



An Agile Worldbuilding Game

Rules Version 0.0.1-alpha

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Playtesters: Per ora io.

Special thanks to no one for now

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 This is *Play*

Welcome and thanks for taking the time to read this!

This tabletop game provides an agile framework for you and your friends to create together interesting, cohesive and yet mysterious settings ready to be explored, discovered and conquered by Playing Characters of a Role-Playing Game (RPG).

The main idea behind *Play*  is to let you, Game Master (GM) of a Powered by the Apocalypse¹ (PbtA) RPG, create with your players a world to set your stories in, a world in which everyone has invested time, a world where everything the group would like to see can be featured.

As a byproduct, you'll also have an extensive session 0, in which you can discuss at length the **Genre** and the **Tone** of the setting you're going to play your campaigns in, set the expectations clearly and achieve a level playing field for all lore spouting matters.

The game uses some ideas from Design Thinking and Agile methodologies, which I won't explain in detail not to be disproven by pundits.

In practice you'll use timed ideation sessions, conversation and sticky notes.

To deserve the "game" status, you'll also have to follow some rules during the creation process, indeed you will **Play**.

To set your creativity loose, you'll choose or randomly select adjectives to establish fictional details, I call them **Tags**.

¹ Any other game where the fiction is similarly established by all players will be fine too!

1.2 What you need to play

To play this game whether in person or online you'll need:

- a group of friends²
- a device capable of reaching the web to use an online random adjective generator

If playing in person you'll also need:

- sticky notes, a bunch of them
- a drawable surface where to put sticky notes on as to connect them with arrows

Otherwise if playing online you'll also need:

- your favourite online sticky note board or digital workspace

² 2-6 players other than you, even though you might use the system solo as a structured way to create settings by yourself

Chapter 2

Playing the Game

As the GM of the future campaign you're probably going to be the **Facilitator** for the session, but really any player who read this manual can take this role upon themselves. Unlike the GM, a **Facilitator** is like any other player apart from being a bit more expert on the rules and being the tie breaker during voting impasses.

Once you've decided the **Facilitator**, you can start...

2.1 Setting the Mood

1. Choose, as a group, a **Name** and a **Genre** for your world, don't fret if you can't come up with a name, or the genre is too general, you can and should go back to them any time.
2. Set a timer to 2 minutes and start a silent hidden brainstorming for **Tags** that would describe your settings' **Tone**, when time's up disclose them and put them all together so as to be able to look at them.¹
3. Set a 1 minute timer to again brainstorm silently this time using the disclosed adjectives as inspiration.
4. As a group, cluster and merge **Tags**, clarify the candidates. (e.g. Guttural and Luxuriant are merged into Primeval)
5. Vote your candidates with 3 votes each. Top 3 **Tags** become your **Tone**. If two or more candidates are tied for a place, the Facilitator decides how to break the tie.

¹ You may look at a random adjective generator for inspiration.

2.2 Forging the Truth

Create the world as it is in the era² we set our setting in, absolved from the bonds of sentient beings' cultures.

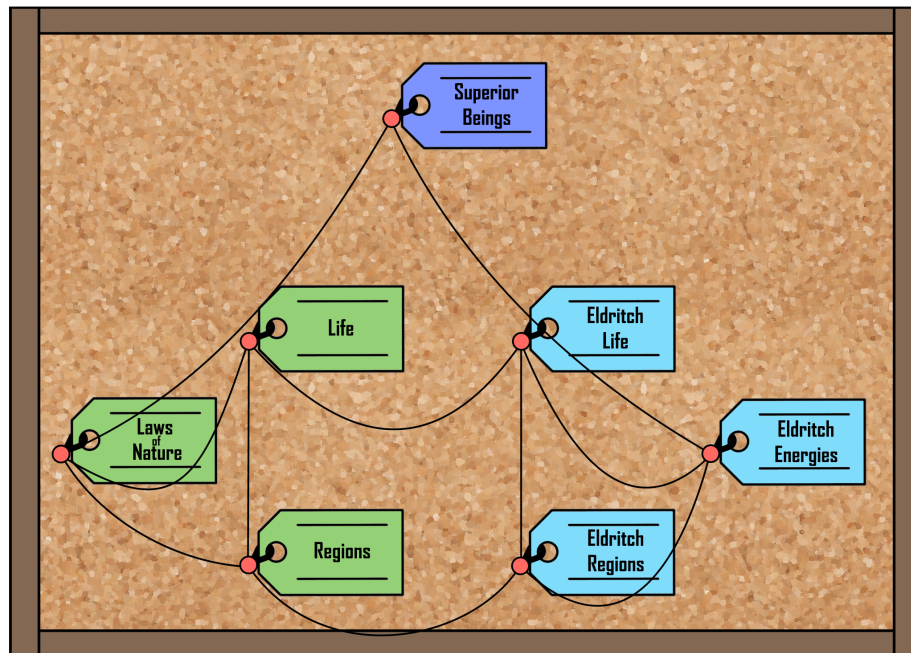
This is the world as it truly is, as far as it can be known and as far as you, as the players, want the world to be knowable at this point.

Cultures, history, art and everything man-made will be managed in the following sections so don't think about them for the meantime.

2.2.1 Abstract-ions

The world is built on **Pillars**, very high abstractions of important parts of the setting, **Aspects** which are specific implementations of the broad **Pillar's** concept and **Features**, which are brief descriptions of one single facet of an **Aspect**.

The **Pillars**



As you can see the **Pillars** have a colour and have relations with one another, let's take a look at them.

² Depending on the chosen setting an era might be centuries, millennia or just a short period in which the status quo doesn't change dramatically

2.3 Pillars

2.3.1 Purple Pillars

represent something that can't be described neither as part of the world nor as outside of it.

Aspects of **Superior Beings** can be anything spacing from the world itself, its creator, something lost in outer space but capable of influencing it from beyond, to an entity that is out of the grasp of sentient comprehension.

Examples: *Gods of most religions, Ascended Sentient Beings, High Demons, Unfathomable Entities, Artificial Creations of Great Power*

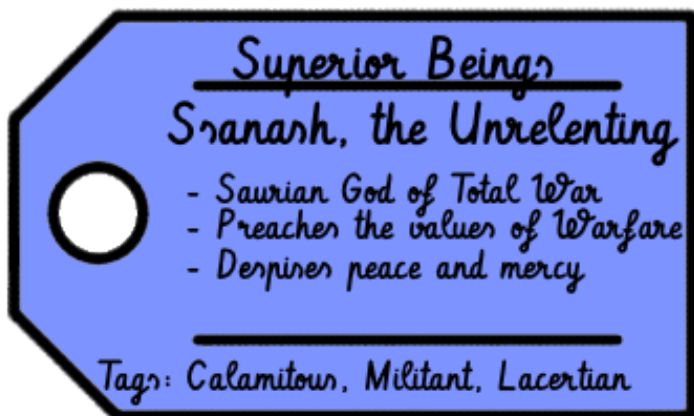
Literary Examples: *Abrahmitic God, Satan, Odin, Elder Scrolls' Vivec, Lovecraftian Old Gods, Pillars of Eternity's Gods*

*Note: Whatever described through these **Aspects** is the factual truth, religion, mythology and philosophy which will be part of following chapters, might be based around that truth, might be human interpretations of it, or might completely disregard it.*

To sum it up, there can be Gods without a religion and there can be religions without a God.

Transcendent

Whenever a player defines an **Aspect** of the **Purple Pillar** they may reroll up to three **Tags**.



2.3.2 Cyan Pillars

represent unusual components of the world, seemingly out of place, unnatural, not part of life as usual.

Aspects of **Eldritch Energies** can be unnatural forces or tendencies, powers that lie in the world but are not of this world, they are mysterious sources that might be explained and controlled by sentient beings.

Examples: *Magic, Technology, Elemental Forces, Soul, Psionics*

Literary Examples: *D&D's Arcane Magic, D&D's Divine Magic, D&D's Natural Magic, Crones' Witchcraft, Arcanum's Technology, Numenera's Cyphers, D&D's Pure Alignment, Ki, Cakra, Eternal Soul, Star Wars' Force, V:tM's Blood*

Aspects of **Eldritch Life** can be unnatural beings, whether a clade, a species or single individuals not worthy to be called **Superior Beings** and not common enough to be considered part of **Life**.

They might be more general concepts related to an Eldritch Energy like Undeath with Necromancy or Artificial Life with Cybernetics.

Examples: *Undead, Dragons, A particular variety of Dragons, A named Dragon, Constructs, Angels, Demons, Fairies, Magic beings in a low magic world*

Literary Examples: *Zombies, Skeletons, Dragons, Red Dragons, Smaug, Androids, Homunculi, Planescape's Trias, Hags, Elves in Harry Potter*

Aspects of **Eldritch Regions** can be planes, dimensions, parts of the world where the normal **Laws of Nature** do not apply or work differently, places where an **Eldritch Energy** shapes the landscape.

Examples: *Mystic Continents, Eldritch Catastrophes' Sites, Planes of Existence, Dimensions, Underworlds*

Literary Examples: *Valinor, Nuclear Wasteland in any Postapocalyptic world, Arcanum's Vendigroth, the Elemental Planes, Planescape's Sigil, WoD's Umbra, the Feywild, Persona's Castles, Heavens, Hells*

Shrouded in Mystery

Features of the **Aspects** of the **Cyan Pillars** relating to origins, inner workings and deepest secrets must be described leaving space for mystery or left unwritten. (e.g. You can't describe the dragons as "Created from Kashath, God of Fire", but you might use "Born of fire")

2.3.3 Green Pillars

represent everything related to the nature of the world, what is commonly found in everyday life in a particular place and time, everything in the world that can be studied through observation and experiments.

Aspects of **Laws of Nature** can be descriptions of how the universe behave, whether on a physical or chemical point of view, or more philosophical approaches such as pantheistic ideas.

Examples: *Physical and chemical phenomena, seemingly eldritch but common phenomena, phenomena tied to pantheistic or animistic worlds, passing of time*

Literary Examples: *Law of Gravity, Survival of the Fittest, Combustion, Westerosi Changing of Seasons, Neptune's Hexagonal Storm, Reincarnation, Yin-Yang, Suns and Moons*

Aspects of **Life** can be natural beings, clades and species, single specimen³, sentient races and facets of physiology. As long as something related to life is pretty ordinary for the natural world as described, it is part of **Life**.

Examples: *Animals, Plants, Clades of Living Beings, A Particular Cat, Humanoids, Magic beings in a magic world, Aliens*

Literary Examples: *Cats, Roses, Mammals, Felids, Nur⁴, Humans, Elves in a Standard Fantasy World, Gungans*

Aspects of **Regions** can be any kind of natural space in the setting from galaxies to planets, from continents to small regions. They can also be Biomes present in the world or geographical features.

Examples: *Planets, kinds of Planets, River Deltas, Biomes, Mountain Ranges*

Literary Examples: *Mars, Gaseous Giants, Yaruga's Estuary, Vvardenfell's Mushroom Forest, Ered Lithui*

Universal Constants

Aspects of the **Green Pillars** when not explicitly redefined, default to our universe and Earth's standards. (e.g. If not mentioned, the law of gravity will apply to your world with **g** acceleration, mammals exist, chemical reaction work as you expect them and so on)

³refrain from using it for sentient individuals, those will be described later

⁴my cat

Chapter 3

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Baker and Baker for starting the Apocalypse and the PBtA movement by which I was deeply inspired and influenced.

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