baneful signs
Core Rules

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About the game

Terminology

Ability

Special and sometimes supernatural abilities possessed by a character.

Action

Whenever a character attempts to do something, it is called an action. There are two action types, simple and complex.

Attack Runes

Runes used specifically to attack other characters during combat.

Attribute

Each character has attributes or traits that define her physical, mental and social capabilities.

Casting

To cast the runes reach into your rune bag and draw the number of runes determined by the Oracle. Do not look at the drawn runes. Next, toss the runes onto the table (or floor) in front of you. On a casting only the runes that land face up are read, and they are read from right to left.

Dice option: If you do not have access to a set of runes then you can use six-sided dice. For each rune you are allowed to draw roll 1 six-sided dice instead.

Combat Pool

The total number of runes a character has to spend during a round of combat.

Consulting the Fates (Advanced)

Consulting the Fates is recommended for advanced players only. At any time before an action or series of events is resolved, a player or the Oracle may decide to consult the fates. Consulting the fates is a way to spice up or add a bit of randomness to a situation. It is also a great tool for the Oracle when he is stuck for ideas. He leaves fate to determine the outcome.

To consult the fates the Oracle casts a predetermined number of runes, and weaves the meanings of those runes into the action by reading them from left to right.

Character Point (CP)

These are points that the player can spend to define his character.

Defense Runes

Runes used specifically to defend a character during combat.

Dice

Small, plastic polyhedrons used to simulate chaos and randomness.

Odds & Evens

There are 25 total runes in the rune set used in the Baneful Signs system. 13 runes are odd and 11 runes are even and 1 rune is blank(see The Unknown Rune). You can determine if a rune is odd or even by counting the number of lines used to draw the rune.

Even   Odd

Dice option: If you are using dice then just count the odd numbers as odd and the even numbers as even!

Initiative

Initiative is based on a characters Reaction skill. It determines which character gets to take her turn first during any given round.

Oracle

The Oracle is the guy in charge of the game. He is the one who tells the story and describes world in which players interact. He is also the interpreter for the Fates and will read the runes to determine the outcome of a casting. The oracle is also called the Game Master, or GM.

Movement

When a character moves from one place to another.

Non-Player Character (NPC)

A character controlled by the Oracle.

Player

A person who controls a character and helps to weave the story told by the Oracle.

Player Character (PC)

A character controlled by a player.

Rank

A unit of measurement used to determine the level of any trait.

Reading the Runes

It is important that when runes are cast that they are left as they fall as that is the nature of fate. Runes are always read from the perspective of the person who cast them as some runes may end up inverted or upside down. Inverted runes have different meanings they would have if they had not landed inverted. Runes that land upside down are often times ignored. There are two different types of readings, simple and complex.

| normal | inverted | ignored |

Dice option: If you are using dice count any 1 or 6 as an upside down reading. Read and rolls of 2 through 5 as odd or even accordingly.

Round

The time it takes for all characters to take one turn is called a round.

Runes

Plastic or Stone chips with symbols marked on them. Each symbol has a meaning associated with it.

Story

An imaginative tale spun by the Oracle, creating a world wherein the players characters (PC) live. The story can be molded and changed by the characters as they interact with the other characters (NPC) that they meet in the story.

Testing the Fates

An attempt to gain favor and possibly add more runes to a casting. The player casts two random runes and adds or subtracts the total from his current rune pool.

Trait

A trait is any attribute, skill, ability or other item that helps to describe a character.

Turn

When a player is allowed to have his character perform an action, it is called a turn.

Rune Penalty

A rune penalty requires that the player remove the penalty number of runes before casting.

Rune Bonus

Bonus runes are extra runes that the player may cast.

Character Creation

Character Points (CP)

Every player begins with a pool of Character Points or CP to spend on his character. These points can be spent to increase any character trait. Each trait begins at 0 and every character begins with a pool of character points to spend on those traits. Depending on how powerful you want your characters to be, you should adjust the number of CP points they begin with. The following table are some examples of settings and the appropriate CP for beginning characters.

Starting CP Points

Setting	CP
Low Power (no abilities)	150
Fantasy	200
Super Hero	250

The number of CP that any trait has is called a rank. A character with a Focus of 2 has rank 2.

After a trait has 1 rank, the cost of increasing its rank goes up according to the Trait Costs table shown below.

Trait Costs

Trait	Cost
Attribute	Next Rank x 4
Skill	Next Rank x 2
Abilities	Special
Templates	Special

The cost progression tables below show point costs for purchasing a level if you want purchase a skill rank from rank 0. This should help to make character creation a bit easier. For example, going from rank 0 to rank 3 in the Focus attribute costs 24 CP.

Attribute Cost Progression

1	2	3	4*	5	6	7
4	12	24	40	60	84	132

*suggested maximum for character creation

Skill Cost Progression

1	2	3	4*	5	6	7
2	6	12	20	30	42	56

*suggested maximum for character creation

The maximum rank any trait can be is seven. It is recommended that at character creation no trait be allowed above a rank of four. As a general guideline the Rank table describes what a given rank means in terms of ability.

Rank Description

Rank	Ability
1	Poor
2	Fair
3	Good
4	Excellent
5	Professional
6	World Renowned
7	Un-Fricking-Believable!

Leftover Points

Any left over CP's should be noted on the character sheet. As you receive more CP's during your adventuring career they can be spent to increase traits.

Traits

Every character is defined by a set of traits. A character's traits include all of her attributes, abilities and skills. These traits can be increased and decreased over time as your character grows and experiences the world within which she lives.

Attributes

The following attributes describe your characters physical and mental make up.

Focus (Foc)

Focus is a measure of a characters mental strength. It is the ability to follow through with a task even when distracted. This attribute is used to determining health.

Endurance (End)

This attribute is important in determining health and how much physical stress a character can withstand. It also helps a character to resist poisons and illness.

Intellect (Int)

Book smarts, retention, and learning are all covered by the Intellect attribute. A character with high intellect knows many skills.

Physicality (Phy)

This attribute is important in determining a characters base movement rate and combat ability. It also helps to determine the physical skill, strength and health..

Sociability (Soc)

Sociability is a measure of how others view your character in social situations. It accounts for demeanor, overall appearance, and the general likability of a character. Sometimes, having low sociability can also be good, especially when a character wants to intimidate another character.

Wits (Wit)

This attribute is a characters natural ability to think on her feet. It is a measure of active intelligence and quick thinking.

Secondary Attributes

Secondary attributes are traits calculated from your characters main attributes. When any main attributes change be sure to recalculate your Secondary Attributes. You cannot spend CP to raise Secondary Attributes.

Reaction

Reaction is the ability of your character to act quickly under stress. It's how fast they can recover their wits and actually do something. Reaction is calculated by adding your Wits and your Physicality together. The higher the number, the faster your character reacts and recovers from surprise.

Reaction = Wits + Physicality

Health

Health is the overall physical and mental vitality of a character. Is the amount of damage and fatigue a character can withstand before falling unconscious or dying.

Health = (Phy + End + Foc) x 2

For each point of health a character has, fill in one dot on the health chart located on the character sheet. Whenever a character takes damage check off that many check boxes starting with the last filled in circle. When the total damage requires you to

check the box labeled KO, you character is knocked unconscious.

Movement

A character can only move so far in any given moment of time. But, sometimes it is very important to know just how far that is. If you use miniatures to denote character movement, this trait becomes even more important, as you can use this number to determine how many squares your character can move in any given turn. Distance is calculated in yards. To determine how many yards your character can move during her turn add her Physicality and her Endurance traits together.

Movement = Physicality + Endurance

Skills

The real meat of any character is the skills that she possesses. Skills are used to perform all sorts of actions from fighting and riding horses to investigating a crime scene and building a car. Listed below are some general skills available in many different settings. This list is not exhaustive and should be tailored to fit your story and setting. Whenever a skill lists sub-skills, each sub-skill must be purchases separately by spending character points. Feel free to add sub skills as needed and at the discretion of the Oracle.

Science

Sub Skills

Botany
Chemistry
Physics
Anthropology
Geology
Medicine
Astrology

Research

Tradskills

Sub Skills

Metalworking
Carpentry
Haberdashery
Woodworking
Weaponsmithing

Perform

Sub Skills

Dance
Sing
String Instrument
Percussion

History

Sub Skills

Art
Local
People
Religion

Technology

The ability to use any computer or any gadget-like device falls under Technology. ATMs, palm pilots, that electric egg-beater that's been in your draw for six-months and setting the VCR clock; they are all gadgets that require the Technology skill.

Savvy

The ability to thrive and survive in an environment.

Sub Skills

Urban – lockpicking, intimidation, pan handling and all sorts of knowledge required to survive on the streets

Outdoor – Land navigating, foraging, seeking shelter, weather prediction, tracking and hunting are but a few things available to the savvy outdoorsman.

Water – Similar to the outdoorsman, the water savvy individual can thrive in a watery environment. Skills like fishing, clamming, water navigation and map reading and swimming are available with this skill.

Language

The ability to speak, read and write a language is covered by this skill. Add languages as required by the settings your game takes place in.

Sub Skills

Spanish
French
Chinese

Animal Handling

This skill includes the ability to train and interact with animals of many types.

Driving & Riding

Sub Skills

Civilian
Military
Construction
Animal

Flying

Sub Skills

Civilian
Military
Commercial
Animal

Investigation

The ability to examine a room, crime scene, or person and discover hidden or disguised qualities is indeed a skill. Investigation will help a character root out lies, intimidate witnesses, and discover secrets that might be hidden within a room.

Law

Knowledge of the laws that govern the society of the setting.

Fighting

There are many ways to fight and many things to fight with. The list shown here contains some of the basic objects that people fight with and it should be added to in order to suit your setting.

Sub Skills

Blunt Weapons, Large
Blunt Weapons, Small
Bow
Chain Weapons
Cutting Weapons, Large
Cutting Weapons, Small
Small Caliber Pistol
Medium Caliber Pistol
Small Caliber Rifle
Medium Caliber Rifle
Heavy Weapons
Shotgun
Sub-Machine Gun
Thrown Weapons, Small
Thrown Weapons, Large
Fists
Feet

Grappling

Abilities

The Baneful Signs system is meant to allow for accommodating any type of setting that you can imagine. For some settings, characters will have special abilities, or powers. If you want your characters to be super heroes that have fantastic powers then you want to define what those powers are.

For instance, you want to create a super hero who can fly and can shoot laser beams from his eyes. He would have the following abilities.

Fly (4 CP)

You can hover and fly up to 10 yards per turn.

Laser Beam Eyes (10 CP)

You can fire laser beams from your eyes. This ability grants you the weapon skill Laser Beam rank 2. The laser beams can also be used to weld metals and to cut through mundane walls and other objects.

You'll notice that each ability has an associated CP cost. A typical special ability costs 4 CP. Fly is a typical special ability.

The laser beam eyes ability is a stronger ability than the fly ability because it also grants ranks in a skill. We add the cost CP cost of a rank 2 skill (6 CP) to the cost of a standard ability (4 CP).

Templates

Templates are a set of skills and abilities that you apply to your character. Templates are a way to define you character with a set of predetermined statistics. For example, in a fantasy setting you may want to your character be an elf.

Elf Template (118 CP*)

Attributes (80 CP)

Focus	2
Endurance	1
Intellect	3
Physicality	2
Sociability	1
Wits	3

Skills (32 CP)
Savvy (Woods) – 3
Handle Animal – 2
Perform (Dance) – 2
Weapon (Bow) – 3

Abilities
Magic Resistance (4 CP)
Cast an extra rune when attempting to resist a magical affect.

Night Vision (2 CP)
You can see clearly in mundane darkness.

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*Fantasy characters begin with 200 CP

What you will notice right off the bat is that a template is really nothing more than pre-purchased attributes, skills and abilities. The nice thing about them is that you don't have to spend time working out your own points if you have a template that gives you what you need already. It is very easy to create your own templates which will fit into your game setting.

Money

Buying Power

Every character needs some money in order to equip her with proper adventuring gear. Instead of assuming a character has a specific amount of money, we will assume that every character has buying power. Buying Power used to purchase equipment at character creation. The total price of purchased equipment at character creation cannot exceed your characters buying

power. Buying power is determined by adding your Intellect to your Sociability multiplying that by 100.

Buying Power = (Intellect + Sociability) x 100

For example, our character Jenna has INT 3 and SOC 2 her buying power equals 500. She can purchase any equipment she wishes up to a maximum of 500 units of money.

Cash-On-Hand

After purchasing starting equipment your character will still need money to use during the course of adventures. This is called cash on hand. Cash on hand is equal to 1/10 of your characters buying power.

Cash-On-Hand = Buying Power / 10

Cash on hand is the amount of money your character can freely spend per week of game time. This formula accounts for upkeep during downtime such as room and board, bills, taxes and other similar items. This money can be saved up over time to purchase equipment. Don't forget, that cash on hand will increase as your Sociability and Intellect attributes go up.

Using your cash on hand is easy, you simply pick the items you want to purchase and divide the total cost by your Cash-On-Hand. This is the number of weeks it will take to purchase said equipment.

Continuing from the example above, we'll assume the unit of buying power is in gold pieces. Jenna has a buying power of 500 gold pieces, which means her cash-on-hand equal 50 gold (500 / 10 = 50). Jenna wants to buy a new longbow which costs 80 gold. It will take Jenna 1.6 (80 / 50 = 1.6) weeks to save up enough money to her new longbow.

Equipment

Every setting will have its own standards for equipment. Fantasy settings will have bows, alchemy supplies, backpacks, bedrolls, horses, arrows, swords, shields and armor. A science fiction setting might have lasers, force shields, space-ships, and teleportation devices. The cost of such equipment will also vary. Presented below is a list of equipment and associated costs. This list includes a variety of items from

many different settings. You should add to this list as required by your game setting.

The following is a short list of equipment along with statistics.

Miscellaneous Gear

Item	Weight	Cost
Backpack	1	8
Candle	.1	.5
Lamp	1	5
Oil (pint)	.5	1
Flint & Steel	.1	1
Matches	.1	.5
Sleeping Bag	4	10
Tent (2 man)	15	80
Rope (50 ft)	5	10
Hammer	2	8
Torch	1	1
Crucifix	.1	1
Canteen (full)	8	2

Clothing

Item	Weight	Cost
Casual outfit	5	80
Formal outfit	6	200
Warm weather outfit	15	150
Cloak	5	50
Boots	3	50
Shoes	2	30

The gear listed above has average weights and cost included. The cost is in units based on the setting you use. As every setting will have unique equipment, the list of available equipment will change accordingly.

Weapons

Weapons and combat are often times the staple of a good, old fashioned role play session. Since there are an innumerable number of weapons available, it is not possible to list them all. However, the short list below should be an adequate start.

Damage Rating (DR)

A weapons damage rating is the number of extra attack runes the weapon grants when fighting with it.

Range (RG)

The range listed next to a weapon is the number of yards the weapon is accurate at. For each increment, or fraction thereof, of the range reduce your attack pool by 1. If your pool is reduced to 0 because of range

penalties then your character cannot accurately use the weapon at that range. For example, York is attacked by a group of thugs who have drawn their guns on him from an alley 18 yards away. York has rank 5 in Pistols and pistols have a range of 7. If York fires back at the thugs his attack pool will be reduces by 3. 18 divided by 7 is 2.5. Since we always round up when determining range the penalty is 3.

Defense (DF)

Some weapons actually offer protection. A twirling staff in the hands of an expert can be used to deflect blows as well as inflict them. Add a weapons defense rating to your defense pool (see Combat) when using that weapon. When dual wielding, use the highest defense rating of the weapons only, defense ratings do not stack.

Weapon Types

Weapon Type	DF	DR	RG	WT	Cost
Blunt Weapons, Large (Staff, Great club)	2	PHY+2	✗	5	40
Blunt Weapons, Small (Club, night stick)	1	PHY+1	✗	2	20
Bow (Long Bow, Recurve Bow)	✗	PHY+2	6	4	100
Chain Weapons (Flail, Ball and Chain)	✗	PHY+3	✗	8	80
Cutting Weapons, Large (Sword, Axe)	2	PHY+3	✗	6	150
Cutting Weapons, Small (Knife, Hand Axe)	✗	PHY+1	✗	1	40
Small Caliber Pistol (.22, .25, .32)	✗	4	8	2	300
Medium Caliber Pistol (9mm, .38, .40, 44 Mag)	✗	5	8	3	600
Small Caliber Rifle (.22, .25,)	1	5	24	2	150
Medium Caliber Rife (.308, 30 aught 06)	1	6	30	4	250
Heavy Weapons (.50 Caliber, Bazooka)	1	8	50	6	800
Shotgun	✗	4	6	5	200
Sub-Machine Gun (Uzi, MP-5, Tommy Gun)	✗	2	12	4	500
Thrown Weapon, Large (Club, Sword)	✗	PHY+2	PHY	✗	✗
Thrown Weapon, Small (Knife, hand axe)	✗	PHY+1	PHYx2	✗	✗

Armor & Shields

Characters gain protection from injury of all types by wearing armor. Each armor type offers protection in the form of extra defense runes. The armors defense rating will add runes to your defense pool during your turn.

Defense ratings do not stack, but only the highest rated armor that covers a body part will be counted towards your defense pool bonus. Therefore, wearing a Kevlar vest (DF 4) over a chain vest (DF 3) will offer a bonus of 4, since the Kevlar has a higher defense than chain.

Shields

A shield is the exception to stacking defense bonuses. A shields DF rating will stack with other armor types. Add a shields bonus to your defense runes. Shields can also be used as weapons and have a listed DR for calculating damage.

Armor & Shields

Description	DR	DR	WT	Cost
Kevlar	✗	4	10	800
Plate Mail	✗	4	70	800
Scale Mail	✗	3	45	600
Chain Mail	✗	2	35	300
Leather	✗	1	25	100
Buckler Shield	PHY+1	1	2	80
Round Shield	PHY+2	2	4	150
Kite Shield	PHY+2	3	8	250
Tower Shield	PHY+1	4	20	400

Sample Character (200 points)

This is a sample 200 point character from a modern campaign.

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Attributes	120
focus — FOC —	3
endurance — END —	2
intellect — INT —	3
physicality — PHY —	2
sociability — SOC —	3
wits — WIT —	3

Personal

name:	Robert Russel	player:	John
race:	African American	ht: 6' 2"	wt: 205 lbs
sex: Male	hair color: Black	eye color:	Brown

Combat

health/fatigue   move 4   armor

reaction 5

Skills	80
( ) Science (Medicine)	2
( ) Fighting (Hands)	2
( ) Fighting (Small Caliber Pistol)	2
( ) Language (Latin)	3
( ) History (Religion)	4
( ) Driving (Civilian)	2
( ) Perform (Sing)	2
( ) Technology	3
( ) Fighting (Grappling)	2
( )	
( )	
( )	
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( )	
( )	
( )	
( )	

Weapons

name	dw	df	dm	rg	wt	cost
.22 Pistol (small caliber)		✗	4	8	2	300

ammo ○○○ ○○○ ○○○ ○○○ ○○○ ○○○
ammo ○○○ ○○○ ○○○ ○○○ ○○○ ○○○

Equipment BP/CoH 600 | 60

item	description
Ammunition	.22 ammo (2 boxes of 100 shells)
Backpack	
Crucifix	
Torch	
Canteen	
Casual outfit	
Priests Robes	Ceremonial robes

Abilities

( )	
( )	
( )	
( )	
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( )	

Actions

Actions are the core of game play in any role playing game. Actions constitute everything a character does to interact with the environment that the Oracle has created. Actions can be anything from driving a car to walking a tightrope across a sprawling canyon.

Not every action requires a casting. When a character wants to walk to the corner store there is no need for casting your runes or rolling dice or anything else. Save your castings for important actions that help to advance the plot of the story.

Simple Actions

Simple actions are any action that has a very black and white outcome. The character either succeeds or fails.

When determining the success of a simple action the player will cast runes in a way that is similar to Testing the Fates. Any face down rune equals -1, any face up odd rune equals +1, and any face up even rune equals +2.

If the total of all runes is greater than 1 the action is a success.

Dice Option: Six-sided dice can be used if you do not have access to runes. Any roll of 1 or 6 is equal to -1. A roll of 3 or 5 equals +1 and a roll of 2 or 4 equals +2.

Complex Actions(Advanced)

A complex action is an action where the results might not be cut and dried. A complex action requires that the Oracle Consult the Fates by performing a reading on the cast runes instead of summing up the values of the casting. Since each rune holds a meaning, the Oracle will weave the meanings of the runes together to determine the outcome(see Consulting the Fates.)

A complex action should be declared before any runes are cast.

Casting Runes

A character's traits determine how many runes the player can cast for an action. The Oracle will decide which traits should be used.

As an example, Moe is trying to swim across a channel to get to the other side. The Oracle determines that Moe must use his Physicality trait (rank 2). Moe gets to cast two runes to determine his success.

It is possible that multiple traits could apply to a given situation.

Whenever multiple traits are used to accomplish an action, cast a number of runes equal to the sum of all traits.

Example: Multiple Trait Casting

Moe hears a scream and watches as a car plummets off the docks and into the water. He sees a small child at the window before the car disappears under into the murky depths of the river. Moe decides to rescue the child and the Oracle determines he must use Physicality (rank 2) and Endurance (rank 3) to complete the task. Moe also has the skill Savvy (Water) rank 2 which the Oracle allows him to use as well. Moe gets to cast seven runes for this action.

Non Contested Actions

Non contested actions are those actions where a character is not competing directly against another character. Lock picking, swimming across a lake, skiing, and cliff climbing are a few examples of non contested actions.

Unforeseen Circumstances

Sometimes there are circumstances surrounding an action that make it harder or easier for the character to complete the action. As a general guideline, whenever a circumstance would make an action harder, reduce the number of pf cast runes by 2. Whenever the circumstances favor the action add 2 runes to the number cast.

Example: Simple Non Contested Action

Dilly comes across a locked door that she desperately needs to get through. She whips out a pin that was tucked away in her hair attempts to pick the lock. The Oracle determines that Dilly will use Physicality + Wits. With a Physicality of two and a Wits of two, Dilly gets to cast four runes. Two runes land face down at a value of -1 each. The remaining two runes come up X and R.

Those are both even runes with a value of +2 each for a total value of +2. Dilly only needed a total of 1 or higher so she succeeds!

Contested Actions

Contested actions are actions where two or more characters are competing. More often than not, contested actions are combat based, such as two characters fighting. But, characters can also compete in foot races, riddle solving or performing. Combat actions will be discussed in more detail in the Combat section of this book (see Combat).

When two characters compete against each other in an action they each cast a number of runes based on traits determined by the Oracle.

If the action is a simple action, the characters will tally their results and whoever has the highest total wins.

Example: Simple Contested Action

Bob and Dilly are both trying to get to the phone booth that is across the street. It's a short sprint and there is no traffic. The Oracle determines that each character will get to cast a number of runes equivalent to their Physicality attribute. Bob has PHY 3 and Dilly has PHY 2. Bob casts runes and 1 lies face down, the other two land face up and are even. Bob has a total of +2. Both of Dilly's runes land faces up and both are even as well; Dilly has a total of +2. Since both characters have the same total the Oracle deems it a tie.

In the case of a complex action, the Oracle will performing a reading of both characters rune castings. The more favorable reading is the winner (see Reading the Runes.)

Consulting the Fates

Consulting the Fates is an advanced method of rune reading that we recommend for advanced players. This is an optional system for determining success or failure of actions. We recommend that the Oracle opt to Consult the Fates whenever he feels that a simple action resolution (as described above) is just too simple for the situation. Using the runes in this manner is an incredible story telling tool as well, and is

actually what sets Baneful Signs apart from other gaming systems. The runes themselves help to tell part of the story. This is something that a roll of the dice cannot do.

When performing a reading, the Oracle should read each rune from left to right, noting each runes position to the caster before determining its meaning. Face down runes are disregarded.

The meanings of each rune are somewhat cryptic, but most have a quite obvious positive or negative connotation about them. The oracle is free to use the definitions of the runes to advance the story of the current action as it unfolds. For this reason, rune readings are an advanced option of the game. The players have to trust in and not question the Oracles reading. They must be accepting of the outcome and move on: not an easy thing to do with all players.

Listed below are all twenty four runes along with their meanings and inverted meanings. It may be helpful to copy this page and use it as a quick reference during game play.

Inverted Runes

Whenever a rune is cast and it lands inverted, meaning its icon is reversed in relation to the caster, the rune takes on the opposite of its meaning. A rune that lands sideways is not inverted. It must land so that its base is above the halfway mark of the rune. We'll use the rune Perthro rune (ᛈ) as an example.

Not inverted   **Inverted**

Some runes look the same whether they are inverted or not. These runes will always be interpreted with there original meanings and they will never be inverted. For example, Jera (ᛃ) looks the same whether it is inverted or not.

Here is a sample of reading a rune in its normal state and its inverted state: Bob reaches into his rune pouch and pulls out a single rune. He casts it onto the table and it appears as:

This the rune Fehu, who's meaning is cattle, wealth or gold. However, if the rune landed inverted…

Then it's meaning changes to poor fortune or loss of fortune. Possibly, it could mean fools gold or something that isn't what it appears.

Testing the Fates

Sometimes it is exceptionally difficult to perform a task. When a player decides that he needs help with performing an action he can Test the Fates in an effort to gain their favor.

When testing the fates draw two runes at random from your rune bag and cast them onto the table. For each face down rune you lose one favor, for each odd rune you gain one favor, and for each even rune you gain two favor. The total amount of favor is the number of runes you add to your rune pool for the current action. If the number is negative, you must subtract that number from the total runes for the current action.

The decision to test the fates must be made and resolved before the action the test applies to has begun. The results are final and must be abided by.

> **Test the Fates = Cast two runes and add/remove total from action runes.**

The Unknown Rune

There is one rune that is blank. This rune is the unknown rune. Whenever this rune is drawn it counts as nothing. It has no value and counts neither for, nor against you when you draw it..

Critical Failures

Any time a casting results in all cast runes landing face down the character suffers a critical failure. Something catastrophic occurs when this happens. Testing the Fates can never result in a critical failure.

Assisted Actions

A character may assist another character when performing an action. When this happens, the assisting character is allowed to use only one trait to assist the main action taker. If the assisting character has multiple traits that apply to the situation, apply the highest ranked trait.

The assisting character will cast her runes just as the main action taker would, she just gets less runes to cast.

Example: Assisted Action
<insert computer hacking example>

Rune Definitions

Symbol	Name	E/O*	Meaning
ᚠ	Fehu	Odd	Fehu can mean cattle, gold, or wealth in general.
ᚢ	Uruz	Odd	Uruz was associated with the now-extinct wild ox known as aurochs. The rune also represents strength, speed, and good health.
ᚦ	Thurisaz	Odd	Thurisaz refers to the giants of Norse mythology.
ᚨ	Ansuz	Odd	Ansuz could be used to refer to any deity, but it was most often associated with Odin, the Viking equivalent of Zeus.
ᚱ	Raidho	Even	Likely an important rune for the Vikings, Raidho signified a long journey.
ᚲ	Kenaz	Even	Kenaz represents a torch or some other source of light.
ᚷ	Gebo	Even	Gebo was used to denote a sacrifice to the gods.
ᚹ	Wunjo	Odd	Wunjo can translate as comfort, joy, or glory.
ᚺ	Hagalaz	Odd	Hagalaz is the rune for hail, either in terms of the weather, or hailing projectiles in battle.
ᚾ	Nauthiz	Even	Nauthiz means need, necessity or hardship.
ᛁ	Isa	Odd	Isa means ice.
ᛃ	Jera	Even	Jera translates as year or harvest.
ᛇ	Eihwaz	Odd	Eithwaz is the rune for yew, a sacred tree used to make rune wands.
ᛈ	Perthro	Odd	The meaning and/or translation of Perth is luck or the unknown.
ᛉ	Algiz	Odd	Algiz denoted defense, protection, or self-preservation.
ᛋ	Sowilo	Odd	Sowilo represented the sun, an important element in pagan worship.
ᛏ	Tiwaz	Odd	The rune of the war god Tyr, Tiwaz was often carved on weaponry.
ᛒ	Berkano	Odd	Berkano was associated with the birch tree, with Idun, goddess of spring, and with fertility.
ᛖ	Ehwaz	Even	Ehwaz is the rune for horse.
ᛗ	Mannaz	Even	Mannaz means man or mankind.
ᛚ	Laguz	Even	Laguz is associated with water.
ᛜ	Ingwaz	Even	Scholars believe Ingwaz can refer either to the Danish hero Ing or to the Danes in general.
ᛞ	Dagaz	Even	Dagaz is the rune for day or daylight.
ᛟ	Othala	Even	Othila means inheritance or the passing on of property or knowledge. It can also refer to an ancestral home or to one's native land.
	Divine	n/a	The unknown rune.

*E/O denotes whether a rune is an even or odd rune.

Simple Reading

A simple reading is a reading where just the player casts runes. Simple readings are used when very little interaction occurs between multiple characters or when a character is trying to overcome the environment, like climbing up a mountain.

Example: Simple Reading

York, an NPC, is a thug from the inner city. He isn't much for small talk and often times finds himself in predicaments because of his aggressive nature and smart mouth.

Dilly, played by Sara, is a private investigator working a job for a client whose husband, Roger Smith, has gone missing. On tip from a reliable source, she discovers that York might have information pertaining to the missing man's whereabouts.

Dilly's first concern is finding York so she can question him. No easy task, as York is an accomplished street urchin, and he knows how to hide.

Oracle: *Dilly needs to make a casting based on Wits. This is a complex action so I'll perform a reading to see if you can locate York.*

Sara: *Dilly has rank four in Urban Savvy. Can she use that instead?*

Oracle: *Sure.*

Sara reaches into her rune bag and extracts four runs, casting them down onto the table. One of the four runes land upside down, so it is disregarded. The Oracle peers at the runes and sees the following:

We can see that the runes are Isa, Fehu, and Algiz (inverted). After consulting the meanings of each rune the Oracle tells the story of Dilly's attempt to find York.

Oracle: *Dilly gets in touch with a contact who might know where York has been hiding out. But, the reception she receives is pretty cold after telling him who she wants.* [Isa means ice]. *Dilly attempts to bribe the man with a handful of cash* [Fehu means gold or wealth], *and it's enough for the contact to overcome his own fears of York coming after him* [Algiz (inverted) means lack of defense or over coming self

preservation). *He informs Dilly that York is hiding in a run down apartment complex on 5th Avenue.*

Complex Reading

A complex reading takes more time to complete then a simple reading. It is often employed when multiple characters are heavily engaged in the action, or when an important story even unfolds. A complex reading is much more interactive for the players. The Oracle should always keep his castings a secret so the players cannot see what his casting result is before he can make his reading.

During a complex reading the Oracle will start with the character who began the action, and then alternately read one rune at a time from each participating character.

Example: Complex Reading

Dilly has traveled across the city and located the apartment complex where York is hiding out.

Oracle: *You ask a few of the people mulling about on the first floor and discover that York has been living in room 301. You quickly head up the stairs and soon find your self standing outside his door. As you stand there considering what to do next the door suddenly opens. Before you stands a young man in faded jeans and a grungy AC/DC t-shirt.*

Sara: *Dilly asks him if he is York.*

Oracle: *He says that he doesn't know anyone named York.*

Sara: *I want to see if he's lying.*

Oracle: *Make a wits casting.*

Sara: *Dilly has a wits of two, but she has Investigation of three, is that any use?*

Oracle: Sure, cast wits plus investigation.

Sara: Okay*, wits plus investigation gives Dilly five runes.*

The Oracle determines that York will use his Urban Savvy of three and his Wits of three which will allow him to cast six runes as well. The Oracle secretly casts York's runes and two of them land face down leaving York with the following runes showing:

Sara five six runes of her own and casts them. Two of her runes land face down as well. Her remaining face up runes are:

◇ ᛒ

The Oracle starts by reading Sara's casting because she started the action by wanting to see if the kid is lying.

Oracle: *The young man looks you straight in the eye, and repeats that he does not know anyone named York, and that this isn't even his normal pad. He lives across the hall.* [Othala (inverted) means lack of knowledge or property. In this case the Oracle feels this actually lends to the credibility of Yorks lie. One up for the bad guy.]

Sara: *The Berkano rune represents the the goddess of spring and of fertility. Dilly will pose as a prostitute who was by a friend to return a favor.*

Oracle: *Ooh, that's a good one.*

Sara takes her Berkano rune and puts it back into her rune bag. The Oracle proceeds to the next rune.

Oracle: *The young man looks Dilly up and down, his suspicious glare turning into a smile. He says, "Alright, you got the right man. I am York." He gestures for you to come in and he makes some comment about Dilly being in for a real treat because he's a real Stallion.* [Ehwaz is the horse. This rune plays perfectly into Sara's replacing the Othala rune with her Berkano rune of fertility. York's pride in his sexual prowess clearly override his desire to hide his identity.]

Sara: *Dilly won't enter. Instead, now that she knows that he is York, she asks him about Roger Smith's disappearance.*

Oracle: *York stops and stares at you, his smile turning into an angry grimace.*

Combat

Reaction

Every combat begins by determining who gets to act first. Every player shall test the fates and add the results to his character's reaction trait. Whoever has the highest total gets to act first during each round of this combat.

Initiative = Reaction + Test the Fates

Actions in Combat

During a player's turn, the player's character may perform Combat Actions OR one Non Combat action. Additionally, the character may move as well.

**Combat Action
OR
Non Combat Action**

AND

Movement

Combat Actions

Any form of attack by one character against another character is a combat action.

Movement

Movement is any mode of travel where the character moves from one space to another space. Running, climbing, walking and crawling are all movement actions.

Non Combat Actions

Any physical action that takes place during combat that is not a Combat Action or Movement. Retrieving a magazine, loading a gun, sheathing a sword, and dropping prone are all examples of non combat actions.

Performing a non combat action uses all attack runes for the turn.

Talking

A character may make short vocal expressions that do not count as actions. Shouting "look out" or "behind you!" are such short verbalizations that they can be done within an inconsequential time period. Anything longer than this counts as a non combat action.

Combat Pool

At the beginning of any combat each player will use her character's Physicality + Fighting Skill to determine the number of runes to draw. By default, all characters have a Fighting (fists) of rank 1. These runes are called your combat pool.

Combat Pool = Physicality + Weapon Skill

The combat pool will refresh at the beginning of every round. Don't forget that you can also Test the Fates to try and get more runes!

Attack and Defense Runes

After drawing the combat pool, separate the runes into even and odd piles. Then choose one pile to be your attack runes, and the other pile will be your defense runes. At the beginning of each turn, you'll get to repeat this process as your combat pool refreshes.

Using Attack Runes

You can attack another character during your turn by simply spending attack runes. You simply pay the number of runes you wish to use on an attack and put those runes back in the rune bag. As long as you have attack runes to spend, you may keep attacking. Attack runes can only be used during your turn.

Using Defense Runes

Whenever another character attacks you, you may spend defense runes to thwart their attack. If you spend defense runes equal to or greater than the number of attack runes the the attack fails. You may spend defense runes during any characters turn.

Bonuses & Penalties

When a character receive a rune bonus to defend or attack another character the bonus only applies to runes spent against the that character. The bonus is not applied to the entire combat pool. Penalties work the same way, apply them to runes that are spent to successfully attack or defend

against the specified character and do not apply the penalty to the entire combat pool.

Example: Combat Bonus
<insert combat bonus example>

Movement

There are several different modes of movement and each one relies on the Movement trait of a character. A character cans slither, crawl, walk, run, climb, fly and swim. Some characters may have bonuses to each of these modes of movement and some characters may not have all movement modes. A standard humanoid character, for example, does not have the ability to fly.

The distance any mode allows a character to move is directly related to the movement trait. The following chart shows the movement rates for each mode in yards.

Movement Modes

Mode	Yards*
Slither	¼ x Movement
Crawl	½ x Movement
Walk	Movement x 2
Run	Movement x 4
Climb	Movement
Swim	Movement
Fly	Movement x 10

*A minimum of one yard of movement is assumed for any mode who's movement drops below one.

I know someone is asking what the slither movement mode is. Slithering is when you lay down on your stomach and more or less drag yourself across the ground. The difference between that and crawling, is that crawling is when you are on your hands and knees. For a character that has a normal movement method of actual slithering, a snake for example, assume that slithering from that particular creature equivalent to the walk mode.

Calculating Damage

You know the basics of combat, but you need to know how much damage a successful attack causes. Whenever an attack succeeds, you automatically deal damage equal to the difference between the attack runes you spend and the defense runes spent against you. If you are using a

weapon that has a DR then add the damage of the weapon as well.

Damage = Attack runes – Defense runes + Weapon DR

If a character ever falls beneath half health she is considered fatigued an suffers a 2 rune penalty to all actions and combat pool.

Example: Combat
<insert combat sample here>

Complex Combat (Optional)

During each players turn that player describes what actions he wants to take. The Oracle determine which traits would be used to complete the actions and then the player casts that many runes. The Oracle then performs a reading to determine how successful the action sequence was.

Miniatures

If you enjoy using miniatures in your role playing, don't fret. You can use them in a baneful signs game very easily. Baneful signs games use hex paper with a scale of one hex equaling two yards. Two yards is approximately six feet. One human sized character fills one hex.

When determining ranges, just remember that each hex is two yards. Thus a Small Caliber Pistol with a range of eight, can target enemies up to four hexes away before suffering a -2 penalty.

Testing the Fates in Combat

A player may test the fates during combat, just as he can during any other action. The decision to test the fates must occur before drawing your combat pool at the beginning of a round, but it may be done as often as you wish.

Specific Attacks

A specific attack is any attack where the attacker wants a specific results to occur. For example, I kick try to kick his knee and break his leg. This is a specific attack where the results could lead to the defender having reduced mobility if it is successful. Some other specific attacks could be stunning, tripping, throwing, disarming.

In order to succeed at a specific attack you must first meet the criteria. One is that you automatically lose two runes from your combat pool for the increased difficulty of trying a specific attack. Secondly, you can only use odd runes when you launch your attack. If you meet both these criteria and successfully hit your target then you achieve your specific results.

Specific Attack = 2 rune penalty + Odd runes only + Successful Attack

<list specific attacks and common results>

Example: Specific Attack
<insert specific attack example here>

The following table lists some specific attacks and the results. If you wish to try other specific actions not listed here Consult the Oracle for possible results.

Assassinate

An aimed attack that kills the target outright.

Disarm

Knocks the targets weapon from his hand. Target loses attack runes equal to her weapon skill for one round.

Low Blow

Dazes an opponent for one round. A dazed target can only use defense runes while dazed.

Knockout

Attempts to knock the target unconscious.

Throw

The target is thrown a number of yards equal to the attackers physicality and is knocked prone. If any objects are between the target and the landing zone the target may take damage.

Trip

The target is knocked prone.

Grappling

Whenever a character attempts to grapple another, she spends attack runes as normal.

However, if she is successful, instead of dealing damage the target's combat pool is reduced by the difference between the attack and defense runes. The combat pool is reduced for one round and the defender gets to choose which runes to remove. She can remove any combination of defense or attack runes.

If a characters combat pool is ever reduced to zero then she is pinned and cannot take any actions so long as she has no combat pool to work with. The attacker must continue to spend enough attack runes every round to keep the defenders combat pool at zero in order to maintain the pin. Any extra runes spent above the amount required to keep the total at zero may be applied as damage at the characters discretion.

Example: Grappling
<insert grapple example here>

Combat Modifiers

As a general rule of thumb, whenever a character is at a disadvantage to another, the disadvantaged character's combat pool is reduced by 2 runes.

Fatigue

Whenever your health falls to half you are considered fatigued and your combat pool is reduced by two and you cast two less runes when you perform any action.

Cover & Concealment

Using cover is when a character puts a solid object between herself and her attacker. This usually occurs when trying to avoid ranged attacks. A cover grants you a DF bonus similar to armor. This means that cover will soak up some of the damage. Typically, a cover bonus ranges from 1 to 4 bonus DF. The cover modifiers listed a below assume cover that can still be penetrated. Other types of cover, like cement, or steel, may prevent all damage.

Cover

Amount	DF
Partial (tree, pole)	1
Half Cover (trash can, desk)	2
Full Cover*	4

*Depending on the cover type full cover may reduce all damage to zero.

Concealment does not allow for cover, but offers a greater chance for an attacker to miss. Darkness, fog, and heavy precipitation make it much harder to judge distances. Concealment causes a rune penalty to the attacker when he attacks a concealed target.

Concealment

Amount	Penalty
Partial (shadowy illumination)	1
Half (heavy fog)	2
Full (complete darkness)	4

Example: Cover & Concealment

Freddy and Mack are members of rival factions who run into each other at a seedy bar. Freddy pulls out his 9mm and starts shooting at Mack who smartly dives behind a pool table. With the low light conditions, Freddy has a 1 rune penalty applied when attacking Mack. This means that when he attacks Mack he has to drop one rune from the total that he spends on his attack. Additionally, Mack has has half cover behind a big, solid pool table so his he an additional DF bonus of 2. Any damage from a successful attack by Freddy will be reduced by 2.

High Ground

Whenever one character has a higher position than another she gains a 1 rune bonus to attacks against the lower character.

Dazed

A dazed character can only spend defense runes during the round she is dazed and cannot move during her turn.

Stunned

A stunned character can perform no actions during the round she is stunned and she cannot move.

All out Attack

A character who declares an all out attack can use all of her combat pool as attack runes for this turn. She cannot move if she chooses this option.

All out Defense

A character who declares an all out defense can use all of her combat pool as defense runes for this turn. She cannot move if she chooses this option.

Healing Damage

Characters will inevitably lost health during the course of an adventure. The damage may stem from a fight, or from a nasty fall down a pit trap. This damage will eventually heal over time.

Each day of non-strenuous rest (no fighting, running, heavy lifting, etc.) restores health equal to a character's Endurance trait.

Each day of strenuous rest (any fighting, running or other similar actions) restores 1 health.

The healing process can be helped along if a character with the medicine skill aids in the recovery process. Once per day a character with the medicine skill may make simple casting equivalent to her Science (medicine) skill. The character recovers additional health equal to the total of the casting.

Magic

The use of magical spells in role playing games is a long standing tradition. If you opt to run a setting that allows for magic then characters who can cast magic should purchase the Magic ability. It is usually a standard ability that costs 4 CP's.

The free flowing nature of the Baneful Sign system allows for an interesting take on magic. The basic magic system doesn't use a predefined list of spells, but instead we opted for a list of spell skills. The skills cover the basics of most spell effects and we leave the description of the spell itself up to the player. If you need to create new categories for new spell, please do so.

Attack

Any magic that attempts to damage the target. Typical examples are streams of acid, fireballs, or even heavy sleet.

Defense

Any magic that attempts to ward off or stop physical or magical damage. The caster may summon forth a shield or a protective bubble.

Curative

Magic that attempts to heal or cure. Curing poisons, diseases or injuries are typical uses of curative magic.

Illusion

Magic that attempts to trick or impress false impressions upon a character. Creating an illusionary wall to make a character think the way is impassible is an example of illusion.

Information

Magic that aids a character in looking for answers and reading minds. Detecting when another character is lying is a good use of information magic.

Transformation

Magic that turns a character or object into something else or to modify the properties of an item or character. Making a character extremely light so he floats instead of plummeting to his death is transformation magic.

Curses

Magic that negatively affects a character or magic cast on an object that causes bad effects to happen when a character touches the object. Causing horrible boils to appear on a characters body that hinder movement and combat would be a curse.

Blessings

Magic that positively affects a character or magic cast on an object that causes good effects to happened when a character touches that object. Causing a character to feel more confident so that she gains a bonus to a skill casting would be a blessing.

Using Magic

In order to use a magic the character will draw runes equal to Focus + Magic Skill. Then cast the runes and read them just as you would to determine the result of any other action.

Casting a spell = Focus + Magic Skill

Magic in Combat

If a character wishes to use magic in combat then she draws her combat pool as normal.

To cast a spell a character must give up either her attack pool or her defense pool in order to cast a spell.

Return those runes back to the rune bag and then draw out a number of runes equal to the magic skill she will be using to cast the spell.

Example: Spell Casting in Combat
<insert spell casting example here>

Magic Equipment

Magic items are any equipment is equipment, weapons and armor that have been magically enhanced. This usually means that they have been effected by one of the categories of magic defined above. Magic equipment can offer bad effects as well as good effects. Here are some sample magical items and their effects.

Sword of Sharpness

This long sword grants a bonus DR of 1.

Bow of True Flying

This bow has a RG bonus of +10.

Potion of Curing

When consumed, this potion cures up to 10 points of damage.

Advancing Your Character

During the course of adventuring your character will gain Character Points. You may spend these points to increase your traits. CP's are spent just as described under the Character Creation at the beginning of the book.

Gaining Character Points

During the course of play the Oracle will reward characters with CP's. These

rewarded are granted by defeating enemies, competing tasks, overcoming an obstacle in a unique way and even for good role playing.

Listed below are the typical CP awards for various actions. The Oracle is free to give out as many points as often as he wishes.

Character Point Rewards

Action	Reward
Defeat a lesser enemy	1
Defeat an equal enemy	2
Defeat a greater enemy	4
Creative play or ideas	2
Good role playing	1
Overcoming an obstacle	2
Completing an adventure	6

If the Oracle wants the characters to become more powerful more quickly he may opt to up the rewards during play.

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