

Epic

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Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

Ideas

Get rid of this chapter - it's a placeholder to store ideas that should move somewhere else:

- Heist: the McGuffin, the Box (location), the Opposition,

- No - Rename - big Skills -> Powers, smaller skills/crafts with simple(r) rolls

- More ability to control the action than just dice rolls - Now medium crunch again, achieve chaotic interaction and allow metagame prep. The dice systems should also enhance drama - d100, maybe, a la Chaosium, instead of open20.

- Better lucky than good, too, esp for the players

- Chaotic systems are highly sensitive to initial conditions, and not easily predicable, thus very useful to generate uncertainty

- The double pendulum is one of the simplest - starting point to slow moving +x,y, then a fast moving +x,y

- Establishing Facts and PC Tie-In creates a story in motion, bootstraps the opening scene, and (almost) sets the Goals/Climax

- Generalized - specialized - customized - personalized ("signature")

- GM Frameworks - for handling things like NPC tactics, TPKs, hirelings - not binding Rules

- Game consequences - injuries, curses, poisons, reputational, bad luck, etc. Due to rolls; allow player choice, but not fail-forward(?). Possible choices: give up next round's action(s) to avoid; give up round continuously until you win a roll (add resource recoup mechanics?);

- Story consequences - twists, betrayals, set-backs, unexpected developments, etc. All essentially delays to end goal. Specifying them allows the players to write the story, but using a mechanism that creates and maintains tension in the plotlines (ie no walk in the park).

- Actions have consequences: using skills means rolling dice and success/fail

- Actions have consequences: changing the world with Facts lets the DM establish (possibly secretly) consequential facts

- Actions have consequences: making Plot decisions (what, exactly, and how?) during unScenes means other Actors also make them

- Actions have consequences: changing Rules (how?)

- Skills/uncontested rolls, combat=Contested result(skill vs skill); magic rework the environment; religion is deus ex machina

- list of possible consequences to failing skill rolls (some per skill) or partial success, or partial fails that bonus future rolls

- some things just don't improve, some things don't start at zero, somethings have positive/negative scale

- Attributes contribute situationally (including to things that don't improve) - 1 point per rank, including negatives

- Including monster abilities w/ improved skill/attrs

- Make skills actual skills - traditional like "climb walls" can be done by anybody, just make a simple rule to cover that; additional skill can *add* to that, tools can add, etc.

- Reduce the urge for magic item dependency - little in setting, more "abilities" / cooperation at higher levels, more emphasis on individual skill, items that "grow" with the PC? (sword +(rank/2))

- More things to do besides combat, as reinforced by having rule structures for more things (ie have religion to-do, make political to-do, etc)

- saves: vs AoE, vs natural (poison, paralyze), vs magic, no divine saves!

- skill descriptions should be detailed, telling where they are useful and where not

- Players control what and how they want to approach something, resolution can only happen in-Scene

unScene-Scene-unScene-Scene

unScene - no resolutions/mechanics: discussion, ask GM, non-resolution items/acting (info comes in)

Scene - tension and resolutions; player-driven when they decide to act; GM-driven for surprise; resolve; Name it

Uncontested skill checks require no roll unless there's tension or pressure - time, intricacy, distraction, sickness, etc - then figure it out, roll vs Rank?

Politics - debts, pay off a debt, favors, repay a favor, opportunities to help / hurt, offers he can't refuse, force, maneuvering / teaming up, betrayal, threats, reputation, information how to make an interesting system ... related but separate from relationships

Rolling a max roll on a die adds a Fact, getting early players closer faster to goals

Type of game:

1. one-shot - what players can bring to the game; what they take from the game (stakes of play)
2. miniseries/tournament
3. campaign -

Dice: d3/d4/d5/d6/d7/d8/d10/d12/d14/d16/d20/d24/d30/d% or d100

Things for the players to do, that need mechanics: combat, magic, prayer, politics, urban, wilderness, general, other

investigate: go from here to there, see the guy, talk to the guy, get info from the guy by asking/intimidating/tricking

investigate: look for clues

Chapter 2

Introduction

This is a fantasy role-playing game.

It's suggested the players all plan their general ideas together so they understand the party makeup. The players, or perhaps the Game Master (GM), describe an event, a happening, a historical reference, or even an encounter or event from a previous campaign or story. This will be used as the starting point for the characters stories.

Each player begins by creating their own Player Character (PC), with a back story and a Goal, and continue by deciding on why the current party is together and what they're doing.

There are many ways a player can reach his goal. Most involve his expending energy to exert his will upon his environment via narration, in concert with the GM and other players. Several associated mechanics allow for accomplishing this in a roleplaying Scene:

- Combat, armed or unarmed, is using physical force (or threat thereof) to coerce an opponent;
- Martial Arts, harnessing inner power to effect the outer world;
- Magic, invoking the arcane powers of the natural world by divers and dangerous rituals and incantations to cause some effect to occur;
- Religion, beseeching a deity (or diety-like force ...) to lend power to the PC;
- Politics, the ancient art of talking someone else into doing your dirty work;
- Urban and Wildernes skills, from information gathering to covert acquisition and dispersement to tracking;
- and, of course, the PC's own Body, Mind, and Spirit.

There are also several dissocated mechanics:

- Focus and Facts, a specific target and set of important facts that serve to provide conflict, tie PC motivations to a common storyline, and end the Story;
- Hero Points, which allow a player to collect and spend points to alter or guarantee a desired result in an associated mechanic roll;
- Story Points allow a player, several players, or the group to establish additional Facts

2.1 Core Principles

1. The Game Master can override, suspend, ignore, or change in any way he wishes any rule in the game. The author is a big believer in the unknown, the mysterious, the things that should not be - not everything will be or play by the same rules the players use.
2. The game is story-based - a Story Focus is created to provide conflict and tie the group together; Players choose Goals for their PCs, and the mechanics incent working toward them; and when the Goal is achieved, that PC's Story is over. Yes, that's correct - this RPG ends.

3. The game tries to avoid rules that have no purpose other than to provide “game balance” (whatever that means). This means the rules are lighter and faster, but easily abused (if that’s your thing). Anything not specifically forbidden is permitted.
4. The game is designed assuming a Combat-as-War play style. That means the rules make no attempt to make encounters fair, or balanced, or even survivable. That, in turn, means that the player characters will probably die. A lot. Hey, most worlds are dangerous places.
5. The game attempts to maximize in-scene immersion and minimize dissociated mechanics. That means the mechanics attempt, as much as feasible, to line up with what the characters would do or think.
6. Skills increase as they are used. Therefore, unlike most of FRPGs, there are no experience points (XP). Since there are also no classes, there are also no levels. Any additional powers stereotypically granted by “leveling up” are acquired per individual skill rank increase. If you like, you can think of skill ranks as “levels”.

2.2 Game Design Notes

Current Requirements

1. Maintain old-school style immersion in-scene.
 - (a) Play to discover
 - (b) Combat as war
2. Build a cohesive top-to-bottom story-creation framework that sets goals and ties the party together.
 - (a) Character and Group goals and relationships
 - (b) Model play-to-discover, but framework incentivizes working towards goals
 - (c) Record each story as play goes
3. Design and implement mechanics to align to the framework, not vice-versa.
 - (a) Low latency mechanics in-scene to maintain immersion
 - (b) Story-based out-scene mechanics
4. No classes, but a skills-based system with a simpler experience system
 - (a) Usage-based increases
 - (b) Abilities based on race, skills, items, organization membership, ?
5. Medium-level crunch, but with minimal latency
 - (a) Simplified combat - easy armed/unarmed system
 - (b) Non-Vancian, flexible but detailed magic system - no huge list of predefined spells
 - (c) Lots of integrated rules allow the group to choose to use or ignore; lack of such automatically means ignore
 - (d) Enough buttons and levers to allow out-of-game twiddling
6. Maintain “death” as a negative incentive, but not necessarily “dead” for campaign game
7. Specifically implement consequences to actions at the story level - disincent “murder hobos”.
8. Hard separation of mechanics from setting,
 - (a) but setting can add mechanics (eg races with abilities)
 - (b) Focus, antagonists, organizations, plot lines, consequences are all in setting context.

State	Main overview	Comments and examples
Outside	Metagame; Buttons and levers to play with	tables for building
Personal	Social contract	specific template with options
Campaign	Focus/Goals	Process to establish
Scene	In Scene: Cast, Location, Time, Purpose, End Criteria; Out of Scene	Character choice
Game	Skill checks,	in-scene low-latency
Group	roleplaying to Goals	
Character	roleplaying	complete immersion

Exposition

An explicit social contract helps assure everyone understands and respects the boundaries of Player (as opposed to Character) actions.

The 4 process creates a common plotline and ties the Characters to it, so they are incented to work as a Group toward common - or at least related - Goals.

The Story Setup and the establishment of relationships creates explicit tension, enhancing drama.

There is an explicit break going into and out of a Scene, as shown in 31.1. This allows a separation of administrative story building and character progression actions from immersive roleplaying.

Scenes have location, time, PC & NPC participants, and should have a point. Players decide their intentions for those items Out of Scene, including the Scene's Purpose, although the GM can of course override or interrupt, forcing a scene. Scene Purpose also allows the GM to set End Criteria.

Rules/mechanics tend to constrain play - determine what kinds of actions there should be, and make mechanics for them.

Non-Vancian magic systems are a more flexible framework than huge spell lists, and immediately give vast range of possibility to Mages from the start. The Player's calculations and assembly of spells towards goals seem to this author very similar to what his Character would be doing, and are thus better role-playing than Vancian-type systems.

The Politics skills, especially Organizations, is intended to tie Character's actions to the society they operate in, and set mechanics for operating in more urban environments, as well as establishing consequences for actions, disincenting modes of play like the "murder hobo".

Out of The Fight is my solution to Death. In OSR-ish type works, the Simulationist influence dictates that when a character is taken to zero hit points, he is Dead. While this works fine for one-shots, convention games, or tournaments - or doesn't, as what do those Players do? - for campaign-length games it creates a serious gap: either you continue making new players regularly, or the DM fudges Death and it loses its sting.

For Players who would really rather keep one Character, the game cannot use Death as a serious game mechanic. Since this game explicitly builds a Story with Goals, Out of The Fight is a method to keep the Characters alive while disincenting incautious play: OoTF ranges from a minor hand-slap in the form of preventing a Player from participating for the remainder of a Scene; to a potentially serious setback if the entire party drops (or the GM goes TPK). The mere threat of knowing that the GM will loot the party of all their gear - and potentially have them wake up chained in a damp cave - combined with the knowledge that they still need to achieve their Goals should be sufficient to instill the proper respect.

Historical

This game has gone through several evolutions, as has my thinking on what I wanted to build. It started as modifications derived from OSR-ish games, being very traditional D&D. In fact, the working title was "D&D Done Right".

It then swung the full spectrum over to an extremely rules-light story-based game, as I had been seduced by that wave of game play, and the rules wording was very loose. They were hardly "rules" at all.

After doing a lot of research (which still continues), and playing a lot of different types of games, I've discovered that I don't really like having to do a lot of story-level call-outs mid-scene. I'm now in a place where I'm trying to capture the immersiveness of OSR in-scene, but incorporate all the new-style story-based elements in a seamless wrapper.

Part II

Social Contract

Chapter 3

Social Contract

Agree on the type of game to be played, and associated character concepts. Do you want to all be fighters, explore dungeons, be traveling monks, be wine stewards, etc.?

3.1 Player Character Death

Part III

Story and Characters

Chapter 4

Story Setup

The steps done in this chapter and the next overlap. FIXME: tighten this process up, removing vagueness. establish a set order, GM's can alter at will anyway. Note that part of this is Plotline setup, and the same process is done for new ones.

My life was perfect...

Loss - players must suffer loss, the bigger the better. Each player different, depending on Perfect

Theme - GM must choose a theme -one shared? indiv? Shared I think, so scenes can advance

So, there must be a way to detail state of perfection, establish the Loss, and select a theme, then Scenes can commence

Default to all protagonists vs antagonist(s), wherein they become allegories for the Theme, each Scene becomes

4.1 Choose A Focus

Choose a Focus appropriate to the setting. This can be any noun (person, place, or thing), collective noun (e.g. a clan, tribe, species), or event. Any particular thing is possible, including more exotic items such as a historical battle, a rumor, or an astrological occurrence.

The Focus should be something the Characters can have a direct connection to - for instance, a long dead king would not make a good Focus, whereas the long dead king's living descendant might. The Focus does not need to be something officially part of the setting, as long as the GM OK's it - it can be spun out of whole cloth on the spot.

Focus Example: The current king of the country to the North, King Skarl.

4.2 Establish Facts

A Fact is a statement about or relevant to the Focus. Declaring a Fact makes it a reality in the Story. They should therefore *probably* not contradict established Facts, but this is not explicitly disallowed (eg: prophecies are notorious for seeming contradictory).

The GM should either establish an initial set of Facts about the Focus (or Foci), or allow the Players to do so; e.g. perhaps the Players take turns adding Facts. The GM should establish a limit to the total number of Facts, and should consider leaving some undetermined at Game Setup, to be determined during play.

Examples:

Fact	Example
1	King Skarl came to power by murder, though it cannot be proven.
2	King Skarl is half ogre (on his father's side).
3	King Skarl warred on the empire to the North over land and resources
4	(determine during play)
...	(determine during play)

The GM may implement any method he chooses to allow players to establish undetermined Facts. For instance, he may let the characters discover some information during a scene, and after the scene inform the players that visiting a certain location will allow them to Establish A Fact. The implementation of granting players to ability to establish Facts and the method and approval of them is completely up to the GM.

4.3 Establish Consequences

FIXME: make this less 1-for-1.

For each Fact, the GM may establish a corresponding Consequence. These are treated as Fact, meaning they are a statement of reality in the Story. It is suggested that most or all of these initial Consequences be public knowledge to the players, in the interest of providing a rich web of hooks to build relationships and future play from.

Consequence Examples:

Consequence to Fact 1: There is a significant faction of the nobility who were victims of the King's rise, and are against the King ... but not openly.

Consequence to Fact 2: The King's father is Grog, tribal leader of the ogres of the Western Mountains, and the two are not on the best of terms.

Consequence to Fact 3: The King now controls the fabled Fire Opal mines of Bucas, making his fire-wielding Red Wizards universally feared.

4.4 Establish Tie-Ins

Each player character now establishes a Tie-In to one or more Facts. This is the beginning of each Character's Story, and is the first thing written in their Player Journal. It is the basis for conflict and Goals, and is the tension that drives the character to take part in this story.

It is important to note that these Tie-Ins are not Facts - they resemble Facts, but do not hold the same standing. They do not have Consequences, and can be more general. They are specific to each Character's Story, and thus potentially malleable. They do not even have to be true throughout the adventure - changes or reveals to a character's basic conflict happen all the time ("Luke, I am your father ...").

Tie-In Examples:

Player Character 1 Tie-In: PC1's father was murdered by King Skarl.

Player Character 2 Tie-In: PC2's family in the Western Mountains was slain by Skarl in his youth.

Player Character 3 Tie-In: PC3 is an ex-Red Wizard, and is familiar with the mines.

4.5 Establish Goals

Players select Goals for their Characters, based on their Tie-Ins. The Character's Goal is their *raison d'être* - their main storyline.

Player Character 1 Goal: Avenge his father - King Skarl must die.

Player Character 2 Goal: Avenge his family - Grog and Skarl must die.

Player Character 3 Goal: The Red Wizards are too powerful, a danger to the world - they must be destroyed.

Once a PC achieves his goal, his Story is over. He Rides Off Into The Sunset, to live Happily Ever After.

4.6 Character and Party Detail

Flesh out the character and establish Relationships between party members

- Establish the background of the character, Before All This Nonsense Started, as it were. [?]

These are a group of questions the players should use to flesh out their characters. They are designed to make the character more real, establish motivations, but are not enforced and do not dictate behavior.

Personality and Background - type of clothing, distinguishing marks, foods, dreams

Characters-specific hooks - spouse/children/family, best friend, enemies

Highlight the campaign world - ties to specific places/people/groups/locations/history

Set an emotional and moral baseline - situational: groups over friends/family, possessions, favorites

4.7 Prologue

FIXME: reorg this section

The Prologue is a collaborative story-telling exercise to write the Story between the starting Facts and start of play. Some, none, or all of these can be determined during the Prologue:

- Determine what the Focus has done in the meantime
- List significant events that have happened in the meantime

FIXME: these should be Facts:

Major Events

Starting with the GM, each player takes a turn to list and describe a major historical event that can serve as a backdrop. One per player is probably sufficient. Examples:

- The War in the East - this kingdom warred with the country to the East for ten years. It was very nasty, some borders changed, but little else.
- Peace in the South - a long-lasting peace treaty exists with the races to the South, and trade has improved.
- The New Reliquary - The old Reliquary, titular head of the Church of Agora in the capital city of Canopolis, died and was replaced by a six-year-old successor.

FIXME: Facts or unnecessary

Story-relevant backdrop

Starting with the GM, each player takes a turn to list and describe a specific location, person, organization, or event. Several per player would create a very rich Story. Examples:

- Charl, one of the border towns to the South. Originally a military outpost, the town has been growing as a great deal of commerce passes through it.
- Fisla, a priest is the Church of Agora in Canopolis. His exact role and responsibilities are unclear.
- The Southern bandits, a large force of outlaws, prey on the commerce routes to and from the South. Caravans are heavily guarded.
- It is rumored that a High Priest of Noso, God of Disease, has arisen from the swamplands to the far SouthEast, and has a significant following.

Chapter 5

Character Creation

5.1 Races

Races, if any, are setting-specific. See 24 on page 60.

5.2 Character Attributes

Finish mechanics first - Stats should be what the mechanics need, otherwise be player-assigned.

If attributes are created, make them mean something at every increment.

Attributes are added directly to relevant rolls.

Area	Attribute	Abbr.	Relevant mechanics	Bump Criteria
Body	Strength	STR	Damage	
Body	Senses	SNS	Perception?	
Body	Endurance	END	Hits, Martial Arts moves	
Mind	Reaction	RCT	Attack, Saves	
Mind	Charisma	CHR	Politics	
Mind	Attunement	ATT	Magic ability	
Spirit	Will	WIL	Magic use, Morale	
Spirit	Divinity	DIV	Religion	
Spirit	Sanity	SAN	Ability to cope	
	Luck	LCK	Any, once per scene	

5.3 Attribute Bonuses and Penalties

Rank			Bonus	Bump Criteria
1	0-4	Unskilled	0	Any usage
2	5-9	Novice	+1	Any usage
3	10-19	Apprentice	+2	Successful usage
4	20-29	Journeyman	+3	Successful usage
5	30-39	Skilled	+4	Successful usage
6	40-49	Master	+5	Successful usage at skilled/involved or above
7	50-59	Grandmaster	+6	Successful usage at master/hard or above
8	60+	Legendary	+7	GM/Setting-specific

5.4 Starting Skills

The GM will set the number of starting points each player gets to build his character, depending on how skilled or experienced the group wants to start out at.

Suggested starting points are as follows:

- Completely unskilled - for instance, teenagers: Each player starts with zero points.

- Beginner - the PCs are just starting their lives on their own: Each player starts with three points.
- Apprentice - the PCs start the game at about Apprentice level in one are: Each player starts with four or five points.

The following lists the number of points required to buy each type of skill at Novice rank:

Area	Cost	Comments
Combat	1	One weapon type per point
Urban	1	
Wilderness	1	
Created	1	Players may create a new skill (with GM's OK)
Political	1	Politics, Connections, one Relationship, or one Membership
Magic	2	One school. Locked - only available at start
Martial Arts	3	One style. Locked - only available at start
Racial extreme	1	Requires starting point; not a skill
Additional rank	1	Per each additional rank of a purchased skill

Please note that the GM and the players should carefully review any planned character concepts to assure they are actually buildable with the number of points allotted. For example, if each character starts with zero points, they will not be able to build an experienced samurai-hacker.

5.5 Starting Relationships

Each player gets a free Relationship ... to either the Party, or one or more of the other PCs, as desired.

5.6 Optional: Delayed Skill Choice

At the GM's discretion, players may save some number of their starting skill points instead of spending them all during Character Creation. Players may then retcon in a needed skill during actual play.

5.7 Optional: Profession

Professions are an optional mechanic intended to capture the character's life before adventuring. They are setting-specific, and normally involve a package of skill ranks and abilities. For instance:

Profession: Thief. You have spent your childhood and adulthood thus far in a large urban slum bordering on more wealthy neighborhoods, and made your living as a thief. Moxy +1, Speed +2, Size -1, Luck +1, Attributes: Notice Traps, Appraise, Organization: Black Market, Relationship: Fence

Note that there is no requirement that a profession be creatable via the normal generic Character Creation rules, or that all the elements be selectable via same. A GM may well decide that, for instance, a PC with the Thief profession climbs twice as fast as anybody else, and that there's no way for others to acquire that; or that the Veteran profession grants more total skill ranks than the rest of the party starts with; or indeed whatever he wants.

5.8 Optional: Conducts

Conducts as a specific concept are taken from roguelikes. Conducts are codes of behavior that a player chooses for his character to adhere to. They help define the PC as an individual, and, if used properly, they can enhance roleplaying, both by assisting the player in making choices for his PC and by providing the GM with challenging hooks and tension based on them. In this game, as in most roguelikes that are their source, it's important to note that from a game mechanics point of view they serve only to help the player flesh out the character. There are no specific mechanics for directing or enforcing conducts, or indeed behavior of any kind, nor are there mechanical benefits or penalties for adhering to them. They are purely a roleplaying framework.

Of course, there may be in-game consequences for player actions, especially in regards to Politics.

Conducts come in many types and scopes, and in various levels of specificity. The GM should decide on if and how players can choose them, and should have the final word on approval and details.

Some sample conducts:

Good

Evil

Worships a deity

Won't hurt animals

(for males) Extremely intolerant of physical abuse of females

Vegetarian

Chapter 6

Epilogue

When a Character accomplishes their goal, their story is complete. All that remains is their Epilogue - what happens after the story ends.

That scene is their last. When the scene ends, the player will narrate the Character's Epilogue - it can be detailed and involved, or as simple as Riding Off Into The Sunset or “ .. and he lived happily to the end of his days.” It can be happy, or sad, or tragic, at the player's discretion ... just make it Epic.

That Character is now Retired, and does not appear in further scenes.

Part IV

Base Mechanics

Mechanics are procedures used by players to exert their will to resolve tension. Anything that does not involve tension should not look for a mechanic to provide a resolution - either the GM or a player should narrate the outcome.

Chapter 7

Ranks and Rolls

FIXME:

This is a bit too simple for Universal.

We want human Skill Ranks to use this, as it aligns to skill bumps for a good length campaign.

Non-humans need a range

Ranges can be single-digit positive integers, larger integers, or various non-linear scales

Effects will also want negatives

that's all math - descriptions always override, story should override, too, and of course GM fantasy overrides all

Most things that are scaled use The Universal Rank table:

Rank	Value	Rank Name	Bonus	Bump Criteria
1	0-4	Unskilled	0	Any usage
2	5-9	Novice	+1	Any usage
3	10-19	Apprentice	+2	Successful usage
4	20-29	Journeyman	+3	Successful usage
5	30-39	Skilled	+4	Successful usage
6	40-49	Master	+5	Successful usage at skilled/involved or above
7	50-59	Grandmaster	+6	Successful usage at master/hard or above
8	60+	Legendary	+7	GM/Setting-specific

This table is used for most attributes and skill ratings for player and non-player characters - each will have a Value, which denotes a Rank and thus a bonus. Usage of Ranked skills and attributes will normally cause an increment of the Value (usually by one), as determined by the GM at the end of each scene.

It is important to remember that this table is scaled to normal Player Character ranges, but NPCs, monsters, mechanisms, magic, etc., may have higher ratings, without limit. For instance, a world-famous strongman may have a Strength rating of Legendary, Rank 8, but a twenty-foot Giant might easily have a rating in the teens (should it become relevant to actually determine such a rating).

7.1 Uncontested Rolls

An uncontested roll is a dice roll where there is a chance of failure, against a more or less fixed target, based on the difficulty of the action being attempted.

See Skills.

7.2 Contested Rolls

A contested roll is a dice roll against an opponent using a skill, usually a major skill like Combat or Magic.

Chapter 8

Scale

Game play takes place in one of three Scales: Tactical, Operational, or Strategic. There are two additional Scales, Long-Term and Permanent, that are not part of game play *per se*.

Scale	Approximate Time Unit	Scene Relationship	Primary mechanics used
Tactical	1 round	Intra-Scene	Combat, most spells, Chases
Operational	1 hour	Remainder of Scene	Tracking, traveling, exploring
Strategic	1 day	Several Scenes	Politics, Rituals
Long-Term	1 month or longer	Many Scenes	Injuries, Curses, Politics
Permanent	Forever	Remainder of Story	Game

Chapter 9

Time, Duration and Distance

Time is measured in rounds and scenes.

A round is similar to rounds in other RPGs - it denotes the rough amount of time it takes to perform one action, such as an attack, or a spell. One round is intended to be approximately five seconds.

A scene is similar to an encounter in other RPGs - it denotes a consecutive span of time, usually, but not necessarily, all in the same setting and the same rate of time passage. There are specific game actions that take place at the end of a scene.

The definitions are left somewhat vague on purpose.

All other passage of time is handled on an ad-hoc basis, either in-scene or out-of-scene at the GM's discretion.

For reference, if really needed, use this:

Rank	Duration	Distance
1	Instant	Self/Aura
2	Seconds	Touch
3	A minute	5 feet
4	An hour	10 feet
5	A day	25 feet
6	A year	100 feet
7	100 years	Line of Sight
8	Permanent	Any

Chapter 10

Damage and Healing

10.1 Physical Damage

Hits

PCs get a number of “hits”, depending on their combat ability. Being damaged, whether from combat or anything else, removes some number of hits. A PC’s number of hits is determined by his highest combat skill rank plus any extra granted by Endurance.

(move to Opt. HP section: Players may choose to exchange Hero Points to regain or prevent hits at any time, one for one, immediately upon occurrence.)

Hits are removed from the Endurance pool first. Hits normally regenerate completely between scenes. If two scenes are especially close together, the GM may direct that not all hits are regained, or that only Endurance pool hits are regained.

Damage Stages

Some types of damage do more than just Hits. These are denoted as Damage Stages with a number. These are not cumulative. The Effect type matches the damage type (physical, mental, divine, magical, etc)

Damage Stage	Effect
1	One Hit
2	One Hit and a Tactical Effect
3	Two Hits and an Operational Effect
4	Two Hits and a Strategic Effect
5	Three Hits and a Long-Term Effect
6	Three Hits and a Permanent Effect
+	Four Hits and a Permanent Effect

Out Of The Fight

When an actor reaches zero hits, they are Out Of The Fight: for the rest of the Scene, they are defeated, defenseless, beaten down and/or unconscious, at the GM’s discretion. The enemy may have their way with them.

Perhaps defeated is good enough, followed by a good bragging; or perhaps they are struck unconsciousness (if not already), or bound, or given an Injury, or dragged off to be held captive or jailed, or even killed.

In any case, actors that are Out Of The Fight are not able to fight or act for the rest of the Scene (unless the GM rules otherwise; say, for longer scenes).

Falling

Each 10 feet fallen raises the Damage Stage one number.

10.2 Mental Damage

reaction, charisma, attunement - ability to think, act / react; any interactions / politics; ability to use magic
Crazy, will-less, insane

10.3 Spiritual Damage

willpower/morale, luck, divinity / diety relationship

Chapter 11

Effects

Detail out this section

- Mechanical/narrative
- temp, perm
- combat affecting, other skill affecting, sense affecting ...
- Effect categories:
 - combat +/- X ranks/roll mod/number of rolls/attacks per rnd or per X rnds
 - senses: vision/hearing/smell/touch/taste +/-, additional capability (ie infravision)
 - movement mod - speed, dodging, perception, etc
 - stat +/-
- Injury
 - source, not effect: context-specific - eg vs. monster X, in situation X, only after X
 - source, not effect: triggered - full moon, word spoken, X does Y during Z while A,B,C
- Examples: all could be temp/perm
 - mech physical: sensory: blind, deaf, dumb; mobility: injured foot/leg; tool/combat: injured hand/arm
 - narrative physical: clumsy, inept, suave, handsome, scarred
 - mech mental: concussion, confused, amnesiac
 - narrative mental: quick, slow, photographic memory, sociopath, habit
 - mech spiritual: [un]lucky, divine protection/annoyance, hi/lo morale
 - narrative spiritual: superstitious, in tune with Nature, religious
 - mech stats: +/- stat
 - mech magical: held, charmed, asleep
 - narrative magical: any flair or theatrics

11.1 Effect Types and Durations

FIXME: these seem negative, add positive? Make negative/positive names for each matrixed type, explained two sections below

Scale	Duration	Physical	Mental	Magical	Divine	
Tactical	Intra-Scene	Temporary	Temporary	Temporary	Temporary	Temporary
Operational	Remainder of Scene	Injury		Spell	Minor Boon	
Strategic	Several Scenes	Major Injury		Enchantment	Favored/Unfavored	
Long-Term	Many Scenes	Disability		Ritual, Enchantment	Blessed/Cursed	Coup
Permanent	Remainder of Story	Deformity	Gifted/<none>	Artifact, Ritual	Beloved/Despised	

11.2 Effect Attributes

From a game play point of view, effects can be temporary or permanent; mechanical or narrative (or both). Effect types are one or more of physical, mental, spiritual, or magical. They can cause physical, mental, or spiritual damage.

11.3 Physical Effects

Physical Tactical Effects

- Stunned - unable to think clearly
- Wind Knocked Out - unable to fight or run while regaining breath

Physical Operational Effects

Physical Strategic Effects

- Concussion - unable to think clearly or perform more than basic actions
- Sprained joint - usually an ankle or wrist; move at one-third speed, unable to fight with held weapon or martial arts

Physical Long-Term Effects

Physical Permanent Effects

11.4 Mental

Tactical

- Surprised - caught flat-footed and momentarily unable to think or act for a round

11.5 Poison and Disease

Poison and Diseases have a Scale, a Target Attribute, and a dice value (eg: 2d4, d4+d6, 2d6, etc.). It may have a Maximum Time.

Each time unit of the relevant Scale (eg every day for a Strategic Scale poison), the poison or disease forces a contested roll of its dice versus the actor's target attribute, usually Endurance. If the poison wins, the actor's attribute is effectively lowered by one until the poison is cured or runs its course (if it has a maximum working time). If an actor's attribute reaches zero, he is dead.

After the poison or disease has run its course, the player's target attribute is increased by one each time unit until the PC is back to the original value.

Diseases may also be transmissible.

(how does that work?)

11.6 Curses

Curses are Magical or Divine, and can virtually and effect, duration, or appearance. Magical curses always have cure, although it may be challenging to discover or apply. Divine curses are powered by a diety or other divine force, and may or may not have a cure. Rather than a mundane cure, a PC must usually appease the diety in some way, or seek other divine assistance or intervention.

Chapter 12

Hero Points

Hero points are a metagame mechanic used to guarantee a heroic or desirable outcome of a particular action or event. The GM will grant zero or more hero points to players after each scene.

Players may spend a hero point to automatically claim success for an opposing skill roll, preferably described with suitable flair. When players spend a hero point they should describe what they are doing, such as a heroic move to help themselves or a party member.

Players may *not* spend a hero point *after* losing an opposing skill roll to change the loss to a win (this is a difference in how this mechanic works from most other RPGs). Instead, they may buy success with Debt points (see below). Note that this means players may have both Hero Points and Debt Points at the same time.

Players may also spend one or more hero points (number set by the GM) to stave off death. This usually happens when the PC is Out Of The Fight and cannot prevent a killing blow or event. The GM may elect to assign one or more Injuries, so the PC doesn't feel he's escaped completely unscathed ...

12.1 Debt Points

Debt Points let players run a deficit if they want to spend a Hero Point they don't have. They also allow players to retroactively declare a failed roll a success. It is suggested that the GM use a physical counter of a different color for Debt Points to distinguish them from normal Hero Points - for instance, red poker chips instead of white. The GM then has the option of "calling in the debt" at some future point, reclaiming the Debt Point from the player, by having something go wrong or poorly for the PC and/or party.

Part V

Skills

Chapter 13

Skills Overview

You are what you do.

Kuato, Total Recall

A skill is some specific set of actions that a character does that he can get better at. If an actor cannot markedly improve in some task in your setting, that task should not be a skill under these game mechanics - use an attribute bonus instead.

13.1 Skill Rank Table

#	Skill Range	Rank	Difficulty	Target	Die	Avg	Bump criteria
1	0-4	Unskilled	Trivial	1	d4	2.5	Any usage
2	5-9	Novice	Routine	2	d6	3.5	Any usage
3	10-19	Apprentice	Easy	3	d10	5.5	Successful usage
4	20-29	Journeyman	Medium	5	2d6	7.0	Successful usage
5	30-39	Skilled	Involved	7	2d10	11.0	Successful usage
6	40-49	Master	Hard	11	3d10	16.5	Successful usage at skilled/involved or above
7	50-59	Grandmaster	Very Hard	16	3d20	31.5	Successful usage at master/hard or above
8	60+	Legendary	Impossible	31	d100	50.5	GM/Setting-specific

13.2 And Table

d6	Result	Description
1-2	But	Some additional complication
3-4	n/a	nothing additional
5-6	And	Some additional benefit

13.3 Using Skills - Competitive

When using a skill in a competitive sense or combat, it's called a competitive use. Both (all) opponents each roll and total their rank dice, including any modifiers, to determine the winner. Additionally, each participant rolls a d6 and consults the And Table - the GM will narrate additional complications or benefits.

If one side's adjusted rank is two higher than the opponents rank, success is automatic with no roll necessary. The reverse is also true - if the opponent's rank is two higher, failure is automatic. Otherwise, all opponents roll the dice associated with their (possibly adjusted) rank. The GM will roll for any non-player character.

The highest roll (or automatic success) wins the Right To Narrate - they narrate what happens. (This can be thought of as the Consequence for "failing" this roll.)

In an ongoing contest, like a battle where opponents are not yet dead and continue to fight, the outcome is what happens that round. Hits may or may not be scored, depending on the situation, as per the specific mechanics (for example, Combat, below) or GM discretion.

13.4 Using Skills - Uncontested

When a character is using a skill in a situation where there is not another force or actor actively vying against him, it's called an uncontested use. Uncontested skill use can normally be treated as automatically successful where there is no pressure or additional the task difficulty.

However, if there are hindrances or challenges, or in general some tension that creates a reasonable chance for failure, the GM will evaluate the conditions and determine the base target difficulty rank. Modifiers are then applied to the difficulty rank:

Type	Difficulty Rank Modifier	Example	Counter-examp
Time pressure	+1	Monsters chasing party	
Senses hindered	+1		Blindfolded while lock
Insufficient or incorrect tools	+1	Makeshift lockpick made from wires	
Exceptional tools	-1	Master's toolkit or complete workshop	
Double time or resources	-1		Time pressure
Quadruple time and resources	-2		Time pressure

Rolls either succeed or fail.

Failing Skill Rolls - Fail Forward

Players can, at their option, choose to turn a skill roll failure into a partial success at the cost of a Consequence.

The GM will ask which side of the tension they wish to resolve (if there is more than one choice) - or may simply tell them the outcome - and ask the Player to narrate how they do it.

The GM will then give the party a Consequence, to be repayed at the Story level at some time of the GM's choosing.

Example

Monsters have chased the party down a corridor ending in a locked door. The mechanic quickly whips out his lockpicks and kneels in front of the door.

The GM tells the Player that this lock appears to have a difficulty equal to his rank. Under normal, unpressured circumstances, "pick this lock" would be an automatic success, but with monsters closing in, the task becomes "pick the lock before the monsters arrive". The additional time pressure also makes the task one step harder. The player rolls against the Skill Rank Table.

A success roll would mean the lock is picked before the monsters arrive.

A failed roll would mean the lock is not picked, and the monsters arrive.

If the player fails the roll, he may choose to Fail Forward for partial success - in this case, the lock is successfully picked after the monsters arrive, and the party gains a Consequence which the GM will call in later. Perhaps in this case, the monsters got a good look at the Characters and security and patrols are increased; or perhaps some equipment or important items is dropped; or the monsters choose to track the Characters and arrive again at an inopportune moment.

13.5 Improving Skills

When a scene is over, the GM will reward the use of a skill in that scene. Each PC will have the skill they used most, or most effectively, increased by one. This is at the GM's discretion. In extraordinary circumstances, he may allow none, or multiples per PC, or perhaps only for some PCs.

Some skills grant additional powers at certain levels. Others simply increase.

Normally these skill bumps cannot be "banked" or otherwise saved. They represent actual skill increases, effective immediately.

13.6 Additional Skills

Your setting may have special restrictions or additional skills. For instance, certain organizational or political affiliations may grant (or deny) specific skills. The GM may also add any skills he likes. They players may add skills during character build if they get the GM's OK.

13.7 Optional: Starting Skill Banking

As an optional rule, at the discretion of the GM, the players may “bank”, or save, up to some maximum number of acquired skill increases at the start of the game for assignment at a convenient moment during play when knowledge of a skill becomes useful. The player can then permanently assign some amount of his banked points to a skill, effectively pretending he had them all along.

For example, John Doe’s warrior has spent all but one of his initial build points, and after two scenes the GM has allowed him to save the two skill points from those scenes, giving him a total of three. During the next scene a situation comes up where the Climb skill would be useful. John retroactively decides that his warrior loved to climb growing up, and spends his three saved points on Climb, making them a permanent part of his PC.

Chapter 14

Combat

Rework from light to light-medium crunch

It should feel like real swords&magic swordfighting

Phases: dialogue, agonistic, dirty, all-in

normal scene: appearance, dialogue (or surprise), attack, block, <fight>

dialogue for morale manipulation, talk phase, back and forth

- Escalation first level

- Agonistic - threats, aggression, and submission

- Display - different types to indicate how much each is willing to invest/ risk to take, odds of winning, opportunity to back down/avoid

- Threats - specifically last chance(s) before fighting

Escalation second stage: dirty fighting

Escalation third stage: all in

Killing has social consequences, escalation level should be defaulted, escalation should have consequences, say

Bad Reputation++

OoTF or submitting should have plot consequences - moves the story.

Objective: Trying to escape / trying to overcome / capture / kill opponent / trying to kill self

Personal Factors (assume PC): combat experience, weapon skill, weapon type/quality, relevant attrs (usu. STR, DEX), effects,

Opponent factors: size difference, armor, mobility, STR/DEX/etc, distance, effects, morale

environment: terrain, lighting/sensory, space, other allies/opponents,

Actions: fight (attack vs defend weighting), move, dodge-only, taunt-or-comment-as-you-act

Results: hits, effects, dramatic side effects (walls collapsing, the knocked over lantern ignites the curtains, etc.), narrative

14.1 Notes

Merely touching (eg for spells) means opponent does NOT add armor; touching skin would add armor

Need to rework Hits, Armor values, and Weapon damage to work together

This model includes any type of contested rollofs - consider pulling “Competitive Rolls” into its own section under Skills overview

14.2 Combat Skills

Combat is a set of skills whose primary purpose is to cause damage to another through force. The individual skills are:

- Unarmed - a single skill that encompasses brawling, wrestling, and simple throws.
- Light Weapons:
 - Light Blades - small bladed weapons from knives through daggers up to short swords.

- Light Blunt - clubs and saps
- Light Ranged - hand-held crossbows and pistols
- Medium Weapons:
 - Medium Blades - one-handed swords, spears (when held)
 - Medium Blunt - warhammers, maces
 - Medium Ranged - spears and javelins (when thrown), bows, light crossbows,
- Heavy Weapons:
 - Heavy Blades - two-handed swords
 - Heavy Blunt - two-handed mauls
 - Heavy Ranged - heavy crossbow

14.3 Combat Table

Combat Rank	Hits	Max Opponents	Max Attacks	Moves	Combos
Unskilled	1	1	1		
Novice	2	1	1		
Apprentice	3	1	1		
Journeyman	4	2	1		
Skilled	5	3	2		
Master	6	4	3		
Grandmaster	7	8	4		
Legendary	8	Any	8		

Add different Moves for different Combat Styles, including unarmed

Maximum Opponents

This column lists the maximum number of opponents a PC can defend himself against during one round. If there are more simultaneous attackers than this, the Player can choose which ones to defend against, and the remainder get free attacks.

14.4 Combat Sequence

Combat is assumed to be between two or more individuals actively attacking and defending, trying to hit and damage their opponents. Each group of individuals so engaged is handled as a separate engagement. For example, two players each fighting their own opponent is two engagements. Two players both attacking a single opponent is one engagement.

A round of combat is handled by this sequence:

1. Everyone involved in an engagement names or decides upon a specific target.
 - (a) If there are more opponents than your Max Opponents, choose which ones to defend against.
2. Everyone rolls Combat skill dice simultaneously.
 - (a) Total equals combat skill rank dice + RCT + weapon bonus
 - (b) If you are attacking or defending against multiple opponents, make the appropriate number of rolls (up to Max Opponents), designating which opponent each roll is for before rolling.
3. If you roll highest against a particular opponent, you narrate the outcome.
 - (a) If there are multiple attackers attacking that particular opponent that roll higher than the opponent, they can all do damage, but only the highest gets to narrate.

- (b) You can do damage to as many opponents as your Max Attacks, though you may defend against up to Max Opponents. Note that this means you can win a particular roll, thus narrating the output, without actually doing damage.

14.5 Armor

An actor's Armor applies to each strike intended to cause damage, provided the usage is reasonable. A stereotypical battle is reasonable usage of armor, whereas standing in a cloud of poison gas is not.

Armor	Value	Notes
Small shield	1	buckler
Shield	2	round shield
Tower shield	3	huge body-length shield
Minimal armor	2	leather
Light armor	3	studded leather, chainmail
Medium armor	4	banded mail, chain-over-leather
Heavy armor	5	full platemail suit over chainmail

14.6 Weapon Damage

Damage normally done by various weapon groups:

Weapon	Weapon Bonus	Hits
Unarmed strike (fist, knee)	0	1
Light weapon (club, dagger)	+1	2
Medium weapon (sword, arrow, bolt, axe)	+3	3
Heavy weapon (2h sword, battle axe, maul)	+5	4

14.7 Unarmed Combat

Punching, escalate to wrestling/throwing/*real* *good* grappling system, escalate to animal nastiness

States: Zero -> held -> Locked -> Sleeper

Moves: Zero -> Held, strike, dirty (only once per fight, if at all; affects Rep)

Losing roll in Held is a Reverse, if the opponent wants it

Moves: Held -> (all automatically return to zero state) strike (+1 extra dmg with light blunt/blade), disarm, throw,

Moves: Locked -> (all maintain lock) Takedown, break

Moves: Sleeper -> OOF

Chapter 15

Martial Arts

15.1 notes

Inner power

Ponder implementation - Body/Mind/Spirit? combat=body, magic=mind, divine=spirit, MA? alignment not as “clean”; they’re not classes

perhaps variable, per style ... eg: =body for fighting, mind for some skills, spirit for some ...

strike, hold/escape, lock/disarm/escape, Injury (autoescape)

unarmed-melee-missle

physical, religious, spiritual; mental, character, philosophy

physical control, mental ctrl, spiritual ctrl,

medicine, herbal, healing

warrior, monk, priest (ie not only combat)

Named moves is interesting because it tells you the user’s Style/School/Master (->org->relat->politics). Fighting an unknown style give your opponent a one rank advantage. First time usage of a special/power/move(/strike?) will identify the style to anyone Skilled Rank or above.

There are no armed combat special moves, because the winner already narrates, and moves trade endurance for additional advantages, which is the hallmark of inner power.

15.2 Introduction

Although many PC attributes are used by Martial Arts moves, they are primarily powered by an Endurance Pool. A PC maintains an Endurance Pool of points equal to his Endurance Rank. Performing a Style Move usually requires the expenditure of a certain number of points, the total of which must be in the PC’s Pool. Points regenerate one per round.

15.3 Martial Arts Skill Table

Rank	Strike damage	Combos	Common(Cooldown)	Generic Template	
Unskilled	1	-			
Novice	2	-	Combo(4)	Body Control	
Apprentice	d4	2	Combo(3)	Mind Control	
Journeyman	d6	3	Combo(2)	Heal	
Skilled	d8	4	Big Jump(3)	Defy Gravity	
Master	d10	5		Nerve Manipulation	
Grandmaster	d20	6		Manipulation of Others	
Legendary	d100	8		Dramatic License	

15.4 Strikes

15.5 Moves

Combos: rank plus stat (str, spd, etc), rank plus stat plus stat (nerve punch: rank plus spd)

Not sure these are at the right level of abstraction:

Types of moves:

hand/foot/elbow/knee/head/weapon strike/block/grab/

block/grab/throw

dodge/escape/reverse

sweep/knock down/prone, disarm

joint lock

taunt/feint

break, pressure/nerve/vital point,

subdue, KO

attack with control: throw, joint lock, disarm, takedown, break, knockdown (sweep, knockout, etc)

defense: dodge, escape (from grab or lock), block,

strike: punch, elbow, kick, knee, headbutt, club, knife, sword, ...

attack to control: grab

15.6 Powers

15.7 Styles

different foci - prime attr, range, weapons, strikes, moves, philosophy

Tiger Style: primary Str, normal strikes; Moves: Tiger Claw (roll + Str) costs 1 Endurance, Jungle Roar (special) costs 3 Endurance,

Type	Technique	Rank	End. Cost	Description
Strike	Tiger Claw	Apprentice	1	Add STR to attack rolls
Move	Takedown	Journeyman	3	Take down opponent, Tiger on top
Power	Jungle Roar	Master	2	Fear - opponent at (some negative) for three rounds

Each style is its own skill. The setting may contain various schools, orders, and teachers who practice their own style, and the GM is free to create his own styles. At Master or above a PC may create a new style.

style-specific has special moves tied to rank (what about armed combat special moves?)

special moves may have lead-in and / or a cooldown time (in rounds)

Can inflict Injuries directly (list out in Injuries)

First time usage of a special/power/move(/strike?) against someone who doesn't know it gets a bonus - thereafter they know "the style" (augment this?)

Chapter 16

Magic

16.1 Introduction

Magic is a single skill. There are no mechanical restrictions on it, but there are usually setting factors that focus Wizards towards certain spells or sets of spells. For instance, reagents tend to be natural ingredients, and thus tend to be found clustered geographically. An example of this from the literature would be sulfur, a deposit that occurs in certain places - nearby Wizards would tend to use Fire more often.

More importantly, though, in most settings knowledge is rare, and it tends to be hoarded by its possessors. The knowledge of reagents, rituals, *et al.* is not evenly distributed, and there is much that is unknown. Between these two factors, and many others, Wizard Schools tend to focus on a certain subset of magic, and jealously guard their knowledge and traditions.

Beyond that, however, there is nothing that intrinsically limits a wizard in what he can cast, provided he can power the spell.

16.2 Casting

Casting requires the Wizard to determine what effect he's trying to use, at what range and duration. This will determine how many spell points are required, and how much Will is required.

In general, all points must be provided and used at the same time. All spell point sources except Rituals can provide points once a round. Only Rituals allow the accumulation of points over time for powering a casting at a later time. All Castings are done in one round, unless otherwise noted.

For the most part, spell points are generic and points from any source can be used to fulfill any requirement. Spell points are, however, nuanced and different - there may be cases where specific ingredients are required, or specific rituals in specific places or times.

The Wizard can supply a number of spell points equal to his Magic Skill rank per round - any extra points required must be supplied via Reagents, Catalysts, Enhancers, or Rituals. Providing extra points is sometimes useful (eg in attack spells), sometimes entertaining (feel free to embellish), and sometimes simply pointless, depending on the spell and usage.

The Will Cost is equal to the single highest value (not the total of all values) of the corresponding row for the spell's descriptors in the Spell Cost Table. If the Will Cost exceeds the wizard's Will, he takes Mental damage.

Spell Points

Spell Cost Table

Points	Will Cost	Effect	Range or AoE	Duration	Complexity	Minimum Rank	Comments
0	0	Trivial	Self	Instant	Raw		Even zero points required
1	1	Defend	Touch/Aura	Seconds	Basic		Defense in hits equal
2	2	Attack	10'		Simple		Damage in hits equal
3	3	Sensory					Includes illusions and
4	4	Divination		An hour	Medium	Journeyman	
5	5	Conjure		A day		Skilled	
x2/6	6	Heal	LoS	A year	Complicated		
x3/7	7	Create			Very complicated	Master	
x5/8	8	Space		Permanent		Grandmaster	Space manipulation
x8/10	9	Time	Any		Incomprehensible	Legendary	

Choose Effect; Range and/or Area of Effect; Duration; and Complexity. Add up all points, perform multiplications last.

Example: heal self: Heal x2, Range Self 0, Duration Instant 0, Complexity Basic 1 = 2 points to heal 1 hit (Basic), Will Cost 6

Example: heal self: Heal x2, Range Touch 1, Duration Instant 0, Complexity Medium 4 = 10 points to heal 4 hits (Medium), Will Cost 6

Example: fire bolt: Attack 2, Range 10' 2, Duration Instant 0, Complexity Simple 2 = 6 points to do 2 hits, Will Cost 2

Descriptors

Effects types:

Trivial is limited to small, narrative-only effects. *Attack* and *Defend* are the causing or prevention of Hits. *Sensory* includes all senses, and includes both illusions (to affect other's senses) and limited clairvoyance-type effects (to alter one's own senses). *Divination* is the attainment of knowledge beyond normal means, including major clairvoyance/clairaudience and speaking with the dead. *Conjure* is the summoning of existing items ... or beings ... *Heal* is the healing of beings or items. *Create* is the creation of new items or beings. *Space* deals with all things physical, and *Time* deals with all things temporal.

Reagents

Reagents make things easier: sulfur and bat guano burn, meaning the Mage needs only a tiny spark to start a bigger fire. Components are reagents: one type of power/energy plus reagent creates an effect. Components are not required, but provide additional spell points, allowing the Wizard to cast more powerful spells than he could by himself. Component quality dynamicizes effect and/or power needs. Knowledge of reagents is not automatic and must be learned, and they must usually be gathered by the wizard directly. Reagents are consumed during casting.

Sample reagents

Points	Fire	Air	Earth	Water
1	Bat guano, sulfur	Feathers	fine sand	purified water
2	Refined sulfur	Raptor feathers		
3				
4				
5	Small fire opal			
6	Large fire opal			
7				
8				

Catalysts and Inhibitors

Catalysts and inhibitors are similar to reagents, except that they are not consumed during casting. Catalysts add spell points, inhibitors subtract points. The proper manner to utilize these must be learned.

Rituals

Rituals can accumulate points at say 1/hr or 1/day - spell(ish) specific(ish). Must be learned.

Rituals are long, complicated affairs that create a huge power reserve for use in implementing truly awe-inspiring effects. They are, for better or worse, rare in the extreme and poorly understood, even compared to normal magic. They usually require expensive, potent, or unique items, extensive planning and coordination, special environments, even multiple wizards, and are sensitive to mistakes.

Enhancers

The knowledge of how, exactly, to use magical enhancers is not universal, although the existence of many such enhancers is common knowledge. Specific application requires study and practice, usually obtained via schools or teachers. The GM may grant a spell point, at his discretion, for any enhancer that the player invokes for a particular spell. He may also feel free to add, delete, or modify any of these to fit his setting.

Magical Laws:

- Law of Association - Commonality controls
- Law of Similarity - Look-alikes are alike
- Law of Attraction - Like attracts like, (or, Opposites attract)
- Law of Contagion - Once together, always together
- Law of Synchronicity - Simultaneous occurrence
- Law of Names - True Names give power

Natural Phenomena

Natural places, items, or times that can enhance casting (or otherwise affect them...). Items here are beyond simple, generic reagents, and are unique in some additional sense.

- Ley lines - provide spell points environmentally, as well as a conduit for channeling power. There are stories of special place at the junction of multiple lines, and there are rumors of special junctions that act as spell point multipliers ...
- Moon/planet/astrological phases - provide spell points for the duration, or perhaps only at a specific time.
- Certain minerals or substances; flora, or pieces thereof; fauna, or particular parts, organs, or excretions thereof - see Reagents

Metamagic

Metamagic means spells dealing with manipulating magic itself. Some examples would be powering spells without spell points, or using natural power sources such as ley lines. Metamagic spells can even operate on other metamagic spells.

These skills are typically *not* taught in normal Wizard Schools, depending on setting, of course. The GM may decide how they may be acquired, or if they can be acquired at all. Examples might include in a long-lost library, from an ancient Wizard, a special school, an invitation-only order, etc.

- Open Channel: Allows a Wizard to establish an open channel to an power source for use in reducing the number of points needed for subsequent spells. In essence it turns a power source into a continuous, generic reagent. Spell points provided depend on the strength of the source, and can either be continuous or one-shot. Costs 1 spell point.
- Trigger: Allows a Wizard to cast a subsequent spell, and specify any set of conditions, which, when met, will release the spell. Costs 4 spell points.
- Delay: A simplified form of Trigger, simply delays a certain amount of time between the completion of casting and when the spell goes into effect. Costs 2 spell points.

- Fork: Allows a Wizard to cast two subsequent spells, both of which will be released simultaneously. Almost always used with Trigger. Costs 2 spell points.
- Chain: A specialized form of Trigger, allows a Wizard to attach a subsequently cast spell to a previously cast spell held in a Trigger or Fork. Costs 2 spell points. The second spell is released when the prior spell collapses (finishes).

Hanging spells

Wizards can spend extra points to prepare spells for casting later on. Doing so alleviates the Will cost.

Resistance

Certain places, items, or objects can function as natural inhibitors, in and of themselves, and / or by projecting such resistance. Such resistors effectively ignore spell points sourced from specifically resisted - that is, spells that would normally succeed will instead fail if removing the resisted points leaves insufficient power.

Mages hoping to overcome this resistance will likely need to research the target, potentially special rituals, and almost certainly acquire specific components

16.3 Magic Table

#	Skill Range	Rank
1	0-4	Unskilled
2	5-9	Novice
3	10-19	Apprentice
4	20-29	Journeyman
5	30-39	Skilled
6	40-49	Master
7	50-59	Grandmaster
8	60+	Legendary

16.4 Schools

A Master or higher may choose to start a School. A school needs a Master or higher at its head at all times thereafter.

Schools focus on particular subjects, and are obviously limited to what the Master(s) know. Larger or better-funded schools may have a dedicated research capability, but as this is obviously a significant source of power, such places must necessarily be heavily embroiled in the local political arena ...

Graduates of Wizard Schools or individual Teachers are typically presented a gift that acts as a Catalyst or Enhancer - for example, this could be a ring, a pendant, a staff, or a tiara; or perhaps a non-wearable item such as an orb or a looking glass. Such gifts will usually provide one additional spell point.

16.5 Mage Actions

Wizard Duels

Wizard Duels are not a mechanic *per se*. When wizards duel, there are no roll offs - each spell is successful, subject to whatever the current environment is. The “duel” is purely narrative.

There may or may not be social conventions that the combatants may (or may not) wish to adhere to - for instance, the stereotypical rule that he who sheds the “first blood” wins the duel.

Optional: Wizard Duels, Alternative

As an optional rule, wizard combat can be basically the same as normal combat - roll off, winner describes what happens. Continuing effects from the previous round's spells can be completely nullified.

Some ideas for the form a Wizard Duel could take:

- Wizards create and equip huge, ghostly Avatars on the fly, based on their current ranks, and the Avatars have a melee combat
- Only Elemental forces can be used - Earth, Air, Fire, Water
- Only Summoned creatures can be used
- Wizards must transform into creatures and engage in combat
- Wizards create an occupy an artificial space separate from the physical dimension, but are otherwise unconstrained in casting

Research

Any reagents, components, catalysts, or rituals are unique to the Character. Research to get more.

Magic Item and Artifact Creation

Create items permanently enchanted to perform feats from mundane to legendary. Decidedly nontrivial, involving arduous rituals and expensive ingredients.

Chapter 17

Religion

17.1 General Priest Skill and Powers

A priest's power is defined by his relationship with his deity and/or the deity's church, depending on the specific deity. This is captured in a Relationship (18.3) with the priest's deity (which represents his standing directly with the deity) and/or a Member (18.4) (which represents his standing or title within the deity's church).

Both the Relationship and the Member have the same number of ranks and normal versions of those Political skill, but may have different names (depending on the specific deity served).

In manner or progression, the Relationship can be increased or decreased based on how the PC's deity perceives his performance in accomplishing the deity's goals and ideals. That means a priest's rank may not automatically increase in the same manner that other Skills do. It is likely that at low levels a priest will progress in such a manner, while at mid- or high-levels there is opportunity to advance faster or slower, depending on how well the priest represents his deity's wishes and instructions. This will be judged by the GM. Note that it is also possible that a displeased deity can lower a priest's standing as well (by reducing the Relationship).

A priest's standing with the church - his Member stat - is subject to all the normal pressures and strictures of a normal human organization. A deity who prefers working through his church will normally grant divine power to his priests based on their standing within the church.

As a representative of a deity, several powers are granted to all priests, regardless of which power they serve. Some deity's priests may have exceptions; they will be listed under the setting's description of that deity 25 on page 61.

In general, players have to roll for success against their deity Relationship as if this were an uncontested skill. This is a way to represent the unknown reasoning, or plain fickleness, of deities, and more strongly reward those who are more loyal.

These common powers are:

Generic Standing Names	Non-priest Rank Equivalent	Power		
Probationer	Unskilled	none		
Acolyte	Novice	Minor Assist		
Subdeacon	Apprentice	Ward		
Deacon	Journeyman	Assist		
Priest	Skilled	Divine Assistance		
Bishop	Master	Boon		
Archbishop	Grandmaster	Major Working		
Avatar	Legendary	Any		

Minor Assist

The priest must dramatically intone the deity's name in relevant phrase, such as "Oh, GodX, heed they humble servant!" The priest may gain a small divine assistance: purifying food or water, causing a small glow to provide light, starting a campfire, etc. Usually may be done with relative frequency.

Ward

The priest calmly performs a warding gesture, invoking the power of his deity, after which any being whose highest skill is below the priest's skill rank may not take offensive action against the priest. At Journeyman rank the priest may extend protection to his immediate area and chosen compatriots therein.

Assist

A medium strength divine assistance, preferably in the theme of the deity. Examples would include blessing a weapon or small group before a battle; curing a temporary condition; speaking with the dead; exorcising a minor demon; minor divinations; resisting extreme environmental or elemental conditions; etc. Usually about once a day, depending on circumstances.

Divine Assistance

Significant power: major healing, including reversing permanent conditions; destroying major beings inimical to the deity; specific divinations, subject to all the vagaries typically associated with such things. Once a week or so.

Boon

Serious divine intervention - small earthquake, weather control, regrowing lost limbs, teleportation - or a personal divine favor, not necessarily related to the deity's direct goals. While lower powers are typically rubber-stamped in normal circumstances, Boons and Major Workings are subject to direct approval of the diety in accordance with their current plans or desires, and are far more variable in effect ... if they are granted at all.

Major Working

The kind of thing people talk about for generations: resurrection, an earthquake demolishing a town or castle. Requires extensive preparation and sacrifice, thus realistically limited to not more than once a year (and usually much longer).

17.2 Standard Priest Tasks

General focus - get skill points for doing specific "things my god likes"

Preaching The Word

Standing in the town square, or any other public place, preaching one's belief. This is general preaching, not a specific conversion attempt.

Conversion

Proselytizing and converting unbelievers to the worship of your god is usually expected of priests, and usually looked upon very favorably by deities.

Ceremony

Many religions have periodic or event-driven ceremonies performed to gain blessings or favorable outcomes. Some may also have more nefarious purposes.

Last Rites for the Faithful

A common type of ceremony designed to assure eternal favor for the dead.

Sermon

As most priests function as a deity's spokesperson, priests are usually expected to keep the faithful in line. Sermons can take many forms, from organized readings of holy text in large ceremonies to simple encouraging words in private when they are needed.

Sacrifice

Gods demand sacrifices. All manner of variation is possible: concrete to abstract, trivial to monumental, rare to frequent.

Chapter 18

Politics

Politics, in this context, is

- Types of political power: physical force, emotional (pain/pleasure), rational, habit

- Perhaps a multi-level game: Detailed, where players utilize skill/magic/force/personal roleplaying of political interaction; and Political, where players play in a more abstract manner, utilizing political connections

- High skill in X could give you hirelings/henchmen/etc for free/cheap

- Political play: attempts to achieve some goal via political mechanics...

- Unopposed (eg: research), spend energy/time/points until goal achieved (or not)

- min/max per time period or effort difficulty, some target number for (partial) success.

- Opposed, same, but opponent can also spend points.

- Different types of resource points with different refresh rates?

- Power sources:

- Referent: Personal charisma, organizational charisma, intangible (ideals, eg: nationalism, patriotism)

- Expert: Reputation

- Legitimate: Organization title/level

- Reward/Coercive: pain/pleasure, assets given or taken

- Resources:

- Information, Relationships

- In the above system of types, power is relative and some assume / depend on each side's point of view

- Special org: recognized legitimate government (if any), who has innate power (as well as an army :-))

- Opponent might be hidden - spend points to discover target (possible frontman)

- Each side will be unaware of points spent until results are had (and maybe not even then)

- Exercise will through power - exercise a specific Power you have in some manner in an attempt to achieve a goal

...

- Humans are social, and societies have political organization ... and expectations for their members.

- Connections - relations that can be used for information or resource acquisition/fence.

- Mid- and high-level characters will be pressured to join groups/guilds/kingdoms, etc.

- High-level uncontrolled talent is dangerous, and makes rulers nervous.

- Once a group is joined, other bits of role-playing open themselves.

- Advancing levels may depend on being able to oust/beat/defeat/kill/displace a superior in that org (think 1st ed. monks).

- Some organization memberships may grant special skills or abilities.

- Political "play": situation, participants, purpose, method, (list of) actions, consequences

- NPCs will have goals and a (prioritized) list of wants, assets, and means

- Things to do: attack/enhance reputation (own or others); establish/undermine relationships; join/leave org; make connections; persuade

18.1 Overview

Politics is an extremely free-form set of social skills. Benefits and repercussions should be of a much larger scale than the consequences of more tactical skills like Combat.

18.2 Reputation

The Reputation Skill denotes how well-known the PC is. A character may have one or more instances of this skill - for instance, a general Reputation, a different reputation in a specific city, a third amongst a certain clan in some region. The higher the rank, the more widely known the PC is. Note that the actual details of that reputation may be good or bad ...

Rank	Difficulty	Ability
Unskilled	Trivial	
Novice	Routine	
Apprentice	Easy	
Journeyman	Medium	
Skilled	Involved	
Master	Hard	
Grandmaster	Very Hard	
Legendary	Impossible	

18.3 Relationships

A Relationship is a listing of the status of the PC's relationship with a specific person, group, or organization (see also 18.4). This skill may be taken multiple times, once for each relationship. Each of these relationships is assumed to be significant and useful to some extent in the current game or campaign, which is why the player bothers to track it. Otherwise, see Connections.

Rank	Difficulty	Ability
Unskilled	Trivial	
Novice	Routine	
Apprentice	Easy	
Journeyman	Medium	
Skilled	Involved	
Master	Hard	
Grandmaster	Very Hard	
Legendary	Impossible	

18.4 Membership

PCs may be part of groups or Organizations. This skill is for a single, specific group, and may be taken multiple times, once for each membership. Unlike normal skills, where usage results in increased mastery, this skill denotes one's standing within the organization, and will be set, potentially arbitrarily, by the GM.

In hierarchical organizations, one may usually give orders to lower level members.

Rank	Difficulty	Ability
Unskilled	Trivial	
Novice	Routine	
Apprentice	Easy	
Journeyman	Medium	
Skilled	Involved	
Master	Hard	
Grandmaster	Very Hard	
Legendary	Impossible	

18.5 Connections

The Connections Skill covers all general and non-specific relationships, and specifically excludes anyone covered under Relationship or Member. Connections represents all the faceless NPCs that are not worth the player or GM's time to detail out. A PC may take this skill multiple times, once for each group or area, and the GM should restrict it within common sense. For example, "Connections: Underworld", meaning "any underworld anywhere" is probably too broad, while "Connections: Underworld, City of X" or "several towns adjacent to Y" is much more believable.

The player is free to characterize this in any manner he feels would add flavor and color. A good example of this would be the London homeless network that Sherlock Holmes uses for information gathering.

Possible uses of Connections:

- Information and Gossip - used to find out or distribute information about something general or specific about something or someone.
- Favor or Generic Help - A favor is asking a close acquaintance for help in some action. Compensation is usually offered, either implicitly or explicitly, but generally not required, as the closeness of this relationship is such that the acquaintance may also ask such a favor of the PC.
- Order - An order is demanding something of someone, without specific recompense offered.
- Acquisition / Fencing - obtaining (or ridding oneself) of an item.

Rank	Difficulty	Ability
Unskilled	Trivial	
Novice	Routine	
Apprentice	Easy	
Journeyman	Medium	
Skilled	Involved	
Master	Hard	
Grandmaster	Very Hard	
Legendary	Impossible	

18.6 Politics

The Politics skill covers an PC's ability to non-violently persuade (that is, anything short of physical force) another party to do something. A PC has only one Politics Skill.

The GM will set a difficulty before rolling, and rolls usually cannot be retried until circumstances change. Difficulty settings should be set considering any relevant items, especially any (known) Member, Relationship, or Connections ranks that might apply. Each of these is sufficient to modify the roll by one rank. Examples might be:

- Known Connections to a group significant to this action
- Member of an Organization that will be interested in the outcome
- A Relationship to a high political official.

Before rolling, either party may "sweeten the deal" by adding additional enticements. Significant sweeteners will modify the difficulty roll (for or against).

Note that after applying all applicable modifiers it is very possible that the roll is an automatic success or failure due to the resulting rank differences. It is this fact that should encourage players to role play situations more deeply.

Rank	Difficulty	Ability
Unskilled	Trivial	
Novice	Routine	
Apprentice	Easy	
Journeyman	Medium	
Skilled	Involved	
Master	Hard	
Grandmaster	Very Hard	
Legendary	Impossible	

18.7 Organizations

Organizations are power structures that determine the flow of authority, and usually money and resources, in areas they deem under their control. Several variations of power structures, official and unofficial.

Some Organizations bestow Titles, implicitly or explicitly, which may have Advantages and Disadvantages, which may be expressed mechanically via dice modifiers or thematically via distinctive attributes or behavior. Some examples might be:

- A Knight who represents a monarchy. “Knight” would be a bestowed and universally recognized title in this kingdom, and would automatically grant extra Resources, Connections, etc.

A good rule of thumb is that there will *always* be *somebody* who "owns" any particular activity in a society. All the interesting ones, anyway ...

Examples:

- The Police/Military/Militia/Town Guard owns public security, investigation, and the legal framework.
- Each Guild owns the activities related to its practices; for instance, the Wizards Guild owns spell research (and potentially casting).
- Crime Lords own all significant illegal activities.

Organizations are especially significant in that PCs may belong to them, but also because PC actions may knowingly or unknowingly infringe on an area that an Organization feels it has jurisdiction over (whether official, or legal, or not). PCs “acting” without “consent” of such Organizations are typically seen as threatening, and may be actively discouraged. In addition, mid- and high-level PCs may be pressured to join such Organizations, thus bringing them under control of those who head those Organizations.

Significant attributes to track for Organizations: name, locations, type(governmental, business(legal/illegal), social/humanitarian, religious, educational, etc.)primary purpose/activity, membership size, known member names, description, resources (quality value - what they have access to). Provides hooks and traction for the GM.

Rank	Difficulty	Ability
Unskilled	Trivial	
Novice	Routine	
Apprentice	Easy	
Journeyman	Medium	
Skilled	Involved	
Master	Hard	
Grandmaster	Very Hard	
Legendary	Impossible	

Chapter 19

Urban

These mechanics should make it feel like real thieving.

- shadowing , tracking, and evasion

- hide, search

- b&e, climb walls

- distract? move silent?

- lockpicking - as with all recommended action types: action to do, tools that help/hinder, mechanics for doing

- lockpicking: type, difficulty, manufacturer, key type

- tool: lockpick: type, quality, buff/nerf per lock attr

- multiples per target - multiple locks per door, locks/traps per safe, etc

- trap set , detect, and disarm

19.1 Climb

Ascending any vertical(-ish) surface. PCs have a base chance to climb a normal wall of 2 in 6. There are a number of possible bonuses or penalties that can apply, at the GM's discretion:

- Rough wall (easy hand/foodholds): +1

- Each piece of (useful) equipment: +1

- Light equipment, lightly encumbrance, or leather armor: -1

- Moderate “: -3

- Heavy equipment or metal armor: -5

- Failing a Climb Walls results in Falling, possible damage, and probable noise.

19.2 Hide

Base 2 in 6, modifiers. General improbability to hide in shadows, hide in plain sight, improved effectiveness of cover?, etc.

19.3 Chases

Good movie chases are based on beats - chasee does something (run, obstruct, change direction, etc), chaser does something

- requirements: more actions/excitement than just one rolloff, but must be capped - cannot go forever

- Terrain modifiers

- Should slide into and out of Tracking mechanic (if any)

- Chase mechanics - FIXME

Optional Chase Mechanic - start a d6 on 1 or 2, another on 6. Both sides roll off - chasee wins, add one to first die, chaser wins, subtract one. If the first d6 was already at 1 and goes to 0, caught. if it was at 6 and goes to 7, escape. Turn the second d6 up one. At six, escape. d4 city, d8 open.

- Chase v2: each side has a d6 (city, d8 open) - chaser starts on say 2, target on 4, roll off. Same roll caught

Chase v3: a la movies, target creates situation/obstacle, chaser reacts. sprint; path-split: (non-unique) corner, door, ladder, etc.; terrain: rooftop, swim, lion's den, leaping over a fence, scaling a wall; obstacle: knock things down, tight fit, calls friends, thru a crowd. Still roll off, possibly with penalties. Include consequences. Not d6, but ranged: extreme, long, medium, close, right behind you, caught

chase mechanics should allow the PCs to do some actions that have effects; they should be tension, movie-like, not realistic. Spend HP, or roll against an action (shortcut, leap, player-determined, etc) - fail lose a step, succeed gain a step. Spend an HP to autosucceed. (good HP drain)

X number of beats to lose 'em, starts at Y beats apart, roll, Based on Perception for bonuses

Chapter 20

Wilderness

tracking, hunting, riding, needed at all?

Part VI

Setting

Chapter 21

Design ideas

Amazing and Fantastic

Diversity and extremes in geology and weather: permanent rains (water,ash,dust,etc), monstrous cliffs, ocean cliffs, rock waves

large mesa serves as ocean-side protected zone from large predators - ocean has watercliffs, too(!)

Large night-time predators; tribe with a Last Man In to cover Homecave entrance

isolated mesa with fantastic animals

magic-gone-wild apocalypse wreckage zone

air-water area, area sink that gets gradually harder to breathe under"water"; huge-coral forest

Defy logic (& PC leverage)

Lots of unknown

Markov chain language creations

Not superheroes in a normal medieval world; 'normal' heroes in a magical world

Ancient psuedo-humans - actual barbarians, Neanderthal-like - troglodytes? Troggs?

Avoid "orcs and goblins" - more humans, but still monsters; diff nations, orgs, groups, mercs

Archons - Power's representatives, Implies angel-like hierarchy

Saurians who rule the North

mirror-opposite faces? fire->ice giants, earth-Shadow(not "shadows"), air->dragons, water->undead?

mad god-king with a genie

large savannah predators

ruins, esp. underground

new ores/metals

drugs (and a drug trade, and copy-cats, and predators)

significant flora (huge trees, carnivorous forests, areas of increasing chaosity)

Amazing geography (don't forget underwater)

Dust desert - sail it

Faerie are xenophobic and old, not called elves but X or something, look like bark and leaf, perfect camo, nonanthropomorphic

Parasites that can transform you into something else

Wizard castles/towers/bunkers/houses that are very dangerous and usually hidden

Out of control magic items, discoveries cause 'gold rushes', heavily disruptive

Consequences: settings that are the results of consequences: hero/villain triumphs and runs kingdom/empire; gold rush caused inflation; (demons) escaped and established foothold

Cities are walled (don't forget barnacles), better ones have militias/armies

Some farmers have "urus", large cattle 6' at shoulder. The steppes have large herds - need to have the steppes expand out past humans like the southern forest does.

The southern forest gets bigger the farther you go - huge trees, ants, beetles, flyers, smaller mammals; treepeople that have "burrows" and tunnel networks thru trees

The South also gets colder the farther south you go.

Dwarves burrowed down and are gone (abandoned ruins)

Seas are very, very rough/large - difficult sailing

live near a volcanic range, lots of obsidian in small disks - jai-alai-like thrower, very dangerous

Replace 'lord' and 'king' with others (eg Indian 'Raja')

Markov chains for non-english or greek-sounding names; seeded word list ->markov->generate new->add to word list for various langs

21.1 Templates

Tribe: Leader: Goals and enemies: System of reward/punishment:
also: race, language, traditions

21.2 Area Design

Top down:

Determine:

1. Environment, Area size and geography
2. Age, Type, Original purpose, Original occupants
3. Construction materials/methods, Map or nodemap
4. Relevant history, Current occupants, Current purpose
5. Notable NPCs

Zone block:

- Default construction / surroundings descriptions
- List of major NPCs / factions and their interrelationships
- Random encounters table
- Random references: adjective list, dungeon dressings, empty room descriptions

Template standard adjective lists

Location type: large: temple, burial ground, residential, castle

Location type: small: house, chapel, cemetery, kitchen, keep, outpost/barracks

Age/occupation: ancient/abandoned to new/occupied

Chapter 22

Introduction

Eos is a fantasy setting intended for use with the Hero Story role-playing game. It describes an adult, savage, vicious world, full.

Based on the design and expected play style of Hero Story, this world is purposefully darker and cruder than normal RPG settings, in order that the players may distinguish themselves that much more.

Skills - setting-specific

The GM may add any skills he likes. They players may add skills during character build if they get the GM's OK.

Setting-specific magic reagents/minerals/substances/flora/fauna

S-s metals, armors, weapons (inc. 'odd' and 'unreal' weapons)

Ley lines, moon/planet/astrological phases

Organizations

Setting-specific player templates

Chapter 23

History

Use Greek and greek-ish names.

No one really knows what happened, or when. What is known is that there was a golden age, and an apocalypse. A dozen plausible theories exist - a God's War, plain war, powerful magic gone awry, plague ... in any case, civilization was destroyed. Humans were saved, by fortune or purpose, and are said to have dwelt with the Elemental Powers for a time.

At some point, we were brought back - or perhaps never left - the southern continent. Before the Apocalypse, humans were all of a kind - no wings, no gills - but living with the Powers changed us. The Air People grew wings, and their bones became lighter and frailer; the Water People grew gills, and webbed feet and hands; etc.

How long we existed in that paradise is unclear. Some say millenia, some say no time at all. Each clan centered on a location linked with its Elemental Plane - the Fire people the volcanoes before the Burning Lands, the Air People the Aeries in the Eastern Mountains, etc; but the Gates were closed, and the Powers heard from no more. Here too, no one remembers precisely why, but we know it was several hundred years ago.

Humans, though changed, are still human. The New Kingdoms were formed as we spread to attempt reconquering a world once ours; though not easily, as many other beasts have long filled the gaps left by our absence. New gods came to be, and they begat more gods and all manner of things. Instability is common, and more than one kingdom has been laid open and its remains torn to pieces by its rivals ... or by fouler things ...

... and yet the past, while forgotten, remains. In the wilds and outside the small borders of the New Kingdoms lie creatures and magics unknown to Man. There are two known continents to the North where humans have not settled. They are not uninhabited; not everything was destroyed in the Apocalypse ...

Chapter 24

Races

24.1 Design goals

Not stereotypical tolkienesque: human, dwarf, elf, halfling [gnome] Historically very humanocentric Mods on the models: - plain humans others not human: - firepeople - very fast, red/black skin, very fragile, need it hot, sleep at night, large variation in size - airpeople - angels; humans with large wings and talons, very light - waterpeople - bluegreen, gills and fins - earthpeople - brown, slow, strong, solid, "dwarves" no hair, like short stone golems

Races

Humans have evolved into four distinct subspecies: Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. Each ranges from completely "normal", indistinguishable from your average human; to extreme, as detailed below.

The Air Race is a nation of flyers. Most have vestigial wings and feathers, and some degree of claw-like feet. The extreme has full-fledged wings with a 10-12 foot wingspan, and can fly. Their bones are all very light and hollow; hence, they are all more easily injured than the other races.

The Earth Race is a nation of diggers. They tend toward being very broad and muscular, though slightly shorter than the other races. The extreme has incredible strength, but is noticeably slower, and cannot run at any significant speed. Their denseness grants them an additional hit.

The Fire Race is a disorganized collective of chaotic individuals. They vary wildly in height, speed, and coloring (tending towards reds and oranges, though purples and yellows are not uncommon, and rarely even other colors). Their temperament is unstable and emotional, ranging from sedate and pondering to manic and foolhardy, changing unpredictably. The extreme glows redly, and has a burning touch (one extra hit burn damage). This elevated temperature is uncontrollable, so normal clothing cannot be worn, etc.

The Water Race is a loose collection of tribes, of various character. Some are friendly and open, other quite hostile and warlike. They often have gills, and are the only race that has settlements underwater in the oceans. Their territories extend farther out than is known, into the deep ocean. Their coloring tends to blues and green, they have webbed hands and feet (sometimes almost flippers), and many have gills. The extreme is very fishlike, requiring almost constant moisture, with large-irised eyes, and the power to heal one hit per day.

Chapter 25

Gods

The gods are what remain of the servant's first creations. The servants disappear from the stories after creating the gods.

The Elemental Gods have a geographical focus:

Element	Mirror Aspect
Earth	Shadow
Air	Storms
Fire	Ice
Water	Ice

As they derive from overall Nature (even the Mirror Aspects), they do not have human motivations or human orientations. They grant powers to their priests, and present some traits understandable to humans, but they are not emotional, are neither good nor evil, and have no ego - they simply are. Even Ice, who appears to be a destroyer, should not be thought of as "evil" - he is simply fulfilling his function. At least, that's what the priests tell the common folk ...

The New Gods are more interested in human affairs:

Simplify - split up, drop the unifying aspect, just have X and !X

Name	Positive Aspect	Negative Aspect
Agora / Khrusos	Commerce	Thieves
Phos / Noso	Light, Health	Disease
Apophu / Hyla	Harvest	Wilderness
Hades / Athanatos	Death	Undead
Khresimos / Kheir	Tools	Battle
Sophia / Kasma	Knowledge	The Void

25.1 Anhelios (Shadow, Earth Mirror)

Personality (traits, generalized, not good or evil); attitude toward priests, expectations and penalties.

Anhelios is the god of shadows, the mirror of Earth. His realm is the insubstantial, the vague, the half-seen. Priests of Anhelios are frequently referred to as "shadows" or "the Shadows of Anhelios". Shadows are also actual beings in and of themselves, terrifying creatures who serve Anhelios.

Standing	Rank	Power	DarkSight	Darkness	Blind
Shadow	Unskilled				
Shadow	Novice	Create Shadow	DarkSight(3)		
Shadow	Apprentice		DarkSight(4)	Darkness(3)	
Shadow	Journeyman		DarkSight(5)	Darkness(4)	Blind(2)
Shadow	Skilled	Summon Shadows	DarkSight(6)	Darkness(5)	Blind(3)
Shadow	Master	ShadePhase	DarkSight(7)	Darkness(6)	Blind(4)
Dark Shadow	Grandmaster	ShadowWalk			Blind(5)
Beloved	Legendary		DarkSight(8)		

- DarkSight

- Darkness
- Blind

25.2 Bronte (Storms, Air Mirror)

Bronte is god of storms. His realm is the clouds and the upper air, and all flying beings fear him. Dragons are Bronte's chosen, and are enemies of all other flying creatures.

Priests of Bronte are expected to be proficient with a spear, Bronte's favorite weapon. They dislike being in enclosed spaces, or indoors for very long.

Standing	Rank	Cloud Cover
Raincloud	Unskilled	
Raincloud	Novice	Mist
Raincloud	Apprentice	Fog, Lightning
Storm	Journeyman	Thunder
Storm	Skilled	Dragon
Thunderstorm	Master	Fly, Call Storm
Hurricane	Grandmaster	
Beloved	Legendary	

- Mist: Slowly creates a hazy mist around the priest, about 5' radius initially, expanding out if he has time to concentrate
- Fog: Creates a fog thick as pea soup, about 10' radius initially, expanding outward as he concentrates. Visibility is very limited, about 5'.
- Thunder: A thunderclap deafens all within a 25' radius for the next round. At Master rank, it may optionally be directed by touch to stun for a round.
- Call Storm: The priest may call forth a violent thunderstorm, even from a cloudless day.
- Lightning - Must be under open sky.
 - Emanates from priest, single target, does one hit.
 - At Journeyman rank, the priest may charge his spear, does one extra hit.
 - At Master rank, optionally a 10' radius strike.

Additional Powers:

- Starting at Skilled rank, it is possible for a priest to enlist a Dragon as his mount and compatriot.
- At Master rank, Bronte's priests may fly, slowly, regardless of air currents.
- At Grandmaster rank priests may fly with the speed and agility of an eagle.

25.3 Psychro (Ice, Fire and Water Mirror)

Psychro is the mirror of both Fire and Water, and is especially powerful. The Ice Giants revere Psychro, and he protects them.

Priests of Psychro are particularly dangerous in hand to hand combat, as they are granted Martial Artist powers as well.

Standing	Rank	Power	
	Unskilled		
	Novice	Cold Wind	
	Apprentice		
	Journeyman	Ice Bolt	
	Skilled	Ice Portal	
	Master	Freeze	
	Grandmaster		
	Legendary		

- Cold Wind - Invoke a swirling wind of snow and hail, doing one hit and obscuring vision.
- Ice Bolt - Throw a jagged icicle at your target, for two hits.
- Ice Portal - Open a portal to the Plane of Ice
- Freeze - Any one of the following:
 - Instantly freeze any object touched, even fire
 - Drop the temperature in to subzero

25.4 Agora / Khrusos - Commerce and Thieves

Shared powers

Standing	Rank	Detect Valuables
	Unskilled	[Detect] Lie
	Novice	
	Apprentice	Detect Gold(3)
	Journeyman	Detect Currency(4)
	Skilled	Detect Currency and Gems(4)
	Master	Detect Valuables(5)
	Grandmaster	Detect Valuables(5)
	Legendary	

- [Detect] Lie: the ability to lie convincingly, or detect lies. Gives a one rank bonus to any rolls.
- Detect X: the ability to detect, upon concentration, the named items, at increasing distance.

Agora

Agora is the god of commerce. There are those outside the priesthood who believe Agora also stands for honesty in transactions; the priesthood is perfectly happy to allow them to continue believing that. Priests of Agora understand that while being honest is usually good business, it's not integral, merely practical, and not an absolute.

The Priests of Agora control the unions and guilds in all major cities, and have extensive relationships with most powers and organizations. When using this network, their Connections Rank is treated as two ranks higher.

Priests of Agora are expected to tithe 10% of all their income to The Organization.

Ironically, the leaders of the Thieves Guilds tend to be priests of Agora, rather than Khrusos - it's better for business.

The Organization

The Organization is the common name for the church of Agora. All priests of Agora are expected to belong to The Organization. Ties are very, very long and very, very deep - the group looks out for itself, and its own.

Khrusos

Khrusos of the god of thievery and deceit. Priests of Khrusos exist to relieve others of their belongings, and are believed to be quite rare.

Priests of Khrusos cannot be publicly so - no urban society will tolerate so obvious a lawbreaker. Thus they cannot have followers, and from hard-won experience almost never reveal themselves as such, even to their friends. They nevertheless often run a crew in a large urban setting. Such crews are often highly profitable, but short-lived, as they draw the attention of the authorities - the hands of Khrusos just can't seem to resist, even if it means having to go to ground for an extended period. Priests often specialize in one area of thievery - for instance, lower level priests might run and teach a gang of child pickpockets in the local market, while higher-level priests might head up a gang that specializes in art thievery or long cons.

Priests of Khrusos have extensive underworld relationships, and they know everybody who's anybody in a wide area around their home base. When using this network, their Connections Rank is treated as two ranks higher.

All priests of Khrusos are referred to as “The Hand of Khrusos”, or simply “The Hand” or “hand” for short, regardless of rank. They are loners, and there is no organized religion for Khrusos.

Khrusos demands a slice - a flat 20% of the total take must be sacrificed to him. Note that Khrusos is uninterested in trivialities that may occur between the time of the heist and the time of the sacrifice ... but failure to tithe carries penalties ... and interest ...

Powers: Sleight-of-hand, Hide, Open/Unlock, Detect Alarms/Traps, Sleep, Minor Illusion, Create Gadget

Standing	Rank	Powers
Hand	Unskilled	Sleight of Hand
Hand	Novice	Hide
Hand	Apprentice	Open / Unlock
Hand	Journeyman	Detect Safeguards
Hand	Skilled	Sleep, Create Gadget
Hand	Master	Minor Illusion
Hand	Grandmaster	
Hand	Legendary	

- Sleight of Hand: Priests immediately learn basic sleight-of-hand. At Apprentice or above, items can actually be stored in a pocket dimension that cannot be discovered physically.
- Hide: The ability to maximize the success of hiding in any situation. At Novice and Apprentice this is only physical, adding one effective rank for a roll; At Journeyman or higher this is divine, allowing hiding and camouflage in near-impossible situations.
- Detect Safeguards: Allows detection, upon concentration, of any safeguards - guards, alarms, traps, either physical or magical - within a small radius.
- Sleep: Puts non-magical beings to sleep
- Create Gadget: The creation of a special-purpose, single-use item to overcome some specific obstacle during an operation. The item can be produced “out of thin air” - the player is expected to choose something unusual, or something normal used in an unusual way.
- Minor Illusion: Just what it says.

25.5 Phos / Noso - Life and Disease

Standing	Rank	Damage/Self	Damage/Other	Identify Life/State	Aura	Minor Disease	Major Disease	
	Unskilled							
	Novice			Identify Life(3)	(2)			
	Apprentice	Heal 1		Identify Life(4)	(3)	(2)		
	Journeyman	Heal 2	Heal 1(1)	Identify State(3)		(3)		
	Skilled	Heal 3	Heal 2(1)	Identify State(4)		(4)		
	Master	Heal All	Heal 3(1)	Identify State(5)	(4)	(5)	(2)	
	Grandmaster		Heal All(1)		(5)		(3)	
	Legendary							

Phos

Phos is the god of life, health, and light. Priests of Phos may not use force with intent to injure - thus they may not take any combat skills.

Noso

Noso is the god of decay and disease. His priests are shunned by society, and they are not welcome anywhere. Priests of Noso may use rusted or broken weapons, but prefer their own clawlike fingernails.

25.6 Apophu / Hyla - Harvest and Wilderness

Standing	Rank	Power	
	Unskilled		
	Novice		
	Apprentice		
	Journeyman		
	Skilled		
	Master		
	Grandmaster		
	Legendary		

Apophu

Apophu is the fat and jubilant god of the harvest.

Hyla

Hyla is the god of the wilderness, and also hunting.

25.6.1 Hades / Athanatos - Death and Undead

Hades

Hades is god of death. He is not evil as humans think of the concept, but rather is a natural part of life. He vies in eternal battle with his brother Athanatos.

Priests of Hades are not particularly welcome in society, due to the normal fear of death and suspicion that they are more than they seem. Ironically, this turns out to be true, as upper level priests are very skilled in applying death. It is even rumored that there is a secret sect of Hades Priests who are assassins for hire ...

Priests are expected to become skilled with weapons and death at the lower levels. At higher levels, they move with divine purpose against special targets whose time has come - death is personal.

Standing	Rank	Power	
	Unskilled	-	
	Novice	-	
	Apprentice	Mortal Strike	
	Journeyman	Biologist	
	Skilled	Phase	
	Master	Orchestrate	
	Grandmaster	ShadowWalk	
	Legendary	Kill	

- Mortal Strike: Any attack does two additional hits.
- Biologist: Intimately familiar with all aspects of living organisms, including diseases and poisons.
- Phase: Walk through walls
- Orchestrate: As your plan unfolds, you will always be in the right place at the right time to inhume your target.
- ShadowWalk: As per Anhelios, above
- Kill: Kill any living being with a touch - magical, divine, or otherwise.

Athanatos

Athanatos is god of the undead. Hades is his brother, and the two of them forever contest the dead.

Priests of Athanatos are despised by all as necromancers.

Standing	Rank	Power
	Unskilled	-
	Novice	Animate Insect
	Apprentice	Animate Animal
	Journeyman	Animate Human
	Skilled	Create Undead
Necromancer	Master	Undead Field
Lich	Grandmaster	Lich
Undeath	Legendary	Undeath

- Animate X: Temporarily animate one specimen, who can follow simple instructions.
- Create Undead: Create any form of undead - walking skeletons, zombie corpses, ghosts, wights, et al. - as a permanent servant.
- Undead Field: Any living being that dies in the Necromancer's realm may, at his whim, rise again as his servant.
- Lich: At Grandmaster rank, the priest may choose to undergo a long, expensive, and painful ritual to transform his body into a form that is exempt from "natural causes" and other forms of organic-based death.
- Undeath: The Undeath can never die - destroying him merely puts his existence on hold until he can reconstitute. This may take some time ...

25.7 Khresimos / Kheir - Tools and Battle

Khresimos

Kheir is the god of tools, focusing on engineering and building.

Standing	Rank		
	Unskilled		
	Novice		
	Apprentice	Engineering	
	Journeyman	Create Tool	
	Skilled	Create Machine	
	Master	Create Device	
	Grandmaster		
	Legendary		

- Engineering: Understands (or can research) the physical and alchemical properties of a tool, edifice, or other man-made purposeful item. At Journeyman or above, can design and direct the building of any of them, provided materials and labor are available.
- Create Tool: Can create special-purpose tools - easy ones instantly, harder ones with more time.
- Create Machine: Can create simple to complex machines - easy ones instantly, harder ones with more time.
- Create Device: Can create masterwork devices - cunning, efficient, and beautiful, these items last for lifetimes.

Kheir

Kheir is the god of battle, focusing on killing and destruction. Priests of Kheir are combat oriented, and must take combat skills. Their abilities tend to make them leaders in battle, but their powers are somewhat offset by the bloodlust that consumes them at higher levels. They cannot use the common Ward powers.

Standing	Rank	Powers
	Unskilled	
	Novice	Bloodlust
	Apprentice	Divine Strike
	Journeyman	Tactics
	Skilled	Strategy
	Master	Create Weapon
	Grandmaster	
	Legendary	

- Bloodlust: Automatic - whenever the priest is involved in combat, he cannot stop or withdraw until all opponents are dead.
- Divine Strike: Once per five rounds, invoke the name of Kheir to do three extra hits of damage to any opponent of equal or lesser combat rank.
- Tactics
- Strategy
- Create Weapon: A long and involved ritual, wherein the priest must pray for inspiration; seek out and defeat a singular monster or opponent; collect items of significance and value; and create a namesake weapon for himself. Often Kheir will impart magical abilities upon it as well. These weapons are famous, and live on through history.

Blood Order

The Blood Order is the strict, and only, hierarchy of Priests of Kheir. Membership is optional, and by invitation only, after the candidate reaches the rank of Journeyman. Despite their bloodlust and occasional lack of control in battle, the Blood Order maintains a very strict organizational structure. Ascending this ladder grants great power, while disdaining it invites certain destruction at the hands of the Order.

Membership in the Order grants the following:

- A novice priest as attendant, to be trained in the basics and returned when he reaches Apprentice
- At Skilled rank, the Priest may employ a circle of men-at-arms, who may display the crest of the Order when on business. Note that the Order does not permit outside Priests of Kheir to employ armed servants.
- At Master, an Apprentice as attendant, returned when he reaches Journeyman. The Master will choose to recommend the new Journeyman to the Order, or not.
- It is rumored that the Order has several artifact weapons that are available for use in special circumstances.

The Excommunicated

At times, a priest of the Blood Order finds himself at philosophical odds with the hierarchy. Those who dare to openly oppose are usually slain, but there are some who have escaped the reach of the Blood Priests justice. These are The Excommunicated, or simply “Excomm”, and while they are reviled and hunted they are Priests of Kheir still.

It is a puzzle why such traitors are left with power. Some sages believe that the basic nature of Kheir being conflict, such a thing is purposefully allowed by the god to prevent stasis.

In any case, they are usually Masters or higher, and usually have a fanatically loyal following of deadly men-at-arms, some of whom may be Priests themselves.

25.8 Sophia / Kasma - Knowledge and The Void

Sophia

Sophia is the goddess of knowledge.

Priests of Sophia have the following powers:

Standing	Rank	Powers
Seeker	Unskilled	Access
Logician	Novice	Logic
Researcher	Apprentice	Research
Historian	Journeyman	History
Specialist	Skilled	Trivia
All-Seeing	Master	Connections
All-Knowing	Grandmaster	Prediction
Light of Sophia	Legendary	Oneness

- Access: Not a power in itself, this is instead access to the priest network, which can be tapped for knowledge
- Logic: At this level priests can see through any non-magical obfuscation, provided enough data is available.
- Research: This enables priests to discover an items properties. More powerful / obscure items may take more time (and money ...)
- History: At this level priests will know - or at worst can discover - the general history of any person, place, or thing they encounter
- Trivia: At this level priests will know - or can discover - the specific history of any person, place, or thing they encounter
- Connections: At this level priests can connect even the most disparate facts, even those historical, and draw conclusions
- Prediction: Enables priests to see the future or futures, but not with absolute certainty
- Oneness: Sees all of time and space, intimately

Kasma, The Void

Kasma does not appear to be a conscious being. Nevertheless, priests of Kasma seem to wield powers sourced from it. Priests of Kasma are universally referred to, by themselves and others, in groups and as individuals, as “*none*”. *None* slowly go insane, their behavior and actions becoming completely alien and unintelligible by the time the Skilled rank is reached. *None* may not use any of the common powers.

Standing	Rank	Powers
None	Unskilled	-
None	Novice	Incite
None	Apprentice	Proselytize
None	Journeyman	Cause Insanity
None	Skilled	Annihilate
None	Master	Ray of Oblivion
None	Grandmaster	?
None	Legendary	?

- Incite: *None* may, if given private time to speak to an individual, cause him to temporarily go berzerk, or homicidal, or merely crazy.
- Proselytize: By preaching publicly, *none* may leverage the public sentiment to cause riots, stampedes, lynchings, etc.
- Cause Insanity: Stories of the exact range, duration, and effect of this power are unclear, but the name says it all ...
- Annihilate: *None* may touch an object and it will disappear forever
- Ray of Oblivion: *None* may Annihilate any object in his Line of Sight

Chapter 26

Locations

A number of large slow-moving moons that affect certain islands (perhaps several sets). A solar system with a "small" sun and a large number of Earth-like planetoids - Need a way to travel between - - A race that can sail between them, with a small number of ships - - Gates - - Small number of large spheres/discs (one per god?), large number of large discs, very large number of small discs - - horizontal feel of medieval fantasy plus vertical feel of scifi

26.1 Canopolis

Free City where things take place, halfway between X and Y, on the coast.

Wizard's Guild of Canopolis

Knights of Canopolis

By invitation only, to those capable fighters, at Journeyman rank or above, who are loyal to the City.

- Attribute: Respect - The Knights are given considerable respect by all residents of Canopolis.
- Skill: Brute Squad - A successful Member roll can acquire some number of soldiers for any purpose.

Surrounding villages

Places of interest

Chapter 27

Flora and Fauna

Signature monsters for the setting - Dragons, Shadows, Undead, Ice Giants, The Illusionists, some type of swarm

Chapter 28

Organizations

28.1 Blue Order

This is an order of Wizards who seek knowledge above all things. Admission by invitation only, to Master rank or higher.

- Skill: Identify - Members may automatically identify any item's properties and history.

28.2 The Hand of Thanatos

The Hand is an order of Assassins. They are primarily martial artists, although they are reputed to use a variety of special weapons and tools. Very little is known about them.

Part VII

Gamemaster Information

Chapter 29

Basics

This game is about the GM giving the players a world to explore and interact with, and players making things happen.

Chapter 30

Story

Tension is resistance by or conflict with other forces between the PC(s) and his Goal. The four main tension types are relationships, the task (including deadlines), surprise, mystery. The first two are begun in the Story Setup, the remaining two are up to you to introduce.

Suggestions for adding surprise and mystery to Goals

You can also add subplots, and additional plotlines

Surprise examples: plot twist, info reveal, unexpected character appearance, crisis/major event, shocking character action

mystery: awareness, investigation, clues, speculations/assumptions, testing, resolution

who, what, where, when

setup, showdown, follow the clues

Chapter 31

Playing

Dramatic Structure

Antagonist(s) - usually the Focus?

Background / Tie-in / Goal - Tie-in is the trigger, inciting incident -> conflict
(work against secondary obstacles to move towards goal)

Climaxes - direct conflict btw protagonist and antagonist; what's at stake, what victory v defeat means; usually only partial for both sides

(Freytag: falling action) - protagonist seems farther from goal than ever

Denouement - resolution and end

NPCs: need names, relationships, motivations/goals, timetables

Scenes have location, time, PC & NPC participants; should have a point ... should PCs decide location/point?

The background/PC setup gives goals and antagonist(s) - need to break it down

The antagonist will have goals

Plot - Facts / Scene - Skill bumps? / Action - Hero Points

Karma pool with positive (white) or negative (red), intentionally keep the feel of "all odds against"

use a Karma point before roll to guarantee result (no need to roll)

use 2 Karma points after a roll to "fix" it to a success (cannot override 2 rank rule)

OOE == lose a Karma point

GM +1 Karma for a plot twist, cause a failure after a roll, add a surprise scene / encounter ?

31.1 Sequence of Play

1. Out of Scene - Next Scene Setup

- (a) Any Story-level mechanics
- (b) Unless GM forces a Scene, Players decide their intentions for the cast, location, and time of the next Scene
- (c) Unless GM forces a Scene, Players conduct any desired preparations, equipment load-out, etc
- (d) GM describes the environment and the circumstances

2. In Scene

- (a) The GM and players play / narrate the scene.
- (b) Players narrate their own action, especially when they win contested rolls

3. Out of Scene - Wrap-up

- (a) Optionally, Name the Scene
- (b) Players record their Character's details from this Scene in their Story Journal
- (c) GM hands out skill bumps
- (d) If a Character has completed their Goal, they dictate their Epilogue

- (e) GM records major outcomes of the scene and optionally determines and/or announces Consequences
- (f) GM forces the next scene, or Players discuss and decide what they want the next scene to be

4. Repeat

31.2 Out of Scene - Next Scene Setup

1. Players decide where to go and what to do there.
2. Mission Prep -
3. Load Out - decide, purchase, and acquire equipment to be carried for the upcoming scene

An unScene is the conversation that takes place between the players and the GM between roleplaying Scenes. It is distinguished by two things: players are not “in character” (ie not roleplaying their PC); and no mechanics resolution can take place (ie no combat, no skill rolls, etc.). Players and the GM can discuss, debate, and review any information or knowledge, and make or modify plans.

Any number of non-mechanics-based choices can also be made in the unScene.

The players will usually use this time to decide where the next Scene will be when there are multiple options (“Where do you want to go next?”), or to skip uninteresting time (“Several days pass uneventfully as you journey down the Coast Road ...”), or to do mission prep and load-out decisioning.

The GM must also decide what has happened in other major time/plotlines.

31.3 In Scene

The Scene is where all the action and role-playing happens.

Players narrate their own actions as much as possible, and especially when they win contested rolls.

31.4 Out of Scene - Wrap-up

Things that normally happen during Wrap-Up:

1. Name the scene.
2. Players journal out what happened to their character.
3. GM notes major outcomes of the scene and determines Consequences.
4. Determine if any Player Goals are met. If so, that Player narrates his Epilogue.
5. GM hands out skill and attribute increments.

Chapter 32

Skills

32.1 Failed Skill Checks

As a metagame principle, failed skill checks should rarely stop play dead. If a skill check was properly set up such that the intent was determined with a bit of detail, a failed roll should allow the GM to narrate failure in some sense, yet keep the story rolling.

Options for failed skill checks:

success but takes longer

small, limited success

failure with a suggestion or bonus, either for future checks or for alternate ways to proceed

fumble

self-injury

something bad happens

disruption, unwanted attention

32.2 Failed Priest Relationship Rolls

Deities are fickle and incomprehensible. Possible suggestions for failed rolls, or And and But results:

- Gain or lose a rank in the deity's Relationship
- Receive a geas or quest
- Be visited by the deity's servants, now or later, who come with Divine Purpose
- Receive or lose an item that will prove / would have proved useful later
- Receive or lose a magical or divine effect
- Receive a sacred item with a mysterious purpose
- Be summoned directly to the deity to explain yourself
- Be temporarily or permanently banished or ascended to the religion's purgatory or promised land

Chapter 33

Gamemastering Advice

33.1 Emotional descriptions

GMs can use biofeedback to assist in summoning the desired emotions in players by describing physical symptoms. Instead of simply saying, “You’re afraid,” a GM might describe to the player the sensation of pin pricks as the hairs stand up on the back of his neck, the tightening of gooseflesh on his forearms, the intense focus and fast scanning his eyes are doing, the isolation and attention to every sound, the sweat breaking out on his forehead, the tightening of muscles and bowels, his heart hammering in his chest and throbbing in his ears ... the GM himself should express the emotion on his own face and posture as well, as mirror neurons in the players will assist in biofeedback.

33.2 Yes, and

The GM should say “Yes” as often as possible, rather than “No”. “Yes, and”, “No, and”, “Yes, but”.

Part VIII

Appendices

A. Random Tables

Adventure types (see tvtropes): courier/escort, mystery/explore, heist, mercenary, buy/sell, rescue,

M. Game Design References

Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Jim Dietz (editor)

N. Inspirational Works

The art of Brom, Colani, Coop, Roger Dean, and Malcolm Edward's Realms of Fantasy
Robert Adams, Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy series
Piers Anthony
Isaac Asimov
Terry Brooks, Shannara series
Glen Cook, The Black Company series, the detective ones
Philip K. Dick
Stephen R. Donaldson, Thomas Covenant series
Raymond Feist, Magician series
William Gibson
Frank Herbert, Dune series
Fritz Leiber, Lankhmar series
H. P. Lovecraft
Julian May, The Sage of the Exiles series
Michael Moorcock, any of Eternal Champion series, esp. Elric, Corum, and Hawkmoon
Richard Morgan, Altered Carbon
Mervyn Peake, Gormenghast series
Terry Pratchett, Ringworld series
Michael Reaves, The Shattered World
Clark Ashton Smith
Matthew Woodring Stover, Heroes Die
J. R. R. Tolkein
Robert Anton Wilson, Illuminatus! books, possibly others
Gene Wolf, esp. The Book of the New Sun, et al.
Roger Zelazny, Amber series

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Nomenclature

Game Master	The Game Master is the human who describes how the world and non-player characters acts and appears
GM	Abbreviation for Game Master
Party	The collected group of Characters controlled by the Players
PC	Abbreviation for Player Character.
player	The human being controlling an Actor.
Player Character	The imaginary person that is role-played by a player.

Bibliography