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# The Timeline

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# Chapter 1

## Construction notes

Some notes here to help me (Ronie) to write. This section will be removed from the final version. If you are reading that for the first time, it will be good to skip that chapter now and come back later.

The way things are going, two aspects seems important:

1. Time travellers have a limited lifespan. So *time* is precious (I'm liking that a lot). It could be even some kind of currency.

That also limits how good someone is at something. I think it's the perfect excuse to contact others and to build teams. Characters can't know everything in a lifespan, so they need to rely on the knowledge and ability of others.

It's promising.

2. The difference between Known and Unknown instead of past and future. That solves a lot of problems about a single timeline vs free will. Also builds importance on controlling information.

Not sure yet about how it's going to work when someone tells you something. Right now my thinking is to make them create an entry in their Journal and cross some years of Age.

If someone tells you about your future, and that becomes a requirement, it seems it could be used as a form of attack. Because now you're required to do that. Maybe, for the matter of an attack, the offender should bring something concrete about that event. Even so, it could be fake.

I'm thinking, I'm thinking.

3. The Journal is *very* useful. However, I'm still not sure how much work it will be. I'd like to keep the "game maintenance" at minimum, but just annotate something is really powerful.

An alternative I'm strongly considering would be just keep track of the Age available and let the player narrate that period as a flashback. If that's even necessary.

# Chapter 2

## Overview

### 2.1 Time travelling

**The Timeline** is a time travel RPG inspired by Aetherco's C°ntinuum and using the Powered by The Apocalypse system.

The system has the following premises:

- There is one and only one temporal line.
- You can travel time and space at will, instantaneously and with no limit.
- Free will is the result of not knowing.

Those three items need a lot of explanation. But bear with me, we are going through them all.

#### 2.1.1 The first premise:

*There is one and only one temporal line*

There is no multiverse. Every decision you make, every action you take don't change the universe, your decisions are already part of the temporal line.

That means there is no way to change the past, or the future, for that matter. Sorry, no one is going to kill Hitler and stop the Second World War, actually, the very act of Time Travelers made it happen.

As you digest the above statement, you are entering in the first philosophical question of time travelling: if there is only one temporal line, then every future event is the past event of someone else, so it also can't be changed. Which means that *there is no free will*. The universe **is**.

A RPG game where the characters can't make decisions doesn't seem very attractive, to be honest. But again, this is a game, so we are going to bend it a little bit.

More regarding free will is in the third premise.

### 2.1.2 The second premise:

*You can time travel at will, there are no limits*

If you have a time travel machine and want its best version ever, just go as far as possible in the future and get the best one. That means *everyone* is using that best machine.

So, what's the best machine possible? What it allows you to do?

Well, the answer is obvious: it allows you to travel to space and time at will, no energy required, no setup time, extremely portable, and so on.

Actually, the best machine possible is not a machine, but a *skill* you learn.

### 2.1.3 The third premise:

*Free will is the result of not knowing*

If the universe **is** and can't be changed, so there is no free will. On the other hand, we make hundreds of decisions a day and if they were different, the future would be different. After all, deciding for a barbecue or a lasagna on the weekend is surely going to affect your future.

Now, instead of thinking in terms of past and future, try the same thinking in terms of *known* and *unknown*. We use our personal known, what's usually called "past", to decide our unknown, commonly expressed as "future". Here's where free will lies, not in multiverses and infinite timelines, but in the cracks between your known and unknown, no matter if they are in the actual past or not.



## 2.2 A small dictionary of time travel terms

- **Jump** - To move through time and space.
- **Jump Up** - To move in the direction of the future.
- **Jump Down** - To move in the direction of the past.
- **Plain Jump** - Teleport. You move in space, but not Up or Down in time.
- **Jump Out** - To move in time or space away, no matter if Up, Down, or Plain.
- **Fall** - To instinctively Jump Out, without controlling the destination. That happens when you create a time paradox or push yourself too hard.
- **Mule** - Someone that Jumps with tons of stuff.
- **Timeline** - Your personal past and future. Everything that happened and will happen to you. The more blanks you have, more free will you have.
- **Age** - How old is your body. That has nothing to do with your birth date, but how long have you lived.
- **Known** - What you lived, your personal past. All the time behind your current Age.
- **Unknown** - What you still have not lived, your personal future. All the time ahead your current Age.
- **Site** - A place in time. The same place in different times are different sites.



## Chapter 3

# Mechanics

### 3.1 The timeline

In front of you all, in the middle of the table there will be The Timeline. It starts with a blank sheet of paper with one point stating where and when all the characters are meeting at the beginning of the game session.

Every time someone Jumps, add one more point above or below the initial point marking where and when. Draw a line from the previous point to the new one and add the name of the players that did the Jump.

[Ronie: That definitely need and extended example and a lot of playtest to check how effective it is.]

### 3.2 The journal

The Journal are the annotations of where your character were at each point in time. You are going to fill it as result of some moves.

An entry in your Journal has 4 things:

1. Where and when it starts.
2. Where and when it finishes.
3. How much Age you've spent there.

4. A small description of what you did in that period. A simple paragraph is sufficient. The GM can ask you for more details.

Entries in your Journal consumes Age sometimes, but not always. If you run out of Age, the history is complete and you can't play with that character anymore.

Don't fill your Journal on every Jump. The moves will tell you when to fill it.

### 3.3 Retirement or Death

As you age, your body become too fragile to support time travel. Even being able to Jump, you need to stay closer and closer to when high medicine is advanced enough. If you are old enough, in a bad situation you can lose conscience and die in the far past.

When you build your character, you need to decide their fate upfront.

If you want it to retire, choose an Age of Retirement. From that point on, your character is no longer playable. Add to you Timeline where and when it's going to retire and doing what. Younger versions of you can visit your older version at any time.

If you see you character as someone who's not going to stop until they drop dead, choose an Age of Death. If you ever play him or her beyond that Age, they will die in game. You can play the dying character at any game session of your choice, just let the Game Master know your intention.

Don't worry about playing the last game of you character. You always can play their younger versions as far as your timeline has blank spaces.

Ages for death and retirement are anything close to 100 years old.

### 3.4 Age

You can play with several versions of your character, even multiple versions at same time. However, the versions are different not only in attributes, but in physical appearance.

Divide your character in 4 Ages between your Recruitment and your Retirement (or Death), they can have different sizes, but each one follows the

other. The first time you play with a version of your character at that Age, fill the blanks.

## 3.5 Scars

When you create your character, describe 5 scars and how they look like.

Scars are physical or mental. They are never too severe as the character can jump Up until the medicine is advanced enough to cure anything.

Scars are big enough to be noticed, but small enough to not be worth the time to fix them. Things like physical scars, mannerisms, or small phobias are perfect. They are marks of experience from your character.

Examples:

- A great scar in you chest, from the shoulder to you hip.
- A mark around your left arm as if it was severed and sewed back.
- A scar over your face, crossing your eye.
- Your left leg is mechanical.

Even if you choose to be one-eyed or have a mechanical leg, you are as capable as ever. Scars are for the fiction, they do not affect game mechanics.

## 3.6 Attributes

[Ronie: Still thinking about Luck, seems appropriate on the “Call Double” move and the scars. But still...]

You have a total pool of 5 points, These attributes change every 20 years or so. When you first play the character at that Age, distribute any amount of points from the pool to that version of you character. The limits for each attribute are +3 and -2.

The GM may ask how your character increased or decreased that attributes from a younger version. Create something interesting.

**Body** - The state of your body. That includes strength, agility, and stamina.

**Mind** - The state of your mind. That includes logic, perception, and knowledge.

**Luck** - How much Lady Luck likes you. Bad luck means more scars, being hit first, and a general grumpy and unpleasant mood. Good luck means less scars, and a shiny and happy personality.

## 3.7 Moves

### 3.7.1 Time travel moves

#### Plain Jump

When you want to teleport without move in time. You're there. Don't roll nor mark anything in The Timeline or your Journal.

#### Jump Out

You disappear from the current time and appear at any time or locale you want. Don't roll:

- **When jumping to somewhere already in The Timeline:** draw a line from where you are to where you are going and add your name on it.
- **When jumping to a new site:** create it in The Timeline and do as above.

**Important:** If you jump without knowing where and when you are, you can't draw a line, so you Fall (see the next move).

#### Fall

*When you are about to create Paradox, you instinctively Jump Out randomly. Roll + Mind:*

- **On 10+:** You Fall close to where you were. The Fall was a Plain Jump just enough for you to avoid the Paradox.

- **On 7-9:** You Fall a bit Up or Down from where you were, you know where but not when you are. The GM secretly records when you are.
- **On -6:** You Fall somewhere Up or Down, and possible Plain far, you don't know where or when. You are obviously a strange in this place. The GM secretly records where and when you are.

### Mule

*When you try to Jump bringing more people or something at your size or bigger, you overexert yourself. Roll + Body:*

- **On 10+:** You *Jump Out*. Take that move instead.
- **On 7-9:** You *Jump Out*, but you mark a Scar (preferentially a mental one). Narrate how you got that Scar.
- **On -6:** You *Fall*.

### Call a Double

You call a Double from your past or your future. You play both. They will be around you as long as you wish.

- To invoke an **younger** version of yourself: you Jump Down and back Up with your younger.
- To invoke an **older** version of yourself: Your older version just appear.
- Roll + Luck: On -6 choose one of your versions. Before you depart from each other, narrate how you obtained a scar. You can choose any other -6 roll as an excuse for that, if you want.

In any case, mark a small entry in your Journal telling where and when your Double were when they Jump to help you. If it's the first time you're getting a Double from an Age you never played before, also execute the move *New You*.

### Serious Combat

*When you fight without concealing your time travel*, mark Serious Combat with date and locale in your Journal and *Roll + Body*:

- **On 10+**: Several Doubles appear and disappear hitting all targets and protecting each other. The targets are all knocked out or dead.
- **On 7-9**: Same as before, but the enemies hit some of you. Choose one:
  - Mark a scar. You can not choose this if all your scars are already marked.
  - Increase your age by 7 days as you jump Out, heal, and get back.
  - Don't jump Out, but -1 to your Body for the next scene as you are still injured.
- **On -6**: Same as above, but something wrong happened, like you've been seen, non-combatants were hurt, someone used that as a distraction, or something else happened. The GM will *not* tell you what it was, effects will be noticed later.

### Instant Skill

*When you need a new skill you don't have*, Jump Out and choose a level for that skill:

- *at Master level*: Spent 10 years on your Journal. No matter how difficult it is, you can do it.
- *at Professional level*: Spent 5 years on your Journal. Everything a competent professional can do, you can do.
- *at Novice level*: Spent 2 years on your Journal. You can do the job, but it will have consequences or it's not going to last for long.

Training is hard work, so you can't stop without losing ability. From now on you cannot play or Call a Double from that period. You also need an uninterrupted open in your Journal to fit the whole period of training.



**Instant Ally**

*When you need something astronomically difficult to do*, Jump Out and call for someone you know:

- *you find a Grand Master*: Add an entry to your Journal where and when you found her or him. After the job done, you own a favor.

The GM will ask you how you met the Grand Master.

**Instant Stuff**

...

**Infinite Money**

...

**3.7.2 Plain moves**

The moves below doesn't involve time travel. They never affect your Timeline.

**Investigate**

...

**Non-serious combat**

...

**Grand Mastery**

...

### 3.7.3 Special moves

#### New You

When you play a version of yourself for the first time:

- Choose an Age slot.
- Fill when that Age starts and ends, if they are not already filled.
- Fill that Age attributes with points from the attribute pool. They can range from -2 to +3.
- Choose which new Scars you have at that age.
- Describe how you look like to everyone.

The Scars you choose will be also present in all future version of you. This move is also triggered when you Call a Double.