GM Guide

This guide is intended for a Game Master (GM).

Read this guide if you are the volunteer among your friends to run the game of A Thousand Faces of Adventure (hereafter abbreviated to 1kFA).

Your responsibilities are:

- pitch the idea of playing 1kFA to your friends
- know, teach, and follow the rules
- confront the players with challenges and dangers
- move the story to plot points
- describe scenes
- give Non-Player Characters (NPCs) names, voices, motivations, and behavior
- take some notes
- and...

The last responsibility is so important it deserves its own paragraph:

The players will signal the *kinds* of fun they want to have. It is your responsibility to notice these signals and insert that kind of fun into the game.

To make your job of teaching the rules easier, this guide has **scripts**. The scripts are written to be read by you to the players at the table.

Before sitting down with your group of players, you should read all the rules. Your players will have questions, and will look to you you to answer them.

Show, Don't Tell

One piece of advice frequently given to anyone trying to convey information is "Show, don't tell".

In that spirit, you are invited to visit `https://www.1kfa.com/world/examples`. There, you will see examples of 1kFA being played. For all the author's attempt to make this document clear, brief, and unambiguous, those examples may do a better job of conveying just what 1kFA is and how it is played.

The Pitch

If you're reading this, then you likely want to play 1kFA with your friends, but there's lots of other games out there, so what can you say to bring your friends to the table around *this* game?

Here are some things that make 1kFA special. You know your friends best, so, as you look at this list, think about what they like and dislike and what they seek from their gaming experience.

- The Hero's Journey - like the stories told in blockbuster movies, your friends will play protagonists who must face adversity to transform themselves and their world
- Players interact with cards and tokens more than sheets of paper, which gives a certain tactile pleasure and feels familiar to board game players
- Play your favorite universe - use the setting of your favorite swords-and-magic universe from pop culture, 1kFA will support it!
- The "surprise moment" happens for all players simultaneously - at the moment a card is flipped, the boldly printed result is immediately visible to everyone at the table
- Layered mechanisms - choices in 1kFA move game resources and probabilities around - there's depth for players to explore and skill to build

First-time Players

If there is a player at the table who has never played 1kFA before, read the Start Script and play Sarukkan's Chamber.

Start Script

> Hi everyone! We're going to play 1kFA. This is going to be really fun, I'm glad you could join me for this! I'm reading directly from a script that was designed to get us started fast, by going over just enough of the rules for our first session, so please pay attention now so we can get to the fun of the game quickly!
>
> 1kFA is a *narrative* game.
>
> It's a storytelling game where we all collaborate and tell the story together.
>
> I'm going to be the GM (it's short for Game Master), so I'm going to be responsible for the events in the world and the side characters (they're called NPCs or Non-Player Characters).

Each one of you is going to play a role, kind of like an actor does. You're going to control one character. You get to tell us everything they think and everything that they say and everything that they do.

Imagine we're making an awesome adventure movie with swords and magic. You're the actors just making stuff up as you go, and I'm a combination of director and cinematographer, trying to fill the story with excitement and drama and also deciding how the scenes go together and where the camera cuts to next.

But let me pause for a minute and get specific about what I mean by "you decide everything your character *does*".

You can't just say "My character Tyrion runs up to the bad guy and punches him in the head and his head goes flying off". You *can* say "My character runs up to the bad guy and *tries* to punch his head hard enough to send it flying off". See the difference? When you describe an action where there's some uncertainty like that, It's my job as the GM to say you've *triggered a move*. The game rules will then answer the question "does it happen?" and tell us if the bad guy's head actually goes flying off.

When a *move is triggered*, it's time to use the cards and dice to see what happens next. Triggering moves is a lot of fun. It's fun to succeed and it's fun to fail, because even in failure, new exciting stuff starts happening. When you trigger moves, you impact the narrative, consequences happen, and we're all going to get surprises when cards flip and dice roll.

Besides face-punching, some other questions that might be answered by triggering moves are:

- Will the washer-woman agree to hide me from my pursuers?
- Do I see the giant spider web in my path?
- Is there another way out of this burning tavern?
- Will this magical scepter work just one more time?

The game isn't all triggering moves though.

Distribute a character sheet to each player.

Most of this game is talking. That's why "Say Stuff" is written so boldly on the character sheets. I'm going to be asking you questions, you'll probably have lots of questions for me, and we're going to put everything together to make an epic story. It's gonna have adventure, battles, chases, discoveries, and magic.

It's a fantasy story, so think dangerous, and take risks.

Be true to your character's personality. Remember it's sort of like acting.

Your character will start out as a scrappy adventurer, and rise in power to become a hero. Or villain. Or maybe they'll just die in the attempt. And maybe they'll be resurrected after that.

Each session will be about 3 hours. We might spend a long time bouncing ideas off one another and dealing with each consequence in an improvisational way, or we might engage in a long battle with lots of dice rolling and card flipping.

There's no predetermined story, we're all in this together, and we're going to play to find out the details of what happens.

This first session will need about 40 minutes of preparation, though. Ten minutes has already gone by with this speech (it's almost over).

Next, we're going to play Sarukkan's Chamber, a pre-made adventure for you to get the hang of the rules. It will be short. I'll set a timer for 10 minutes and end Sarukkan's Chamber when it goes off.

Then we'll take 10 minutes to create a Touchstone List for our game.

Then we'll do 10 minutes of Character Creation.

And then, the adventure begins.

Let's start!

Your Deckahedron

Give each player a Deckahedron.

(Print-and-play and mobile app versions are available at www.1kFA.com)

Here's a stack of 20 cards, it's called a Deckahedron. You'll use this to see how successful your character is when moves are triggered. It also represents your character's Stamina points, which we'll discuss later.

Notice the 4 different colored symbols on the edges. They're named Anvil, Blades, Crown, and Dragon. When you *trigger a move*, I'm going to instruct you to flip the top card of your Deckahedron, and we'll see the result on the flipped-over side. There are 4 possible results:

- : this means you succeed at the thing you tried
- : this usually means something good happens, but maybe with a downside
- : this usually means something "ok", or not-so-good happens

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- : this usually means that I get to say what happens and make my own move

When I ask you to flip, I'm going to say something like "flip Anvil" or "flip Blades". That means you find the result on the edge that has that symbol.

When you flip it over, please put it down in a way that everyone can clearly see the result. Try to orient your cards consistently so that we don't get confused about what your result is.

Let's try it: everybody put your Deckahedron on the table and flip yellow.

Step the players through "flipping yellow" using the instructions in the Player's Guide

Make sure each player understands how to execute a flip before you proceed.

Your base moves

Give each player a Move Booklet

Here are the basic moves. You don't have to read this booklet unless you want to. I'll point out moves when they're triggered and we can read them together or you can just let me apply them.

It's hard for me to do everything though, so the more you can participate, reading the text of your moves, and suggesting narrative outcomes, the smoother the game will run. Once we've had some practice, playing the game will feel like a collaborative story we're working through together.

The move you'll be triggering the most will probably be Defy Danger, that's why it's on the first page. The moves in the back of the booklet are "downtime" moves which we won't need until much later.

Let's go through an example of flipping Defy Danger. The move reads from top to bottom. First we would establish in the fiction how your character is defying danger, are they using their Str, Dex, or Int? Once that's decided, we would look at your character sheet to see what value that attribute is. Let's say they were diving to the ground to avoid a spear that was thrown at them. That's Dex. Let's say their Dex was rank 3, or "Crown". So that's the side of the card we're going to look at. Flip your top card. What result do you see on the "Crown" side?

[Take the result, and if it is s, ask the player to help you interpret a potential outcome using the Defy Danger move. If it is , tell them how it would be your turn to make a GM move]

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Sarukkan's Chamber

You are going to be running a short tutorial game for 2-3 players. One will control a female protagonist character, and one will control a male protagonist. If there is a third player, they will control a prisoner that the other two characters discover in the first scene.

First, you will need names for the characters and setting of Sarukkan's Chamber. Ask the players these 3 questions. This is an improvisation exercise. Its purpose is to get the creative juices flowing and to signal to the players that they have input over the story.

Ask the players for the name of a medieval fantasy city name. Simply write down the answer. That will be the name of the setting.

Ask "What's a store where women buy clothing?". This time, twist the answer a little to create the female protagonist's name. (eg, "Forever 21" might turn into "Forva", "The Gap" into "Gappalina")

Ask "What's a city in Europe?". Again, twist this answer to create the male protagonist's name with that. Stretch your creativity muscles. (eg, "Paris" might turn into "Croissant", Maybe rearrange "London" to "Donalo")

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This mini-game is a GM tool. Often, the players will look to you to
come up with names of characters or places on the fly. Instead of
sitting still and thinking for 30 seconds, you can can use this technique
to keep them engaged. See [Appendix 1](#appendix-1) for more
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Ask each player to write down the names you just came up with on their character sheet.

Next, instruct the players to fill out the attribute boxes on their character sheet like so:

- Both characters have 1 Intelligence (Anvil)
- The female protagonist has 3 Dexterity (Crown) and 2 Strength (Blades)
- The male protagonist has 2 Dexterity (Blades) and 3 Strength (Crown)

Introduce Sarukkan's Chamber

Begin narrating the set-up.

> [Addressing her] _ (female protagonist), you are an acrobat. Your troupe of performers set off on the road to perform in the big city _ (city name). You were really excited, because your big brother lives there, and you haven't seen him since you were 13, and that was 10 years ago.
>
> But your excitement soon turned to horror and despair. On the road, your troupe was overrun by masked horsemen. They attacked

fiercely and without mercy. Your caravan guards fought bravely, but were outnumbered. You and your companion, Gwendolyn, were captured.

[Ask the player] What was Gwendolyn's role in the troupe?

In the chaos, you remember one phrase uttered by the marauders, "Deliver them to Sarukkan's."

You endured days of travel shackled in a box, Gwendolyn tried to comfort you both by singing a song from her past,

[Name the song, or do an impression of Gwendolyn singing a few bars. try to make the song have something to do with Gwendolyn's role in the troupe]

Finally, you found yourself imprisoned in a small, dark, musty cellar room. Windowless, the only illumination is whatever lamplight filters through the cracks of the door.

You could hear sounds from the hallway though, and on the second day, you heard Gwendolyn being removed from her cell. After that, only silence.

[Dramatic pause]

[Addressing him] _ (male protagonist) you are a thief-catcher. You're not too bright, but your boss, Gandlin, has taken you under his wing and taught you street wisdom. Merchants employ him to recover stolen valuables or they pay for simple retribution against the pilfering scoundrels. You provide the muscle. Gandlin provides the brains. He sniffs them out, you beat 'em up, and each of you shares in the reward.

That's how it had been. Gandlin has now gone missing.

He was investigating a series of thefts from private homes. There was some pattern to it – artifacts or books taken, but no smashed windows or doors. The mystery of it had Gandlin obsessed, working sometimes until dawn.

[Ask the player] What was Gandlin's favorite breakfast food?

One dawn it was Gandlin that was taken.

[Describe the scene of Gandlin's disappearance, using the favorite breakfast food to paint the picture]

Following the trail of clues, you came to the locked gate to the yard behind Sarukkan's estate. Sarukkan was a powerful player in _ 's (city name) noble circles, but not much was known of him.

After jumping the wall, you didn't get much farther before you were surprised from behind and knocked out, waking up in a tiny, dirt-floored room in the cellar.

[Addressing both] But tonight, something changed. It was noisy tonight. Footsteps and conversations could be heard upstairs. It was some kind of party. And there were no guard patrols of the cellars. In parallel, but without bumping into each other, you both used the lapse to escape.

You freed yourself from your cell.

In some dark corner you grabbed a reveler and took their elaborate costume and mask for a disguise. Tonight must be a masquerade ball.

With no easy opportunity to exit, you kept evading attention by going upstairs, until you reached the third floor.

From different doors, you simultaneously enter an empty bedchamber.

At this point, take out a blank sheet of paper and draw this incomplete map of Sarukkan's Chamber. Then drop a couple tokens representing the players' characters on the paper. If you don't have tokens, you can use coins or nuts or glass beads, anything handy.
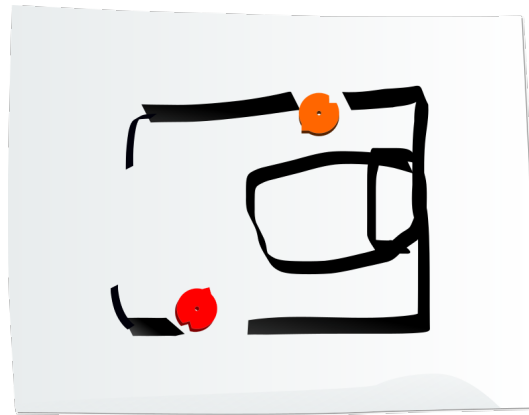

Figure 1: Draw maps, leave blanks

This map will let everyone know roughly where their character is positioned. You don't always need this visual aid, but Sarukkan's Chamber is a tutorial, so it's good to have some practice.

When you draw out a map of an environment like this, be very loose and fast. Leave blanks. Rely on the imagination of the players to fill in the details unless

there's something whose position is important to draw.

For example, a player might tell you that they look around the chamber for an exit, and you might say "There's a large window at the front of the room , but it's framed in iron. The ironwork looks old though, maybe it's no longer sturdy?". That would be a good point to draw a few lines to show where the window is in the room.

> You turn from the door you carefully and silently closed to see across the room, an apparent party guest in full wardrobe.
>
> [Dramatic pause]
>
> One last thing, with these masks on, you don't know this, but you're brother and sister.
>
> What do you do?

Start a timer for 10 minutes.

This last question "What do you do?" is very important.

When you describe a situation, always end with this kind of prompt. Portray a situation that demands a response. Always.

But now what should I say?

> Where's the *rest* of the script?

If this is your first time being a GM, you might feel intimidated. That's ok. Remember, this is not high art, this is improv. You are *playing* to find out what happens.

If this is the first time you've GMed a game, the best thing you can do is prepare. Read the Guidance chapter. Check out some examples of how other GMs have run their games. Then, with that context, read the Guidance chapter again.

The primary thing to remember is that on , you get to make a move.

Always **Describe the immediate situation around the characters**. This is how you start a session, how you get things rolling after a snack break, get back on track after a great joke: tell them what the situation is in concrete terms.

Use detail and *senses* to draw them in. The situation isn't just an orc charging you, it's an orc painted in blood swinging a hammer and screaming orcish battle prayers. You can leverage a lack of information, too. The sound of clattering armor and shuffling feet, for instance.

The situation around the players is rarely "everything's great, nothing to worry about". They're adventurers going on adventures – give them something to react to.

Sarukkan's Chamber Details - take them or leave them

- Luxurious canopy bed in the middle
- Chamber is full of esoterica - bookcases and desks overflowing with books, sculptures, candlesticks, and votives
- Chamber is empty of any adornments, the only feature is a bed and a precise circle of white powder in the center of the room
- A window at the front of the room - an escape route?
- An alarm triggers when a guard enters the room?
- A creepy portrait of Sarukkan, whose eyes follow you as you move
- A trap-door under the bed - where does it lead?

Goals for Sarukkan's Chamber

Ideally, Sarukkan's Chamber should demonstrate what kind of game 1kFA is.

1kFA creates plot questions for players to answer:

- Will the brother & sister who haven't seen each other in a decade discover each other's identities?
- Will the brother & sister escape Sarukkan's imprisonment?
- Will the brother & sister rescue Gandlin or Gwendolyn?
- (3rd player variant) Will the reluctant guard choose to obey an evil master, or rebel?

1kFA creates tension and action:

- Potential combat against guards or kitchen staff or Sarukkan himself
- Potential pursuits involving outsmarting or outmaneuvering pursuers
- Potential to hatch plans and use available resources to set traps or defy traps that been set for them
- Potential to use stealth and social manipulation with guards and party guests

Your group's playing of Sarukkan's Chamber doesn't have to *all of this*, the players will make choices that surprise you. If they surprise you with something unlikely or risky, be ready to declare that moves are triggered, but also be ready to say "Yes, and…" to their crazy ideas.

It should also help teach the rules of 1kFA.

- Work in an opportunity for each player to do a Deckahedron flip
- If a player flips an XP card, that's an opportunity to explain how they earn XP
- If a player flips the Critical Success card, that's an opportunity to explain the Critical Flip move
- Ideally there will be a combat scene. (see the Combat guidelines) Try to get the PCs to attempt *Mix It Up* or *Volley*

- When a PC loses Stamina, explain that losing 10 Stamina points will mean the character is incapacitated
- The brother & sister may trigger *Discern* and *I Know This* moves when they try to reveal each others' identities
- The *Discern* move often comes up when having a look around Sarukkan's Chamber itself.
- If any player-versus-player combat happens, remember to use the PvP combat rules

It should also be a warm-up for your GM skills.

- Remember: "Yes, and…"
- Move the spotlight - be fair, let all players impact the narrative
- Manage the pace. Let the PCs have some dialogue, but when it feels like they're hesitating, push quickly to the approaching dangers.
- Get some guards into the room for a quick fight.
- As the PCs gain the upper hand, show signs of another threat (maybe the wizard himself approaches - it's ok to tell the story of what's happening *off-camera*)
- Play Sarukkan's Chamber *honestly*. Set the stakes the same as you would when you play a campaign
- Observe your players for signals about what kind of fun they enjoy

After Sarukkan's Chamber, the players should now understand how the Deckahedron works with character attributes to produce results that affect the narrative. Ask the players if they get it, and explain again if there's still any confusion.

After the timer goes off

When the 10 minute timer goes off, you have a choice.

Take a look at your friends, are they having fun? Are they smiling, are they looking at you eagerly to see what happens next, are they bantering with each other about what actions to take, are they having in-character dialogues?

Sarukkan's Chamber is intended as a 10-15 minute tutorial, but if it seems like everyone wants more, you can keep it going.

Ask the table if they want to keep going with this scenario. If not, just skip forward to Begin a Campaign.

But if they do want to continue, add in the next layer of rules before jumping back into the action:

- Any character still wearing their elaborate costume should get a card entitled "Costume". This is an item.
- If the characters have acquired any significant items during their adventure so far, also make a card for those.
- The characters do not get any Pack cards, as they were just prisoners

Sarukkan's Chamber 3rd PC variant - The imprisoned guard

If you've got a 3rd player at the table, add a guard character.

Add another 5 minutes to the timer, so now Sarukkan's Chamber will end after 15 minutes, not 10.

Ask "What's a domestic brand of beer?". Use that to create the 3rd character's name. The guard can be any gender, has 3 Int, 2 Str, and 1 Dex.

Let them know that they'll get introduced about 5 minutes into the story.

After the first two PCs have had a chance to orient themselves to their surroundings, and maybe have a dialogue with each other, introduce the 3rd PC

> [Addressing guard] _ (guard), you are a guard, but also a prisoner awaiting your doom.

> You were the newest hire in Sarukkan's staff, but you didn't even get to collect a week's wage before thing went sideways. Even on day one, you noticed some sketchy stuff going on around here.

> Your supervisor, Yogran the Rat had assigned you the simple duty of yard patrol, and when you passed by the cellar you could swear you heard the sounds of women crying. Yogran sternly rebuffed the complaint you made, and then he set you up.

> [Ask the player] What employee offense does Sarukkan have zero tolerance for?

> [Describe the way Yogran the Rat set up the player's character using that offense]

> The last thing you remember is being told that your soul will be used as fuel in a dark ritual on the night of the ball.

> You awaken now in Sarukkan's chamber, roused from your sleep by the sound of two voices. You can speak, but your arms and legs are bound.

> [Ask the player] Where in the room are they storing you?

> What do you do?

Guidance

Here are 6 mantras to come back to whenever you don't know what to say next.

- Portray the world of the Touchstone List
- Fill the characters' lives with adventure
- Move the spotlight

- Ask the players
- Make GM Moves (or refer to them for ideas)
- Drive towards your next *Journey point*

Portray the World of the Touchstone List

One of the first things your group will do when you begin a campaign is create a universe – the fictional setting in which the PCs will be adventuring. This setting is expressed by something called the Touchstone List.

1kFA is about characters who have decided to take up an adventure in the hopes of fulfilling a strong need. It's your job to participate in that by showing the players a mysterious and dangerous world in which their characters can find that adventure. Without the player characters in the world, calamity would ruin something precious. Maybe even the whole world would fall into chaos or destruction – it might still, even with them. It's up to you to portray the fantastic and bizarre elements of that world. Show the players the wonders of the world they're in and encourage them to react to it.

Always know that the Touchstone List is there to support you in portraying this world. Look at the titles written there. Remember those books, movies and TV shows, and lift something directly from those stories. Lift animals, characters, environments, situations, lift whole cities if you want to. Remember Picasso's words: "Good artists copy, great artists steal".

The main point is to describe and emphasize the fictional situation to the players at the table. Give the players details so that they can grasp the stakes of their decisions. Give the players inspiring material to help them come up with answers when you ask them questions.

Fill the Characters' Lives With Adventure

Filling the characters' lives with adventure means working with the players to create a world that's engaging and dynamic. Adventurers are always caught up in some dangerous situation or another – encourage and foster that kind of action in the game.

1kFA adventures **never** presume player actions. A 1kFA adventure portrays a setting in motion – someplace significant with creatures big and small pursuing their own goals. As the players come into conflict with that setting and its denizens, action is inevitable. You'll honestly portray the repercussions of that action.

Move the spotlight

The general attention of people sitting at the table is called "the spotlight". Participants tend to talk one-at-a-time, while all others wait in excited anticipation.

The GM is tasked with managing the "when" of the spotlight. When does one player's contribution end, and the next player's begin? When has a player said something that triggers a move? When is it time for the players to all sit back and suffer or delight as the GM describes the consequences of their decisions?

Never let a player's time in the spotlight be inconsequential. A player might wait 10 minutes for their friends' moves, so if their whole turn in the spotlight ends with "nothing happens", that player's experience will suffer. Give them an opportunity for something. This doesn't mean they have to slay a demon on every turn, merely getting a big laugh can be "something".

Remember, this is a collaborative story. Laughter and excitement are the rewards for everyone.

Allow the players to naturally move the spotlight among themselves.

As the GM, you may take a turn in the spotlight:

- when someone flips   (or sometimes just)
- as specifically instructed by a move a player is executing
- when everyone looks to you to see what happens
- when the players give you a golden opportunity

Usually your turn in the spotlight will be spent making a **GM move**. But it may also just be general narration.

Ask the Players Questions

1kFA is a conversation. The GM is the main storyteller, but not the only storyteller. **Ask the players questions** and use the answers. Embrace your curiosity.

When you run Sarukkan's Chamber, there are some built-in prompts to give you some practice asking questions that fill in the details of a scene or give personality to NPCs.

There are also questions that you will need to ask to establish what rules apply: "What is your character trying to accomplish?", "Is anyone else helping?", "Who is taking the lead?".

The easiest question to use is "What do you do?". Whenever you make a GM move, end with "What do you do?". You don't even have to ask the person you made the move against. Take that chance to shift focus elsewhere.

The questions that gave the characters flesh during character creation are examples of asking questions and using the answers. You can always go back and pull more buckets up from that well. If a character is religious, ask them what their gods would have to say. If there's a halfling in the party, ask how hungry the current scene makes them.

Try asking the players to describe outcomes. For example, if a player's character is in a fight with a goblin and the player gets an amazing *attack power* roll of 10, the GM might ask the player, "Describe how your character kills the goblin". This gives the player license to get flowery and really see their character live up to the promise of being powerful in this fantasy world.

When you're stumped for what happens next, ask a player to fill in the details. Consider where you are in the Campaign, and ask a leading question. Use their answer to describe the next scene or introduce the next challenge.

Chapter	Question
Home / You	What's the one rule you're not supposed to break?
Need	What do you wish people here could see the beauty of?
Go	Who do you hope won't try to get in your way?
Search	What strange custom do they practice here?
Find	*this stage has it's own set of questions*
Take / Pay	A great trembling is felt. What's that sound? / A figure approaches. You thought they were dead, who is it? (engage their fear / grief)
Return	*this stage has it's own set of questions*
Change	Which old friend or adversary is the first to greet you?

Other questions to ask are improv game questions. These are questions that have nothing to do with the current scene, but prompt everyone, especially you, to *think laterally*. These can be great to inspire you:

- If you just need a name for an NPC or location
- If you want to insert a danger into a scene
- If you want an NPC to respond, but don't have dialogue, voice, or personality ready
- If you need an idea for a puzzle or a monster

Helping Unsure Players

Sometimes when you ask a player a question, they will simply respond "I don't know". This can be a signal that the player isn't having fun, and might need some direction. It can be difficult to just make stuff up about a character that doesn't really exist moving around in a purely imagined world.

Think about how this player has signaled what they've found fun. Do they seem to enjoy the *fictional* parts of the game, or the *mechanical* parts?

If they're enjoying the fiction, ask them what would happen to this character if this was a movie, or use the titles from the Touchstone List. Ask them if they're ok with their character being put in jeopardy, or if that makes them uncomfortable. Ask them what the character's *most immediate* motivation might be.

If they're enjoying the mechanical game, ask them what resource they're after: XP? precious items? powerful weapons? move cards? Then ask what they think the shortest path is to get the thing they're after. Help them see the necessary steps to get what they want.

In either case, you're nudging them towards making a decision to accomplish a goal. They might need to accept that getting what they want means taking a risk. In fact, the game is designed to reward more XP to riskier choices (triggering lower-level moves is more likely to generate XP than higher-level moves).

Use this as an opportunity to take feedback as well. Have you made the situation *clear*? It's ok to have a conversation about the conversation.

Make GM Moves

Often the players will move the story forward by having their characters talk and do actions that are certain (you don't call for flips unless actions or consequences are uncertain), so there may be long stretches where a GM doesn't need to jump in.

But when your turn comes, here are the options available to shake things up:

- Escalate the danger
- Reveal an unwelcome truth
- Show signs of an approaching threat
- Deal damage
- Use up their resources
- Turn their move back on them
- Separate them
- Give an opportunity that fits a player's cards or character's background
- Show a downside to their appearance, reputation, or equipment
- Put someone in a spot
- Offer an opportunity, with or without cost
- Tell them the requirements or consequences and ask

During the execution of a GM move, tools may be employed to generate ideas and make decisions:

- Ask players questions

- Ask players to reveal a card from their Deckahedron (this doesn't count as a flip, this is just the GM using randomness to help make a decision)
- Put on some music
- Use an improv game

Try to keep up the excitement and pace of play with your GM moves, but also know that it's ok to invest a little in making them significant and to pause for a second to think through some repercussions. Will the move you make drive the story toward your next *Journey point*?

Note that the move you execute in play may actually overlap multiple moves on this list. That's ok, creating honest fictional responses sometimes demands it. For example, "deal damage" is a move, but other moves may include damage as well.

A GM move is not restricted to the player move that caused it

Understand that when a player resolves a flip with , that doesn't always mean that the thing they were attempting fails.

The GM is free to let the character accomplish the thing, but may use the flip result to bring new action and intrigue into the story.

Let's say a player's character is a thief infiltrating a stronghold, hired to steal a fabled yellow amulet. Maybe the character attempts to climb over a wall to avoid being seen by guards. Consider the following consequences of an :

- You fail to get over in time and the guards start yelling and pulling at your boots (Escalate the danger)
- You climb over, but as you do so, you overhear the guards in friendly conversation with someone that sounds a lot like the fence that hired you for this caper (Reveal an unwelcome truth)
- You climb over. You pause for a second to listen for the guards' passing. You hear their footsteps slow, then stop. Have they found something? Suddenly, one barks an order "Get to the tower and sound the alarm. Run!" (Show signs of an approaching threat)
- You climb over. The camera pans up to the dark sky, we see grey feathered beasts with the faces of birdlike wolves, the flaps of their wings loud and ominous. Each of their tails ends in a glowing yellow shape extremely similar to the description of the amulet. (Show signs of an approaching threat)

The first example is pretty straightforward, a thing was tried, it failed, the character suffers the direct consequences.

In the remaining three examples, the character got to the other side of the wall safely. A fictional cue triggered the move, the mechanisms of the rules were engaged, and then the GM chose to create new, separate, fictional badness. The

fiction produced by the engaging the rules does not have to be constrained to the fiction that engaged them.

The last example does something even more strange. It talks about a disembodied "camera" and portrays a scene to the *players*, but not to the *characters*. This can be a fun style of play in 1kFA, but it may not please every group because it "breaks immersion". If you describe the world like a movie, you're asking players to be audience, not actors.

Always be on the lookout for signals from the players for the kind of fun they want to have.

Escalate the Danger

The fictional world is full of danger. Adventurers are constantly being surprised by what's around the next corner or the thing that has been stalking them from the shadows.

Monsters have special attacks. Use these special attacks.

The location itself can produce danger. Are the PCs on a sinking ship, or a crumbling tomb? Announce that the deck they're on floods, or that the passage that led them in is now blocked by tons of rubble.

Reveal an unwelcome truth

An unwelcome truth is a fact the players wish wasn't true: that the room's been trapped, maybe, or that the helpful goblin is actually a spy. Reveal to the players just how much trouble they're in.

Show signs of an approaching threat

This is one of your most versatile moves. "Threat" means anything bad that's on the way. With this move, you just show them that something's going to happen unless they do something about it.

Deal damage

When you deal damage, choose one source of damage that's fictionally threatening a character and apply it. In combat with a lizard man? It stabs you. Triggered a trap? Rocks fall on you.

The amount of damage is decided by the source. In some cases, this move might involve trading damage both ways, with the character also dealing damage.

Most damage is based on a die roll. When a player takes damage, tell them what to roll. You never need to touch the dice.

Use up their resources

Surviving in dangerous places often comes down to supplies. With this move, something happens to use up some resource: weapons, armor, magical item charges, ongoing magical effects. You don't always have to use it up permanently.

A sword might be flung to the other side of the room. Walking across the shimmering barrier might end any ongoing magic effects, etc.

An easy way to decide on what resource to use up is to look to the cards in front of a player:

- End ONGOING effects of magic items
- Place white-side red cards on magic items for temporary charge loss
- Place black-side red cards on magic items for permanent charge loss
- Place black-side red cards on mundane items for damage
- Take away Pack cards
- Take away item cards (careful with this one - use only when appropriate)
- Take away marker tokens (ie, those created by Where It Hurts, etc.)

Note, **a GM cannot take XP from a player**. Use of XP should always be a player choice.

Turn Their Move Back On Them

Think about the benefits a move might grant a character and turn them around in a negative way. Alternately, grant the same advantage to someone who has it out for the characters.

If Ivy has learned of Duke Horst's men approaching from the east, maybe a scout has spotted her, too.

Separate Them

There are few things worse than being in the middle of a raging battle with blood-thirsty hawkhounds on all sides – one of those things is being in the middle of that battle with no one at your back.

Separating the characters can mean anything from being pushed apart in the heat of battle to being teleported to the far end of the dungeon. Whatever way it occurs, it's bound to cause problems.

Give an opportunity that fits a player's cards or character's background

Every character has unique move cards for skills that they shine at, or has a fictional backstory that can overcome social obstacles or tests of knowledge.

Present an opportunity that plays into one character's domain.

It doesn't have to be a character that's in the current scene though. Sometimes a locked door stands between you and treasure and there's no lock-picking expert in sight. This is an invitation for invention, bargaining, and creativity.

Traps, ambushes, and locked doors are great examples. Need some Derring-Do to avoid giant clock-tower gears? Maybe proof of religious or guild affiliation would confer a backstage pass?

Show a downside to their appearance, reputation, or equipment

Just as every character shines, they all have their unique weaknesses too. Do orcs have a special thirst for elven blood? Is an ongoing flow of magic disturbing dangerous forces? The torch that lights the way also draws attention from eyes in the dark.

Offer an opportunity, with or without cost

Show them something they want: riches, power, glory. If you want, you can associate some cost with it too, of course.

Remember to lead with the fiction. You don't say, "This area isn't dangerous so you can make camp here, if you're willing to take the time." You make it a solid fictional thing and say, "Helferth's blessings still hang around the shattered altar. It's a safe area to rest or plan, but the chanting from the ritual chamber is getting louder. What do you do?"

Put someone in a spot

A spot is someplace where a character needs to make tough choices. Put them, or something they care about, in the path of destruction. The harder the choice, the tougher the spot.

Tell the requirements or consequences and ask

"Ok, everyone flees from the hammer-camels, heading towards the water, but let me ask this first: Samwise is wearing plate armour. If he leaves it behind on

the bank of the river, will someone else provide a distraction so he can remove it? Or Samwise can keep it on and clumsily swim, but he will lose 1 Stamina."

This move is particularly good when they want something that's not covered by a player move, or they've failed a move. They can do it, sure, but they'll have to pay the price. Or, they can do it, but there will be consequences.

Base the requirements or consequences in the fiction and make them clear to the characters, not just the players.

This can also be a good move to underscore particularly tricky dangers. Let the players know that if they attempt to dive between the giant clockwork gears, you're going to spend a *Shadow point* to increase the difficulty.

Drive Towards Your Next Journey Point

When a GM has time in the spotlight, and the set-up has been established, they have an opportunity to earn themselves a *Journey point* by taking the plot to another milestone in the Hero's Journey.

Look to the Campaigns Guide and decide which milestone the current fictional situation is well set-up for.

Remember that the players don't have to bite on every hook. Don't fight it when things to go sideways. You can always skip it or try again.

Begin a Campaign

Universe Creation

1. Create a GM sheet

The GM needs a sheet of paper to make notes and track information.

At the top of the sheet write the headings "Journey Points" and "Shadow Points". Leave enough space to track the points under each of those headings.

When a player flips and *resolves a move* with a , gain a *Shadow point*. When a move with the *IMMEDIATE* tag is resolved with a , mark two *Shadow points*.

See the Campaign Guide for rules on when to gain *Journey points*.

2. Establish Touchstones

First, the table needs to get on the same page about the adventure's setting, themes, and tone. Give the players an overview of the steps in creating a
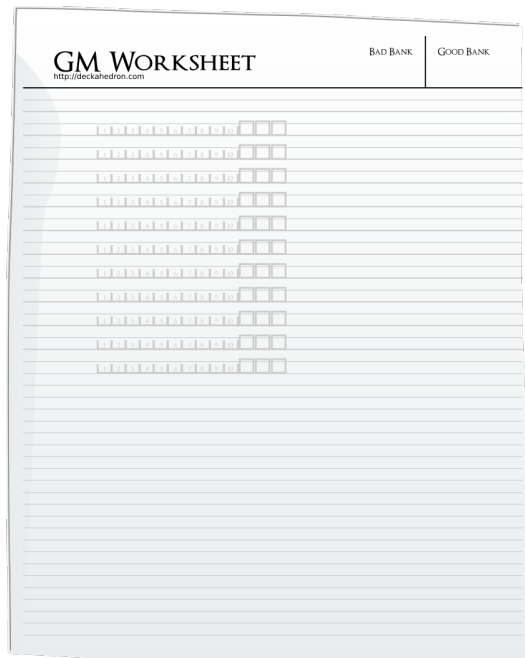
Figure 2: GM Worksheet

Touchstone List, and tell them its purpose. Then start executing the steps.

Take out a new blank sheet of player.

> Before we start an adventure, we need to figure out what kind of world your characters come from.

> We'll go through a 3-step process to make what's called a Touchstone List.

> The Touchstone List is a tool we use to create the setting for the game. I'll also use it for inspiration on tones and themes. And we'll look to it together when your characters are pushing the envelope, to answer questions like "is that action even possible?"

Note: if you want to use "adventure modules" from your library, this is the time to introduce and pitch them.

Brainstorm Titles

> The first step is for everyone to grab a pen or pencil and write a few titles from pop culture on this piece of paper. Think of books, movies, games, comics and TV shows whose settings inspire your imagination. Think of ones where you've imagined yourself inside

those stories and thought about what decisions you would have made
if you were those characters.

Don't censor yourself, and don't shoot down anyone else's title down.
This is brainstorming, and we want the ideas to flow.

Stop when you've got 3 or 4.

You may need to reiterate to the players that you're looking for *titles*.
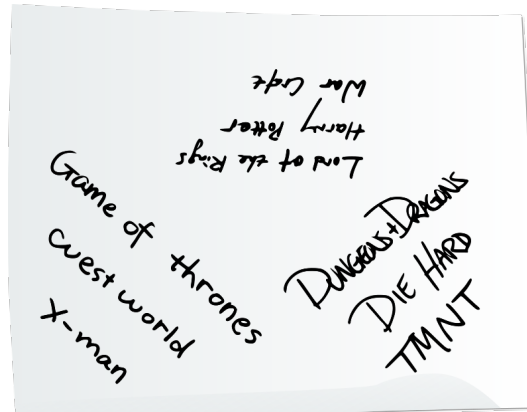

Figure 3: Touchstone List

Narrow it down

Take a look through the titles for anything that may be in a setting that's not
well-supported by the rules of 1kFA. If there is such a setting, remind the players
that 1kFA has rules for swords and limited magic, and no rules for machine guns
or interstellar travel. So choosing sci-fi touchstones might help with themes and
tone, but won't have much to offer for establishing setting.

1kFA works best with stories where characters start out "scrappy", that is to
say, without extraordinary powers and privileges, characters who struggle, who
chafe against their current limitations in the world. So superhero titles or stories
where protagonists are genetically imbued with special abilities might also need
to be pared down.

For step 2, we're going to narrow it down.

Take a turn and circle one of the titles on this list. You are allowed
to circle one of your own titles, or any of the other ones.

Only circle one, and don't circle something that's already been cir-
cled

Each player gets a chance to circle one of the titles on the list. The GM gets a turn too, and should take that turn after the others are finished.
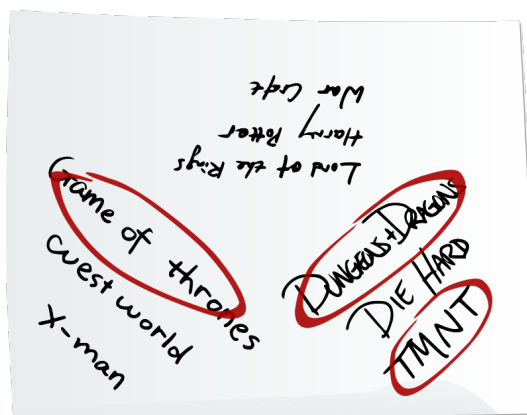

Figure 4: Touchstone List

The "Touchstone List" may be consulted when the table needs to make a judgment about whether facts being proposed make sense in the shared universe you're creating. It can also be used to simply make calls on whether a character's attempt at something is uncertain (remember, the GM only calls for flips when the outcome is uncertain).

You can ask the question "Did any character accomplish a similar feat in __ ?" (fill in the name of one of the titles in your Touchstone List).

It's also something to consult for what's *not* special. If the titles on your list never talk about how their heroes acquire horses or boats, and instead just spontaneously present the characters on horseback or sailing at sea, then maybe your game should gloss over questions like "How did you get that horse?".

The Touchstone List is also an early way that the players can signal to the GM the kind of fun they want to have.

3. Set Expectations

> This is our "Touchstone List": [read the circled titles]

The GM, using their knowledge of the rules, should read the list and call out any potential conflicts between circled titles and the rules of 1kFA.

Will the players expect their characters to pull off the same feats and use the same powers of the chosen touchstones?

Die Hard is a great touchstone for tone, themes, and relationships, but 1kFA doesn't have rules for helicopters or machine guns.

The GM should not *reject* any circled titles, they should just address what's going to be possible.

Everyone will have more fun if expectations are set at the beginning.

> Imagine this mashed-up universe.

> What kind of world would be the one where some portion from each circled title is mixed together with the others?

> What does this world look like?

> What are it's dominant features?

> What secrets are hidden away in the small places?

> Who are the folk that populate it, do their children happily play in the sun?

> What monsters lurk, what weakness do the ambitious and powerful exploit?

It's not necessary for anyone to answer these questions, they are mostly to provoke the imagination. But if the table does start imagining out-loud, keep that discussion going for as long as it is productive.

> Finally, who will *you* be in this world? 1kFA is a game about a group of scrappy adventurers who grow in power as we play the game.

> Your character will start the game with skills and gifts beyond ordinary folk, but they'll still have to work and struggle through adversity to become really powerful.

Character Creation

4. Choose cards

Gather the move cards, and separate them into piles:

- Cards with "A" in the corner
- Cards with "B" in the corner
- Cards with "C" in the corner
- Cards without any letter in the corner

If you are playing a One-Shot campaign, remove "Entreat the Blood-Bound"

If any player is new to A Thousand Faces of Adventure

Lay out the A cards in front of your players. Then select and lay out (`# of players + 1`) B cards. Then select and lay out (`# of players + 1`) C cards.

These are called move cards. You are going to take turns choosing, and I'm here to explain how they work and answer questions.

The "A" cards are usually the most powerful, so, during character creation, you can only choose one of those. You can choose up to 2 of the B cards, and if you wanted, you can choose 3 C cards, You get to start with 3 move cards in total.

To differentiate the characters, you don't get to choose a card that someone else has already picked. But later on in the game, you can "Study Under a Master" to learn new moves and even choose moves that someone else has.

There's a lot of choices here, so don't get overwhelmed. You don't have to read all of the instructions on each card, just focus on the titles and ask yourself if that sounds like something you want your character to be doing during the game. If a title sounds interesting to you, ask me about it and I'll explain how it works in the game.

If you're the kind of person that really wants to optimize your character you'll probably want to read and understand the rules in the Player's Guide, plus all the text of the move cards, and now might not be the best time for that. 1kFA is more about improvisation than perfection, so try to listen to your gut and just pick cards that look like fun.

As players choose cards, there may be opportunities to explain some of the deeper rules.

When a player chooses a card with an UNENCUMBERED tag, take that opportunity to explain how Item and Pack cards impact those types of moves.

When a player chooses a card with an IMMEDIATE tag, take that opportunity to explain that they can only use one IMMEDIATE move at a time, and that they don't risk a GM move if they flip   or .

If every player has played 1kFA before

For experienced players, moves are chosen by drafting cards.

Shuffle the A, B, and C piles, keeping them separate.

Put the B pile on top of the A pile, then put the C pile on top of that, creating a deck. Take that deck in your hand. Don't shuffle it.

Deal out a hand of cards for each player at the table. Some players might get more cards than others, that's ok – there doesn't need to be the same number of cards in each hand.

Now the draft begins. Each player should look through their hand, take one card from it, then pass the remaining cards to the player on their left. They

can take at most 1 A card, and at most 2 B cards.

They do that 3 times.

Any amount of table-talk is allowed during the draft. After the draft is over, if someone doesn't have an A card, they may additionally choose any C card that wasn't chosen in the draft.

5. Choose Int / Str / Dex

Figure 5: Point distributions

Tell the players to choose how to distribute 6 points among the attributes. No attribute may have a rank of zero. They must all be at least Anvils, and there's no rank above Dragon.

Looking at which attributes get applied to their chosen move cards will help the players decide how to distribute these 6 points.

> Now that you've got a few moves, you'll want to fill in your character's attributes. There are three: Dexterity, Intelligence, and Strength, shortened to "Dex", "Int", and "Str" on your character sheet.

> You have six points to distribute among them, and each attribute must have at least one point – you can't have an attribute of rank zero.

> Your attributes will affect the degree of success you enjoy when you trigger the different moves. You can see what the moves depend on by looking towards the upper left side of a move card. A move that depends on Str is more likely to get a better result when your Str is really high.

> If you're interested in the exact statistical breakdown, there's a page at the end of your move booklet that lays it all out. For now though, you should probably just go with your gut.

6. Name your character

When players have finished picking cards, ask them what their character is called.

> Ok, now think of a name for your character and write it down. When you've got it written down, announce it to the table.

Have them write the name on the top of their character sheet bold and large so that you can read it. Using large print with a felt-tipped marker is recommended.

7. Add flesh

Starting with the first player to announce their character's name, ask the questions on this list, one-at-a-time, and make notes of the players' answers. Don't ask each question to each player, address a question to just one player, then move on, asking the next question to the next player. This exercise gets the players thinking about their characters, and gets the table talking, so it's ok for players to blurt out responses out of turn.

For each bulleted question, add a follow-up question of your own. How do the players' responses relate to the established Touchstone List? What further detail would you like to know? Follow your curiosity. This will warm up your improvisational energy and spark ideas for the opening scene of your story.

This conversation might also add details to the world, like what kinds of species and religions exist.

- What species is your character, human, or something else from our Touchstone List?
- Does your character steal things, or do they respect the concept of private property?
- Before the adventure starts, is your character engaged in any kind of profession?
- Does your character believe in gods? Is there some kind of religious practice or religious organization for them?
- Does your character enjoy the outdoors, or city life? Are they extreme in that preference?
- Roughly how old is your character? Have they ever killed a person before?
- What's your character's social standing? When they first walk into a room full of people, do they provoke any reaction?

Not everyone will get asked every question, but everyone will *start thinking* about how *each* of these questions applies to their character. With some depth and dimensionality in mind, a player will be better able to imagine creative outcomes to the situations their character is confronted with.

As you're asking the players these questions, listen for how the answers signal the kind of fun the players want to have and also measure the expectations they have for the game. 1kFA is a game where characters start off as scrappy adventures. If a player is telling you their character is a fire demon or a ten year

old shoe-shine boy or a computer hacker, a conversation is needed to establish how that character can fit into the 1kFA rules.

If a player's character reads as too exotic, that might be the player signaling that the fun they want to have is playing a different game.

8. Choose Fateful Moments

Since 1kFA is a game about taking risks, I'm going to give you an opportunity to get some bonuses when you get risky. We're going to create what are called "Fateful Moment" cards.

On your Fateful Moment will be written some goal for your character to achieve in the story. Then I'm going to put 2 XP on the card.

When your character *takes a big risk* to achieve this goal, you get to take the 2 XP.

The player on your left is going to look at this list of goals then present you with 2 options. You must choose 1 of them. That goal gets written on your Fateful Moment.

- Expose an embarrassment
- Locate a prize
- Extract a secret
- Become enamored
- Sell your services
- Break down a barrier
- Choose a side
- Be an agent of justice
- Take pity on the desperate
- Start a grudge
- Consort with the unsavory
- Believe an impossible claim
- Get called out on your boasting

Write the chosen phrase on a blank card (now called a "Fateful Moment card") and hand it to the player. Place two XP on each player's Fateful Moment card. It's not theirs to spend yet, though. When their character first *takes a big risk* by the method or for the reason written on their card, the player takes the XP.

Fateful Moments help players with less experience in role-playing games decide what to do. If they are very useful at your table, you can do the Fateful Moment procedure for players after they finish a period of downtime and head out again for adventure.

9. Choose Items and Weapons

Now lets give your characters some equipment.

We'll start with the mandatory stuff, first of all, everyone gets 2 Pack cards. You can use these with the "Good Thing I Brought…" move.

Give each player 2 Pack cards. Pack cards are just white-side green cards.

Next, does anyone have a Move Card that has a "RECEIVE CARDS" tag on it?

RECEIVE CARDS phase

Help them identify the tags on their move cards then give them the items or the choice of items specified in the rules for those cards.

- The "Use a Magic Item" card lets them take 1 magic item of their choice
- The "Channel the Living Light" card lets them take Sigil of the Living Light
- The "Entreat the Blood Bound" card lets them take Blade of Echoes

2 Item Cards phase

Next, everyone gets to choose 2 item cards for your character, these can be weapons, armour, or any other items that have mechanical significance. 1kFA comes with some cards to get us started, but we can also write stuff on blank cards.

It's recommended that your character have some kind of weapon. Without a weapon, their "attack power" will only be 1. Here are the weapon cards that come with the game, but we can also use blank cards and create weapons that would be reasonable for a "scrappy adventurer" to have in the universe we've imagined in our Touchstone List.

When your character strikes an enemy with a weapon, their attack power is 1d4. You can increase your attack power later in the game by using the "Craft a Weapon" or "_ Mastery" moves.

Lay out the weapon cards that come with the game. If two players want the same kind of weapon, just use a blank card to make a second copy.

If a player wants their character to have an unusual weapon, that's fine. Explain to them that at the beginning of the game the die they will roll will be a d4, even if they describe something epic.

The next recommendation is armour or a shield. Armour works by absorbing the attack power of your enemies. Shields work by

nullifying your enemies' attack power, but only if you can get your guard up fast enough, and that will challenge your Dexterity.

Lay out the armour and shield cards that come with the game. If two players want the same kind of weapon, just use a blank card to make a second copy.

Players don't have to choose only from weapons, armour and shields. After the cards due players with RECEIVE CARDS tagged cards are chosen, each player can choose at most 1 magic item card as one of their 2 starting item cards. They can take one even if they didn't choose the "Use A Magic Item" move card. But if they choose a magic item, make sure they understand the difficulty and cost of attempting "Use A Magic Item" at the "wild" level.

Any time there is a blank on a card, the player should fill it in, so that you and they know exactly what kind of item the character possesses.

`TODO: link to weapon and armor lists`

Aside: A feather can make you slower

Often during this phase, a player might bring up the issue of why an item they've called a ring or a pair of boots can have an encumbrance penalty. How can sliding on a ring make it harder to run away? How can wearing boots make it impossible to pick a pocket?

The answer is: that's for them to decide.

In 1kFA, play flows between the domain of the fiction and the domain of the rules. All the players create fiction, which triggers rules, then the rules produce mechanical results, which the players are challenged to interpret into fiction. Sometimes that means the GM interprets an attack power roll, and sometimes it means that a player explains that though their ring looks small, it weighs more than anyone expects, or that the magical attunement of the boots sends a chronic tingling sensation up the nerves of the wearer's legs.

Players get to give items descriptive names and dream them into existence, but do not get to change the rule that the items gained during character creation incurs encumbrance penalties.

This doesn't mean that every fictional object introduced in the course of the game reduces a character's speed. After the adventure begins, the fiction may produce a letter from the king, or the eggs of a cursed salamander – things that may not incur an encumbrance penalty.

10. The Hearth

This is a game where the players play together on the same team.

Before the game begins, establish for *every* PC, what makes them feel most at home, and how the characters already know each other.

Ask the group to choose by consensus one of these things that they all have in common, and ask them to describe why this common thing bonds them together and why it makes them comrades that would risk their lives for each other.

- Specific People
- Food
- Song
- Environmental feature
- Ritual or festival
- Group activity

This answer will be known as The Hearth. Write it down on the same sheet as the Touchstone List and label it "The Hearth".

The Hearth is something that will be made inaccessible to the party when the first threshold is crossed, and be made available again when the second threshold is crossed. For details on thresholds, see the Campaign Guide.

Use what the players describe to get your first *Journey point*, by starting the story out in a place of normalcy, vitality, and comfort. Remember, it doesn't have to be a Hobbit hole. Characters might be most at home in the middle of a bloody battle.

Begin

Now that the table has established the initial details, it's time to begin.

Shuffle the blessing cards and place them face down in a deck. Shuffle the wound cards and place them face down in a deck. Put a wound token next to the wound deck so you can tell the difference between the wound and blessing decks.

There are many ways to start the narration, so check out the examples to see some.

Players will probably have a couple questions on their mind when the game begins:

- Where am I?
- Where can I go?
- Who else is here that I can interact with?
- How do I start using my special move cards?

Asking the players questions is a tool that's *always* available to the GM. Might establishing more details about the world spark some plot ideas? Go around the table and start asking the players for a detail about their character or their role in the world of the Touchstone List.

One classic way is to start like some movies start, with an establishing shot that gives us a sense of setting. You could narrate a typical day-in-the-life scene of NPCs. Or maybe start with the atypical, and narrate a scene of trouble brewing.

Another way is to zoom in. Start narrating from a bird's eye view of the continent, zoom in to a specific region, then to a city or town, then to a neighborhood, then to a building and ending when you're in the room with the player's characters.

Everybody at the table has seen movies before, you can use that fact to talk about "the camera". You can use words like "pan" and "fade in", and everyone will naturally get it.

End your initial narration by confronting them with a problem and asking "What do you do?"

Session 1 Rules

These rules are split up into sessions. During the first 3-hour session, the players will probably just be getting the hang of the the flow of the game. In session 2, they will probably experience downtime, and be ready to understand how moves interact with each other.

Creating A Combat Encounter

As the narrative develops, the PCs will be faced with challenges and conflicts. Sometimes they will be confronted with NPCs or monsters who mean to do them harm. Nonviolent options like negotiation or escape may still be valid in these situations, but players will often choose to confront their antagonists with steel.

Combat encounters don't have to be simple zero-sum games. Think about the narrative stakes as well. When swords are drawn, put something besides life and limb in jeopardy – information, resources, social standing, risk of alarm.

When a scene breaks out in violence, you'll need to get your GM worksheet and write down a few stats for the party's foes.

If the foe is a fear-inducing monster, keep in mind the rules of the Monsters chapter as you step through this process.

First, write down the names of each foe. Beside each name, write the foe's attack power (d4, d6, d10). Beside that, draw ticks or spaces for their Stamina points. Beside those, draw up to three armour squares.

Figure 6: GM Worksheet

Armour squares are a mechanism for foes that work similar to the armour or wound mechanisms for PCs. Whenever a foe is facing any amount of *attack power*, the GM can just cross out an armour square to absorb the full amount.

When attack power goes above d4 or armour squares are added, spend *Shadow points* according to this table.

Shadow points	Foe augmentation
1 per	armour square (maximum 3)
2	attack power d6
4	attack power d10
1	monster has 11-15 stamina
2	monster has 16-20 stamina
1 per	monster special attack

Foes' Stamina and attack power should be realistically scaled to the "scrappy adventurer" level of the players. Help the players estimate the threat they face

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by giving the foes fitting descriptions. This table should help.

	Stamina points	Attack power
Children	2	1
Civilians	4	1 - 1d4
Bouncers, Guards	5-6	1d4
Trained Soldiers, Elite Guards	7-10	1d4 - 1d6
Monsters	5-20	1d4 - 1d10
Villains	5-10	1d4 - 1d10

Generally, human opponents will have 1 attack power when unarmed and 1d4 attack power when armed. Save greater attack power for monsters and special villains.

Remember that foes' power can be exerted in more ways than just their Stamina and attack power. Challenges may arise from the antagonist's superior knowledge of the environment, magical abilities, political connections, or other types of fictional positioning.

As you spend more time playing, you will find it faster and easier to create these encounters and write up the stats in the GM Worksheet. If the players at your table are signaling that they enjoy the challenge of combat encounters and mastering the combat mechanisms embodied by their characters, then you can use the appendix Mathematical Combat Balance to create encounters that are more objectively balanced and satisfy the type of player that delights in system mastery.

However, If all that math feels a little too "gamey" for your table, just wing it. Create encounters as demanded by the established fiction, or take the following pre-balanced examples as a starting point, and adjust as you please.

Example combat encounters

Easy - A pair of guards taken by surprise

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TODO: illustration
```

The PCs way is blocked by a pair of guards who are sleeping or distracted by a game of dice. They have 6 stamina points, and short swords (1d4 attack power). As long as the PCs don't bungle their approach, they will have an opportunity to attack first or attack from range.

If the guards believe they have no hope of winning, they will flee or give up and beg for mercy.

Medium - A lieutenant and his soldiers

`TODO: illustration`

The PCs turn a corner or open a door and stumble into a planning session presided over by a lieutenant and his subordinates (there are as many subordinates as there are PCs). They are the swords-first, questions-later types and attack immediately at close range. The 3 soldiers have 6 stamina points and do 1d4 attack power. The lieutenant has 8 stamina points and has one armour square.

The lieutenant will never surrender, but if the rest of their allies are cut down, a single soldier left standing may lose his nerve and give up.

Hard - The swamp beast

`TODO: illustration`

The PCs are surprised by a *thing* that springs up from the muck and launches a surprise attack.

The beast is introduced when a player flips an , so the GM makes the "Escalate the danger" move and additionally deals 1d4 damage to one of the PCs as the beast makes glancing contact with its fierce claws.

This thing fights to the death and has 12 stamina points. It bites and slashes for 1d10 attack power.

Special attack: the beast can disappear into the muddy terrain and later spring up behind the most vulnerable PC, as long as that PC is standing in the beast's territory.

Give hints

Players will perceive the game as either "fair" or "unfair" partly based on how the foes are described by the GM before the combat begins. Always describe the confrontation in a way that hints at the difficulty.

- The two guards *exchange an unsure look and step forward*
- The salty pirate flashes his blade, but *simultaneously takes a step backwards towards his ship*
- The golem is *gargantuan and covered in scars from many battles*
- The *horde* of undead wolves stare at you with *unrelenting hunger*
- The old woman with the walking stick is *unfazed by your threats* and, *after looking you up and down, turns away with an air of dismissal*

The feel of combat

In combat, it's ok if play gets more formulaic. Some players enjoy the "abnegation" of a tit-for-tat combat scene that lasts tens of minutes. This can be a combination of exciting and relaxing. Give your players opportunities to press their favorite buttons.

That said, some players don't seek abnegation. What kinds of signals are your players giving you? Maybe they want to get through combat faster. If so, when you make your moves, you can think cinematically. Continually raise the stakes for both sides during the scene. Think dangerous. No character or set piece needs to be safe or sacred.

The Combat Spotlight

Combat can play out in whatever way feels natural and follows from the fiction. That said, it can be taxing on a GM to come up with new, creative responses in combat because flips are happening frequently. So, to relieve some of that pressure, here are some formats to follow that guide the table through a combat encounter.

1kFA doesn't have turns, but it's ok if moving the spotlight during combat makes it feel that way.

Format 1

This format is simple, and gives the players the most agency.

- Give each player a "turn" where they will probably trigger an aggressive combat move like Mix It Up or Volley
- Pay attention to IMMEDIATE combat moves that may have triggered
- Execute the moves, make cool stuff happen as consequences
- Go around the table until all the opponents flee or are incapacitated
- Any   results may usually be interpreted as "your enemies attack". Choose some opponents that weren't *just* in a Mix It Up, and declare they attack one of the player's characters. Apply attack power against that character. Use an attack power die from one attacker, and add 1 attack power for each other attacker

Format 2

This format makes the opponents more of a threat.

- Give each player a "turn" where they will probably trigger an aggressive combat move like Mix It Up or Volley, call that a "player round"

- Pay attention to IMMEDIATE combat moves that may have triggered
- After player turns are complete, and the players look to you to see what happens next, execute an "NPC round"
- Identify the opponents that didn't interact during the "player round"
- Describe how all of those opponents team up on one of the player's characters, and call for one Defy Danger flip. (move the "danger" spotlight fairly, but also try to put pressure on any players with more than 3 unspent XP)
- Failing the Defy Danger flip results in the player's character suffering the opponents' attack. You can calculate attack power thusly:
  - : one attack power die from the lead attacker, and add 1 attack power (not die) for each other attacker
  - : no attack power die is rolled, but 1 attack power per attacker (so 3 foes = 3 attack power)

Format 3

This format imagines the opponents as particularly quick and aggressive.

- Give each player a "turn" where they will trigger a move
- Pay attention to IMMEDIATE combat moves that may have triggered
- When describing the outcome of a player's move, also describe how the opponents take aggressive action.
- Keeping the spotlight on that player, have them respond to the actions of their foes, usually by needing to follow their first flip with a Defy Danger flip.
- Allow players to avoid the opponent's aggressive action if their first flip specifically provided for it, and it makes sense in the narrative. (See Backstab, Bum Rush, Volley)

Your Format

These combat format suggestions are just that - suggestions. Players often think up creative solutions or approaches that you won't have predicted beforehand, and that might break one of the above formats. The key is to be true to the established fiction. Also realize that you have power to introduce facts into the fiction. For instance, by the GM move you choose in response to player's failed flips.

A GM's role is not to be the opponent of the players. You're not trying to make their characters *die.* On the contrary, you should be a *fan* of the characters. The best story is one where they struggle, but succeed.

Loot

After combat, the players may propose that their characters sift through the battlefield looking for valuables. Let the characters find whatever you think would be most fun, or something inspired by the Touchstone List, or ask them questions to figure out what boons or treasure were won from their adversaries.

Sometimes nobody will have a concrete idea of what the loot was, and that's okay too.

If the characters slay a pack of werewolves, and then search the bodies, and the table can't immediately come up with an idea for what beneficial gear was dropped by feral, nearly naked humanoids, you can write "What we found on the werewolves" on a blank card, and give that to one of the players.

Later in the game, when the rules demand Item or Pack cards be spent, the "What we found on the werewolves" card may be spent, if the players can justify it. It can even be considered *precious* if the fiction supports it.

———————————————————

Session 2 rules

———————————————————

Prepare

Before your next session starts, you should run through the events of the previous session in your head. Think especially about signals you got from the players. What kind of fun did each player seem to seek out or respond to? Was a player particularly keen to create backstory, to get into combat, to ask a lot of questions about how the world works? Can you think of things to go into the next session to provide that kind of fun?

Think about the plot and how you might get your next couple *Journey points*. Do you think the characters will make certain decisions? You might imagine 2 or 3 key decisions the party will be confronted with. For every fork in the road, try to imagine how the world and NPCs will respond when the characters choose either branch.

That's important. Prepare for *either* case.

There is no *correct* answer for the characters. Never punish a player for making a choice you didn't expect.

Being prepared is different than having a plan. No game ever goes according to a plan.

The purpose of preparation is to use your imagination to assemble a cabinet of narrative spices. At the beginning, you won't know if you're baking a pie or a casserole. You don't even get to see the recipe upfront, it is slowly revealed to you as each ingredient is added to the bowl. Have some cinnamon and sugar ready, but also have some salt and chili powder.

Wait until you play to find out the details of what happens.

Special Move: The Session Opener

From the second session onward, there is a special move that happens once everyone has sat down to play.

Story Recap

First make sure everyone is on the same page. Remind the table of the details of the setting and the characters. Ask the players about what they learned about the world or to remind the table of a way their character's expressed their personality in the last session. Give your recounting of the events that happened in the story so far.

Ask for Notes

Lead each player through a quick check-in. Everyone, including the GM will ask if there's any way they could improve their style of play.

```
Each time we start a new session, there's going to be an opportunity for
players to ask the table how they can make a bigger contribution to the
fun.

I'm going to give each of you a turn, and if you'd like, you can "ask for
notes".  You are free to skip it, but this is a great opportunity before
you get into character to see if there's anything about your play-style or
any choices your character could make that would amplify the experience
for everyone.

When asked to give someone feedback, answer honestly and gently. We are
giving suggestions for improvement, and these suggestions can be taken to
heart or completely ignored. No response is ever required of the person
asking for notes.

Never say "you are having fun wrong". It's better to say "There are more
fun parts over here if you want to take a look".
```

```
After everyone, including myself, has had a turn, all the players get a
free experience point for participating in this exercise.
```

This move's purpose is to practice an open dialogue and help everyone *improve*
their play. If it feels like bargaining, argumentation, excuse-creation, litanizing
of sins, the move has not been executed correctly. Just take a deep breath and
move on.

GMs should particularly try to improve their ability to listen for signals. Tell
players about the content you added last session in response to a signal you got
from them. Ask what signals you missed.

Give Notes

Look at your Touchstone List. Is the group playing the setting and the themes
and tones you all wanted when you started? Use this either to re-focus player
decision-making, or to discard / add titles on your Touchstone List.

If the players are consistently mis-interpreting a rule or forgetting to use rules
when they have an opportunity, now is the time to call those out and answer
their questions.

Frequently Given Note: Create Advantages

New players may especially benefit by being reminded about *creating advantages*
at the beginning of their 2nd session.

After session 1, the players may be realizing that they fail often – more than
they'd like. Take the opportunity to talk about the odds, and what a player
can do to improve them.

Some psychological studies have shown that odds feel "fair" only when players
get wins 60% of the time. Now look at the Deckahedron statistics reference.
You'll see that if your players are mostly doing standard flips (flips without
advantage), they are likely to feel the game is unfair.

Explain to your players that getting good at playing 1kFA means *creating ad-
vantages*. There are built-in moves like Discern and Defend that can be used
to create advantages. Explain each one of these moves. Discern should be
particularly encouraged if you'd like more opportunities to describe the world,
environment, and NPCs that you're creating.

Frequently Given Note: Try Wild Moves

When you begin your 3rd session with new players it might be a good time to
remind them that they can literally try any of the moves that have Dex, Int, or
Str printed at the top of the card.

Even if they don't have the card, they can trigger a move by describing their character taking that kind of action.

They might even discover their character is good at it (via a Critical Flip).

Another good hint for your players is that a good time to try moves wild is when they've built up a +2 advantage.

Other Frequently Given Notes

Generally, the Session Opener can be used to help the players absorb more of the rules. As the game progresses, their characters will open up new ways to be more competent and have a stronger impact on the game world.

This is often a time to open up the Player's Guide and look at one particular section. Give the players all the details of one small section and answer questions.

Examples:
- Gaining new moves
- Increasing move levels
- Getting items with More Power
- Collecting green rings to earn Level Cards

Apologia

After running through the events of last session in your mind, you may realize you're painted into a corner. When the characters are in a situation where you can't imagine a way to keep the game exciting, you need to have a conversation with your players.

This is a shared narrative, so it's allowed to retroactively edit. Collaborate. Get consent.

Ceremonialize

If your gaming session includes food or drink, the Session Opener can be ceremonialized by refraining from the first bite or the first sip until the Session Opener has been completed.

Another idea to add some ritual is to start some exciting, adventure-appropriate music when the Session Opener concludes. Video game soundtracks, or a soundtrack from one of the titles on your Touchstone List are great for this.

Reward Yourselves

If every player has had a chance to get satisfactory feedback it's time to dole out XP. Give a new one to each player.

The Core Game Loop

1kFA has 2 main types of activities, "downtime" activities, and "adventure" activities. The game transitions from downtime to adventure and back again to downtime, repeating in a "loop".

Adventure activities involve risk, exploration, and confrontation. Adventuring will incur costs on the characters in the form of injury, damage to items, and spent magical charges, but it will also let the players build up resources like XP and loot.

Downtime activities are less risky. In these activities, the costs and benefits are known upfront, like shopping, healing, and studying. When injuries and treasures have built up, the players will seek a town to salve their hurts, exchange their loot for exciting new gear, and learn new skills. With that done, the players should be hungry to put their new skills and gear to use, and thus head out again for adventure.

Each transition gives the GM a lot of opportunity to shape the narrative, so when possible, these transitions should be exploited to earn a *Journey point.*

The core loop is not a rule, nor something a GM needs to enforce, it should happen naturally.

Downtime

If the characters are not in a town, the moves available during downtime are:

- Rest
- Sharpen and Stitch
- Seek Help (only if it makes narrative sense)
- _ Mastery
- Craft a Weapon

In a town, these moves are also available:

- Study Under a Master
- Shop / Procure
- Obsessive Contemplation

There is an important choice that a player must make during downtime, and that is, what to spend their time doing. Their character can't do everything in one day. In particular, in one day these moves are mutually exclusive:

- Rest
- Study Under a Master
- Shop / Procure
- Obsessive Contemplation

Additionally, Sharpen and Stitch can only be done while resting, so it is effectively mutually exclusive with the latter 3 moves.

If the GM wants to give the players' characters a second day in town before any action takes place, a *Journey point* must be spent.

Otherwise, on the second day, the GM should present some situation that demands immediate attention. Put something at risk if necessary. Remember, in this dangerous world, nothing is safe or sacred.

The players may still ignore the situation and keep performing downtime moves on the second day – in that case, narrative consequences should be honestly described. What opportunity has been forever lost? What did the adversaries in the world accomplish because the heroes ignored them?

Adventure

The adventure activities are where the players' characters take risks and get into conflicts. To get out of their literal comfort zone, they must have motivations.

If the players at the table are not yet inventing their own motivations for their characters, Fateful Moment cards can be assigned again.

When the transition from downtime to adventure happens, choose Fateful Moments using the procedure described above. (If they still had a Fateful Moment, the new Fateful Moment replaces the old)

Using Journey Points

Journey points are used to create certain kinds of "Deus Ex Machina" situations to benefit the players' characters.

An Unexpected Arrival

When the players find themselves in a situation that looks dire:

- There's no hope and no way out
- They're surrounded and outnumbered
- They've lost the majority of their Stamina points and the foes in the scene are still healthy and looking to fight
- The villain's plot is a hair's breadth from completion

- There's a puzzle they need to solve, but haven't got a clue

Spend a *Journey point* to have an allied NPC enter into the scene, just in time to save the day or spoil the plot.

The NPC should be someone (or some thing) the PCs have met before and who has an honest reason, based on the fiction, to assist the PCs.

This could be a love interest mentioned in someone's backstory, a local page boy from the last town, or a double-crossing wizard who had a change of heart. Their arrival changes an otherwise established fate, a victory or defeat.

If combat is underway, as you move the combat spotlight around the scene, the NPC should get a turn to act as often as each player does.

- The NPC may assist any player character's attack, adding an appropriate die to the attack power
- The NPC may get into a scuffle with one foe, effectively preventing that foe from acting as the combat spotlight moves around
- The NPC may convey or reveal information valuable to the players

A Second Day of Peace

In order to give the players' characters a second day of peace and quiet in a town, so that multiple time-consuming downtime actions can be made in a row without any bad consequences happening in the narrative, a *Journey point* must be spent.

Brought Back to Life

If a PC dies, you may spend a *Journey point* to bring them back to life.

You may not resurrect PCs without spending a *Journey point.*

Take care to be honest to the fiction. Try not to degrade or insult any emotional journey that the death provoked.

Resurrection can have many forms.

Resurrection can come at a high cost.

A Heroic Spark / A Place Transformed

These two are variations on a theme of *change*, and so are best suited for the final chapters of the story.

Let the players *see* the ways that their scrappy-adventurers-turned-heroes have impacted the fantastical world around them.

A Heroic Spark

The heroes have made an indelible mark on the life of someone they encountered, we see the seed of heroism planted in that individual. We know that their destiny is forever altered.

- A young girl practicing with the signature weapon of one of the PCs.
- Townsfolk singing the song of The Hearth with a new verse inserted - a verse about the escapades of our heroes

A Place Transformed

Somewhere previously visited is now magnificently and symbolically changed. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the *scale* of the PCs actions.

- A once-oppressed hamlet now rebuilding and revitalized.
- A lich king's castle repurposed as a friendly settlement.
- The forest that was being decimated now verdant with a new kind of tree, that had never been seen before.

Reveal the Hearth

In the 9 and 30-hour campaigns, there is a special GM move called "Reveal the Hearth"

Using *Shadow Points*

Fictional Disadvantages

In real life, some actions are more difficult than others. The GM has some tools to reflect this in the game.

There are strict rules. Be realistic *and* work within the boundaries.

Let's say the party of adventurers is in a dark cave at nighttime and no torches are lit. A multi-winged bat creature swoops down at them, claws slashing. The first player declares they're going to dive out of the way (Defy Danger with DEX). Because of the set-up, it makes sense that this will be more difficult than if the character could clearly see the creature and the cave floor they're diving into.

- You can spend 1 *Shadow point* to create one level of disadvantage

This level of disadvantage should now be applied *consistently* whenever any character attempts to avoid the creature's swooping attack in a dark environment. No further expenditure of *Shadow points* is needed.

Consistency prevents players from feeling the game is unfair or that you are especially aiming negative consequences at one player.

Traps

When the characters are investigating a set piece or entering a new area, it can be trapped to cause instant damage. Inflict damage equal to the amount of *Shadow points* spent.

The Enemy Strikes First

When an enemy surprises or was otherwise ready for a PC, they can attack without giving the player an opportunity to Defy Danger. The attack power will be equal to the amount of *Shadow points* spent.

Deadly Pursuits

When a player uses the Bravely Run Away move, spend 1 *Shadow point* and either:

- land them in a situation where they are again in immediate danger
- start the Pursuit Mini-game

Augmenting Combat Encounters

As specified in the Combat chapter, *Shadow points* can be spent to increase attack power dice, add armour squares, and outfit fear-inducing monsters.

Creating Challenges for Players

Puzzles

Puzzles are obstacles described in the fiction that are overcome with cleverness. The cleverness can come from the players, by analyzing the facts of the situation out-of-character, or the cleverness can come from the characters, by their fictional actions and by using moves like *Discern* and *I Know This*.

Here are some things to think about when presenting a puzzle in your game. (with thanks to The Art of Game Design by Jesse Schell)

Goal

The puzzle's goal should be easy to understand, and the players should be motivated to solve it. Use human instinct and familiar artifacts.

- an obvious symmetry is broken
- pieces that should line up are askew
- a pattern has an interruption
- a narrative cliche is slightly off

Ramp

Make it easy to get started interacting with the puzzle. The players should want to examine and touch the mechanisms that solve it.

Does it look inviting to touch? Does it look attractive? Does it look like something they've seen before? (This might be an opportunity for *I Know This*)

Don't make it dangerous to interact with. The danger should be in *not* interacting with the puzzle.

Progress

How is progress visible when they are interacting with the puzzle? Consider the difference between a Sphinx-like riddle and the game of "20 Questions".

What feedback is given when they are making positive versus negative progress?

Can you introduce sub-elements of the puzzle the players can act on while they're stumped on a larger element?

Stumps, Hints, Giveaways

If you make a puzzle, you must be prepared for your players to be stumped.

Know beforehand a couple ways that hints will emerge. Your tools of narration can include more than just plain visual descriptions. You can use NPC dialogue, move "the camera" and engage all of the senses.

Lastly, be open to simply give away the solution. Giving away the answer still lets players have "Aha!" moments.

Monsters

Monsters are part of the fiction

Monsters represent something about the theme, usually the fear that must be overcome, or the anti-premise.

If a monster is used as the threshold guardian during the Return chapter, it should be a realization of the Big Fear of the story, or the anti-premise. If the players cross the first threshold on the premise of "We will save the village", the monster should be the thing that will destroy the village and many villages after it. If the premise is "We will return richer than the king", the monster is the thing that destroys the concept of wealth, maybe by turning the surface of the world into a hellscape where the only currency is suffering.

Monsters are puzzles

Monsters are puzzles that can be brute-forced with violence. Monsters have a weakness or a preferred strategy. That may also include something about the environment in which the monster is encountered or interesting items the characters have previously acquired.

Be ready to follow the fun. A monster's weakness might be something that a player invents that you weren't expecting!

The Puzzles section will help you develop some ideas for how to set up the puzzle of the encounter with a monster.

For a threshold guardian monster, blocking the characters' escape out of the unknown world, the weakness or successful strategy should demonstrate the *change* integrated by the heroes during the "Find" chapter.

Monsters can be fought

Monsters can be defeated in combat, and work like regular foes, except that they can have more than 10 stamina points and they have special attacks. See the Combat chapter for how to spend *Shadow points* to determine its combat stats.

You get to choose the special attacks of your monsters. Simplicity and staying on-theme are the way to go here. If your monster is inspired by an animal, ask yourself how that animal would attack in a unique way. If the monster embodies a specific fear, what attack would induce the maximum amount of that kind of fear?

It is recommended to telegraph the special attacks somehow. Let the players know what kind of threat they're dealing with and the stakes of their decision to fight this creature.

Making monsters

The easiest monsters to include in your story are ones you've already seen before. Look at your Touchstone List – what can be plucked out of one of those universes and dropped into the path of the adventurers?

Otherwise, it can be a lot of fun to invent your own. Monsters can be generated by mixing two or more concepts, as long as one of those concepts invokes fear.

- giant
- tiny
- multiple
- airborne
- you know it's there, but can't see it
- seeks out your nostrils, eyes, ears
- constricting
- drowning
- surrounding
- fire
- blood
- amputation / missing parts
- sharp or thorny
- fat
- related to corpses or rot
- related to excrement or egg-laying
- signs of disease or infestation
- evoking mucus or slime
- ancient
- brainless
- beyond comprehension, mind-bending
- taboo or forbidden
- wet and against your skin
- soulless mimicry of human behavior or appearance
- drains potency or causes sleep

Any animal, but especially ones humans are instinctively afraid of

- scorpions, spiders, mosquitoes, wasps
- wolves, jackals, big cats
- elephants, rhinos, hippos
- birds, bats
- crocodiles, alligators
- snakes, eels, worms

- cephalopods, jellyfish
- sharks, killer whales
- lizards, dinosaurs

For a "classical" effect, mix up two or three of the animals - eg, a snake with the wings of a bird, an octopus with scorpion tails for tentacles.

Some monsters are scary because they include an aspect of goodness, nobility, or innocence. This can emphasize corruption, be used as a trap or a trick, or just create contrast.

- babies, children
- gold, wealth
- sexual attractiveness
- mimics a character they love / admire
- religious symbols

If you want more inspiration, there are many great resources in books or on the Internet. Here's a very small sample:

- Dungeon World
- Hot Springs Island
- Carried by Creatures

Villains (aka "Bosses", aka "The Big Bad")

A villain or arch-enemy is not necessary, but can be a very useful tool. Having one "mastermind" behind all the badness in an adventure creates a very focused point of attention when the characters make decisions about what to do next.

Villains have desires. Usually a desire is fundamentally simple, but a story is interesting (and provides more interaction options for the players) if the *means to achieve* the desire is *complicated*.

Voldemort wants *control*, but doesn't run for office, instead he hides 7 horcruxes behind monsters and puzzles, then buries himself as a parasite underneath his sycophant's turban.

Darth Vader wants *order*, so must build a moon-sized laser beam, blow up all the rebellious planets, promote and demote military subordinates, and sell his estranged son on the value of theocratic rule.

Some fundamentally simple desires:

- freedom
- revenge
- orderliness
- control
- love / infatuation
- satiation

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To get more ideas for desires, you can use the same **Hooks** section that is used to motivate player characters in the Campaigns Guide.

Think about your villain as a full person. You will have to improvise their actions and decisions, so use empathy. Are they driven by reason, dangerously erratic, or myopic and compulsive? When you know who they are, and how they make decisions, you will be able to quickly make calls about how they react to the player-characters' actions.

A meaningful villain often represents a mirror image or "shadow-self" of the story's heroes, with the thematic difference being that the villain stays constant, rejecting the change that a hero must accept to truly be a hero.

Signals From Players

Your job as a GM is to listen and look for signals from the players about what *kind* of fun they want to have, and then to insert that kind of fun into the game.

Signals From Components

An easy signal to notice is the physical material sitting in front of each player. A player makes decisions about this material and *players want their decisions to matter*.

Look at the Dex, Int, and Str on a player's character sheet. Is the fiction providing opportunities for them to use their greatest attribute? Are there opportunities for them to get into trouble with their weakest?

What move cards and items are sitting in front of a player? Are they getting opportunities to use them all? What kinds of names have been written on the items? How can those names be used to amplify themes or tones of the narrative?

What is the state of a player's Deckahedron and XP? Is there opportunity to play with the tension of stamina and wounds? Is the player waiting to spend XP during epic action sequences?

Other Signals

Catching signals is different for every GM. It's a skill that develops with time and its never expressed in quite the same way. Being sensitive to your friends'

behavior can help you catch signals that are much less explicit than the physical components.

The most obvious thing to pay attention to is body language - how is a player holding themself? Are they smiling? Laughing? Do they become animated when they describe their character's actions or when they act out dialogue?

How long is a player taking to make a particular decision? A long duration often indicates that the decision is *important* to the player, so if the consequences are big, they might feel very rewarded. This can be tricky though, when one player is taking a long time, notice the other players too and gauge how the delay is affecting them.

Do the players argue with each other? Argument indicates that they believe that there are important stakes of a particular decision. This can be a tricky social dynamic to navigate. As long as arguments stay friendly, a great way to use this signal is to cement those stakes. The good thing happens, but the bad thing happens too. The price is paid. Someone wins, someone loses.

This is just a brief list of suggestions. There are more signals and more ways to interpret them, your table will be unique, and you will all figure out what kind of fun is most rewarding.

Appendix 1

- What's a city in Europe?
- What vegetable did you eat yesterday?
- Who is the worst Hollywood director?
- What was your worst childhood injury or illness?
- Name a one-hit wonder musical group.
- Name a shop where women buy clothing.
- What's something you buy at a hardware store?
- What's my mother's favorite TV show?
- What do kids find when turning over stones in a garden?
- Name something people believe in that isn't real.

Appendix 2

Mathematical Combat Balance

Calculate party power

Party Power is an easy number to calculate, based on each PC in the scene.

```
Party power = (10  (# of PCs)) + (# of XP the PCs have)
```

Create your foes

Create set of enemies that challenge them to the desired degree.

A **challenging fight** for new players is made by creating foes balanced against the Party Power.

Use Party Power to give the foes:

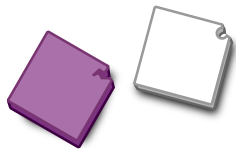|	Party Power cost
One stamina point	1
A weapon that does 1d6 damage	4
One armor square	3

You can also augment foes by spending *Shadow points.*

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A Thousand Faces of Adventure

Hi, thanks for playtesting A Thousand Faces of Adventure!

I am striving to make this game as awesome as my soft human body will allow, my hope fueled by the facts that we've split the atom and domesticated cats. Any great human accomplishment depends on tests, and so A Thousand Faces of Adventure depends on you.

Email me with any thoughts or comments at sjb@ezide.com

If you want to follow the development, join me on Twitter at @boardcrafting

All materials you need to playtest at home can be found here: http://www.1kfa.com/playtest_files or just email me a mailing address and I'll send you a physical copy.

Thanks again,

Shandy