems
- Obtain something illegal or dangerous
- Work with a person or group that is hated or feared



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Your patron is watching closely and may try to threaten or coerce you further. Other interested parties or powerful forces may interfere, perhaps to stop your task or hurt your patron.

Do you have to lay low, face the heat, go on the run? Who offers a devil's bargain to make this go away?

- Get something to someone right now
- Deal with several complex problems
- Obtain something illegal or dangerous
- Work with a person or group that is hated or feared



*Discard by spending downtime
attending to the condition.*

Indebted

*"I kinda told the thieves' guild I'd take care of something" --
Basler*

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Exhausted

"The leaf dragon's toxin got me... Sorry..." -- Woody

Your body is out of resources. You pushed yourself to a breaking point.

You can't fight effectively. Each new step is an effort. Focusing on anything other than survival is difficult.

Where do you recover? At what cost? Do you experience dreams or delirium? What rare ingredient does your medicine require?

- Extended lack of sleep
- Starvation or dehydration
- Serious illness or poison
- Delerium or hallucinations
- Burns or frostbite



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*Discard by spending downtime
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Wounded

"It's...just a scratch..." -- Emory

You've been seriously injured. You might pass out if you aren't helped soon. Every step is painful, and it's hard to concentrate.

You can't move very fast or fight effectively. Someone might also exploit your condition.

Where do you stay while recuperating? Under whose care? What special measures must be taken? Do you retain scars?

- You suffered significant blood loss
- You have broken or twisted limbs
- You were pierced by arrows, spears, or claws
- You reopened your wounds while fighting



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Condition Examples

Conditions are a way to achieve success at a cost. You can use conditions in many ways.

- You choose to take Disarmed to score a telling blow on the enemy.
- The facilitator or another player thinks touching the idol will leave you Magicked.
- A poisonous cloud envelops you. If you want to stay in it, meet the challenge by taking Weakened, otherwise you must leave the cloud.
- You're already Hurt, but you can worsen it to Wounded to get a hit. You attack, blood gushing from reopened wounds, and strike down your enemy before falling in a faint yourself.
- You spend a scene being healed by a priestess to discard Hurt. You wanted to talk to her anyway, about...
- You spend a week of downtime doing odd jobs to pay off Indebted. During that time, you listen for new adventure opportunities.



Flip to see rules

Character Cards

Cards with this icon are character cards.

To create a new PC, pick three cards from three different categories, e.g. Focus, Role, and Origin. You can choose cards at random, or select them yourself.

These cards describe a PC's most important traits, or the traits that you want to see in the spotlight during the game. Just because someone else has the Courage card doesn't mean your character isn't courageous, only that it's not going to be the quality we see most often or most plainly.

- Topside: get a hit by flipping the card
- Flipside: flip when a prompt is narrated by anyone



Synthesist

What or who will you unmake, in your goal of making something new?

- Tear down something valuable or important
- Keep something going at great cost
- Overuse the same solution



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Soldier

Life is pain. There's no reward for this, only the next battle. When will you fall?

- Lash out at an easy target
- Use your power selfishly
- Dismiss the peaceful alternative



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Quester

That which is greater than you can also crush you beneath it.

- Waver in your dedication to your quest
- Shut others out of assisting you
- Put your quest before more mundane matters



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Performer

When anything you say matters, will you say the wrong thing, or for the wrong reasons?

- Show up or embarrass someone important
- Draw unwanted attention
- Provoke an unintended reaction



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Opportunist

There's only so much good luck to go around. Will you run out of yours, or take someone else's away?

- Kick someone when they're down
- Betray a trust
- Let someone else pay the price



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Monster

To be the thing they say you are. How easy to do it accidentally. How tempting to choose it.

- Make everything worse for yourself or an ally
- Fall prey to your darkness
- Spark conflict or dissent



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Guardian

You control that which depends on you, and sometimes the weight grows too much.

- Assert your authority
- Cast suspicion too widely
- Shut down your feelings or shut out your charge



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Dreamer

When the gulf between is and ought becomes too much, which will you choose?

- Reject the real, denounce the realist
- Forget that you have friends
- Lose sight of your dream for a time



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Scraplander

They say you're no better than the trash you gather.

- Rush into risk
- Defy civilization's customs
- Express a dangerous or weird quirk
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

ForestFolk

They say you're creepy and aloof.

- Refuse offers of aid or comfort
- Bluntly say a hard truth
- Keep an outsider distant from you
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

CountryFolk

They look down on you as rustic bumpkins.

- Distrust the sophisticated
- Ask something everyone else knows
- Rigidly uphold tradition
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

CityFolk

They say you've sold your soul to the city.

- Establish dominance through aggression
- Overvalue the material
- Take advantage of a relationship
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Westerner

They say you're unreliable or untrustworthy.

- Fail to uphold an obligation
- Disappoint someone important
- Disappear when needed
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Easterner

They say you are distant and arrogant.

- Mask your emotions behind politeness
- Follow your own ways in strange lands
- Extol the virtues of your own culture
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Southerner

They say the desert has burned weakness out of you.

- Uphold a complex code of honor
- Make an expedient but cruel choice
- Stand by your group, right or wrong
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Northerner

They say your heart is frozen.

- Eschew material comfort
- Act disinterested or distant
- Distrust an outsider
- Subvert the stereotype



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Wits

*"When I said people were gullible, I didn't mean me too!" --
Basler*

No battle plan survives contact with the enemy, but not all planners are humble enough to realize that. Getting by on the world can sometimes mean exploiting people, or seeming like you're doing so.

- Misjudge the strength of your position
- Overplay your hand
- Make someone else pay for your victory



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Tech

"The gizmo broke and I gotta fix it. Well, at least I have my tools." -- Basler

Nothing works perfectly, especially new inventions that have seen more use than testing.

- The gadget has unexpected side effects or fails to work at a key moment
- A gadget malfunctions or breaks in interesting ways
- People distrust or avoid your strange science



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Secrets

"You don't wanna know" -- Basler

The problem with secrets is keeping track of who knows what. The value of a secret is lost once it's revealed. And some secrets weigh on the conscience.

- Endure distrust from those around you
- Reveal the wrong thing to the wrong person
- Give yourself away at an inopportune moment



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Magic

"The Power is much like the ocean. You can sail in it, or drown in it." -- Tana

When called, the Power always comes. That doesn't mean you can always command it.

The costs and consequences of using magic can be anything, even for a familiar spell.

- Face a cost you can't easily or immediately pay
- Supply a rare material component or perform a ritual at specific place and time
- Fall prey to a side effect or curse



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Instinct

"So, he was a king's guard in disguise. He looked like a bad guy!" -- Woody

Only fools rush in, and this time, you were the fool.

- Interrupt a plan mid-execution
- Misjudge someone's intentions or actions
- Screw something up by impulsively acting



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Chi

"Well, I can't pick locks with my fingernails, can I?" -- Basler

Your training is demanding, and while your body is versatile and powerful, it can't compete with everything.

- Face a problem that requires tools after all
- Spend time honing yourself instead of accomplishing an important goal
- Reveal your abilities to someone you'd rather not see them



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Charm

"Listen, city boy. Stop talking or I'll cut your tongue out." --
Woody

Some people can become enraptured by their own ability to impress and influence. They buy into the story they're selling, until reality intrudes.

Others see charm as deceit, and will trust you less.

- Show off needlessly
- Push things for the sake of pushing
- Take advantage of someone's emotions



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

Courage

"Emory! Fall back! This isn't our fight!" -- Tana

Courage can twist into cowardice or recklessness. Not everyone knows the right time to run from a battle, or when a battle really needs to be fought. And not everyone is prepared to fight every battle they face.

- Compromise a principle for safety or experience
- Run away to avoid getting hurt, physically or emotionally
- Seek glory or self-aggrandizement



*Flip when a prompt is narrated
by anyone.*

X-Card

Start the game by reading this text aloud:

"I'd like your help. Your help to make this game fun for everyone. If anything makes anyone uncomfortable in any way, just lift this card up, or simply tap it. You don't have to explain why. It doesn't matter why. When we lift or tap this card, we simply edit out anything X-Carded."

"And if there is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break and we can talk privately. I know it sounds funny but it will help us play amazing games together and usually I'm the one who uses the X card to protect myself from all of you! Please help make this game fun for everyone. Thank you!"

*Lay this card at the center of the
play area*



Simple Dice

If you need to meet a challenge and have no other way to do so, or if the outcome ought to be random, you can roll 1d6.

- On 1-3, you don't meet the challenge
- On 4-6, you get 1 hit



Flip to not use dice

Challenges

Challenges follow the principle of "say yes or roll the dice".

Use challenges to increase or decrease the difficulty of a situation. For example, a risky combat scene might pose several challenges in succession. A simple social encounter might pose only one challenge.

The player posing the challenge should give an idea of what failure looks like. That player, or the Storyteller, might narrate the specifics of failure.

The same action should not be challenged multiple times unless there are both distinct and interesting ways for it to fail. For example, a demonstration of new magic might go awry by itself, but might also anger a jealous wizard who observes it.



Flip for additional rules.

The Storyteller

Several core rules are roles assigned to a single player.

These roles can be assigned individually to several people, or all given to a single player ("the Game Master" or "the GM").

The roles can change hands during the game. You cannot take a role away from someone else, but you can ask someone else to give up a role.

If you've been assigned a role, you are bound by the Principles.

Whoever plays this card is the storyteller. Flip for additional rules.



The Referee

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The Principal

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The Principles

This is a placeholder. Individual settings will introduce their own Principles.



The Game

This is a game whose rules are on cards.

To add a rule, write a card.

Follow every rule on the cards on the table.



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The Principles

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The Principal

You get to create and play a Principal Character (PC), one of the protagonists of the story.

Your job is to narrate your character's actions and reactions. Decide on their agendas, then enact them in interesting ways.

When someone asks "what does your character do, say, or think?", you get to answer.

- Stay true to your character
- Share ways for other players to help you have fun
- Look for opportunities to advance your story
- Support other players' stories

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The Facilitator

Players in the spotlight are the focus of narration. We're asking them for an action that pushes the scene forward, and shining the spotlight until they make one.

Your job is to oversee moving the spotlight from player to player in fun and fair ways.

Move the spotlight:

- toward a PC who's placed at risk or in danger
- toward a player who hasn't acted recently
- toward a player who has an interesting idea for how to move things forward
- away from a player who just resolved a dramatic or decisive action
- away from a cliffhanger or moment of tension
- away from any player who's had it too long

Whoever plays this card is the facilitator. Flip for additional rules.



The Loremaster

Your job is to establish the history, setting, and canon of the world in which the game happens.

When someone asks, "what do our characters know about X?" and it's not a question for an Ensemble Character (EC) to decide, you get to answer.

Any player can suggest an answer, but you have the final say on what's true. If a specific PC's heritage, origin, or interests concern the question, consider deferring to them.

- Who was the greatest Paladin in history?
- What languages might my character learn to speak?
- When did the dragons disappear?
- How does magic work, anyway?
- Why are orcs monotheistic?

Whoever plays this card is the loremaster. Flip for additional rules.



The Referee

Your job is to adjudicate questions about the rules of the game, and to make changes to the rules with the group's consent. Any player can suggest how to handle a rule, but you have the final say.

Example rulings:

- Is a given card applicable to this fictional situation?
- How should a given card's text be interpreted?
- Is it time to create a new card?



Whoever plays this card is the referee. Flip for additional rules.

The Storyteller

The Principal Characters (PCs) are the focus of the game. The game also has Ensemble Characters (ECs), sometimes called Non-Player Characters (NPCs).

Your job is to narrate the ECs' actions and reactions. Decide on their agendas, then enact them in interesting ways.

ECs are allies, antagonists, or anyone else involved in the story but not at the heart of it.

- Give ECs a name and identity
- Find the essential humanity of every EC
- Don't steal agency or spotlight from the PCs
- Initiate actions that prompt a PC response

Whoever plays this card is the storyteller. Flip for additional rules.



Challenges

Any player may challenge a PC's action if failure is likely and success or failure are both interesting for the story.

When your PC is challenged, you must generate a hit in order to succeed. Other rules provide ways to generate hits.

If you fail to meet a challenge, your PC's intentions are thwarted, or complications arise. There's no challenge if this can't happen.

- You're navigating rough terrain, and might fall or lose equipment
- You're in a tense conversation and might offend someone
- You're fighting or fleeing a dangerous monster, and might get hurt
- You're working with complex magic or technology, and it might malfunction
- You're confronting an emotionally fraught situation, and might lose self control



Flip for additional rules.

Simple Dice

The Simple Dice rule is not used in this game



Flip to use Simple Dice

X-Card

Start the game by reading this text aloud:

"I'd like your help. Your help to make this game fun for everyone. If anything makes anyone uncomfortable in any way, just lift this card up, or simply tap it. You don't have to explain why. It doesn't matter why. When we lift or tap this card, we simply edit out anything X-Carded."

"And if there is ever an issue, anyone can call for a break and we can talk privately. I know it sounds funny but it will help us play amazing games together and usually I'm the one who uses the X card to protect myself from all of you! Please help make this game fun for everyone. Thank you!"



*Lay this card at the center of the
play area*

Courage

"It doesn't matter if I win. It matters if I don't try." -- Emory

Courage is strength in the face of grief or pain. It's not just a willingness to do something, but to do it when there's every reason to hold back.

Courage lets you fight when afraid, speak when being shouted down, stand up when you're injured, or take an unpopular stand.

- Honor or pride must be upheld
- Someone or something near you has already suffered harm
- Nobody else can or will take the risk



Flip to get a hit.

Charm

"I only came here to see you!" -- Basler

The essence of charm is creating a bond with someone. Make them feel interesting, or appreciated, or just part of something cool.

Charm lets you awe, wow, surprise, or comfort people. It gets you through tough situations with style and panache, making people move aside for you or get behind you through force of personality.

- Perform with grace and elegance
- Get by on audacity
- Gain someone's confidence



Flip to get a hit.

Chi

"The mind directs the body's power. I get it now." -- Basler

Through training, mindfulness, and practice, you've learned to use your own mind and body as a tool.

Chi lets you fight, move, and act with grace, power, and precision. You can push your own abilities past normal limits, or unlock new ones.

- Use your body's abilities in place of weapons, armor, or equipment
- Focus inner strength to resist torment or temptation
- Gain an understanding of someone from how they move



Flip to get a hit.

Instinct

"My eye watches the target. My hand lets go the bowstring. I do nothing." -- Woody

You do things without thinking. Your heart, your conscience, a divine command, or something guides your actions.

Instinct lets you act when everything says to hesitate, or when uncertainty overwhelms you, or when speed counts more than reason.

- Take decisive action in the moment
- Get an immediate read on a person or situation
- Exploit a momentary opportunity



Flip to get a hit.

Magic

"I don't know, I just felt ... something ... flow through me!"

-- Tana

The mystical, the eldritch, the arcane. The Power has many names. What do you call it?

You can achieve a variety of supernatural outcomes with magic, such as healing, curses, enchantments, and more.

- Place the impossible within reach
- Mingle the material and the symbolic
- Infuse the ordinary with awe and mystery



Flip to get a hit.

Secrets

"Basler, where did you get that knife from?" -- Tana

You deal in concealment, stealth, and subterfuge. Your tools are things people don't want known, or weren't expecting.

You could use hidden weapons, court gossip, cloak-and-dagger skulduggery, or the secrets of the heart.

- Acquire something from someone else without their knowledge
- Reveal something you've been concealing
- Avoid detection or culpability



Flip to get a hit.

Tech

"Y'see, this gizmo here can automatically pick any lock in the kingdom!" -- Basler

You focus on science, technology, or artifice to get things done.

This could include familiar inventions like handguns or balloons, or magitek such as glowing crystal fire-rods, or products of magic such as alchemical potions.

You can use, repair, or replace your toolkit of inventions.

- Fight using advanced weapons or protective gear
- Overcome obstacles by deploying a gadget
- Gain surprise or advantage against those unfamiliar with your tech



Flip to get a hit.

Wits

"The world is full of opportunities!" -- Basler

Characters who live by their wits take advantage of the things (and people) around them. They turn difficulty into opportunity, or find a new way to look at a situation.

Wits lets you find solutions within the problem you face, create plans, and know when to abandon those plans.

- Find a way to turn strength to or from weakness
- Devise a plan to deal with a problem
- Realize a useful truth about a situation



Flip to get a hit.

Northerner

Snow-swept peaks and narrow valleys are your home.

- Deal with or take advantage of cold
- Survive sudden misfortune
- Bury your emotions and move forward



Flip to get a hit.

Southerner

Fiery deserts and glittering oases are your home.

- Deal with or take advantage of heat
- Keep going when all seems lost
- Inspire in the face of hardship



Flip to get a hit.

Easterner

Mysterious mountains and river-lands are your home.

- Work with earth and metal
- Share the wisdom of past generations
- Understand unspoken things



Flip to get a hit.

Westerner

Islands, archipelagos, and boats are your home.

- Deal with or take advantage of water
- Quickly adapt to shifting circumstances
- Speed away from trouble



Flip to get a hit.

City Folk

Big cities, centers of knowledge and trade, are your home.

- Get around in crowded or complex areas
- Use a lesson the city taught you
- Find a guy who knows a guy



Flip to get a hit.

Country Folk

Villages, farms, and manors are your home.

- Work with the land and animals
- Do what common sense tells you
- Show hospitality to everyone



Flip to get a hit.

Forest Folk

Trappers' camps and green silences are your home.

- Live and thrive in the wilderness
- Notice something hidden
- Find a path to your goal



Flip to get a hit.

Scraplander

Haunted wastelands and blasted heaths are your home.

- Survive through attentiveness and preparation
- Deal with or take advantage of remnants of old wars and lost magic
- Reveal a useful item or experience



Flip to get a hit.

Dreamer

Tomorrow beckons, if you can fix today.
You can't change the world alone. But
you aren't, are you?

- Remind someone of their best self
- Light a candle to spite the darkness
- Defy what's possible with what's necessary



Flip to get a hit.

Guardian

You feel responsible for something or someone else. Their need propels you.

- Keep your charge safe from something
- Identify and monitor a threat
- Endure the unimaginable



Flip to get a hit.

Monster

Your looks, reputation, or nature cause common folk to fear or reject you.

- Take advantage of others' fears
- Exploit the source of your monstrosity
- Make common cause with other monsters



Flip to get a hit.

Opportunist

Life is unpredictable. When an opening comes, seize it. When a chance comes, take it.

- Exploit or create a weakness
- Employ misdirection or deception
- Take a risk nobody else would



Flip to get a hit.

Performer

Through actions and words, you entertain, persuade, or transform people around you.

- Embody grace, confidence, or poise
- Influence people to action
- Spark or manipulate emotion



Flip to get a hit.

Quester

A vow, an ideal, a promise, a vision, a mission. Something drives you unstop-pably onward.

- Live the life your resolve demands
- Rally others to your cause
- Find a way forward despite everything



Flip to get a hit.

Soldier

Life is struggle. Everyone has to fight, all the time. What do you fight for?

- Test your fate against an opponent
- Make a sacrifice to support a hope
- Stand up when everything says to stay down



Flip to get a hit.

Synthesist

You create, fix, and remix.

- Make something new out of what's available
- Repair or recreate something
- Bring creativity to bear against a problem



Flip to get a hit.

Character Cards

Cards with this icon are character cards.

To create a new PC, pick three cards from three different categories, e.g. Focus, Role, and Origin. You can choose cards at random, or select them yourself.

These cards describe a PC's most important traits, or the traits that you want to see in the spotlight during the game. Just because someone else has the Courage card doesn't mean your character isn't courageous, only that it's not going to be the quality we see most often or most plainly.

- Topside: get a hit by flipping the card
- Flipside: flip when a prompt is narrated by anyone



Condition Cards

You've been affected by a temporary problem. Injury, delirium, debts, magical curses, and so on are all conditions.

You can choose to take a condition to get a hit. Describe how. Players who challenge you can suggest conditions to meet it.

The condition is fictionally true and limits your actions. If you narrate an action the condition would interfere with, you must meet the challenge of the condition in addition to any other challenges.

You can flip a topside condition to worsen it and get a hit. Describe how.

Clearing conditions takes time. Use this time to drive drama, build the world, or explore how you clear the condition.

Discard any conditions that no longer apply in the fiction.



Flip to see examples

Hurt

"Ow! Watch who you carve up with that thing!" -- Basler

You've been bloodied, bruised, stunned, or otherwise physically harmed.

You can't exert yourself too much without making it worse. Enemies can target existing sites of injury as well.

Do you have access to healing magic and potions, or just bandages and first aid? Who treats your injuries?

- An enemy successfully attacked you
- An animal or monster mauled you
- You were in the path of something heavy and damaging
- You were in the middle of a natural disaster or large-scale magical attack



Flip to worsen the condition and get a hit. Discard by spending a scene attending to the condition.

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Weakened

"This forest goes on forever, Woody. Can we just stop a moment?" -- Tana

Your body is trying to keep itself going, but is under attack or is being deprived.

You can't push yourself too hard, and it's hard to concentrate.

Do you need shelter, medicine, food and water, or just sleep? What are your symptoms? Is there anything you take to ease them? Did you hide them to press on?

- Fatigue or forced marches
- Sleep deprivation or nightmares
- Hunger and thirst
- Poison, disease, or infection
- Exposure to the elements
- Fever or chills



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Obliged

"We will deal with the brigands, your highness." -- Emory

You took on or were given an important responsibility.

Someone or something will be watching you to see you uphold your end of the bargain. There will be consequences if you delay or decline.

Your patron might grow impatient or asks for more. Rivals or enemies might interfere. The task might need to be kept secret, lest someone be hurt.

Do you have to fight, haggle, or steal something to make good? Do you end up making new enemies? New friends?

- Deliver an item or message to someone
- Deal with a troublesome individual or group
- Promise a favor later for a purchase now
- Swear a magically binding oath



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Wanted

"I think they saw us." -- Tana

Someone or something powerful or dangerous is seeking you out, and you'd rather not be found.

You risk discovery if you present yourself to guards, spies, or allies. There might be a bounty on you, or hunters after you.

Can you lay low, or do you need to leave the area? Who can you trust, and who would rat you out? What do you sacrifice to keep safe?

- You broke the law or offended someone
- You're in a heavily guarded area and people are suspicious
- You've done something to attract official attention
- You're in a dangerous animal's territory



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Magicked

"Be careful. If anything in the forest looks edible, it's a faerie trap" -- Woody

A spell or other supernatural power is affecting you. It might cause discomfort, distraction, or inconvenience. Your perceptions might be twisted somehow.

You must be careful when doing things that would set off the spell.

What weird rituals or strange ingredients diminish or slow the effects on you? What obnoxious compulsions or taboos does it force on you? What price must you pay to free yourself?

- Charms, illusions, delusions, and deceptions
- Magical prohibitions against entering or leaving a place
- Vexing problems, minor bad luck, or other trickery



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Altered

"A leg brace of tree bark and vines? Well, at least I can walk."

-- Woody

Powerful magic has physically changed your appearance or abilities. Your new features might be helpful in limited ways, but mostly they're a hindrance.

You'll have trouble doing things you took for granted, or draw attention to yourself if seen.

What's the worst side effect of the change? What mystic ingredient or substance can hold the change at bay, or undo it? Who looks at you funny, and what might they do next?

- Animal ears or tails
- Monstrous modifications like claws, fangs, or scales
- Partial petrification or zombification



Flip to worsen the condition and get a hit. Discard by spending a scene attending to the condition.

Altered

"A leg brace of tree bark and vines? Well, at least I can walk."

-- Woody

Powerful magic has physically changed your appearance or abilities. Your new features might be helpful in limited ways, but mostly they're a hindrance.

You'll have trouble doing things you took for granted, or draw attention to yourself if seen.

What's the worst side effect of the change? What mystic ingredient or substance can hold the change at bay, or undo it? Who looks at you funny, and what might they do next?

- Animal ears or tails
- Monstrous modifications like claws, fangs, or scales
- Partial petrification or zombification



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Undergeared

"This is the last of our fresh water." -- Woody

Vital gear has been damaged, or resources are running low.

You might have lost something and been forced to make do. You can't overuse what you have, lest things get worse. You might need to ration what you have.

What have you lost that's hardest to live without? Can you use some ingenuity to get by with whatever's left, or what you can scrounge? Who in the area has a replacement, and what do they want for it?

- Blunted or broken weapons, low on arrows
- Damaged or partial armor
- Malfunctioning magical tools
- Lacking food, water, or medicine



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Hindered

"This arm is useless for drawing a bow right now." -- Woody

Your body, mind, or senses are in temporary disorder. You might have over-taxed yourself, or suffered from injury or stress. You may be in the grip of a powerful or magically-caused emotion.

You will have trouble using affected abilities, making rational decisions, or spotting important clues or danger signs.

Who fixes you up so you can at least keep going? How do they help, and what does it take? What support do you now need from those around you?

- Injured limbs or impaired mobility
- Blurred vision, ringing ears, or dizziness
- Serious shock or mental disturbance
- Powerful anger, grief, sadness, or anxiety



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Armored

*"My daggers bounced off that plate mail! What now?" --
Basler*

This encounter includes something important that is heavily defended.

This could mean body armor of leather or metal, hardened barriers of stone, or wood, a protective aura of magic, a divine blessing, or something else.

You may be challenged if you try to penetrate or circumvent the armor to get to what's inside.

Something armored may:

- Ignore harm from typical weapons or other sources of damage
- Destroy weaker things that strike it or are struck by it
- Protect unarmored allies



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Base

"Aheheh.. We come in peace?" -- Basler

The encounter includes a place where creatures stay for a common purpose.

A Base can be a temporary encampment, an outpost, a secret headquarters, a wild animal's den, or some other protected space.

You may be challenged if you try to find something specific in the base, find your way out or through, or confront its occupants and their preparations.

A Base may:

- Bristle with defenders
- Defy intrusion with traps, labyrinthine structure, or other clever preparations
- Enable its defenders to cut off escape routes or easily give chase



Flip to see ways to meet the encounter's challenges.

Diabolical

"Back, foul fiend! Light will overcome you!" -- Emory

A Diabolical encounter has the touch of evil. An actual summoned demon, a possessed victim, or a dark and malevolent force are all Diabolic.

You may be challenged if you engage with the Diabolical without proper protections or if you unknowingly encounter its influence.

A Diabolical encounter may:

- Seek to corrupt or influence the vulnerable
- Exploit moral weaknesses or dark secrets
- Expose its true nature and hellish powers



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Elemental

"Earth sprites. They have the ore we seek." -- Tana

This encounter involves powerful elemental forces. This can mean creatures made of such forces, or dangerous sources like a volcano or a violent storm.

You may be challenged by the raw power of an Elemental threat, or it can cause environmental dangers or obstacles.

An Elemental power may:

- Create, animate, or manipulate its element in useful or dangerous ways
- Change the environment with aspects of its element, such as making rivers of fire or barriers of wind
- Control or manipulate its element, even inside complex or living things, like the metal in electronics or the water in blood



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Flying

"Did something just swoop overhead?" -- Emory

This encounter includes an important aspect that can fly or is otherwise airborne.

Winged creatures, skilled magicians, and others can fly. Floating platforms, mischievous winds, and more can keep important assets or dangers aloft.

You may be challenged when a flying threat holds your object out of reach, or when you try to affect something in the sky.

Flying threats may:

- Strike targets on the ground without risking counterattacks
- Move faster than those trapped on the ground, or reach places they can't
- See greater distances or from better angles



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Gang

"They outnumber us 5 to 1, folks!" -- Basler

This encounter includes a group of people or creatures bound together in common purpose.

Gangs can be organized, like criminal gangs or military units, or they can be informal groups, like angry mobs or startled herds of animals.

You may be challenged by a Gang's numerical advantage, or by its planning and influence.

A Gang may:

- Surround or isolate individuals through strength in numbers
- Shout down or bully a lone voice
- Bring a variety of skills or resources to bear on a problem



Flip to see ways to meet the encounter's challenges.

Hybrid

"A Gryphon. The heraldic symbol of my kingdom. Majestic!" -- Emory

A Hybrid being is made up of two or more things, not always living.

Such beings can be part-human (mermaids, harpies), mixed animal (cockatrices, pegasi), shapeshifters (werewolves), or weirder (tree-ogres).

A Hybrid may pose a challenge if characters are unfamiliar with the combination.

Hybrid beings may:

- Use the best of their combined abilities
- Use different abilities together in some unique way
- Reveal a surprising new ability



Flip to see ways to meet the encounter's challenges.

Large

"The bigger they are, the harder they fall!" -- Tana

This encounter includes something of enormous size. It might be naturally large, like a dragon or a giant, or have been enlarged by magic or other forces.

You may be challenged if you can't overcome your diminutive size relative to a Large threat.

A Large threat may:

- Resist human-scale attacks or effects
- Reach or hit an entire area at once
- Deal devastating damage to smaller creatures and objects



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Monstrous

"That ain't no ordinary wolf, folks.." -- Basler

Monstrous threats are altered forms of the familiar. They are fiercer, more feral, or disturbingly unnatural.

The characteristics of a mundane thing become exaggerated and gruesome. Muscles knot and bulge. Jaws elongate and bristle with vicious fangs. Hide thickens and goes patchy. All is as seen through the lens of nightmare.

You may be challenged by a Monstrous threat's adaptations, or by its relentless aggression.

Monstrous threats can:

- Lash out savagely
- Use their adaptations to overwhelm the unprepared
- Terrify onlookers with their awful nature



Flip to see ways to meet the encounter's challenges.

Notorious

"That's Gretamaw, the Beaked Butcher!" -- Basler

This encounter includes someone or something that bards sing about.

A Notorious monster whispered of by fearful villagers. A place of power that most folks avoid. An artifact of legend, replete with arcane power. A person known for great or terrible deeds.

You may be challenged by the weight of Notorious reputation, by those who follow or worship it, or by the very power that made it famous.

Notorious things may:

- Impress or intimidate you with their presence
- Live up to the legend in a big way
- Reveal some unexpected or unreported ability



Flip to see ways to meet the encounter's challenges.

Portentous

"Where are all those crows going?" -- Tana

This encounter foreshadows something important. It can be a mystical experience, laden with dreams and prophecy, or just a mundane glimpse into a momentous reality beyond.

Ominous encounters not only foretell change, but confront a character with a question: are you ready for what comes next?

Portentous encounters may:

- Give a taste of things to come
- Force people into hard moral or personal choices
- Subtly mingle the mundane and the symbolic or dreamlike



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Spectral

"My arrows go right through it." -- Woody

This encounter includes something ghostly or purely spiritual.

Spectral entities might have obligations or passions binding them to the mortal world. They may be frightened, angry, or confused. They might wish to go - or stay.

You may be challenged by a Spectral threat if you can't interact with it, or if its otherworldly nature has dangerous effects.

A Spectral threat may:

- Pass through solid matter or people
- Wield morbid magics like chilling touch or possession
- Ravenously pursue something the living have that it wants



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Tense

"Deep breaths. Stay calm. Show them we're friends." -- Tana

The encounter includes a highly charged situation that affects some or all of the beings present.

Maybe someone expects something momentous to happen at any moment. Maybe two or more parties are on the verge of taking drastic action.

You may be challenged to navigate a Tense situation without making it blow up, or losing an important opportunity.

Beings in a Tense situation may:

- Lash out with ill-considered action
- Make bad assessments or assume the worst
- Heedlessly run away, often making things worse



Flip to see ways to meet the encounter's challenges.

Toxic

"Don't let it touch you! Your skin will rot away!" -- Woody

This encounter includes something that can poison you.

Venomous creatures, assassins with poisoned blades, swamp gasses, and many other things can afflict you with sickness. Poisons can be fast acting and deadly, or gradually debilitating.

You may be challenged to engage the toxic things without getting infected.

A Toxic threat may:

- Sicken anyone in contact with them
- Fend off an attack with the threat of toxin
- Deliberately attack with the poison



*Flip to see ways to meet the
encounter's challenges.*

Undead

"This unholy abomination will fall!" -- Emory

Necromancy, curses, or strange phenomena can bring a deceased creature back to a false life. The being is sustained by magic, not biology. Some undead are mindless; others are disturbingly cunning. They are frightening reminders of mortality, often endowed with dread powers.

You may be challenged when you confront the undead using the same tactics you would use against mortal foes.

An Undead threat may:

- Ignore attacks or effects that target life force
- Sustain more damage than normal before being defeated
- Infect those they harm with a plague or sickness



Flip to see ways to meet the encounter's challenges.

Emotion

Oracle cards can answer questions. Draw one card for a simple answer, or two cards for a complex one.

Use these cards to answer what someone is feeling, or what emotion a thing or event would spark.

Each emotion has two neighbors. You can use the emotion itself, or choose to mix it with a neighbor.



Flip to reveal an answer

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