



Girl^{by} Moon light

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GIRL *by* **MOON** **light**

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For those working at a copy shop and not at all sure if this means the person standing at your counter can make copies of this thing, they can. This is "express permission." Carry on.

This book explains the rules of a game, and has examples of people playing it. The game is real, but all of the characters and situations presented are fictional, and any resemblance to real people is purely coincidental.

This book includes depictions of intense emotions, interpersonal conflict, some violence, and scary monsters.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5	INTRODUCTION	63	Consequences and Harm
6	Why Magical Girls?	64	<i>Reduced Effect</i>
7	How Do We Play?	65	<i>Complication</i>
8	The Protagonists	66	<i>Lost Opportunity</i>
10	The Director	66	<i>Worse Position</i>
11	Series Playsets	67	<i>Harm</i>
13	<i>At the Brink of the Abyss</i>	71	Resisting Consequences
15	<i>Beneath a Rotting Sky</i>	74	<i>Protecting Your Allies</i>
17	<i>On a Sea of Stars</i>	75	<i>Armour</i>
19	<i>In a Maze of Dreams</i>	75	<i>Special Armour</i>
20	PLAYING THE GAME	76	Loss & Death
21	Safety	79	Clocks
21	Materials of play	81	Gather Information
22	Setup	83	PHASES OF PLAY
25	Cycle of Play	83	Obligation
25	<i>Obligation</i>	84	Downtime
25	<i>Downtime</i>	84	<i>Make a Connection</i>
26	<i>Mission</i>	85	<i>Help a Friend Recover</i>
26	<i>Fallout</i>	86	<i>Work on a Long Term Project</i>
27	Episodes and Seasons	87	<i>Investigation</i>
28	Player Agenda	88	Missions
28	<i>Play to Find Out</i>	89	<i>Mission and</i>
	<i>What Happens</i>		<i>Investigation Tier</i>
28	<i>Be a Fan of the Other Players</i>	90	<i>Engagement roll</i>
28	<i>Reveal Your Inner World</i>	91	<i>We Cut to the Action</i>
29	<i>Hold On, But Lightly</i>	93	<i>The Heart of the Matter</i>
29	<i>Keep Hope in Your Heart</i>	95	<i>Flashbacks</i>
29	<i>See Things Through</i>	96	<i>Fallout</i>
	<i>a Queer Lens</i>	100	Advancement
29	<i>Gaze into the Broken Mirror</i>	100	<i>Gaining XP</i>
30	CORE SYSTEMS	101	<i>Advances</i>
31	Actions	101	<i>Series XP</i>
34	Attributes	102	THE SERIES PLAYSET
35	Rolling the Dice	103	What's in a Series?
37	<i>Action Rolls</i>	104	Series Creation
51	Transcendence	105	<i>A Word on Touchstones</i>
52	<i>How to Transcend</i>	106	We Begin in Season Two
53	<i>Benefits of Transcendence</i>	107	THE PROTAGONISTS
54	<i>Limits of Transcendence</i>	108	Choosing Your Playbook
55	Links	110	Character Creation
57	Stress and Eclipse		Overview
58	<i>Eclipse</i>		

117 CHARACTER PLAYBOOK REFERENCE

118 **The Enigma**

122 **The Guardian**

126 **The Harmony**

130 **The Outsider**

134 **The Stranger**

138 **The Time Traveller**

142 **The Unlikely Hero**

147 THE DIRECTOR

147 **The Director's Agenda**

147 *Address the Characters*

148 *Address the Players*

148 *Ask Questions and
Build on the Answers*

148 *Express Consequences
By Way of the Fiction First*

149 **Using the Series Playset**

149 *Director's Playsheet*

149 *Series Rules*

150 SERIES REFERENCE

151 **At the Brink of the Abyss**

152 *Building the Series*

154 *Series Abilities*

156 *Director's Principles*

157 *Series Rule: The Hideout*

159 *Obligation*

159 *Downtime*

160 *Missions*

161 *Position, Effect, and
Consequences*

162 *Fallout*

162 *Pacing the Series*



164 **Beneath a Rotting Sky**

165 *Building the Series*

167 *Series Rule: Traitors!*

167 *Series Rule: Hunters in the Night*

168 *Series Abilities*

170 *Director's Principles*

171 *Obligation*

172 *Series Rule: Cursed Fates*

174 *Downtime*

175 *Series Rule: Have a
Disagreement*

176 *Missions*

178 *Position, Effect, and
Consequences*

178 *Fallout*

179 *Series Rule:
Devour Blighted Hearts*

180 *Pacing the Series*

181 **On a Sea of Stars**

182 *Building the Series*

185 *Series Rule: The Last
Bastion of Humanity*

186 *Series Rule: The Engines*

188 *Series Rule: The Flagship*

190 *Series Abilities*

191 *Director's Principles*

192 *Obligation*

192 *Downtime*

195 *Missions*

196 *Position, Effect, and
Consequences*

197 *Fallout*

198 *Pacing the Series*

199 **In a Maze of Dreams**

200 *Building the Series*

203 *Series Rule: Suspects*

204 *Series Rule: Avatars*

206 *Series Abilities*

208 *Director's Principles*

209 *Obligation*

209 *Downtime*

211 *Series Rule: The Conspiracy*

213 *Missions*

215 *Position, Effect, and
Consequences*

216 *Fallout*

217 *Pacing the Series*

219 INDEX

INTRODUCTION

Girl by Moonlight is a game about the tragic struggles and defiant triumphs of a group of magical girls resisting an oppressive society. It explores the heartbreak of denying who you really are, and the transcendent power of relationships and community.

Girl by Moonlight is a role playing game, and in the course of play you will improvise descriptions of the fictional world and its characters, listen actively to the other players, and engage with the game's mechanics at appropriate moments in play. All players share in these responsibilities. The game is collaborative—we all contribute and build on each other's contributions to create a compelling story. You can think of a role playing game as a structured conversation, so all the normal etiquette and considerations of having a conversation apply. Listen to each other, and respond to what others are saying. Ask questions often, and be open to adjusting your ideas.



WHY MAGICAL GIRLS?

This game builds on the magical girl genre, in which we see young women with magical powers transform into an alter-ego to fight evil. The game reinterprets the classic examples of the genre to create an allegory for self-discovery and queer identity. This text uses 'magical girl' as a shorthand, but your magical girls need not be girls, necessarily. Rather they are people whose identities put them at the margins. They must conceal their true selves, conforming to the world's suffocating expectations even as they work in secret to transform them.

To help portray the struggles of our heroes, the game introduces two complementary ideas—transcendence and eclipse. When a magical girl casts off the compromises of their day-to-day life and embraces their true self, they **transcend**. They take on a new form, and tap into the power needed to change the world—maybe even save it.

But when the responsibility and expectations become too much to bear, their light is overwhelmed by inner turmoil, and they fall into **eclipse**. They make fatalistic choices, give in to doubt and fear, and turn away from their lofty ideals. Sometimes, they are undone by their own hopes and dreams. In *Girl by Moonlight*, failure and heartbreak are just as likely as triumph or redemption.

Along with this internal danger, the game highlights the external pressures that weigh on those whose heroic selves do not fit into the world's expectations. Their day-to-day lives leave them surrounded by obligations—to family members who do not understand, to social institutions that prioritize the very conformity that has led the world to the brink of destruction. Overwhelmed by seemingly incompatible responsibilities, alienated from the people they are trying to protect, a magical girl may come to doubt what they are doing, or who they really want to be.

This is why the final and maybe most important theme of magical girl stories is friendship. Hiding your true self while trying to save the world can be too much to bear alone. But when all seems lost, our heroes have each other to lean on. Through their bonds of love and shared identity, they can find the strength to endure, and continue the struggle.

HOW DO WE PLAY?

In this game most players will take on the role of a **protagonist**—perhaps an Unlikely Hero unaware of the destiny that awaits her and the power it brings, or maybe the Guardian sworn to protect her, and keep her on the right path. Each protagonist embodies a single character, who they create using a **playbook** which determines what kind of magical girl they are. Each playbook expresses a particular way of relating to others, to power, and to the world at large. They are a set of archetypes both to play into, and to subvert or question. For example, the Time Traveller has journeyed through time to change someone's fate, but might also be a nosy meddler who doesn't trust others to solve their own problems, thinking they've seen it all before. The promise of the character's virtues and the tragic potential of their flaws combine to create a compelling character.

One player is the **director**—they embody the antagonism the protagonists face, the fictional world they inhabit, and the supporting characters. The director takes cues from a **series playset** that determines the nature of the fictional world, and the themes of the story you will tell together. For example, the series *At the Brink of the Abyss* is fantastical and optimistic, and includes a mix of magical and mundane imagery to draw on. The playset instructs the director to *give monsters human hearts*. This tells us that there is always hope for redemption in this world, and that despite the villains' monstrous exteriors, there is a fragile human heart there to connect with.

By building on each other's contributions, all the players collectively create and explore a fictional world. Through our protagonists, we see the cruelty and beauty of that world, and how it changes the hearts of those that move through it. We hope that our magical girls might change their world for the better, but their ultimate fate awaits discovery through play.

THE PROTAGONISTS

All but one player at the table will take on the role of protagonists in the game. They are responsible for creating and embodying a compelling character. Together their characters form a tightly knit group, whose stories overlap. Most of the events in the game center on the protagonists, and their choices define the outcome of the story.

As a protagonist, it is your job to:

- ◆ be a fan of the other players
- ◆ play to find out what happens
- ◆ reveal the inner world of your character

Raven is a music student, at night she sneaks out of her mother's house to join her friends on magical adventures. Why is Raven so eager to run away from home?

Himna is a revolutionary forced to serve the institutions she rebelled against, she is still trying to find a way to make peace with the dangerous Leviathans. What hope is Himna clinging to?

The protagonists lead double lives. Day to day, they move through the mundane world, a world which seeks to crush their beautiful hearts. They endure its constant pressure, sometimes coping, but often not.



But as night closes round them they shine brightly, transcending their mundane forms to defy the world's malice. They find strength in their friendships, their own resolve, and even their pain. They use their power to change the world for the better, and sometimes die trying. Together, they refuse to let their grace be smothered by a cruel world.

Raven is the Harmony, she is a relationship embodied, her song can change hearts, and she inspires her allies to carry on, come what may. But what is the cost of leadership?

Himna is the Guardian, she lives by a rigid code, her courage is a shield for her friends, and she is always there for those she loves. But who cares for Himna, in turn?

These magical girls stand as a metaphor for queer self-realization, and their magical transformation is an allegory for their own self-discovery. The characters' power lies in their vulnerability—they are beautiful and resilient, but also unproven. They are always questioning, uncertain in their identities. They move fluidly through their phases, sometimes shining, sometimes dark.



THE DIRECTOR

One player takes on the role of the director. They are responsible for embodying the game's adversity. The director collaborates with the other players to establish details of the setting, and plays any secondary characters the story requires. The director is responsible for portraying adversity to the protagonists, but they are not playing against the other players. Everyone at the table collaborates to tell a compelling story. By posing significant questions of the other players, the director helps shine a spotlight on the protagonists.

As the director, it is your job to:

- ◆ **be a fan of the other players**
- ◆ **ask compelling questions of their characters**
- ◆ **build on the answers to those questions**

What music is Raven forced to study and play? What does she play in secret?

Will Amaranth find hope before it's too late? What will it take to change her heart?

What does it mean to fight for a paradise you will never see?

While adversity in this game comes in different forms, it is always a pervasive, suffocating force. It permeates the mundane world as day-to-day oppressions, as people enforcing the status quo. It also manifests supernaturally—as magical monsters and people who trade their hearts for power.

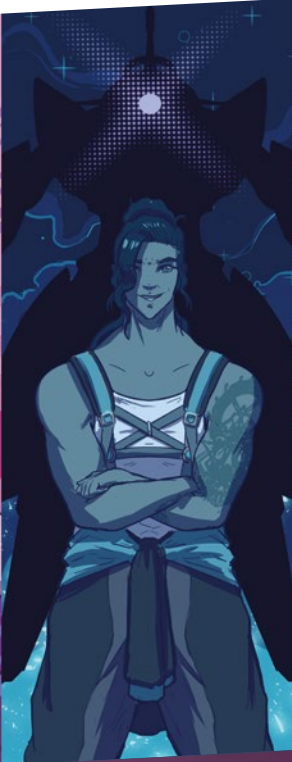
Professor Caspian Hulme studies baleful constellations, and communes with the powers that dwell inside them. By night he transforms into a horrifying beast, and hunts whatever the stars direct him to.

Coordinator Zura seeks to subjugate the Leviathans, and carve a bloody path to human colonisation of space. She spends the lives of her subordinates freely in the pursuit of her ambitions.

SERIES PLAYSETS

The game is divided into playsets, a collection of materials that guide play for the group. Think of these playsets as a set of tools for authoring a particular kind of story. The series also provides an episodic structure, and guides play towards a climactic finale. Each has unique setting details, antagonists, abilities and mechanics, but they are all connected by the game's central themes of self-realization and shared struggles.

One of the first decisions the players make together is to choose a series playset. Once they have chosen, the players then collaborate to establish the details of the series by answering questions posed by the playset. Their answers establish the nature of the fictional world, the adversity the protagonists will face, and the ultimate goal they are striving towards.





AT THE **BRINK** *OF THE* **ABYSS**

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Heroic magical girls reclaiming a corrupted world.

At the Brink of the Abyss is about redemption and heroism. It has an optimistic outlook, in which monsters have hearts—often fragile broken hearts, in need of healing. The transcendent powers of the protagonists are a pure and truly good thing, and they use that power to change the world for the better. There's still danger and struggle, but ultimately this series aims for an uplifting and optimistic narrative.

Touchstones: *Steven Universe* by Rebecca Sugar, *Sailor Moon* by Naoko Takeuchi





**BENEATH
A ROTTING SKY**

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Tragic magical girls doomed to an inevitable fate.

Beneath a Rotting Sky is about tragedy and betrayal. Most, if not all, of the characters will be complicit in the world's oppression, with little hope of redemption. The protagonists' own power plays a role in their undoing, and their story ends with an almost inevitable tragic fate. Though this series is bleak, there is still struggle and triumph—and moments of brightness made all the more luminous against the backdrop of a crumbling world.

Touchstones: *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* by Akiyuki Shinbo





ON A SEA OF STARS

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



***Mecha pilots struggling against extinction
at the hands of the Leviathans.***

On a Sea of Stars is about institutions, and hope in the face of extinction. The protagonists are captive heroes, forced to fight a slowly losing war against an overwhelming enemy, the Leviathans. All while being alienated from the people they protect. They rely on the Engines to stand a chance against their foes, and the Engines, in turn, are fueled by their pilots' emotions and transcendent powers.

Touchstones: *Diebuster* by Kazuya Tsurumaki, *The Vision of Escaflowne* by Kazuki Akane





IN *A* MAZE OF DREAMS

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Dream travellers seeking the truth of a magical conspiracy.

In a Maze of Dreams is about desire, mass culture, and ideas developing a life of their own. It is filled with guarded hearts, whose truth can only be found in dreams. The protagonists have learned to take refuge in those dreams, but now find themselves tangled up in the Conspiracy—a multifarious sinister plot, a virus of human thoughts. They must unravel the Conspiracy, lest it devour our dreams, and make a nightmare of the waking world.

Touchstones: *Paprika* by Satoshi Kon, *Serial Experiments Lain* by Ryutaro Nakamura



PLAYING THE GAME

Each time you gather to play, you are improvising an installment in an ongoing story. The director and the protagonists collaborate to describe the fictional world of the game, the characters in that world, and the situation and context in which the characters find themselves. It is a layered conversation. Sometimes you speak as an author, describing a location in detail, or a character's inner thoughts. Other times, you might speak in character, like an actor, addressing another player as if they were their character. You might also speak as a member of the audience, describing what you see on the screen, the music, the lighting, or talking about your interests and hopes for the story at large.



SAFETY

It is important to have safety tools when playing this game. The story you create at the table will be emotionally driven, at times very intense and challenging. This may mean that someone needs to take a break, change a detail of the story, or gloss over certain parts. There are many tools that can help to keep you and your fellow players safe, and support them in setting boundaries or managing the content of the story. If you have been playing together awhile, your group may already have some tools they prefer. If not, do some research online (a search for 'RPG safety tools' will provide a good starting point), and choose a toolset that works for your table. This may require some practice and experimentation, especially if some of the players have not used similar tools before.

It is also important to not expect the tools to do *all* of this work for you. Simply having tools available will not automatically make your play safe. It is also necessary to foster a culture of consent, with clear and open communication between each player. Safety is a shared collective responsibility of all players, to one another and to themselves.

MATERIALS OF PLAY

- ◆ **Four or five players.** One director and three or four protagonists.
- ◆ **Six sided dice,** at least five.
- ◆ Printed copies of the **playsheets.**
- ◆ **This manual** for rules reference.
- ◆ **Blank paper, pens and pencils,** and maybe some index cards.
- ◆ **Anything else you need** to accommodate your fellow players. This could be snacks and drinks, a quiet accessible space to play in, or a clear start and end time for the session.

If you are playing online, you could play using a virtual tabletop, in which case you might still want to take notes or use a paper sheet to help with your own bookkeeping.

SETUP

The first step to playing the game is choosing which series playset you will use. This decision is best made by consensus, with all players present. Make sure everyone is familiar with the various options, and discuss which will be the best fit for the group. Talk about things that excite you in the various series, and share any boundaries or reservations you have as well. This is also a good time to talk about the roles (director and protagonists) each player will take on.



Anya, Bev, Claire and Dylan decide to play *Girl by Moonlight* together.

Bev wants to be the director, and the others are happy to be the protagonists.

They start by choosing a series playset together, and decide to play **At the Brink of the Abyss** because they are excited to tell the story of a world in crisis, at the tipping point between redemption and dystopia. While this description could apply to several of the series, they want the story to have a hopeful tone, where pure hearts can triumph in the end.

Once you have selected a series, follow the series creation procedure on page 104. This involves answering a set of questions to help define the world of the story more clearly—players collaborate to build details of the setting, supernatural adversity, and the specific situation of the main characters. All the players participate in answering these questions, regardless of their role.



The group takes turns asking each other the questions from the series playset. Sometimes the most exciting answer is obvious, and other times they talk through different options and possibilities. Soon they have created their antagonists, a court of squabbling petty gods who rule a fractured stellar empire. They also start to build a picture of their mundane world, a rigid authoritarian place that values tradition and abhors community.

Midway through series creation, the protagonists will be prompted to choose character playbooks. The protagonists' characters exist in relation to various elements of the setting and situation, and making those characters in a vacuum will lead to trouble once you bring them to the table. By creating their characters after most of the setting and situation are established, the protagonists can make a cohesive and connected group of characters. These characters are a part of their world, and are tied to it and each other through their relationships and shared histories.

The detailed procedures for series creation can be found on page 104 and instructions for creating characters begin on page 110.

Next, they choose their playbooks. Claire chooses the Harmony playbook because she wants to have music be a central element of her character. She names her character Raven.



Anya wants to play a bombastic character, so she picks up the Enigma. Her character's name is Fawn, but when she wears a mask to hide her true identity, she is known as the Midnight Quill.

Dylan chooses the Outsider so that he can play a foil to one of the other characters. He names his character Hawk.





The same group might instead play **On a Sea of Stars**, because they want a story about institutions and survival (and also giant robots). Here, they create their antagonists, the Leviathans, engineered space-faring creatures that turned on their creators.

They create their mundane world, the remnants of a solar authority holding the last of humanity in stasis, clinging to the promises of their failed terraforming project.

For this series, Claire wants to be the Guardian. Her character is Himna, a revolutionary who lives by a strict code of non-violence, and wants peace with the Leviathans.

Dylan chooses the Stranger. He makes Van, a disgraced military pilot who secretly loves Himna, but is duty-bound to serve the solar authority.

Anya plays the Time Traveller. Her character is Surt, an explorer who recently returned from the stars only to find the world he knew is gone.

CYCLE OF PLAY

Girl by Moonlight has a structured cycle of play, four phases that repeat to form the rhythm of the game. Each complete cycle is called an **episode**.

Each episode is broken into the following phases: **obligation**, **downtime**, **mission**, and **fallout**.

A **session** of play lasting about four hours will typically include a full episode, but this will vary due to individual playstyle, familiarity with the game's systems, and personal preference. It is okay to break up play to suit your group's needs, so long as you pick up where you left off the next time you play.

OBLIGATION

In the obligation phase, we see the protagonists in their regular lives. They work through mundane difficulties and oppressions, the ever-present pressure of a hostile world. The obligation phase gives a brief but essential look into the day to day struggles of the protagonists, and helps show us how their daily struggles and their magical adventures are connected. We see the world they dream of changing.

Raven sits through another music class, playing patriotic marches and stern orchestral music under the strict gaze of her teachers.

Himna endures military drills, training to slay the majestic Leviathans she once swore to liberate.

DOWNTIME

In the downtime phase, we follow the protagonists as they eke out moments of solace and hope, despite the pressures we saw in the obligation phase. They pursue their own goals, and form genuine connections with each other. The downtime phase is an opportunity to see the world that might be, if the protagonists can change things for the better.

Raven skips curfew to meet her friend Fawn at an underground dance hall.

Himna visits Surt in the infirmary, she holds his hand while he sleeps.

MISSION

In the mission phase, the protagonists set out to make that change. Preparations and connections made in the downtime phase are transformed into defiant action. This is where the drama and tension of the game peak, and the protagonists take risks and face peril in the hope of realizing their dreams.

Raven and her friends search for the Nebula Crown, an ancient relic that might help their cause.

Himna and her fellow pilots scramble to their engines, desperate to stop the leviathan ICARUS.

FALLOUT

In the fallout phase, we see the aftermath of their mission. Regardless of its outcome, circumstances are changed, and there are unforeseen consequences of their actions that the protagonists must reckon with. The fallout phase exposes new complications and antagonism. It shows us the consequences of the protagonists' struggles, and foreshadows struggles to come.

Raven claimed the crown, with the help of her friends, but what was the beast that hunted them in the ruins? Will the crown lead the beast to them?

The pilots drove the leviathan back, but now face discipline from their commanding officers who wanted ICARUS killed.



EPISODES AND SEASONS

This episode play cycle (obligation, downtime, mission, fallout, repeat) acts as a fruitful set of constraints, and keeps play focused and moving forward. Episodes, in turn, compose **seasons** which represent a complete narrative arc for the series. The season always ends with a significant confrontation against the series' adversity, after which the circumstances of the protagonists are dramatically changed. Between seasons the players have a chance to reflect, change roles, make new characters, and return to the story with fresh eyes and new goals. Typically a season will contain five to eight episodes.

For a full description of each phase, including details on available choices and actions, see the *Phases of Play* section on page 83.

PLAYER AGENDA

Depending on your role, there are certain principles that will guide your play. The protagonists and director all share a collective player agenda, which reflects our goals as players of *Girl by Moonlight*, regardless of playbook or series.

PLAY TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS

Approach the game with excitement for what might happen, and not with a plan for what should happen. Let the game's mechanics and the contributions of the other players drive the story in directions you did not anticipate. Approach the story with an open mind, and embrace change, failure, and uncomfortable outcomes. If you try to force events to unfold a particular way, the game will fight you, and it will spoil the experience.

BE A FAN OF THE OTHER PLAYERS

Get excited about what the other players are doing. Listen when they speak, take an interest in their characters and contributions. Ask questions about the details that excite you, and build on the answers to those questions. It is every player's responsibility to think beyond their characters, or their own story. Leave space for other players to fill, and make contributions with other players in mind. This approach to play will build a more integrated story, where everyone's ideas combine into a cohesive and compelling whole.

REVEAL YOUR INNER WORLD

When portraying characters in the game, include descriptions of their emotional world. Whether directly in what they say or do, or indirectly through description, give the other players a window into the thoughts and feelings of characters you portray. Feelings matter in this game, so bring them to the surface and let them be an active part of play. By speaking these things aloud, you give the other players an opportunity—to better understand your character, and also to respond in ways that help explore, and further illuminate, your character's true self.

HOLD ON, BUT LIGHTLY

It is natural to invest emotionally in the characters, and to hope for their stories to turn out a certain way. It is important, though, to remain flexible when the story takes unexpected turns. Understand the characters as complete people with flaws, not as perfect vessels for wish fulfillment. Let them make mistakes. Similarly, do not be precious about the narrative itself. Be willing to let go, and permit the story you are telling to be a mutable, living thing.

KEEP HOPE IN YOUR HEART

Even as the characters face overwhelming adversity, it is essential that the players keep hope in their hearts. The protagonists are heroic because they hope for a better world, and take action to make it a reality. They must take risks, and face down terrible adversity to enact this change, and for the story to feel compelling. Hopeless play robs the characters of their potential, and makes for cynical stories.

SEE THINGS THROUGH A QUEER LENS

Queer content enriches the experience of play, and is fundamental to the themes and the inner workings of this game. The protagonists are uncertain and fluid in their identities, and defy monolithic cultural expectations concerning gender and relationships. Antagonism will echo these themes as well, showing tragic outcomes of the same journey, or dysfunctional, selfish reflections of the ideals the protagonists are pursuing.

This queer lens extends beyond identity—ways of being—to include ways of acting, and seeing. Look for ways to reframe the stakes and possible outcomes of conflict to include mending, care, and connection. Humanize and embrace the other. Reject limiting binaries, and explore more complicated answers to questions of identity, love, and community.

GAZE INTO THE BROKEN MIRROR

Regardless of the role you are playing, take an interest in the game's adversity. Let your character have flaws and vulnerabilities that provide opportunities for the other players to follow through on. Consider the ways in which the protagonists are complicit in, or a reflection of, the evils they struggle against. Don't worry about failure, or getting your characters into trouble, because that's where all the fun of the game happens.

CORE SYSTEMS

Role playing games function just like a conversation. Players will take turns speaking and listening to one another, building on what has already been said. The mechanical systems of the game form a structure that guides this conversation.

Typically the director's role in the conversation is to present the situations and settings the protagonists are in, and it's up to the protagonists to take action. This is where the mechanics come in, to help resolve the outcome of the protagonists' actions, and take the conversation in unexpected and exciting directions. These new circumstances demand new choices and actions from the protagonists, and the conversation continues.

Through this back and forth of conversation supported by mechanics, a story emerges. No player is deliberately crafting it moment by moment, rather, it is a byproduct of play that can only be seen in hindsight. Everyone at the table is playing to find out what happens next, and the mechanics help make sure that the outcomes are exciting and unexpected.



ACTIONS

The protagonists have nine actions, which they will use in the course of play to overcome adversity.

Protagonists are better at some things than others—each action has a rating (from 0 to 4) which tells you how many dice to roll when you perform the action. The third and fourth dice, the transcendent action dice, are only available when a protagonist is transcended.

When presented with obstacles during play, the protagonists will describe what their characters do to overcome that obstacle, and based on that description will choose an action to perform. Often their intent and choice of action will be clear from their description. If not, the players should ask questions, and discuss the situation until both intent and choice of action are clearly understood. Sometimes an action will be less effective in a given situation, or put the character in more danger, but it can still be attempted. Once the action is chosen, protagonists will roll dice to determine how well it goes. This is known as an action roll, and is fully detailed below, on page 37.

Actions are flexible, in that they encompass whatever style or method suits the character and the situation in question. Each protagonist might use **express** differently, one stridently arguing, another begging and cajoling, but both are using their words with an agenda in mind.

Actions can be used to produce a variety of effects, and choosing to use a particular action does not necessarily limit the possible outcomes. A protagonist might use **express** to taunt an opponent, in the hopes of making them too angry to focus. They might also use **express** to convince someone to calm down, and resolve an issue non-violently. The details of their use are up to the protagonists and director to negotiate during play, as appropriate to each situation.



CONFESS

When you **confess**, you expose the inner world of your thoughts and feelings to another. You might reveal to someone that it was you who left anonymous gifts at their doorstep. You might admit to a friend that you were once a servant of the evil empress.

You could try to use your feelings to change someone's mind (but express might be better).

FORGIVE

When you **forgive**, you show that you care for someone despite a mistake they have made. You might offer a chance for reconciliation to a friend that wronged you. You might embrace a monster that was once human, in the hopes that it might be human again someday.

You could try to offer an olive branch to someone to gauge their feelings (but empathize might be better).

PERCEIVE

When you **perceive**, you see the world as it presents itself, without judgement. You might observe someone and note their daily routine. You might see the beauty present in even the darkest and strangest corners of the world.

You could try to figure out what a complicated machine does (but analyze might be better).

EXPRESS

When you **express**, you use words with an agenda in mind. You might teach someone a valuable lesson about friendship. You might convince a longtime rival to work with you for a time to solve a shared problem.

You could try to tell someone how you really feel about them (but confess might be better).

DEFY

When you **defy**, you muster your courage and face opposition head on. You might stand up to a bully, fixing them with a stern glare. You might unleash your mightiest attack against a dangerous foe.

You could try to argue with someone to get your way (but express might be better).

EMPATHIZE

When you **empathize**, you understand a person intuitively, and feel their emotions as if they were your own. You might listen to someone's story, and gain an understanding of their perspective. You might touch a horrifying monster, and feel the frightened heart that beats within it.

You could try to understand someone's true intentions (but analyze might be better).

CONCEAL

When you **conceal**, you hide your true intentions and feelings. You might pass unnoticed, as just another face in the crowd. You might choke down your true feelings and lie to someone.

You could try sneaking through the rafters of an old building (but flow might be better).

FLOW

When you **flow**, you move with grace and adapt to your circumstances. You might leap across a gap to reach safety. You might act in accordance with other's expectations.

You could use your speed to go toe to toe with a frightening monster (but defy might be better).

ANALYZE

When you **analyze**, you search beyond the surface presentation of the world, and discover secrets. You might study an ancient book for information on magic rituals. You might discern a gap in your foe's defences.

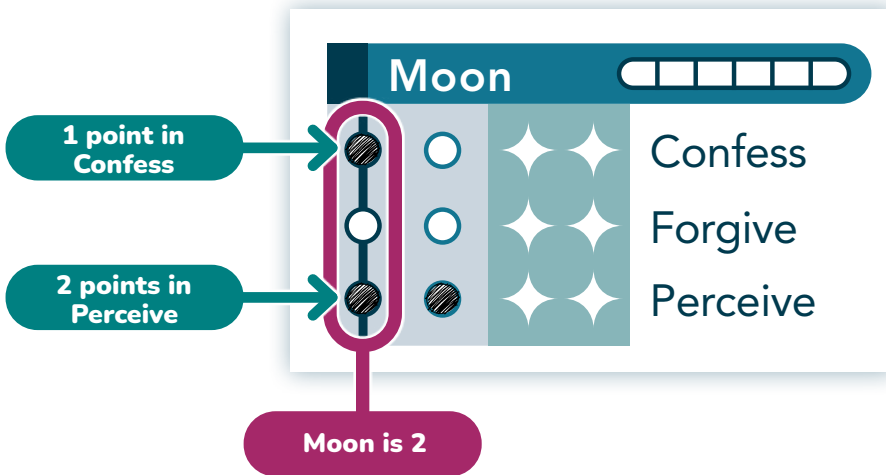
You could analyze a piece of music to understand its beauty (but perceive might be better).

ATTRIBUTES

Actions are grouped into three attributes, which the protagonists use to resist negative consequences: **sun**, **moon**, and **stars**. Each attribute has a rating from 0 to 3 that tells you how many dice to roll when you use that attribute.

The rating for each attribute is equal to the number of action dots in the first column under that attribute. For example, a character with one point in confess, no points in forgive, and two points in perceive will have a moon attribute of 2. (Protagonists who are well rounded will have better attribute ratings.) Transcendent action dots do not count towards attribute ratings, even if they are the only dot the character has in a given action.

- ◆ **Sun** represents a character's *compassion* and *resolve*. Roll sun when you resist a consequence of *violence* or *fear*.
- ◆ **Moon** represents a character's *sincerity* and *clarity*. Roll moon when you resist a consequence of *despair* or *heartbreak*.
- ◆ **Stars** represents a character's *cleverness* and *elegance*. Roll stars when you resist a consequence of *panic* or *social pressure*.



ROLLING THE DICE

This game uses six sided dice, and generally players will roll 1 to 4 dice at a time. You roll the dice and base your result on the highest single die roll. To determine how many dice you will be rolling, you'll use an action or attribute and start with dice equal to its rating. Additional circumstances may then add or remove dice before you roll.

If you ever have cause to roll zero dice, you roll two dice and keep the *lower* result. You cannot roll a critical success when you have zero dice.

There are five primary types of rolls:

Action roll. When a protagonist tries to accomplish something, and there is meaningful danger or something at stake, make an **action roll** to see how it turns out. Action rolls, their effects and consequences, drive most of the game.

Hawk weaves through the oncoming horde, her eyes set on Charybdis. She's using flow to overcome an obstacle, in this case a horde of evil minions.

Action rolls are described in detail in the next section on page 37.

Downtime roll. When the protagonists are not on missions they can perform downtime activities in relative safety. You make **downtime rolls** to see how much they get done. Downtime rolls cannot result in failure, or negative consequences for the protagonists.

While the rest of the crew is asleep, Surt makes modifications to his engine Eoligos. He's using analyze to work on a long term project.

The different downtime actions available to protagonists, and their corresponding rolls and results, are fully detailed on page 84.

Fortune roll. The director can make a **fortune roll** to disclaim decision making, and leave something up to chance. When there's no clear answer, and no one is in a position to make a judgement call, a fortune roll is a good way to keep the story moving forward.

Bev isn't sure if Crux, a supporting character, would choose to side with the adversary. They make a fortune roll using the adversity tier to determine Crux's fate.

After the group faces the leviathan ICARUS, Bev makes a fortune roll, using a table to generate some unintended consequences of the group's mission.

Resistance roll. A player can make a **resistance roll** when their character suffers a consequence they don't like. The roll tells us how much stress their character suffers to reduce the severity of the consequence.

Fawn tries to keep up with Hawk, but she hesitates and misses her chance. Anya doesn't want her character to be separated, so she rolls Fawn's sun attribute to resist the consequence.

For more details on resisting consequences, see page 71.

Obligation roll. Protagonists will each make this roll during the obligation phase. Like a resistance roll, **obligation rolls** tell us how much stress a protagonist accumulates, in this case the stress comes from the day to day struggles of their lives.

Van spends hours reviewing mission reports and simulations, reliving her past mistakes while trying to find a way forward. Her obligation is being the squad commander, and she endures it stoically using her stars attribute.

For more about obligation rolls, see page 83.

ACTION ROLLS

Action rolls are the most common type of roll in the game, and also require the most choices on the part of the players. When an action roll is called for, follow these steps:

- 1 The protagonist states their goal and chooses an action to use
- 2 The director judges the position for the roll and effect level for the action
- 3 Determine the dice pool, and add any bonus dice
- 4 Check for harm and subtract dice or adjust effect if the harm is relevant
- 5 The protagonist rolls the dice and we evaluate the result



CHOOSING A GOAL AND ACTION RATING

When presented with obstacles during play, the protagonists will describe what their characters do to try to overcome that obstacle. They state their character's goal, and choose the action they will use to achieve it. Their character's rating in the action determines their starting dice for the action roll.

Often their goal is clear based on the fictional circumstances and the description they provide, but even in those cases it is still helpful for them to state their goal explicitly. Sometimes players will make overly sweeping goals that go beyond what seems reasonable in a situation. In such cases the director should speak up, and help negotiate a more reasonable goal for the protagonist. This could also happen if a player sets their sights on too small or incremental a goal. This is an aspect of the game in which the director and protagonists will form an ongoing consensus of what is possible within the world they have created, as well as the pacing of the story they are telling together.

Once the player's goal is established, there is typically something going on in the fiction that will directly inform the choice of action to roll. That said, protagonists can revise their actions in the fiction in order to roll a different action rating, if there is one that seems more sensible to them. Often a few different actions will work in a given situation. It is not necessary to debate the minutiae of which one best applies—the protagonist simply chooses the action, and the director determines the position for the roll based on that choice. If a protagonist wants to revise their choice of action after the director replies with a position and effect, they are free to do so. Be flexible, as players will often decide to adjust their choices during this part of the process.



Raven is asking Leo to help her sneak into the archives. Claire can't decide if she should use express or confess in this situation. She has the same rating in both actions, so the decision is mostly about what feels right for the story. For express she could have Raven call in a favour, maybe? Confess would probably involve Raven telling Leo about the crown. Bev offers that express would be safer—they think a risky position would be fair for that action. Confess, on the other hand, would be desperate, but Bev thinks that the weight of the secret would move Leo, so they say it would have great effect. Claire gets to choose whichever she thinks is best.

Choice of action is one way that protagonists make statements about who their characters are, by showing how they deal with problems. Sometimes this will mean choosing actions that are not a great fit for their goal, or the situation at hand. The protagonists struggling, sometimes applying ill suited tools or techniques to problems, is an equally important part of their story as their successes and strengths.

ESTABLISHING THE FIELD OF ACTION

The set of actions available in the game also inform us about what matters in the world. Because there are several emotion-oriented actions, we know that feelings matter in this game. Whether you defy the monster or empathise with it, those carry equal weight. Either choice can affect the world in a meaningful way, and address adversity that the characters face.

When describing details of the game's fiction, it is important to provide details that are relevant to the various actions. Descriptions of the physical elements of a situation are often the first to come to mind: *Who is where? How does the air feel and smell? What colour is their adversary's costume?*

These tangible details should be supported by emotional elements: *What emotions are showing on their adversary's face? What is the mood in the room? What history do these characters share?*

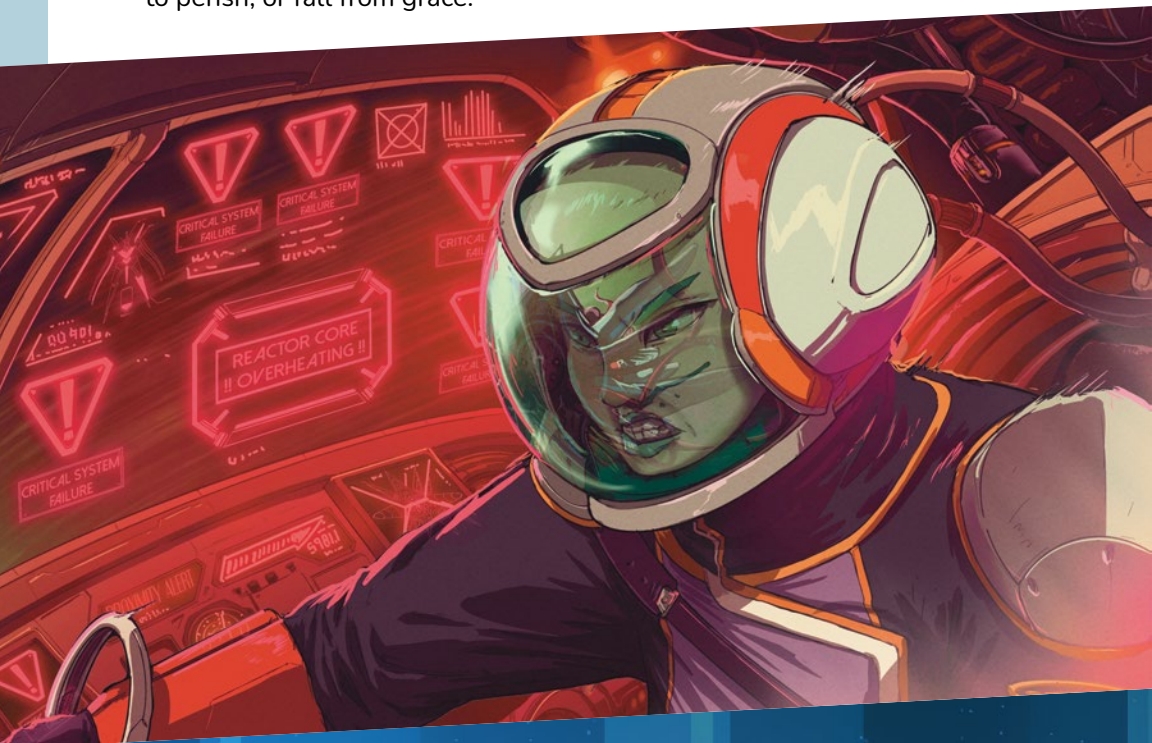
Both the surface details of the situation, and the inner aspects of the characters, are fields on which the game's action takes place. Describing these various details gives opportunities for different actions to come into play, and opens up new avenues for the other players.

EVALUATING POSITION

Position represents the severity of consequences resulting from a given course of action, should it fail. There are three positions: controlled, risky, and desperate.

- ◆ **Controlled:** You have a perfect opportunity, you have the advantage in the situation.
- ◆ **Risky:** You're acting under duress, there is no clear advantage in the situation.
- ◆ **Desperate:** You're overreaching your capabilities, circumstances are set against you.

The default choice for position is risky. Most action is dangerous, and pits you against your opposition on even footing. If the situation is more dangerous, make it desperate. If it seems less dangerous, make it controlled. If there is no risk, then an action roll is not needed. Sometimes the risk is emotional, that if the action goes wrong your character might be heartbroken, or suffer a tremendous blow to their pride. Other times the danger is a physical threat like bodily harm or losing their grip at the wrong moment. Heartbreak and injury are held to be equal dangers in this game, and either could cause a character to perish, or fall from grace.



Van powers up the thrusters on her engine, and attempts to lead her squad through ICARUS' defensive swarm. Dylan chooses flow, and Bev thinks about the possible dangers in the situation before replying with a position for the roll. A head on assault against the leviathan seems like it should be very dangerous. Bev decides it's a desperate action; everything is stacked against the pilots here. They might fare better if they break through, but for now the situation is as dangerous as it can get.



There are no hard and fast rules regarding position. It is a venue in which the director expresses their sense of tone and style for the game. Make the call that feels correct to you and the other players at the table. If you're not sure about a given situation, ask the other players what they think. The director has final say when determining position, but the process of evaluating position is a conversation between the director and the other players about the fiction's tone, and the game's circumstances. Talking about this openly will make the game run more smoothly, and establish a consensus at the table about these topics that will roll forward to events in the future. Keep things consistent once this baseline is established, as it is the foundation for the game's story.

Things to consider when determining position:

- ◆ **Action:** What action is being used to overcome the obstacle? Does it seem like a particularly dangerous approach?
- ◆ **Context:** What events preceded this situation? What are the circumstances the characters are taking their action in? What might happen if they fail?
- ◆ **Adversaries:** What is aligned in opposition to the action? How dangerous is that opposition? In what ways?

EVALUATING EFFECT

While position describes the risk involved, **effect** describes the impact—how much can be accomplished with a given action. There are three effect levels: limited, standard, and great.

- ◆ **Limited:** You achieve less than we'd expect, a portion of what you might have hoped for. What remains undone? What reduced your impact?
- ◆ **Standard:** You achieve what we would expect in the circumstances. Maybe this resolves the action, but there also might be more to do, yet.
- ◆ **Great:** You achieve more than expected. What makes this possible? What additional benefit or output do you get?

Sometimes a given action might have no effect. This could be as a result of harm and other penalties, or because a protagonist is attempting something that is actually impossible in a given situation. In such cases, consider breaking an action down into discrete steps that **are** possible, or trying a different approach to overcome the obstacle.



Bev considers the possible effect level for Van's flight through the leviathan's defences. It's dangerous, but if they do reach the leviathan and get in close, it seems reasonable that the swarm would not be able to fire at them without hitting ICARUS as well, so it just might work. Bev decides it should be standard effect, and says "That'll be desperate, with standard effect, Dylan." Dylan replies "Oh! Is it really that dangerous?"

"Yeah, the defensive swarm is like, thousands of drones launched from the belly of the leviathan that seek out and destroy threats." Dylan briefly considers trying a different approach, since there's surely a more nuanced approach that Van might take, but decides to stick to his original plan.

"Coordinator Zura ordered Van to assault the leviathan, and I think she is too committed to the chain of command to do anything else. So sure, desperate/standard works for me."

The director evaluates the fictional circumstances and decides what effect level a given action will have. Similar to position, this is a way to establish the tone of the action in your game.

The default choice is **standard effect**—build your evaluation from there based on the various factors in the fiction at hand. In *Girl by Moonlight*, the most significant factor in this evaluation is whether or not the protagonists are transcended. While they are their mundane selves, the protagonists can contend with mundane problems at standard effect, and should expect limited or no effect at all against the supernatural elements of the game. In such cases, they will need to push themselves for increased effect, or make savvy use of set up actions or team work. While transcended, the protagonists can face magical threats on a more even footing, and the director should start their evaluation at standard effect before considering advantages and disadvantages that might change it.

When evaluating effect, consider these factors:

- ◆ **Emotion:** Does the action play into a threat's emotions? Is it redemptive? Does it confirm someone's deepest fears, or set off their hidden pains? Are they too angry to listen?
- ◆ **Scale:** Is one side outnumbered? Are they larger or smaller? Do numbers or size factor into this action in these circumstances?
- ◆ **Surprise:** Are they ready for this action? Do they consider the character who is acting a threat?
- ◆ **The supernatural:** Are they trying to overcome something magical? Are they transcended?
- ◆ **Harm:** Are they injured? Are their emotions holding them back for this action? Are physical injury or emotional harm a factor for this action?
- ◆ **Scope:** What kinds of outcomes feel proportionate to the action? What makes sense given the story so far?



WHY POSITION AND EFFECT?

The negotiation of position and effect is where the tone of the game's action is established. The conversations around position inform us about how dangerous the world is, and how severe the cost of failure can be. Each series playset will have different guidelines for what constitutes the default position in different situations, as well as appropriate types of consequences.

The conversations around effect level help keep the action of the game grounded and consistent. Some opposition cannot be bested with certain approaches, and some problems are out of the scope of what the protagonists can solve directly. Again, playsets will have guidelines for these conversations.

Keep in mind that struggle and tension are at the heart of what makes role playing games like this one function. It's important to have credible threats, and challenging opposition for the protagonists. Trivial opposition will tend to make the story feel flat and uninspiring.



BONUS DICE

Once you have chosen your action and position and effect are determined, you have the opportunity to add up to two bonus dice to your action roll.

A teammate can **assist** you to provide you with a bonus die. They take 1 stress, or spend a link, then say how they help you, and give you an extra die to roll.

You can also **push yourself** for a bonus die, which costs 2 stress, or you can accept a **poisoned promise**. Pushing yourself and poisoned promises are mutually exclusive—it's one or the other, never both.

PUSHING YOURSELF

You can take stress to briefly exceed your normal limits—this is called **pushing yourself**. When you make an action roll, you can mark 2 stress to choose one of the following benefits:

- ◆ Add +1d to your roll
- ◆ Improve your effect by 1 level
- ◆ Act despite being incapacitated by harm

The protagonists will often find themselves over-reaching, or trying to do things they aren't particularly good at. By pushing themselves, they can succeed despite being out-matched, outnumbered, or out of their element. Players should describe what this looks like. How does this flash of brilliance differ from their normal actions? What lets your character exceed their limits?

POISONED PROMISES

Characters in this game live in a hostile world, one that pits them against each other, and twists their intentions. The protagonists act with intention to do good, but they cannot predict every consequence of their actions. The world can't be changed without disruption, upset, and consequence.

To reflect this, the director or *any other player* can offer a bonus die to any action roll by attaching a **poisoned promise**. A poisoned promise adds a troublesome complication to the story, often connected to the immediate action, but not always. Some examples include:

- ◆ Betray a friend or loved one, maybe by accidentally exposing a secret they told you
- ◆ Introduce a troublesome character or factor, perhaps a longtime rival interferes
- ◆ Inadvertently help your adversary's cause
- ◆ Start and/or tick a troublesome clock, maybe an existing clock for 'Leo abandons the revolution' or a new clock for 'collapsing walkway'
- ◆ Your action sets some greater foe on your trail, advance the adversary track
- ◆ Suffer harm, like being overwhelmed by anger or a hard fall onto pavement



Raven and her friends are sneaking into the excavation where the Nebula Crown was dug up. Claire wants to roll conceal, but she doesn't like her odds since she has no dots in that action. Bev offers a poisoned promise: "Maybe Raven's mother is part of the group the authorities sent to lock down the dig site?" Bev is introducing a troublesome character. "You hear her directing her security detail at the opposite end of the excavation. Does that work?"

Claire thinks it over—this could mean that Raven has to confront her mother, or that she gets put in danger. That sounds interesting (if troublesome) to her, so she accepts the poisoned promise and takes an extra die for her roll.



Having touched down on its massive shell, Himna tries to find a way to communicate with ICARUS. Claire announces she wants to use analyze, and asks if anyone has a good poisoned promise for her. Anya offers, “maybe there’s some kind of massive port that your engine can interface directly with, but plugging it directly into the leviathan will overload its systems and cause a bunch of damage?”



“Oh, that sounds good! My poor engine, though... I think I’ll just push myself instead.”

If accepted, the poisoned promise occurs regardless of the roll’s outcome. You make this bargain, pay the price, and get the bonus die. There might not be a good promise for every situation, and that’s okay. Usually good poisoned promises will jump immediately to mind. Don’t agonize over making them, let them come naturally, and keep play moving forward. The cost of the promise need not relate directly to what is at stake in the roll, but it is usually best for the severity of the cost to be relative to the stakes. Asking for a protagonist’s immortal soul in exchange for a bonus die to tie their shoes will tend to rub players the wrong way. You cannot roll, nor expend armour, to resist the consequences that come from a poisoned promise.

Should it ever be an issue, the director has final say over which poisoned promises are fair and reasonable. Remember that protagonists can always refuse a promise if they can’t bear its cost, or just don’t feel like taking it.

HARM PENALTIES

When a protagonist's harm is relevant in a given situation, they suffer a penalty based on the level of the harm. Penalties from multiple harm tags can apply, if they are each relevant to the action being performed. The penalties for each level are:

- ◆ **Level 1 harm: Less effect for the action.** Downgrade the action's effect by one level. This can drop an action already at limited effect down to no effect.
- ◆ **Level 2 harm: -1d to the action roll.** If this would result in the protagonist having less than zero dice in their pool, consider them at zero dice anyways (they roll two dice and keep the lowest).
- ◆ **Level 3 harm: Incapacitated.** The protagonist cannot perform action rolls, unless they receive an assist or push themselves. In either case, the protagonist does not receive the extra die for their action roll. They also need help to move, are not fully aware of their surroundings, and will struggle to do anything at all until their condition improves.

Harm is a type of consequence, and is described in more detail on page 67.

EVALUATING THE RESULTS OF A ROLL

Once the dice are rolled, note the highest number—that is your result.

- ◆ If the result is a 6, it's a **clean success**. You accomplish what you set out to do, without any complications.
- ◆ If the result is a 4 or 5, it's a **partial success**. You accomplish your aim, but your success comes at a cost, or is complicated by other factors, like harm, reduced effect, unexpected consequences, etc.
- ◆ If the result is 1-3, it's a **bad outcome**. You probably do not achieve your goal, and you suffer additional consequences as well.
- ◆ If you roll more than one 6, it is a **critical success**. Criticals give you some further advantage or gain beyond what you initially established.

Between their own abilities, teamwork, and poisoned promises, we can see that characters in this game are generally going to succeed, but that most success will not be without complication. If there is ever a doubt about how to resolve a situation, fall back on this basic idea and keep play moving forward. You can seek rules clarifications after the session, and follow the procedure correctly next time it comes up.



TEAMWORK

In order to overcome the challenges set before them, the protagonists will need to work together. They can help each other with actions in three different ways:

The simplest form of teamwork is when the protagonists **assist** each other with actions. Describe how your character is assisting, mark 1 stress on your character sheet, and give another player an additional die for their action roll. You might also suffer consequences resulting from the roll, depending on the situation and the results of the roll.

Hawk is trying to force her way through a wall of angry spirits. Raven helps her by singing to calm the spirits. Raven marks 1 stress, and Hawk gets +1d to her defy roll.



If multiple protagonists want to help, or several protagonists set out to do the same action, you can perform a **group action**. One character leads the action, coordinating the group towards the common goal. The leader, and all others participating, roll the same action, taking the best result from among all contributors as the overall result for the group. For every member of the group action whose result is 1-3, the leader takes 1 stress.

Van leads her fellow pilots, flying in formation with them to evade the leviathan's defences. They all roll flow. Surt succeeds with a 5, but Van and Himna each roll a 1. The group action succeeds, but Van takes 2 stress.



You can **set up** another character's action. By creating an opportunity for your allies to follow through on, you can contribute to an ally's action indirectly. Perform an action that makes sense to set up your friend's action. If you are successful (a result of 4 or better), they get either increased effect or better position for their roll. The choice of which is up to you, depending on the action you take to set up your ally. All the normal procedures for success, failure, and consequences apply to this set up roll.

Caspian Hulme is following Fawn, so she slips into a dead end alley where she knows Hawk is waiting, luring Caspian into a trap. Anya rolls Fawn's flow, and gets a 6. She decides that this gives Hawk better effect when she steps out from the shadows to confront Caspian. When Dylan rolls Hawk's defy, he gets great effect instead of standard, thanks to the setup action.

ACTION ROLL SUMMARY

- ❶ **A roll is needed:** A protagonist describes their character acting to accomplish a specific goal. Make an action roll when there is significant opposition, immediate danger, or troublesome consequences to failure. If not, no roll is needed.
- ❷ **Choose an action:** The protagonist making the roll chooses the action rating they wish to use. Choose an action that matches what the character is doing in the story.
- ❸ **Assess position and effect:** The director assesses the position and effect for the action. This evaluation factors the action chosen, as well as relevant fictional circumstances.
- ❹ **Bonus dice:** Add up to two bonus dice. Gain a bonus die when you:
 - ◆ Receive assistance from another protagonist.
 - ◆ Push yourself (take 2 stress) or accept a poisoned promise.
- ❺ **5. Roll and evaluate:** Roll the dice pool and judge the outcome. The players narrate the action together, with the director responsible for narrating bad outcomes and consequences as determined by the position and result of the roll.

TRANSCENDENCE

In order to stand a chance against the various threats the protagonists face, they will need to **transcend**. Each playset will have variations on what it means to transcend, but at its core it is always the same—transcendence means embodying your truest self. It is an exultant expression of everything that the characters are forced to bury and deny about themselves in their day to day lives.



HOW TO TRANSCEND

Each protagonist can activate their transcendence once per mission. They may transcend at any time—before making an action roll, in response to a consequence they are suffering, or any other time they feel makes sense. The details of the series being played, and the group's answers to various questions during series creation will determine the exact nature of transcendence in your game. It might also vary from character to character within a given series.

When a protagonist transcends, they describe their character's transformation. As well as tapping into inner reserves of power, they also manifest physical changes. Their look, their body, their gender, might all shift to reflect the true self that otherwise lies hidden within them.

What does your true self look like?

How does it feel to transcend?

How does it feel when the power is spent, and you change back?



When Fawn transcends, she adopts a heroic alter ego 'The Midnight Quill' a dashing scoundrel who works from the shadows to secretly aid her friends. Midnight Quill wears a mask that hides her identity, and her friends (or at least Hawk) suspect that she is in league with the adversary, mistaking her efforts to help them as meddling interference.



Van was vat-grown, engineered from birth to pilot her engine, Alastor. When she transcends she enters an intense flow state, her body humming with energy as she taps into her specially manufactured physiology. For a moment we see her floating in the vast, alien landscape of Alastor's mind, before snapping back to herself in the engine's cockpit—her pupils dilate, then contract, that same landscape now faintly visible behind them.



BENEFITS OF TRANSCENDENCE

While transcended, the protagonists gain access to the following:

- ◆ Transcendent special abilities from their playbook and the series playset
- ◆ Use of their armour
- ◆ Transcendent action ratings (the third and fourth dots) if they have any
- ◆ Increased effect level against supernatural opposition

While transcended, the protagonists can perform superhuman or magical feats that would otherwise be impossible, thanks to their transcendent special abilities. Some of these abilities are theirs alone, personal manifestations of power born of their individual skills and truest self. They also have shared abilities, manifestations of the group's magical origin and destiny. Transcendence also shields them from harm, and lets them face their adversaries on a more even footing.

Notably, while not transcended, the characters do not have the necessary effect level to match supernatural threats in the world. The director will evaluate position and effect accordingly in those circumstances. Expect to be desperate/limited at best when facing supernatural forces in your mundane form.

As Van charges her thrusters and prepares to make an attack pass at the leviathan ICARUS, she transcends. A mundane pilot would be shot down easily, but with her heightened awareness and deeper connection to her engine, she is able to slip through the leviathan's defences, and lead her squad into position to stop its rampage.



LIMITS OF TRANSCENDENCE

Each protagonist has a transcendence track in their playbook. Every action roll made while transcended advances the track by one segment. This includes group actions, and any action rolls made in flashbacks in which the character is still transcended. Once the last segment of the track is filled, their transcendence ends.

If the protagonists are able to accomplish all they need to with the transcendent actions they have, then transcendence ending might be a relief. A moment of peace and released tension, in the relative calm following the action. If, however, they run out of transcendence in the midst of a mission, with their adversaries still threatening them, they might end up bereft of power when they need it most.



Fawn, in disguise as Midnight Quill, follows her friends as they sneak into the university security office after hours, looking for clues to the Nebula Crown's location. She distracts patrolling security, and secretly opens the way for her friends, all while remaining perfectly concealed... until her friends trip an alarm, and the whole situation escalates. Cops everywhere, flashlights probing the darkness, shouts and panicked footsteps in the night.

Hoping to buy her friends time to escape, Fawn makes a last ditch attempt to draw the police away from the others, stepping dramatically into the searchlights. It's her last transcended action, and it goes badly. She draws their attention, but isn't able to get away cleanly.

Fawn finds herself alone, running across the moonlit campus grounds, without her powers. Just a girl in an ill-fitting costume now, desperately looking for somewhere to hide.

The transcendence track resets when the protagonists complete a mission, unless they are in eclipse, or ineligible due to a series rule.

LINKS

When their transcendent powers alone are not enough, the protagonists can draw on the power of their relationships with each other, represented by links. Links are primarily created through the **make a connection** downtime action, though certain character playbooks or series might have other ways of making them. The protagonists' ability to make these connections, despite the weight of obligations and oppressive day-to-day routine, are an important part of what makes them heroic.



Links are between your character and another protagonist, and are divided into separate pools accordingly. All unspent links are lost at the end of each episode.

To use a link, players spend a link with a character and choose one of the effects listed below. Any time a link is spent, describe how the characters' relationship is a source of strength here in the moment.

Players can spend links to gain the following effects:

- ◆ **Recover stress:** Spend a link to recover 2 stress. This can affect you, or the linked character, at your option.
- ◆ **Shrug off harm:** Spend a link with a transcended ally to allow them to ignore the effects of a single harm tag until their transcendence ends.
- ◆ **Helping:** You may spend a link with someone to give them a bonus die. You do not need to take stress, or even be present in the scene to help them directly.
- ◆ **Lending strength:** When someone rolls a 4/5 result on an eclipse roll, you may spend one link with them to prevent them from falling into eclipse.



Hawk slams her hammer into the monstrous Professor Hulme, who is lunging at a stunned Raven. Dylan goes to roll Hawk's defy, and looks to Claire for some help.

"I don't think Raven can do much directly here, she's not ready for a fight. But since you're coming to my rescue and all, I'll spend one of my links with Hawk to give you a bonus die."

Dylan grabs an extra die for his roll, "Yeah, Hawk is yelling Raven's name as she charges in!"



Himna just reached 9 stress due to a bad resistance roll, which prompts Claire to make an eclipse roll. She gets a 4. Dylan looks at his sheet, and sees that Van has one link with Himna, so Dylan spends it to prevent Himna falling into eclipse. Van hears Himna panicking, and reassures her over the radio "Don't give up, I'm with you. I've got your back."

STRESS AND ECLIPSE

The protagonists endure a great deal, and are pushed to the limits of what their bodies and hearts can handle. They persevere in part because they have the hope and determination they need to withstand adversity. This capability is represented by the stress track.

When protagonists need to push themselves beyond their normal limits, or to endure or avoid bad outcomes, it costs stress.

Van delivers a report to her commanding officers. They question her every decision, and doubt her loyalties. Dylan rolls for Van's obligation and gets a 5. Dylan marks 6 minus the result in stress on his sheet, which means 1 stress for Van. She endures the lectures and interrogations silently, her face stoic and expressionless.



Hawk confronts Canis after class—she's sure Canis is a snitch, and is trying to get him to stop. Dylan rolls Hawk's express, and gets a 2. Bev describes the consequences of missing the roll: Canis hears Hawk out, but has already given his report to his MCP handler, Cpl. Lynx. Dylan doesn't want this to happen, so he rolls to resist using Hawk's stars attribute. He rolls a 4, which means Hawk takes 2 stress. She still does not succeed at her initial intent. Instead, Hawk can tell Canis is lying—he has not reported yet, but he will if Hawk does nothing to stop him.



When protagonists reach the limits of their stress track, they risk falling into eclipse.



ECLIPSE

Even the protagonists have moments where they do not live up to their heroic identity. All the ways they have been taught by their society to hate themselves, and doubt their own truth, compromise them from the inside. They indulge their worst impulses, or push themselves to dangerous extremes, struggling with the impossible demands the world has placed on their shoulders.

When you fall into **eclipse**, your inner turmoil and self-destruction manifests. Each playbook has a unique *When you eclipse* prompt that describes the mindset that takes hold of your character while they are in eclipse. It also includes an escape clause, which will need to be satisfied in order to return to normal.

Eclipse shows us a reflection of the protagonists, but through a broken mirror. A fractured and dysfunctional counterpoint to their identities that threatens to bring about their downfall. It also shows a possible future, a version of reality in which our heroes have turned away from their destiny, and the world is left unredeemed.



Fawn is running through the university grounds, desperately seeking a place to hide from the campus police. Anya rolls Fawn's conceal, but misses the roll. Bev describes the consequences of failure: "Fawn finds a place to hide near the metro station, and lays low for a bit. She thinks she's safe, but just as she emerges from hiding to hurry to the metro, she rounds a corner straight into a group of cops, who take her in for questioning."

"Oh, I don't think that will end well for me..." Anya replies. She looks down at her sheet, she's almost at maximum stress, she's used all her transcendent actions, and she's separated from her friends. "I guess I have to resist that, but I'll need to roll perfectly."



ROLLING FOR ECLIPSE

When you reach or exceed your stress limit, you roll for eclipse using your lowest attribute. While at your stress limit and not in eclipse, any additional stress you would take instead triggers another eclipse roll.

1-3 You are in eclipse.

4/5 Another protagonist can push themselves or spend a link to keep you from succumbing. If they do not, treat it as a 1-3 result and you are in eclipse.

6 You hold on to hope, and stay in the struggle. The next time you take stress, roll for eclipse again.

On a **critical success**, erase 1 spent segment of your transcendence track, and recover 5 stress. In addition, on a critical:

- ◆ If **sun** was rolled, each other player advances their recovery clock by 2.
- ◆ If **moon** was rolled, each other player recovers 2 stress.
- ◆ If **stars** was rolled, each other player resets their armour and special armour uses.

Anya rolls to resist Fawn's arrest and gets a 1. So much for rolling perfectly! Fawn already has 7 stress, which means marking another 5 will more than fill her stress track. Anya fills the track to 9 stress, and then rolls for eclipse. She rolls her lowest attribute, moon, and gets a 3, which means Fawn is in eclipse.



If, instead, Anya had rolled a 6 for her eclipse roll, Fawn would hang on at the brink of eclipse. Her stress would remain at nine, and Anya would have to roll again the next time Fawn takes stress.

FALLING INTO ECLIPSE

When you fall into eclipse, read the prompt out loud, including the escape clause. This will help everyone at the table to understand the sudden shift in behaviour, and remind them of how they can help your character escape eclipse.



Anya reads her eclipse prompt out loud to the other players. “Who you really are clearly isn’t enough; only the mask is worthy of their love. You reject all aspects of your everyday self, and embrace the most superficial aspects of your persona. Give them what you know they want—effortless beauty, and extravagant drama!”

Dylan shakes his head, smiling ruefully. “Oh great, an even more melodramatic Midnight Quill... Hawk is going to love that.”

Anya shoots Dylan a look, then continues on, reading the second half of the prompt. “You escape eclipse when someone shows you the truth of their heart, and you reveal your identity to them. They add a promise about keeping your secret.” Nobody says anything to this, but Anya can see her fellow players thinking about the escape clause, and how they can help Fawn see that she’s a worthy friend, with or without her mask.

WHEN IN ECLIPSE

Being in eclipse does not mean that your character turns on their friends or suddenly becomes a villain. Though it may push you towards fatalistic choices or reckless behaviour, you are still in control of your character’s choices and actions. Being in eclipse is an opportunity to have your character act out, cause drama, or say things they are normally too calm or shy to say out loud.

Embodying your eclipse prompt earns you xp at the end of session, and you may choose to do this regardless of whether your character is in eclipse or not. When not in eclipse, you can hint at your character’s worst impulses, calling attention to the behaviours and feelings described in the prompt. Save the more overt expressions of this inner turmoil for when your character is in eclipse.



Characters can be in eclipse through all phases of play, and remain in eclipse until the escape clause is satisfied.

Fawn's eclipse prompt is about her fearing she cannot live up to her heroic alter ego, Midnight Quill. Anya decides that Fawn will do something dramatic and foolish to prove herself a hero, and waits for the right moment. Meanwhile, she spends all of downtime being overly dramatic and aloof, but everyone is too busy to notice Fawn's angst. Typical!



While you are in eclipse you use stress in reverse, erasing accumulated stress on your sheet any time you would normally take it. You do not clear stress or your transcendence track at the end of a mission. If an effect causes you to recover stress while in eclipse, increase your stress by that amount instead.

Being in eclipse gives you power, effectively letting you use your accumulated stress a second time. This power comes at a cost, however, as in this state your character's dysfunctional impulses start to overshadow their virtues.

It also brings risk—if your stress ever reaches zero while you are in eclipse, choose one of the following for your character:

- ◆ They can take no more, and they die
- ◆ They lose their magical powers and return, heartbroken, to mundane life
- ◆ They betray their companions and side with their adversaries

Make a new character, who will join the group after the current mission ends. (For more on losing characters, see page 76.)

ESCAPING ECLIPSE

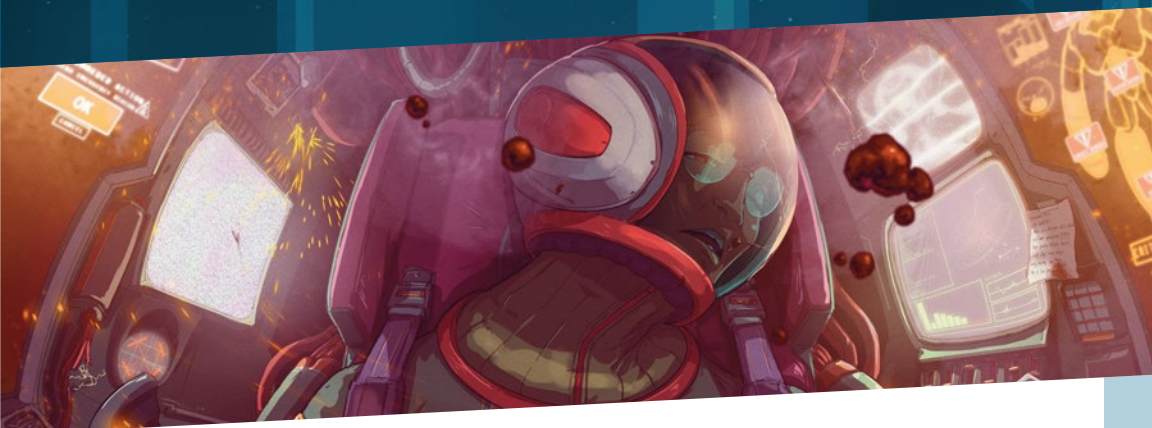
Each playbook has a way to escape eclipse detailed below the eclipse prompt. The protagonists cannot do this alone, though. They will need support and care from their friends to find themselves once more. This can happen in the midst of a tense action sequence, or in the relative safety of downtime. It is often helpful to discuss what escape might look like for a character in advance, given the circumstances of their eclipse. Sometimes escape will require an action roll, but it could also happen as a result of dialogue between characters, or some other fictional circumstance that feels right to the players. Be flexible when assessing what counts as satisfying the escape clause.



Later, Hawk saves Midnight Quill from certain death at the claws of Caspian Hulme. There is a brief moment in which the two of them are alone amidst the rubble of the excavation site. Dylan describes Hawk helping Quill to their feet, and the two of them locking eyes while Hawk says “I don’t know what I’d do if someone got you before I could.” She smiles, and lets Quill go, despite her long standing grudge against the masked meddler. Anya sees Dylan subtly setting her up—Fawn can escape eclipse when someone shows her the truth of their heart, and she reveals her identity to them. Grinning, she describes Midnight Quill removing her mask, and pulling a stunned Hawk in for a kiss!

When you escape eclipse, if you are in downtime, erase any remaining stress, and clear your transcendence track. If you escape eclipse while on a mission, your stress and transcendence tracks remain in place.





CONSEQUENCES AND HARM

Through ill fortune, the actions of their foes, or their own mistakes, the protagonists will face consequences. There are five types of consequences:

- ◆ **Reduced effect**
- ◆ **Complication**
- ◆ **Lost opportunity**
- ◆ **Worse position**
- ◆ **Harm**

Depending on the circumstances, the director might assign one or more consequences as part of evaluating a roll. They make this assessment using the fictional circumstances, the guidelines of the series in play, and the overall tone established by the group during play.

The position the roll was made at, and the roll result also factor into this assessment. A desperate action will have more severe consequences than a controlled or risky action. A 1-3 result will carry more severe consequences than a 4/5 result on the same roll. It's a judgement call that takes a little practice to master.

Surt draws the leviathan's attention to make an opening for Himna to get in close. Anya describes Surt flying past the leviathan's head at top speed, thrusters flaring white hot as he tries to draw it into a debris field. Anya is choosing to roll flow for the action. Bev says that it sounds like a risky action, with standard effect. Anya rolls and gets a 4, a partial success.

This means Surt succeeds in his intent, but his action will also have negative consequences.



REDUCED EFFECT

This consequence means the protagonist falls short of whatever they initially set out to do. If you tried to rescue a friend who was drowning, maybe you've gotten them to the water's surface, but not yet back to shore. Maybe someone accepts your offer of cooperation for now, but will watch for opportunities to betray you later. Your impassioned plea stalls the monster, but does not redeem its heart as you had hoped. This is equivalent to reducing the effect level of the protagonist's action by one level.



Bev might choose to reduce Surt's effect level as a consequence, meaning Surt only had limited effect. Instead of completing the action in one step, making an opening for Himna will require completion of a clock. Bev makes a new 4-count clock called "The Diversion" and marks two segments. Someone else will have to finish what Surt started.



COMPLICATION

This consequence means new or worse dangers. It might be immediate—maybe a protagonist is separated from their friends, someone important sides with your adversaries, or the room catches fire.

The director might choose to advance a clock, instead, to track consequences that extend into the future. Maybe there is a clock for a bridge that is on the verge of collapsing, and the director advances it one step. This will be a problem soon, but for now the bridge holds and the protagonists can try to accomplish their goals before it collapses.

A serious complication is more severe—a protagonist is surrounded by foes, a trusted friend betrays the group, the room they're in catches fire and the doors are all blocked.

Whatever the details of a given complication, it should not invalidate or cancel out the effects of a successful roll. If the protagonist rolled a 4/5 while convincing the ghost of a queen to help them, do not have the queen be plotting their downfall all along. The protagonist succeeded, so the queen will help them, though maybe she demands a favour in return.

Bev could choose to add a complication. Surt is going faster than he can handle through the debris field, he can feel pieces of debris ripping through the hull of his engine. Warning lights flare in the cockpit, showing the extent of the damage, his engine can't take anymore of this. Bev tells Anya to remove a point of strength from her engine.



If Anya had rolled a 1-3 instead, Bev might choose a serious complication. Surt collides with a huge chunk of debris he somehow didn't see, and loses all sense of orientation as his engine careens into the debris field. The cockpit goes dark. He will have to get his engine back online, and navigate out of the debris field to get back to his friends, who are still struggling against the leviathan without him.

LOST OPPORTUNITY

This consequence means that the situation changes. Whatever approach was used before will no longer work. You might still be able to accomplish your original goal, but it will have to be by some new means. Maybe you tried pleading with a monster to remember its human life, but you discover that its heart is closed, and it can't remember. If you want to redeem it now, you'll have to try another way, maybe by empathising with it to learn what pain caused its heart to close.



Maybe Surt loses his opportunity. The debris field is too dense, and his engine refuses his controls and veers away. He'll need to think of a different distraction, or change his approach.

WORSE POSITION

This consequence means the protagonists' actions make the situation more volatile. This isn't a failure, nor is it a success yet. You can try again, and re-roll your action at a worse position. This consequence creates a sense of an unravelling situation. While a mission might open with a controlled position, this consequence can take it to risky, and then up to desperate as the protagonists get themselves further and further beyond their limits.



Bev might put Surt in a worse position. A simple fly-by isn't enough, Surt will have to collide with the leviathan to get its attention and change its course. Anya can try this new approach, and re-roll the action at desperate. If not she will have to abandon this line of action.

In the case of a partial success, their action still succeeded (so re-rolling wouldn't make sense) but the situation is made dangerous by some new problem or threat. This means subsequent actions will be in worse positions.



HARM

This consequence means lasting emotional or physical injury, and possibly death. When a protagonist suffers harm, it is recorded in their playbook at the appropriate level. Harm is recorded as a word or short phrase that describes the nature of the harm.

Bev could assign harm. The strain and fear caused by Surt's reckless flight through the debris field might take an emotional toll, leaving him with level 1 harm 'shaken.' If the tone calls for something more significant, maybe Surt saw visions of his own doom as the g-forces pushed him to near blackout during his manoeuvres, and he suffers level 2 harm 'fatal visions.'



If Anya had rolled a 1-3, instead of a 4/5, Bev might make the harm more severe. The debris which had damaged Surt's engine might instead pierce the cockpit, and cause level 3 harm 'shrapnel wounds.'

Each level of harm has an associated penalty which comes into play when any harm at that level is relevant to the current circumstances:

- ◆ **Level 1 harm: Less effect.** Downgrade the action's effect by one level. This can drop an action already at limited effect down to no effect.
- ◆ **Level 2 harm: -1d to action rolls.** If this would result in the protagonist having less than zero dice in their pool, consider them at zero dice anyways (they roll two dice and keep the lowest.)
- ◆ **Level 3 harm: Incapacitated.** The protagonist cannot perform action rolls, unless they receive an assist, or push themselves. In either case, the protagonist does not receive the extra die for their action roll. They also need help to move, are not fully aware of their surroundings, and will struggle to do anything at all until their condition improves.



Later, Surt needs to leave the cockpit and throw himself through the void to board the ICARUS. Anya goes to roll Surt's flow, which has 1 dot, and Bev points out that Surt has level 2 harm. He is still being plagued by visions of his own doom, so Anya will roll one less die. Anya describes Surt hastily going through emergency decompression procedures in a cold sweat, before gritting his teeth and hurling himself across the gap. Anya effectively has zero dice for this action, so she rolls two dice and keeps the lowest.

Levels 1 and 2 can hold two separate harm tags, while level 3 can only hold one. If you run out of spaces to record harm at a given level, any new harm at that level is recorded on the level above.

Harm		RECOVERY	
3		need help	
2	EXHAUSTED SCARED	-1d	
1	BRUISED CONFUSED	less effect	

ARMOUR ☐

SPECIAL ☐

level 1 harm bumped to level 2 because level 1 is full

Level 4 harm is fatal harm. Often the threat of fatal harm will come as a consequence of failing a desperate action against a dangerous foe, though other situations might merit it as well. Whatever the circumstances, players should call out when fatal harm is on the table, so that no one is caught off guard by such severe consequences.

If you need to record harm at level 3, and that level is already filled, you suffer a catastrophic consequence, which might be fatal, if the director rules that circumstances merit it. In such cases, treat this as taking level 4 harm. Otherwise, you narrowly avoid disaster, and you are out of action for the remainder of the mission, unable to make action rolls or help your allies. Do you flee to safety? Do your friends carry you out? Are you left for dead only to turn up later?

HARM EXAMPLES

Lesser (level 1): drained, scared, confused, scraped, bruised, embarrassed

Moderate (level 2): exhausted, panicked, cut up, mortified, disgraced

Severe (level 3): impaled, catatonic, crushed, heartbroken, hopeless

Fatal (level 4): eaten, drowned, lost forever, utter despair

LINKS AND HARM

Protagonists can shrug off harm using links. To do so, spend a link with a transcended ally to allow them to ignore the effects of a single harm tag until their transcendence ends.

This is a temporary effect, and does not remove the harm from their sheet.

Anya is about to make her roll at zero dice, when Claire interrupts, “Hey, I’ve got a link with Surt, I’ll let you ignore that harm!” Claire crosses off the link with Surt on her sheet. “I think that Surt is about to hurl himself into space when he hears Himna reassuring him over the radio. *You’re going to make it, Surt. Just take another breath, and focus. You can do this.*”



Anya breathes a sigh of relief, now she can ignore that harm tag and roll one die, which gives her much better odds of succeeding.

RECOVERING FROM HARM

You can recover from harm by filling the harm recovery clock on your sheet. Most often this will happen during downtime, when a friend helps you recover, but you might have a special ability that lets you recover some other way. When the clock fills, erase any harm at level 1, and reduce all other harm by one level. You can take this opportunity to adjust how the harm is described if that feels appropriate—level 2 harm ‘exhausted’ might become level 1 harm ‘drained.’

If you have further segments to mark after filling your recovery clock, they carry forward to your next recovery as long as you still have harm. When you have no harm recorded on your sheet, erase any marked segments in the recovery clock.



During the next downtime phase, Himna helps Surt recover. Claire rolls Himna's empathy and gets a 6. This advances Surt's recovery clock by 4 segments, which completes the clock. His only harm is level 2 ‘fatal visions’ which Anya adjusts to level 1 ‘shaken’.

Harm	RECOVERY
3	need help
2 FATAL VISIONS	-1d
1	less effect

Harm	RECOVERY
3	need help
2	-1d
1 SHAKEN	less effect

ARMOUR ☐ SPECIAL ☐

If Claire had rolled a critical success, the extra segment would carry forward, leaving Surt with one segment of progress towards his next recovery.

RESISTING CONSEQUENCES

When a protagonist suffers a consequence that they deem unacceptable, they can choose to resist it. Simply tell the director “No, I’d like to resist that.” Resistance is automatically effective—the director will tell you if the consequence is reduced, or mitigated entirely. You then make a resistance roll to see how much stress your character suffers as a result of their resistance, and we describe how your character resists this consequence.

You make the roll using one of your character’s attributes (sun, moon, or stars). The director chooses the attribute based on the nature of the consequence being resisted.

- ◆ **Sun:** Consequences from violence and fear
- ◆ **Moon:** Consequences from despair and heartbreak
- ◆ **Stars:** Consequences from panic and social pressure

Your character suffers 6 stress minus the result of your resistance roll. So a roll of 4 would mean your character suffers 2 stress. A result of 6 means no stress is suffered. If a critical is rolled, you also clear 1 stress.



Generally, resistance will reduce the severity of consequences, but not eliminate them entirely. If you were to resist fatal harm, for example, you might reduce it to severe harm instead. Or if a complication resulted in the advancing of a clock by 3 segments, it might only advance 2 or 1. In other situations, a reduction of severity might not make sense, and the consequence is all or nothing.

Let's say the consequence being resisted is that a monster knocks you off a ledge. When you resist, the director might say that you avoid the consequence completely—you dodge the monster's swipe, or deftly keep your footing.

Maybe instead, they say you resist it in part—the monster shoves you towards the ledge, but you somehow keep your feet and don't fall off it. It's between you and your friends, you're separated and in a bad spot, but at least you're still standing.

The decision whether to reduce or avoid consequences completely is really about the overall tone of the series. More light-hearted fiction might see the characters avoid danger completely. The characters only suffer a lasting consequence at the player's option, or when their armour and stress are used up. In a heavier, more tragic series, most consequences will only be reduced—action has long term consequences, slowly grinding the characters down.

As with setting position and effect, there is a larger conversation happening between all the players when we talk about resisting consequences. What makes sense, and feels authentic to the fictional world? What reflects the game's tone? There are no hard and fast rules for this—though the series playset provides some helpful guidance—instead it is a flexible, ongoing consensus that emerges through play. The director is responsible for guiding that larger conversation, and for keeping consequences and resistance consistent with that consensus.

The director also has the option of assigning multiple consequences. Sometimes this will follow naturally from their description of consequences from a roll. Other times, this may be a conscious decision based on the circumstances—maybe they can't think of a severe consequence and so introduce multiple smaller ones, or a desperate roll is missed at just the wrong time. In situations where the director assigns multiple consequences, the protagonists may choose which ones to resist, and make rolls for each.

While Fawn distracts campus security, Hawk and Raven make their own run to the relative safety of the nearby night-district. Dylan and Claire make a desperate group flow roll, which goes terribly. Bev describes the consequences: “You’re both running as fast as you can, maybe a little panicked at that, and one of you... I guess Hawk since you’re leading. Right as you reach the edge of campus, there’s a major street, but it’s late so people are driving fast. You burst out into the street, still convinced that you’re being chased, and this car comes out of nowhere. Bam!”



Dylan puts a hand over his mouth “Yikes! That’s messed up! Is Hawk okay?”

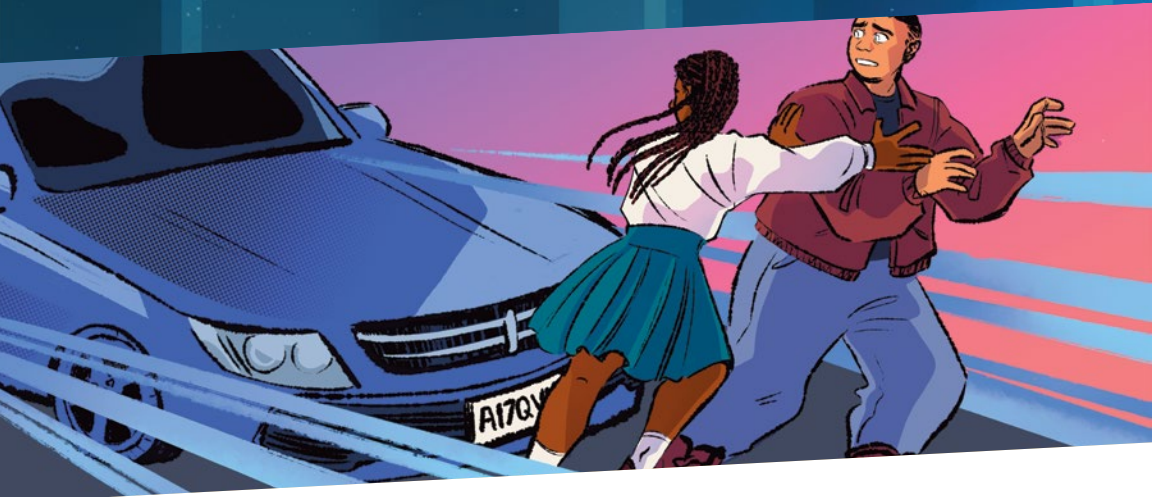
“Not really, I’m thinking level 3 harm? The car sort of clips Hawk and knocks her to the pavement, you’ve probably broken some bones. The car just speeds off into the distance, and you’re both left there, silhouetted by the street lights as the sound of its engine fades into the distance.”

Dylan is taken aback at first, then he remembers that he can do something about it. “Hold on, I want to resist that!”

Bev replies “Sure. I think you can drop this to level 2 harm. Maybe Hawk sees the car coming right at the last second, and manages to roll over the hood. You’ll need to roll sun since this is a violent consequence.”

“Yeah, that makes sense, and it’s my best attribute!” Dylan rolls 2 dice, and gets a 4. He marks 2 stress on his sheet, as well as the level 2 harm ‘hit by a car’.





PROTECTING YOUR ALLIES

Protagonists can **protect** their allies, and resist a consequence on their behalf, provided that it makes sense in the fiction. In these cases, the protecting character must take on the consequence, and will suffer whatever adverse effects would have befallen whoever they are protecting. The protector can then roll to resist the consequences they have taken on as normal.



Instead of Hawk resisting the consequence, Raven could protect her:

Claire proposes to Dylan, “Hey what if I resist the car hitting Hawk instead, like Raven yanks her back at the last second or something?”

“I like that more! Hawk likes to think she’s the one that saves people, I bet she’ll give Raven a hard time about this later, once they’re safe.”

Bev reminds Claire that Raven is protecting Hawk, so it will be Raven that ends up taking the hit. Claire shrugs and picks up the dice, she likes this turn of the story, a little harm is more than worth it. She gets very lucky, and rolls a critical success, which means Raven recovers one stress, instead of taking any. “Nice! Raven’s pretty tough, apparently.”

Bev nods. “She is, but that just saves you some stress—she’s still taking the harm. It’s level 2 now, since you resisted it, so maybe something like a fractured wrist? You pull Hawk out of the way, but can’t stall your own momentum and end up bouncing off the side of the car as it whips past, horn blaring.”

ARMOUR

While transcended, the protagonists have **armour** against physical harm. You can mark an armour box to reduce or avoid an appropriate consequence without rolling to resist. Most often this will mean resisting harm, but there might be situations where it makes sense for a protagonist to use their armour to resist a different consequence.

This armour might be very literal—armoured clothing and uniforms, or maybe makeshift armour the protagonists have cobbled together. It might instead be magical—energy fields, protective talismans, or a token of friendship. The details of how this armour looks and functions within the story are entirely up to the group and their interpretation of the broader world.

Once an armour box is used, it can't be used again until it is restored. Armour is restored at the end of each mission, and might be restored at other times by certain special abilities.

You can combine armour with a resistance roll. For example, you could roll to resist a consequence of harm, then use armour to further reduce the harm. This could result in fatal level 4 harm being resisted to level 3, and then reduced by armour to level 2.

Raven just took level 2 harm protecting Hawk from being hit by a car. Raven is still transcended, so Claire spends her armour to reduce the harm to level 1. Just as Raven collides with the car, ghostly armour flashes into being around her, and then fades away. She meets Hawk's eyes, shocked that they both escaped relatively unharmed.



SPECIAL ARMOUR

Some special abilities grant access to special armour. This is an additional type of armour that is useful for special situations, defined by the ability that grants it. Like standard armour, special armour lets protagonists resist consequences without rolling or spending stress. It also typically has additional options for spending it to gain advantages. You do not need to be transcended to use special armour.

When it is used, mark the special armour box on your playsheet. Special armour is restored at the end of each mission.

LOSS & DEATH

Loss is a necessary outcome for tragic stories. In this game, the protagonists will often face setbacks and defeat, doubly so if they are unwilling to risk everything to accomplish their goals. If they push themselves a little too hard, though, or take too many chances when the stakes are high, they risk losing themselves.

This could be from injury or death, risking their lives in pursuit of their goals. It could be from heartbreak, despair robbing them of their transcendent nature. Or they might be consumed by their own inner turmoil, falling so deeply into eclipse as to become a different person, perhaps even becoming an adversary to their former allies.

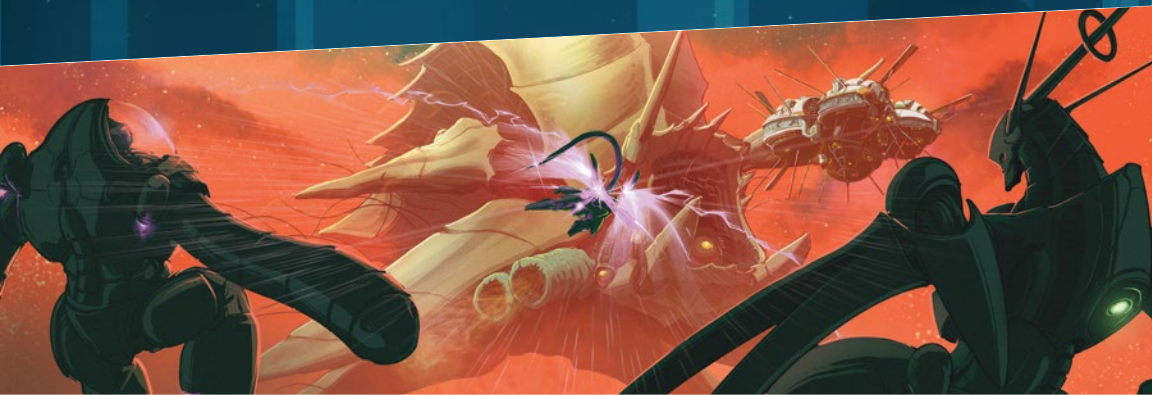
Should a protagonist fall, make space for the gravity of that event. Whatever was at stake in that moment is made all the more significant if someone sacrificed themselves for it. These kinds of events are transformative to the narrative, and can signal a dark turn in the story.

For the players at the table, permit everyone a break to reflect, and grieve. Be conscientious of the emotions of your fellow players, and if necessary prioritize them over the immediacy of the game.

Remember that harm is not limited to physical consequences—a character can suffer emotional harm to the point of being lost to the story, just as surely as if they had died.

There are a few different ways a character might be lost:

- ◆ If they suffer level 4 harm and do not resist it, they die, or are so emotionally devastated that they cannot continue as a protagonist.
- ◆ If they need to record harm at level 3, and it's already filled, they suffer a catastrophic consequence, which might mean death if the director rules that circumstances merit it.
- ◆ A character whose stress reaches zero while in eclipse is lost, overcome by their fractured nature—the player may choose what form this takes in the story, but they are no longer a protagonist character.
- ◆ A protagonist can also die when death is a logical consequence of some action that they take or fail to prevent another from taking. This is a situation where it is best to have this be established before the roll is made, or the circumstances come to pass. Telegraph this as far in advance as possible, and give players every opportunity to bow out. If they walk knowingly into it, so be it.



The pilots have failed to keep ICARUS away from the Bastion, and the leviathan is advancing at full speed, seeking to collide with the station and destroy it. Van comes up with a desperate plan, to fly into the maw of the leviathan and overload her engine's reactor. The resulting explosion will cripple the leviathan, but it's a suicide run. Van speaks to Himna over the radio "We can't save it, Himna. I'm sorry, but I have to stop it."



Dylan and Bev talk about the position and effect for this action, and acknowledge that even a success would mean death for Van. Dylan smirks, "Van is a soldier through and through, if she sees no other option, I think she's willing to do it."

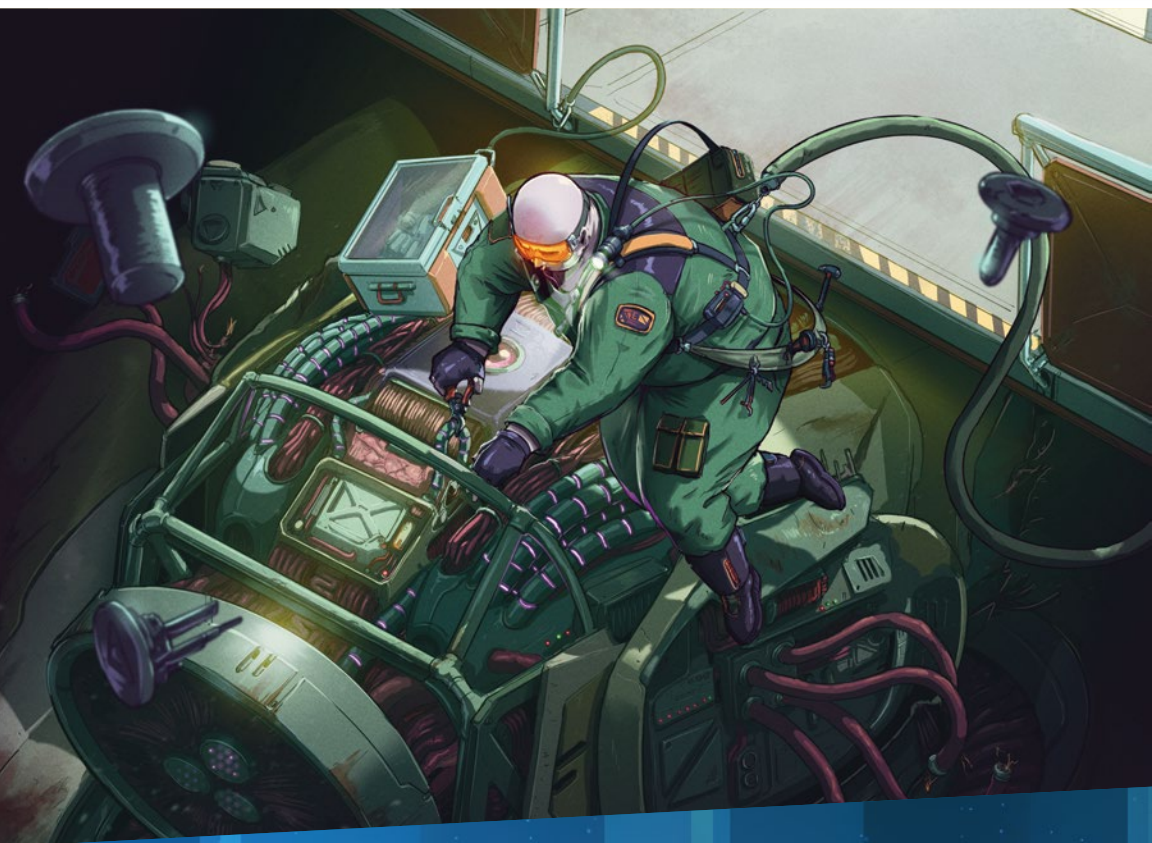
Meanwhile Claire looks at her sheet. She wrote a promise, "I will give my life for Van, when the time comes." She points this out to Dylan, and then describes Himna accelerating past Van, matching her collision course with the leviathan's maw. "They'll be lost without you" she says, as she speeds past, "just like I was."

Claire makes the roll instead of Dylan, as everyone at the table processes the significance of this choice...

When your character is lost, you can create a new character. They enter play during the next obligation phase. You might make a completely new character, in which case take some time to introduce them, and set them into the broader fabric of the story. Or you might instead take a secondary character and make them into a protagonist. What has changed, to make this character into a protagonist? Make sure to talk to your fellow players about how you imagine them fitting into the group. This is also a good time for players to revisit their promises, ensuring that the new addition to the group is connected to the other characters.



Everyone takes some time after the mission to talk about what happened, especially Himna's sacrifice. Claire thinks about her next character between sessions, and decides to play something totally different from Himna. She begins the next session of play by making Falin, a failed pilot candidate. They were part of the most recent and advanced batch of pilots that the naval authority manufactured, which according to them had a fatal flaw, rendering them unsuitable for service. Thus Falin is out to prove themselves worthy, in the eyes of the naval authority, the other pilots, and themselves. Falin is the Enigma, and when the others launch, they steal a maintenance engine from the hangar and join the fight under a mysterious callsign. She introduces her new character, and after some back and forth asking questions, she and the other players fit Falin into the established elements of the story so far. She writes new promises for Falin, and the others, with some sombre ceremony, erase their promises with Himna and write new ones.



CLOCKS

Some actions or consequences may not have immediate effects, but instead build towards a more complicated or significant outcome. The director can track these types of consequences through the creation of a **progress clock**. This is represented by a circle divided into a variable number of segments. Typically the more complex the problem, the more segments the clock will have. Clocks have at minimum 4 segments, and generally aren't larger than 8 segments.

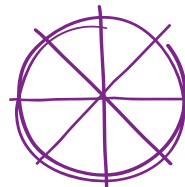
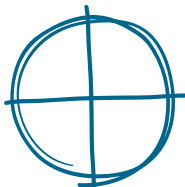
At its most basic, a clock is a promise about the story—when the clock is filled, something will happen. It should always be clear to the players what a clock represents in the story, even if the exact details of what will happen when it fills are left unstated.

Clocks are useful for all manner of situations in which some additional granularity for problems or action is appropriate. They can represent looming consequences that manifest when the clock is filled. They can also be used to track progress towards a goal, a shift of attitude towards a character, or the inevitable decay of a crucial piece of machinery. Whatever the case, the clock represents the outcome, not the methods, as those will be determined by the rolls made to advance or reverse the clock.

Hawk is fighting Hydra in an ancient network of catacombs under the city's harbour. The catacombs are rapidly flooding after Hawk smashed Hydra through a wall that held back the water. Bev starts a 4-count clock called "washed away" and marks 1 segment. This short clock means there's very little time left before the water overwhelms them both. Will they finish their duel despite the danger?



Raven is composing a piece of music, something that contains all her triumphs and sorrows, to sway the broken hearts of their adversaries. It's a long term project. After some discussion, Bev and Claire decide that an 8-count clock makes sense.



Progress in clocks is generally marked following an action roll, **poisoned promise**, or certain downtime rolls. Sometimes it will also just make sense to mark segments in a clock because of events in the fiction. The fictional circumstances surrounding a clock should reflect its progress, and vice versa. Keeping track of this during play is largely the director's responsibility. They describe the outcomes of clocks emptying and filling, and use them to build tension and show the state of the fictional world.



ICARUS reroutes what power it has left to its engines, and flees into the asteroid belt. Van and Surt give chase. Bev starts an 8-count clock called "the pursuit," and marks three segments. Bev also makes a 4-count clock called "run to mother." If the protagonists can fill their pursuit clock, they have ICARUS trapped, but if the run to mother clock fills, ICARUS makes it to the safety of its brood. If both clocks fill at the same time, they trap ICARUS, but its mother comes to its aid, and the protagonists will have a much bigger problem to contend with.



RUN TO MOTHER



Clocks are generally open information at the table that all players can see and ask questions about. Sometimes this means playing with a sense of dramatic irony, where the players know a disaster is looming that the characters are oblivious to.



To represent the unrest and protesting in the city, Bev makes a 6-count clock called "uprising." They start this clock at 4 segments, since the situation is already quite heated. As the story unfolds, certain events prompt Bev to mark or erase segments of the clock. If it ever fills, the revolution begins. At that point Bev might start two racing clocks, one for the revolution overturning the corrupt authorities, and another for the authorities efforts to crush the uprising.



GATHER INFORMATION

When a protagonist wants to seek additional information or detail, they can choose to **gather information**. This is typically a fortune roll, but in the middle of a dangerous or volatile situation, it could be an action roll instead.

1-3 1 question

4/5 1 question and 1 follow-up

6 2 questions and 1 follow-up

On a **critical success**, the protagonist gains improved effect level, additional questions, or some volunteered information, at the director's discretion.



Based on the result of the roll, the player gathering info can ask a varied number of questions from the list in their playbook. The effect level for the roll determines how forthcoming the director is with information. If the player rolled a 4 or better, they also get a follow-up question, which is asked after the initial questions have been answered. A follow-up question can be anything the protagonist wants to know, though it must involve information established by the initial questions.

Each playbook has a different list of questions, which reflect the unique perspective that character would have on a given situation. For example, the Guardian can ask *'Who here is afraid?'* and the Time Traveller can ask *'What is already in motion here?'* This means that, depending on their playbook, protagonists will only have access to certain types of information. Players are encouraged to use the questions in creative or unexpected ways, but the set of questions they have will always end up colouring the responses the director gives.



Fawn is nervously flirting with Hawk, their eyes meet and then they both look away. Anya rolls Fawn's confess to gather info. There is no immediate danger here, so this is a fortune roll. Anya rolls a 4, and chooses to ask "What does Hawk really want?" Dylan answers that Hawk isn't really flirting, she's trying to get Fawn to reveal her secret. Anya asks a follow up question "What would it take to make Hawk fall for Fawn, despite herself?"



Van is probing the leviathan's defenses, looking for an opening or vulnerability using analyze. There is obvious danger here, from the leviathan and its swarm of defensive drones, so Bev says the roll will be risky, with standard effect. Dylan rolls Van's analyze, and gets a 3. Dylan gets to ask one question, he chooses "Where can I gain an edge?" Bev answers that Van sees a pattern in the swarm's movements, and that she could exploit that pattern to make it to the leviathan's hull. However, while Van was so focused on her analysis that she drifted into range of the leviathan's main weapons, and her HUD lights up with warnings as ICARUS opens fire.

PHASES OF PLAY

Girl by Moonlight has a structured cycle of play, four phases that repeat to form the rhythm of the game: **obligation**, **downtime**, **missions**, and **fallout**. Each phase has its own mechanics, procedures, and themes which are described in detail below.

OBLIGATION

In the obligation phase, we see the protagonists in their day-to-day lives. Their obligations show us the mundane face of the forces they struggle against. The nature of these obligations will vary by series, but they are always a source of stress and struggle for the protagonists.

When you roll obligation, roll your lowest attribute, taking stress equal to 6 minus the die result. On a critical success, you get an additional downtime action.

For any result, we narrate what this means for the characters. This might mean some dialogue, or moments of in-character play, or you might choose to narrate what happens to the characters. Use the attribute rolled as a guide for the ways in which the obligation affects your character:

- ◆ **If sun is rolled**, your obligation involves scary people or circumstances, or is physically taxing.
- ◆ **If moon is rolled**, your obligation breaks your heart, and drives you to despair.
- ◆ **If stars is rolled**, your obligation puts you under social pressure, or sets off your anxiety.

Director, this is a place to follow through on your principle to **gaze into the broken mirror** in the everyday world, as well as providing a place to foreshadow whatever trouble is coming for the protagonists.

DOWNTIME

During downtime, the protagonists pursue their personal goals, and set themselves up for future success. The four basic downtime actions are listed here. These basic actions may be added to, modified, or replaced outright by special downtime actions and rules from the series playset. The protagonists can perform two downtime actions each. While they can choose any combination of the actions available to them, it is often beneficial to coordinate these choices amongst the group to ensure that their larger goals can be accomplished.

Downtime action results that affect tracks, clocks, or links award them based on the following table:

1-3 2 segments marked or links given

4/5 3 segments marked or links given

6 4 segments marked or links given

A **critical success** will have different results depending on the specific action, but generally results in 5 segments being marked plus an additional benefit.

MAKE A CONNECTION

When you **make a connection**, choose another protagonist and describe something the two of you do together. If it's something the other character would appreciate, their player can offer you an extra die. Roll an appropriate action. The chosen character gains the result level as links with you (on their sheet).

On a critical success, you also gain 1 link with them on your sheet.

You can only make a connection with a given character once per downtime.



Raven skips curfew to meet her friend Fawn at an underground dance hall. She is making a connection with Fawn. Claire describes the characters sneaking out after curfew, the dimly lit dance hall, and the style of music being played. Fawn is too worried about being caught to have a good time, so Anya does not offer Claire an extra die. Claire decides to roll Raven's defy for this—dancing for her is about being brave and breaking with convention. She rolls a 4, which gives Fawn 3 links with Raven. Anya marks the links on her sheet, and describes Fawn smiling despite herself as she watches Raven dance.

HELP A FRIEND RECOVER

When you **help a friend recover**, describe how you are supporting their healing process, and roll an appropriate action. They advance their recovery clock according to the result.

On a critical success, fill 5 segments and you each mark 1 link with the other character.

Completing the recovery clock removes all level 1 harm, and all other harm is reduced by one level. If your roll gives you more marks than there are spaces on the clock, they carry forward towards their next harm recovery, if they still have harm remaining.

Hawk corners Raven in between classes, and insists on seeing the scrapes she got saving Hawk from a speeding car. Hawk takes Raven's hands in her own, and inspects them, being tender, despite her gruff demeanour. She's helping a friend recover. "I'm supposed to take the hits, Raven, not you... You going to be alright?"



Raven is still shook up, and tired, but seeing Hawk's softer side helps her feel less alone. She smiles. "It's just scrapes, I'm used to bumping into things. I'm good."

Dylan rolls Hawk's express and gets a 6, which advances Raven's recovery clock by 4 segments, which completes the clock. Raven has two separate level 1 harm tags, 'scared' and 'road rash', which Claire erases from her sheet.



WORK ON A LONG TERM PROJECT

When you start a **long term project**, describe what you are setting out to accomplish, and the director will set the size of the project clock. Standard projects are 6 segments, clocks for longer or more complex projects might be larger. Especially significant projects might require multiple clocks, dividing them into different phases.

When working on a project, roll an appropriate action and advance the project clock according to your result.

On a critical success, fill a total of 5 segments of the project clock, and mark xp. What insight does working on the project provide the protagonist?



Falin steals some parts from the maintenance bay and sets about building a device that will let them bypass the hangar's security doors, making it easier for them to access the engines in secret. It's a complicated task that will take time, and special resources to complete. Claire describes her idea to Bev, who replies that this project will require a 10-count clock. Claire's first action towards completing it was stealing some parts, so she rolls Falin's conceal. She rolls a 2, which gives her only 2 segments. Still a long way to go!

BYPASS DEVICE



Fawn wants to contact other protesters, and form an underground network for mutual support. This involves travelling to different parts of the city, secret meetings, and lots of organizing. Bev thinks this project should be an 8-count clock. Anya describes Fawn riding the metro with a pack full of pamphlets to meet with friends she met at a protest a few months ago. She rolls Fawn's express, and gets a 6, which gives her 4 ticks of progress on her project clock.

BUILD NETWORK





INVESTIGATION

When you **investigate**, describe how you are seeking information about your adversaries, and roll an appropriate action. Results advance the investigation track in the series playset.

Along with advancing the investigation track, use your result as a **gather information** roll as well, asking the director questions about what you have discovered. The director will describe what gave you this particular insight, and reveal details that were previously unknown to you by answering your questions.

On a critical success, advance the track by 5 segments, and the group gains an additional die for the engagement roll on the next mission.

Hawk waits for her astronomy professor, Caspian Hulme, to leave his office, and breaks in. She digs through his notes, looking for a connection between Caspian and the stellar queen Charybdis. She is investigating. Dylan rolls Hawk's conceal, and gets a 4, which advances the group's investigation track by 3 segments. Bev describes some photos on the desk that show strange ruins in some sort of construction site. Dylan asks a question from his sheet, choosing "What's really going on here?" Bev answers, "It looks like something was dug up during the construction of the new building on campus. Hawk spots a photo of a glowing object, a ring of stars and swirling colours." Could this be the Nebula Crown?



MISSIONS

Missions are where the main action of the game happens. The protagonists set out to change something in the world, and face opposition from their adversaries in the process. Each mission will have a specific goal that the protagonists are trying to achieve, and clear barriers and opposition to be overcome. Missions are the climax of each episode, where the story elements shown in obligation and downtime get resolved. Regardless of the outcome, new situations and challenges will follow from the events of each mission, driving each season towards an inevitable confrontation.

A mission must have a clear goal, and fall into one of the mission types listed on the series sheet (see page 150 for more details on each play-set's missions.) A mission will often take the majority of a session of play to resolve, but some might be short and contained if the protagonists are well prepared, and things go smoothly for them.

Each series separates its mission types into numbered tiers. Missions of higher tiers are more dangerous, and have larger impacts on the story. The protagonists must match a mission's tier with their own investigation tier in order to approach that mission on even terms.

The choice of mission is informed by details from the protagonists' investigations, as well as their larger plans that will play out over the season. Often, the choice of mission will become obvious during downtime, with a clear objective manifesting naturally through the protagonists' actions and the director's answers to their investigations. If there is any uncertainty about which mission to choose, or how a mission might fit the story, take some time to talk it over as players. Choosing missions that the protagonists haven't prepared for might mean that they are taking bigger risks (as reflected in more perilous engagement rolls) or that the characters are stumbling into something important that they were not expecting. Ultimately, the choice is up to the protagonists to make, but fitting the mission choice into the game's story is a shared responsibility of all players.

MISSION OVERVIEW

Missions are composed of the following stages:

- ◆ Engagement roll (page 90)
- ◆ Cut to the action! (page 91)
- ◆ The heart of the matter (page 93)
- ◆ End of mission and fallout phase (page 96)

MISSION AND INVESTIGATION TIER

The protagonists' ongoing investigations into their adversaries' plans, motivations, and essential nature contribute to the investigation track. As this track fills, the protagonists are able to pursue higher stakes missions based on the information they have uncovered, which is represented by the tiers on the investigation track. When a tier is completely filled, the protagonists are considered to be at that tier in their investigations.

The protagonists get +1d to their engagement roll for missions of equal or lower tier to their investigation progress. They are at -1d to engagement for each tier by which the mission exceeds their investigation progress.

During fallout, progress on the investigation track is lost. Stale leads and changing circumstances mean constant setbacks for the protagonists' investigations, even as they steadily close in on the truth.

After finishing their downtime actions, the group is ready for their next mission. Anya, Claire and Dylan talk through their options, looking over the missions in the series playbook. Since they just moved up to the second investigation tier, they're excited to try one of the tier 2 missions. Claire suggests Reclaim an Object of Power, and Dylan chimes in to remind them about the Nebula Crown, a mysterious artifact that Hawk learned about during her investigations. The crown was discovered on the university campus during construction for a new building, and the whole area has been on lockdown ever since, crawling with agents of the authoritarian government.

Bev agrees that this sounds like a great mission idea, and reminds the group of some additional details from a previous session—Raven's mother, who works for the government agency responsible for the lockdown, has been assigned to head the dig project. That's what all those weird papers that Raven found in her office must have been about!



ENGAGEMENT ROLL

At the start of a mission, the protagonists make a special fortune roll called the engagement roll to find out how the mission begins. This lets us cut straight to the action, the heart of whatever is interesting about a given mission. This one roll will let us know how things are going, and jumps past all the tedious set-up, planning, and lead-in.

The number of dice used for the engagement roll depends heavily on the circumstances of the mission:

- ◆ There is always hope—the protagonists start with 1d for every mission.
- ◆ Is the mission particularly heroic or noble? Take +1d. Does the mission's goal or methods reflect the worst parts of the protagonists? Take -1d.
- ◆ Is the mission following through on details from the protagonists' investigation? Take +1d. Are the protagonists acting rashly, or on very little information? Take -1d.
- ◆ Does this mission determine the fate of a friend? Take +1d. Are troubles from the protagonists mundane lives getting in the way of this mission? Take -1d.
- ◆ Does the mission's tier exceed the current tier of the investigation track? Take -1d per difference in tier.
- ◆ Are there any other elements that you want to consider, due to circumstances or events in your world? At the director's discretion, these factors might improve or impede your engagement roll.



Now that they've decided on a mission, the players need to make their engagement roll. They go through the list together. Even though the Nebula Crown sounds cool, the mission doesn't strike any of them as particularly noble. But since the mission is directly related to two previous gather information actions, they do get an extra die for following through on their investigation.

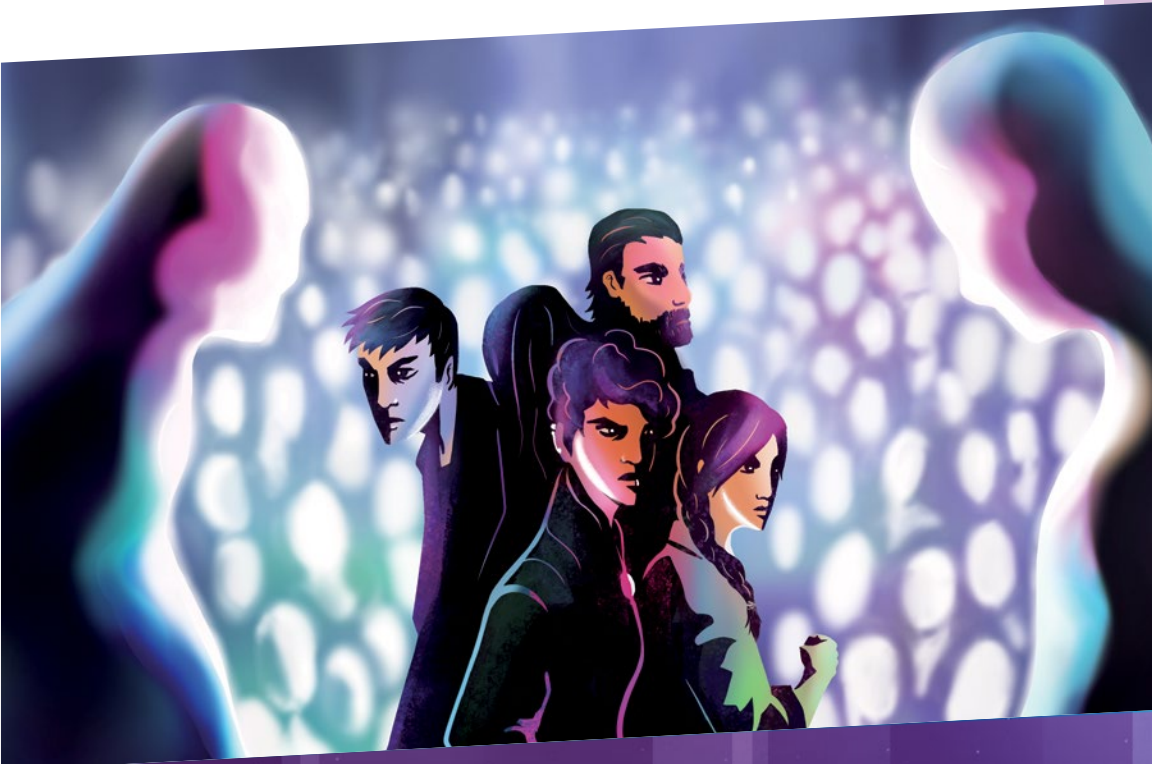
Continuing through the checklist, Anya points out that Raven's mother grounded her after catching her going through those papers, and everyone agrees that this is going to make it much harder for her to sneak out for the mission—the -1d cancels out their extra die, and they are back where they started, with the single die for hope. Anya shrugs and picks up the die—what's the worst that could happen?

WE CUT TO THE ACTION

Based on the outcome of the engagement roll, we already know how the initial stages of this mission have gone. Engagement roll outcomes function similarly to any other roll:

- 1-3 Bad result.** You're in a desperate position when the action starts. Someone or something has moved against you—it's a trap, ambush, or counter-attack.
- 4/5 Mixed result.** You're in a risky position when the action starts. The plan is holding together, just barely, the protagonists will need to take steps right now to avoid disaster.
- 6 Good result.** You're in a controlled position when the action starts. Things are going as planned, and the protagonists are setting the tempo.

A **critical success** is an exceptional result. You've already overcome some initial obstacle, and you're in a controlled position for whatever comes next.



Don't be precious with this cut to the action. Most folks' inclinations lead them to be conservative with this, but it is much more valuable to cut a lot off the front of the mission, and dig into the action at a more granular level. Give yourself and the other players more time in the heart of the mission. Negotiate smaller incremental outcomes for their actions, and gloss over all but the most essential confrontation or obstacle. This ensures that the protagonists will have adequate resources available to have a reasonable chance of accomplishing their goals. It also leaves more room for flashbacks, making them more relevant. In turn, the flashbacks let the narrative remain flexible and adaptable to the needs of the table, by allowing the players to choose where to focus and fill in details.



Anya rolls a 4 on their single engagement die, and breathes a sigh of relief—that's not so bad. Bev consults the table for a mixed result, and thinks for a minute before cutting to the action. They describe how the group has successfully infiltrated the locked down construction site, sneaking past guards and making their way to the central chamber of the excavation. The Nebula Crown rests there, glowing with arcane energy, on the top of a stone plinth. But as soon as they step into the chamber, they realize that they're not alone. Professor Caspian Hulme, their brilliant but moody astronomy professor, is already in the chamber—and he's just picked up the Nebula Crown!



THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The protagonists came here for a reason, and now is where they work towards whatever goal they set out to accomplish. The situation should present them with clear obstacles to overcome. It should be equally clear when they have achieved their goal. This is also an opportunity to build on details that have come up during the investigation and other downtime actions, as we see how they fit into the protagonists' plans, or the preparations of their adversaries. Revelations about other characters or seemingly-unrelated events can be a great way to add a twist to an otherwise straightforward mission.

Bev is building on details from the other players' previous investigations when they decide that Professor Hulme wants the crown. Dylan introduced Professor Hulme as one of Hawk's supporting characters, a 'moody astronomy professor', and he has appeared in a few downtime actions, including one where Hawk discovered the professor's interest in an upcoming 'celestial alignment.' Bev had already used that scene to foreshadow Hulme's potential involvement with the group's adversaries, so having him show up in the mission seems like a natural escalation.



Bev isn't really sure how Caspian is involved, or how important he is to the adversary's schemes, when they decide to include him in the mission. For now, they just know that he wants the Nebula Crown for his own devices—how the other characters respond (and how well they roll) will help them fill in these details as the mission unfolds. As the director, Bev is playing to find out about Caspian too, albeit from a slightly different angle than the protagonists.

For the director, setting an appropriate amount of opposition to the protagonists' goals will take some practice. Being a fan of the other players requires that you challenge the protagonists. Presenting them with serious threats will give the protagonists opportunities to act heroically, and overcome those threats. Push the protagonists to use their resources and abilities as best as you can—the game thrives on last ditch efforts and characters stuck with their backs to the wall. The most tense and exciting moments in missions will come when triumph and failure are both close at hand.

If you get it wrong as the director, don't arbitrarily extend or cut short a mission, just try to hit the target better next time. It's okay for the protagonists to fail, or suffer setbacks and losses, though they should generally have the opportunity to withdraw and regroup. If they commit to a desperate move, though, do not flinch from enacting the consequences they knowingly leapt into. It's important for the mechanics and story to have teeth. Action without consequence, or overcoming trivial opposition, will not feel satisfying for anyone at the table.

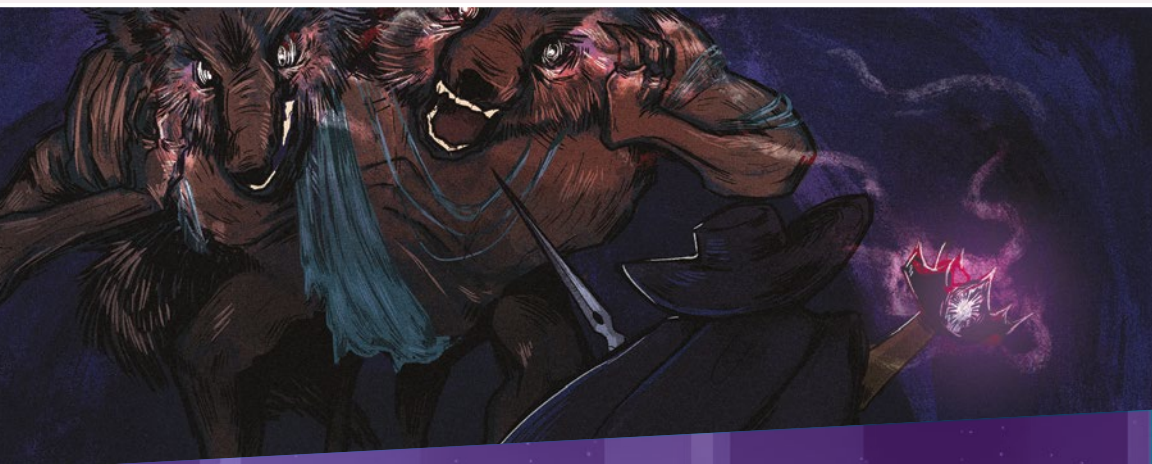


Raven tries to convince a startled professor Hulme to give her the Nebula Crown. She tells him it's dangerous, and that she can get it to a safe place, where its power will be contained. Dylan wants to assist, so he describes Hawk nodding along to

Raven's pleas, hoping a familiar face might convince Caspian to hand it over peacefully. Despite all that, Claire rolls a 1, so Bev decides to escalate the situation with a major complication. They describe Caspian recoiling, "it's mine, you can't have it!" Then suddenly his body contorts sickeningly as he transforms into a bestial form, like a giant wolf, but with birdlike hind legs, and a boar's head alongside a wolf head.

Bev makes eye contact with Claire as they describe this turn of events. Claire realizes that she could resist this consequence, but a horrifying wolf-monster professor is too cool to pass up. She nods along to Bev's description, making it clear she wants to see what happens next.

Caspian drops the crown as he transforms, and lunges at Raven and Hawk. Anya takes this moment to have Fawn (in disguise as the dashing Midnight Quill) leap down from a nearby scaffold and snatch the crown before fleeing into the twisting maze of the excavated ruins!



FLASHBACKS

You may find yourself in situations during missions where you encounter some difficulty that you feel your character would have planned or prepared for. Whenever this comes up, you can call for a flashback—a brief scene or interlude describing whatever it was your character did in the past that is suddenly, dramatically relevant to the mission.

Flashbacks can be to almost anything. It might be that we flash back to some detail of your investigations, or see the character packing a needed object. Maybe we jump to an important interaction between two protagonists, setting up emotions that matter in the present moment. We can even flash back to earlier in the mission itself (before we cut to the action), when your character prepared a trap or learned a crucial bit of information.

When you describe a flashback, the director will tell you how much stress it costs. Obvious preparations and simple tasks are 0 stress. Anything more complicated than that will cost between 1 and 3 stress, at the director's discretion:

- ◆ **0 stress:** You thought to pack a flashlight and some snacks when exploring an ancient temple.
- ◆ **1 stress:** You had a heart to heart conversation last week with a friend who has now been turned into a monster by the adversary, so you know what secret pains led to their transformation.
- ◆ **3 stress:** You befriended the mall's security guard a few days ago—rather than catching you sneaking in, they're here to let you in.

Players can always adjust their proposed flashback, or even back out of it completely, if they decide the stress is not worth it.

Flashbacks may require an action roll, to determine how successful the protagonist was at whatever plans or preparations they made. In the example with the security guard, the director could ask for a roll to see just how friendly the security guard will be; on a failed roll, they may still let you in but require an additional bribe or favour.

Any actions rolls made in flashbacks to before a character was transcended do not gain any of the mechanical benefits of transcendence, and do not advance that character's transcendence track.



Midnight Quill has the crown, but Professor Hulme is right on their heels, his wolf eyes burning as he closes in. Hoping to gain an edge in the situation, Anya calls for a flashback—she explains how earlier, when Fawn was sneaking in through the construction site, she noticed that all the excavation around the crown had made a section of the floor dangerously unstable—the same section that Midnight Quill is just about to cross. Bev nods along, and decides this flashback costs 1 stress—it's not simple or obvious, but it's also not decisive. Knowing that the floor is unstable will provide an opportunity, but Anya is still going to have to make an action roll of some kind to take full advantage of this new detail.

Flashbacks let you work around problems, not re-write them out of existence. While it is absolutely fair play to turn a complication into an opportunity, flashbacks are not meant to negate established consequences. In addition to evaluating its cost, the director has final say on whether a flashback is reasonable.

FALLOUT

In the **fallout** phase, we see the consequences of the group's mission. Their adversary closes in on them, seeking to snuff out the opposition they represent. Other complications and consequences also arise following the group's efforts. In this phase the director will advance the adversary track, and make a fallout roll to generate new troubles for the group.

Fallout marks the end of an episode, and a launching point for the events of the next episode. This is an excellent opportunity for the director to ask questions, and follow through on details that were set up during the mission. The world changes as a result of the protagonists' efforts, be it for better or worse, and we should see the beginnings of that change in this phase.



After many close calls and heroic efforts, the group has succeeded, escaping with the Nebula Crown and leaving Professor Hulme buried under a pile of concrete and rubble. They gather around the crown in the safety of their hideout, nursing their wounds and worrying about the fate of their professor. Meanwhile, the institutions and forces of the world are slowly reacting to their theft...

ADVERSARY TRACK

Just as the protagonists seek the truth of their adversary, it is always hunting for those who would oppose it. This is represented by the Abyss, Blight, Leviathan, and Conspiracy tracks on their respective series play-sheets, and are referred to collectively as the **adversary track**. When the track is filled, the group's adversaries find them, and seek to wipe them out. The track fills as a consequence of completing missions, poisoned promises, and certain in-fiction events detailed below.

Every mission exposes the group to reprisals, regardless of the mission's outcome. During fallout, the adversary track advances by one segment, plus one additional segment for each of the following that occurred during the mission:

- ◆ The adversary's agenda moved forward
- ◆ Someone fell into eclipse, or was killed by or defected to the adversary (this could be a protagonist or a supporting character)
- ◆ The protagonists came closer to their destiny, as established in series creation

As segments are marked on the track, you will fill five segment tiers. These tiers determine the severity of fallout after missions. When a tier is filled, the adversary is considered to be at the next tier for the purposes of fallout.

If the track fills, the group's adversaries have found the protagonists, and move against them. Play this out as the highest tier mission available in the series playset, but the protagonists automatically fail the engagement roll. It is the worst possible situation, they are caught off guard and unprepared. This mission occurs after obligation and downtime, and should the protagonists survive, it ends the season as normal, albeit on a sombre note.

The track resets at the start of a new season.

After describing a few more details of the scene back at their hideout, the players turn to the series playbook as Bev goes through the fallout process. They start by advancing the adversary track, marking one segment automatically before considering the list. The mission was a setback for the adversary's agenda, and nobody fell into eclipse, but it seems clear to everyone that the Nebula Crown is somehow central to the group's destiny—to overthrow the authoritarian government, and gain independence from the gods that control their planet. Bev marks a second segment on the track, casually noting that this has moved it into the second tier. The protagonists exchange nervous looks as Bev makes the fallout roll.





FALLOUT ROLL

After a mission, roll for fallout. The director will roll dice equal to the current investigation tier, and consult the chart in the series playset, under the appropriate adversary tier. The director describes the consequences of the fallout to the other players. This might mean some dialogue, or moments of in-character play, or it could be narration of events that are unfolding, as yet unknown to the protagonists. Regardless, the situation created by the fallout roll is not resolved immediately. Any actions to address the consequences of fallout can be undertaken in the subsequent downtime phase, or even the next mission.

Every series has its own fallout results. For example, the results from *At the Brink of the Abyss* look like this:



Tier I

- 1-3** an enemy acts against the group
- 4/5** a friend needs urgent help
- 6** omens loom in the mundane world

Tier II

- 1-3** an enemy is embraced by the abyss
- 4/5** agents of the abyss stalk a friend
- 6** an obligation causes trouble for the group

Tier III

- 1-3** the abyss advances its agenda
- 4/5** a friend succumbs to the abyss
- 6** an important place falls to the abyss



Bev rolls two dice, since the investigation tier is at 2, and gets a 4. Consulting the adversary table for tier 2, they see *agents of the abyss stalk a friend*. Bev thinks about this a little, and then describes a scene happening in parallel to the group's celebrations in the hideout—we see Raven's mother being summoned into a board room to answer for her failure to safeguard the 'anomalous object' at the dig site. A director berates her, cutting off her objections and belittling her efforts. We see her fear and embarrassment as the director concludes that she is 'unfit for the task', then a glimmer of hope as the board explains that she will have one last chance to redeem herself... with help, from an outside source. She looks on with confusion as the viewpoint widens to reveal a bandaged but composed Professor Hulme lurking in a shadowy corner. He smiles, his wolfish teeth gleaming in the darkness, and congratulates her on her 'promotion.'

At the table, Claire puts her head in her hands, though everyone can see she is smiling a little underneath. "Why do parents have to be so complicated?"

FALLOUT PHASE SUMMARY

During every fallout phase:

- 1 Evaluate the adversary track.
- 2 Protagonists erase all stress from their sheet, erase all unspent links, and reset their transcendence tracks and armour uses.
Protagonists who are in eclipse do not erase stress or reset their armour and transcendence track. The Beneath a Rotting Sky playset also has specific series rules that change how this step works.
- 3 Roll fallout and play out any immediate consequences of the roll. Leave problems unresolved, to be acted on later by the protagonists.
- 4 The investigation track drops to half its current value, rounding up.

ADVANCEMENT

As the protagonists engage in the struggle against their adversary, it changes them. They gain new powers, suffer losses, and learn hard lessons. This growth is reflected mechanically through the protagonists gaining **xp**. The advancement of the protagonists shifts the story into higher stakes situations, and brings the protagonists closer to one day realizing their destiny.

GAINING XP

Whenever a player rolls a desperate action, they mark xp in that action's attribute.

At the end of each session, the protagonists will also mark xp when conditions laid out on the playsheets are satisfied. Xp earned this way may be assigned to the playbook track, or to the various character attribute tracks.



At the end of their session, the players take turns going through their playbook xp questions together, and Claire marks several xp for Raven. Since she also marked xp in her stars for a desperate flow roll during the mission, Claire decides to put all her session xp into stars as well, which fills the track, earning her an advance.



ADVANCES

When an xp track fills, whether on a series or character playbook, an **advance** is earned.

Advances in an attribute are spent to increase an action under that attribute by one point. Actions can be advanced to a maximum of 4, with the third and fourth action dots only available while the character is transcended.

Playbook advances are spent to gain one special ability or transcendent ability from the lists provided in the playbooks. Playbook advances can also be used to gain one **veteran ability**, which allows a protagonist to gain an ability from a different playbook. This can be used to gain any special ability which that playbook could gain by spending an advance.

SERIES XP

Along with the individual characters, there is also **series xp**, which is earned by the group and recorded in the series playset. Series xp is gained in the same way as playbook xp—at the end of each session, the players go over the list of conditions in the playset, and mark xp based on how many were addressed that session.

Series advances represent powers or abilities shared by the whole team, and the group should discuss how best to spend them.

Claire explains to the group that she is going to spend Raven's advance on a point in conceal, despite Raven's honest nature. With her mother now working directly with the adversary, there are probably going to be a lot of things she has to hide.



The group has also earned enough series xp to get an advance, and they spend several minutes going over their options before selecting the Redemption series ability, which gives them bonuses to noble and heroic missions, and rewards for rescuing innocents. They speculate about how the Nebula Crown might have purifying or redemptive powers, and Bev makes a note to ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for the group to follow through on their heroic intentions.

THE SERIES PLAYSET

The series in *Girl by Moonlight* is the central element of play. The **series playset** gives everyone at the table an opportunity to define the game's antagonism, the fictional world, and the origins of the protagonists. The series playset contains all the core elements of the story we will tell together, acting as a shared reference for all the players. Though each series also contains a playsheet with specific advice for the director, the playset is the general responsibility of the group.

The series playsets are:

AT THE **BRINK** *OF THE* **ABYSS**

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Heroic magical girls reclaiming a corrupted world.

BENEATH A **ROTTING SKY**

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Tragic magical girls doomed to an inevitable fate.

ON A **SEA** *OF* **STARS**

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Mecha pilots struggling against extinction at the hands of the Leviathans.

IN A **MAZE** *OF* **DREAMS**

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Dream travellers seeking the truth of a magical conspiracy.

WHAT'S IN A SERIES?

Each series playset consists of three playsheets, which each hold different rules and reference materials to be used in play:

The **protagonists' sheet** has space for recording series creation choices, the series abilities, the missions available in that series, tracks for investigation and adversity, series xp prompts, and some rules unique to the series. All of this is information that the protagonists will need to manage and refer to collectively.

The **adversary sheet** has the series agenda and principles for the director, the fallout table, and the adversary track, as well as any series rules that the director will need to use. This sheet is primarily for the director to reference during play. These are named after the adversity central to each series: The Abyss, The Blight, The Void, and The Conspiracy.

The **reference sheet** serves as a catch-all for any other series-specific elements. These vary by series, and provide space to record and track any other necessary information. They may also include other series rules, so that the players can have those on hand for easy reference.

The **series creation workspace** contains a list of questions and prompts that the group will use to create the world of the series, and the place of the protagonists within it.



SERIES CREATION

Start by choosing a series playset. This choice is the most significant factor in defining the content, tone, and themes of your game. Everyone at the table gets to weigh in, and the choice should be one that everyone is excited about. Take the time to come to a consensus. Once a playset has been chosen, read the lists of prompts in the series creation workspace and answer them together, starting at the top of the left column and working through them in order. Record your choices on the protagonists' series sheet.

Everyone provides input here, regardless of the roles they will play during the course of the series. Try to work on a consensus basis, to make sure everyone is interested in playing in the situation you are establishing. Listen to other players' input, and make space for them to speak. Be especially mindful of any dynamics from outside the game that might influence whose voices are heard and heeded.



Claire and her friends discuss which playset to choose. They talk about each series, and mention elements from each that pique their interest. Bev and Dylan are both fans of mecha anime, and suggest *On a Sea of Stars*. Anya wants to be a Time Traveller, and is keen to see that in a sci-fi setting, so she agrees. Claire says she is interested, but doesn't want the game to be all fighting—she's interested in communicating with the giant alien Leviathans. Everyone is excited by that idea, so they pick up *On a Sea of Stars* and begin the series creation process.

Some sections of the lists will include questions. Answer them collectively, and note the answers. Don't agonize over these choices and questions, or try to define every detail behind a choice. Pick the option that feels right, or has immediate appeal for everyone, and move on. It is entirely acceptable to make choices and leave the details to be established during the course of play. In fact, this is encouraged—too much time spent establishing detail at this stage will leave the fiction stale and constrained when it comes time to play the game.

Series creation is best when completed in one sitting, to keep the conversation cohesive and fluid. This process generally takes at least an hour to complete.



They start answering the prompts on the series sheets. First, they answer ‘What lurks in the void?’ by choosing ‘a vast all-consuming organism’. They all like how that sounds, but have no specific ideas for it quite yet, so they note their answer and move on to the next prompt. They’ll come back to this if their discussion yields some extra details, but for now it’s undefined.

Next they answer ‘What act of hubris brought this doom upon us?’ Anya suggests ‘our first attempt at interstellar travel’ and adds that maybe this all-consuming organism is some kind of living world-ship that humanity made. Everyone’s eyes light up, and they write down Anya’s idea before moving to the next prompt.

Eventually you will reach a question about the specific roles that each protagonist plays. This question then prompts the protagonists to select playbooks. Character playbook procedure is detailed on page 110. The answers the group has chosen for the initial questions will inevitably inform character creation, so be sure they are recorded on the series playsheet. Once the protagonists have chosen their playbooks, the group should return to answer the remaining questions before they finish creating their characters.

Once you have answered all the prompts and the protagonists each have a character playbook filled out, select a series ability and transcendent ability from the series playsheet as a group. Now you’re ready to start your first episode of *Girl by Moonlight*!

A WORD ON TOUCHSTONES

Each playset was inspired by different works of media, but that does not mean the players are meant to slavishly recreate these existing fictional worlds. The game will work best when the players are excited about the same themes and elements, but strive to create a new world that reflects their own experiences and stories. The touchstones listed are by no means exhaustive, and there are many other works that might fit each series. Those listed should serve as a convenient point of reference for understanding the themes and goals of each playset when discussing which series to choose. Abandon any touchstones that do not serve you and the other players.

WE BEGIN IN SEASON TWO

In a similar spirit to ‘We cut to the action’ (page 91), begin play of the series in the second season of your imagined story. Play with the conceit that there has already been a first season of the series, in which all the usual establishing arcs have taken place for the characters and the adversary they face. This spares you the need to spend time on tedious introductory scenes, characters meeting each other for the first time, establishing which character is the leader, etc. Instead, take this all as given. The protagonists have an established dynamic and have been working together for some time. This permits you to get to the more exciting stages of the narrative, and into the deeper elements of the protagonists’ relationships.

This also leaves space in the past that can be backfilled during play. If there is a particular detail of setup that interests you—a chance meeting between two characters, the conflict that sparked a rivalry, or the origin of an established adversary—show that in a flashback when it becomes relevant.

It can be helpful to remember that you don’t always have to just go to ‘the next thing’ that happens, chronologically. Keep the narrative flexible, both in the moment to moment action, and in the grand arc of the story. This flexibility will let you focus on the most exciting or emotional moments of your series, and naturally edit out less compelling content.



THE PROTAGONISTS

The protagonists are the primary characters of the story the players are telling, and most players at the table will play as protagonists.

As a protagonist, it is your job to:

- ◆ **play to find out what happens**
- ◆ **be a fan of the other players**
- ◆ **reveal the inner world of your character**
- ◆ **hold on, but lightly**
- ◆ **keep hope in your heart**
- ◆ **see things through a queer lens**
- ◆ **gaze into the broken mirror**

(For a full description of the player agendas, see page 28.)

You are provided with a set of tools to help you do this, most notably your character playbook. Your playbook is a place to record information about your character. It includes abilities and powers that your character might obtain, as well as places to track important details and attributes of your character. It also contains specific rules and prompts that are unique to that playbook, and therefore your character.

Pay special attention to your character's xp section, eclipse prompt, and promises. These details define the goals, methods, and themes of the playbook.

CHOOSING YOUR PLAYBOOK

When choosing a playbook, the most important thing is to pick one that seems exciting to you. Sometimes a playbook will jump out at you as exactly the right fit, and this will be an easy choice. If that doesn't happen, or you are trying to decide between two equally interesting-sounding playbooks, you can also consider:

- ◆ **Chosen roles.** The role you have chosen from the series prompts is a good place to start. Are there any playbooks that make sense for that role?

If you chose to be a demanding mentor, it might make sense to play the Guardian, who lives by a strict code. You might also choose a playbook because it subverts expectations about a chosen role. A demanding mentor might instead be an Outsider, choosing their mentee as their rival.

- ◆ **Playbook details.** Read the xp, eclipse sections of the playbook, as well as the promise prompts to see if a playbook's themes interest you, and suit your role.

Maybe you're interested in the Time Traveller's ominous predictions and time manipulation powers. You might also choose the Enigma because you want to play a character who is good at sneaking about, and see that conceal is one of the playbook's starting actions.

- ◆ **Touchstone inspiration.** Consider characters from the series touchstones, or other media you enjoy, and what playbook you imagine they would be.

If you loved Garnet from Steven Universe, you might be inspired to choose the Harmony. Or you could draw on Sherlock Holmes, or other favourite mystery novels, to create a Stranger who pursues mysteries through careful investigation.

- ◆ **Other players.** Talk to other players about what they find exciting about each playbook, and what they are planning to choose.

Other players will present you with different reads of the playbooks, and have ideas that might not occur to you.

THE ENIGMA*A mysterious ally and dramatic hero*

The Enigma is good at working from the shadows, and dramatic revelation. Play an Enigma if you like being the center of attention.

THE GUARDIAN*A vigilant protector and patient healer*

The Guardian is good at protecting others, and caring for their friends. Play a Guardian if you want to make a statement about what is right.

THE HARMONY*Two voices speaking as one, a beacon of hope*

The Harmony is good at understanding emotions, and acting in concert with their allies. Play the Harmony if you want to inspire others.

THE OUTSIDER *A renegade with a troubled past and something to prove*

The Outsider is good at direct confrontation, and brash reckless action. Play the Outsider if you like conflict.

THE STRANGER*A cold and distant luminary*

The Stranger is good at calm evaluation, and unconventional approaches. Play the Stranger if you want to know how things work.

THE TIME TRAVELLER*A secretive oracle and dedicated friend*

The Time Traveller is good at using flashbacks, and prophesying outcomes. Play the Time Traveller if you want to have your own secret agenda.

THE UNLIKELY HERO *An unproven prospect and heartfelt companion*

The Unlikely Hero is good at making friends, and getting in over their head. Play the Unlikely Hero if you want to be the heart of the group.

Claire chooses 'royal heir' and 'secret lover' as her roles during series creation. She then thinks about what playbook makes sense for these choices. Initially, she considers the Unlikely Hero, imagining her character struggling to live up to some grand destiny, suitable for a royal heir. She settles on the Harmony, deciding that she wants to put a twist on the idea of a secret lover. As the Harmony, her character can contain their own secret love.



CHARACTER CREATION OVERVIEW

When making characters, follow these steps:

- ◆ Record and review series information
- ◆ Record role and background
- ◆ Detail your obligation
- ◆ Assign action ratings
- ◆ Choose special and transcendent abilities
- ◆ Create secondary characters
- ◆ Name your character
- ◆ Introduce your character
- ◆ Make promises

RECORD AND REVIEW SERIES INFORMATION

While answering questions from the series playbook, you have already made some decisions as a group that affect your characters—you know something about what kind of world they live in, and what kind of adversity they will face. Make sure this information has been captured on the protagonists' sheet of the series playbook, for easy reference.



Claire checks over her notes from series creation, and fills in some blanks on the series sheet. She is particularly interested in their answers for The Mundane World—authoritarian government and class struggle. She wants to have her character reflect the tension between those two concepts.



RECORD ROLE AND BACKGROUND

You also chose an origin for all your characters, and one or two roles you wanted your particular character to play in the group and in the story. Write those choices down in the Role and Background sections of your playbook. You should also feel free to rephrase or add to these choices as your ideas about your character develop.

Claire chose 'royal heir' for her role, but based on discussions with the group, she writes down 'scion of a powerful family' instead. Her character's family has political connections, and big expectations for her.



Based on their shared origin of 'reincarnations of interstellar royalty' she notes that her character carries the spirits of Princess Lumina and her lover, Silver Knight Lyre. She has some ideas about what that might mean, but mostly she likes the sound of it, and is happy to figure out the details during play.

DETAIL YOUR OBLIGATION

Write down the group's shared obligation in your playbook, and add a detail that's specific to your character. For example, if the protagonists are all at a high school, maybe one of you is the class president, and another might be a teacher, or the janitor.

The group's obligation is 'university students', so Claire notes her obligation as 'music student'. She imagines her character being forced to play state approved music, but loving some new underground style that is tied to the revolution.



ASSIGN ACTION RATINGS

Your playbook starts with two action ratings already assigned. Choose a third action and increase its rating to 1. This could be an action in line with your playbook or role, or something more idiosyncratic to the character.

Descriptions of each action can be found on page 32. It can also be helpful to think about what sort of things you're excited to see your character doing in the story.



Claire's sheet came with a dot marked in empathize and forgive. She adds one dot in confess, so that her character can bare their soul through their music.

CHOOSE SPECIAL AND TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

They also have a list of special abilities, and a separate list of transcendent abilities that are only available when your character has transcended into their magical form. Each playbook starts with one special ability, listed at the top of the page. Choose one additional special ability and one transcendent ability for your character.

These abilities often have mechanical effects as well as fictional ones. If an ability mentions an unfamiliar rule, or you're not sure exactly how something would work, don't be afraid to ask the group for advice—someone probably knows.



Claire takes 'Perfect pitch' and 'Beacon' for her character, they are both in line with her other choices so far. She considers taking 'Powerful presence' instead of 'Beacon', because being a giant woman seems really cool, but ultimately sticks with 'Perfect pitch'. Sometimes the obvious choices are the right ones.

CREATE SECONDARY CHARACTERS

Make up two secondary characters that are connected to yours. These could be family members, friends, rivals or mentors; anyone you can think up, that has some connection to your character and seems like they might be interesting to include in the story. If you're stuck for ideas, it can be helpful to think about the questions you've already answered as a group—your obligations, the mundane world, and even the supernatural adversity you face can all be good sources for secondary characters.

It's also a good idea to talk out loud when coming up with secondary characters, so everyone has an idea of what sort of characters are already out there, and can spot opportunities to build on each other's contributions.

Though they're likely to connect in many ways, secondary characters should not be shared between protagonists—each player authors two characters. That doesn't mean you can't also have connections to the other characters, or that they can't know each other. The main goal is to have a suitable quantity of characters for the director to draw on.

Claire makes her character's mother, an ambitious agent of the authorities. Claire isn't sure what to name this character yet, so she asks Bev to give her a name later, if it comes up. She'll simply refer to her as 'Mother' for now.



Claire then makes a fellow student who enjoys the same music as her character. She looks at the series name list and takes one that catches her eye—Leo.



NAME YOUR CHARACTER

The next step is to name your character. Each character has both a mundane name and a true name that relates to their transcended self. Each series playset includes a list of names for inspiration, and your playbook will include a prompt for both names. You are free to disregard (or reinterpret) these prompts—and you don't have to pick from the playset list either. They are intended as inspiration only.



Claire knows how she wants her character to look. She imagines a sombre young woman, with well kept dark hair, always dressed a little too formally at her mother's insistence. She picks a name from the list that matches this look—Raven.

INTRODUCE CHARACTERS

Once each protagonist has completed the steps listed above, go around the table and have everyone introduce their character. When it's your turn, describe your character's look, what they do, and what kind of person they are. You can also mention your action ratings and abilities, to give a sense of what your character is capable of.

This is also a good time to mention the secondary characters you created, and describe how they are related to your character. The director should record the names and details about each secondary character, as they will portray them during the course of the series.



Everyone takes turns describing their characters, Claire writes their names on her sheet under Links and starts thinking about how her character might be connected to theirs. When her turn comes, Claire describes Raven, making a point to mention her special ability Perfect Pitch, and her ideas about what it means that Raven is the Harmony.

She introduces Leo, the music student, and Raven's mother, agent of the authorities, and writes down their names with a brief description for future reference.

MAKE PROMISES

After introductions have been made, write a **promise** on your sheet for each of the prompts. These promises will each include one of the other protagonists in some way. You'll earn xp during play by working towards keeping your promises.

The players should share their promises as they come up with them, so everyone knows how the protagonists feel towards each other. Conflicting or impossible promises are an enduring source of drama, and reviewing each other's promises will help the group spot opportunities for tense or revealing character moments once the story gets going.

After hearing all the introductions, Claire considers what to write for her promises.



While she's contemplating her options, Dylan proposes to Anya that Fawn be Hawk's rival. Anya replies "Sure, but I'm playing the Enigma, so maybe only one side of my character is your rival? Are we rivals in our mundane lives, or only when Fawn is Midnight Quill?"

"That's a good thought! Hmm... I like the idea that her rivalry is with Midnight Quill. I've got 'a promise of rivalry' in my prompts, so maybe it's something like, *I swear to capture that meddler, Midnight Quill!*"

"Is that so? Well I'm going to have an intimate promise, *I will confess my love to Hawk.*"

Dylan laughs, "That's perfect! Hawk's in for a surprise either way."

The dynamic between Fawn and Hawk sparks Claire's imagination, and she thinks about how Raven might play a role in their drama. One of her prompts is 'two conflicting promises' so she writes *I will help Hawk find love, and keep Fawn's secrets*. She can already imagine all the headaches this will cause for Raven.

PROMISES

A **promise** is an in-character statement, a belief about something you will do (or will never do) because of how you feel about another character. These promises aren't necessarily something your character has ever said out loud—at least not to the other character—but they are conscious beliefs that guide their actions.

Each promise relates to a specific protagonist, and you should pick a different character for each. Playing towards these promises will earn the protagonists xp at the end of session. You don't need to fulfill them, necessarily, and many promises will be too big or too complicated to ever cleanly resolve. Often a character's efforts to keep a promise will meet with complication or failure, what matters is that we see all that in play.

A promise of martyrdom: I will give my life for Van, when the time comes.

A misguided promise: I won't let my love for Himna stop me from doing my duty.

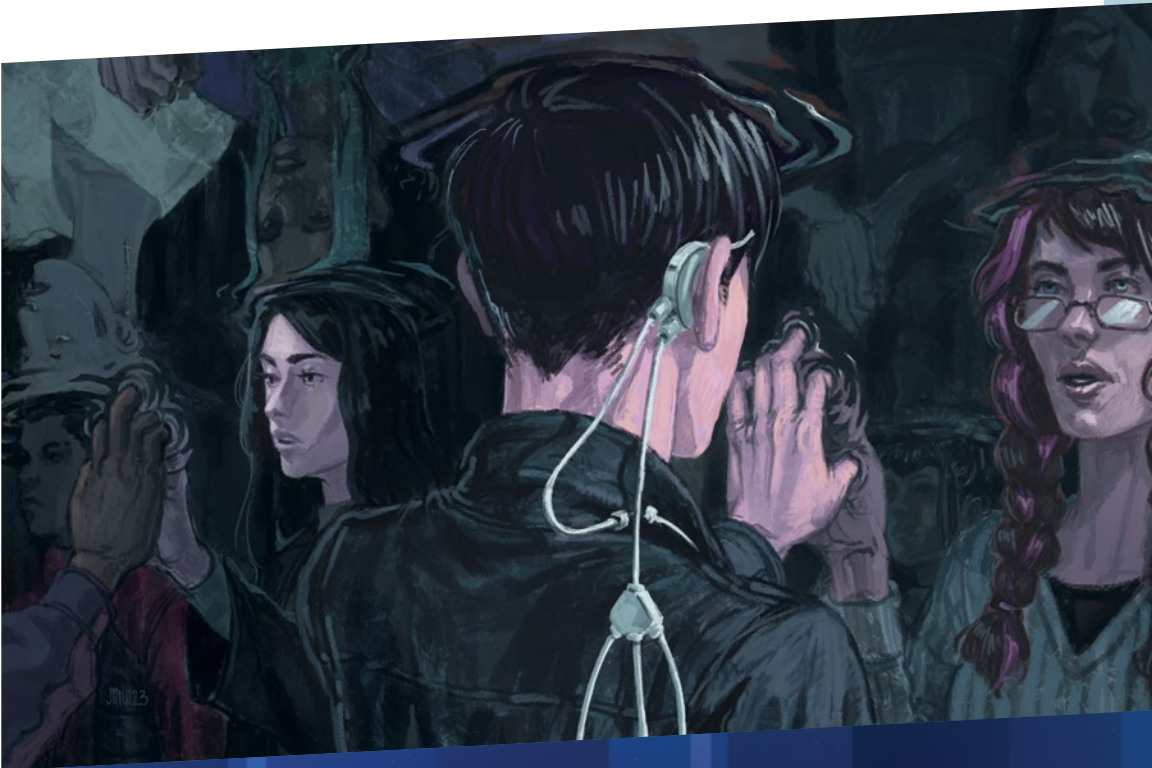
A paradoxical promise: I'll show Falin the way things were, and can be again.

An intimate promise: One way or another, I'll make Van finally notice me.

If circumstances change, or your character has a change of heart, you can rewrite or replace promises during the fallout phase, or between sessions. If you do this, tell the other players about the new promise, and the reasons for discarding the old one.

CHARACTER PLAYBOOK REFERENCE

This section contains all the information included in each character playbook, along with some additional clarification and advice on each one. This includes guidance on specific abilities, as well as advice for playing each playbook's eclipse prompt.



THE ENIGMA

A mysterious ally and dramatic hero



Aloof, secretive, and graceful, the Enigma leads a complex double life. Always there at the moment of need, only to disappear mysteriously when the danger has passed. Like any good act, the Enigma leaves their audience wanting more.

When you play an Enigma, you earn xp when you address a challenge with mystery or ostentatious action. Dazzle your foes and allies alike with your skill and beauty, but never let them get too close.

What are you hiding behind the mask? Will you ever let someone in on your secret?

NAME

For your **Mundane Name**, choose:

- ◆ A forgettable name
- ◆ A puzzling name

For your **True Name**, choose:

- ◆ A dashing name
- ◆ An imperious name

PROMISES

Make each of these promises to one of the other protagonists:

- ◆ A secretive promise
- ◆ An intimate promise

ECLIPSE

When you eclipse—Who you *really* are clearly isn't enough; only the mask is worthy of their love. You reject all aspects of your everyday self, and embrace the most superficial aspects of your persona. Give them what you know they want: effortless beauty and extravagant drama!

You escape eclipse when someone shows you the truth of their own heart, and you reveal your identity to them. They add a promise about keeping your secret.

The Enigma in eclipse struggles to live up to their heroic alter ego. What was once an aspirational idea of a better self is twisted into self loathing and denial. It is also about the expectations of others, and the pressure that puts on the Enigma to outdo themselves and deliver big dramatic and heroic acts.

Revealing your identity to another emphasizes the self-acceptance necessary to escape eclipse—even without the mask, you are enough.

When someone helps you escape eclipse, they can choose to rewrite one of their existing promises to include keeping your secret, or they can create a new third promise.

GATHER INFORMATION QUESTIONS

When you gather information, you can ask these questions:

- ◆ What does [X] intend to do?
- ◆ Who here is keeping secrets?
- ◆ Where can I find [X]?
- ◆ What's the vulnerability here?
- ◆ How can I stay hidden?
- ◆ What does [X] really want?

STARTING ACTIONS



Express

Conceal

SPECIAL ABILITIES

You begin with **Behind the mask**, and choose one more:

Behind the mask: Your transcendent and mundane selves lead separate lives, and no one knows that they are the same person. Your transcendent self wears a mask—describe it.

How does your character fit into the group as their mundane self? How does the group feel about your masked persona? What does wearing the mask let you do, that you would never dare do otherwise?

Make sure to talk to the other players about how you imagine this working in the story, since everyone will have to work together to make sure your secret identity plays out smoothly.

Working from the shadows: When you secretly set up another character's action, roll +1d. If they succeed, mark xp.

Phantom: You may expend your special armour to resist any consequence that would cause you to be detected or overlooked, or to immediately seize the attention of everyone present.

To use this ability, mark the special armour box on your playbook sheet. When you use this to resist a consequence, you negate the consequence completely.

Shrouded in secrets: No one can unmask you without your permission. Gain +1d when your mundane identity conceals your true purpose, or helps you escape notice.

When you take this ability, talk to the other players about how you all imagine it working in the story. Is it that no one ever tries to unmask you in the first place? Or are you in some way magically protected from such interference? Do you have an endless number of masks under masks under masks?

Discussing this up front will head off any awkward moments, where other players stumble into this hard limit on what can happen in the story.

Cover story: You may choose to take -1d to your obligation roll to fill any remaining segments of your recovery clock. What's your cover story for your injuries?

Two steps ahead: Two times per mission, you can assist a teammate without spending stress. Tell us how you prepared for this situation.

TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

The big reveal: The moment you transcend, you may choose to immediately disappear, and may reappear at any time, in the place of your choosing.

Watch this!: When you push yourself, choose one of the following additional benefits: *perform a superhuman feat of athletics - deliver a monologue without anyone interrupting you*

Superhuman feats of athletics are things like running along a tight-rope, leaping to a second story window from the street below, or out-running a horse.

Powerful friends: Once per mission, you may flashback to a special downtime action, taken as your transcendent self. Shift the results of the roll up one step.

This action depletes your transcendence track as normal, but the flashback does not cost any stress. This allows you to make a connection with another character using a flashback, or any other activity that you didn't have time for in the downtime phase.

THE GUARDIAN

A vigilant protector and patient healer



Patient, watchful, and kind, the Guardian looks out for their friends. They live by a code, and work to keep others on the right path. Guardians are fierce when their friends are threatened, and are never to be taken lightly.

When you play a Guardian, you earn xp when you address a challenge with kindness or self-sacrifice. Let your friends stir up trouble, and when they get in over their heads, you can finish what they started.

Will you hold true to your code? Who depends on you? Who can you go to when you need help?

NAME

For your **Mundane Name**, choose:

- ◆ A traditional name
- ◆ A resolute name

For your **True Name**, choose:

- ◆ A warrior name
- ◆ An iconic name

PROMISES

Make each of these promises to one of the other protagonists:

- ◆ A promise of martyrdom
- ◆ A protective promise

ECLIPSE

When you eclipse—Your shining example is not enough. This world is rotten to its core, corrupted by those too weak-willed to follow even the simplest rules. The slightest breach of your code must be met with uncompromising justice. Punish them until they repent.

You escape eclipse when someone shows you something pure and beautiful, and you set aside your crusade.

For the Guardian eclipse is about reducing everything to black and white—either it aligns with your code and is acceptable (for now) or it is in breach of your code and must face your justice. Where previously the Guardian may have made exceptions, or not seen a certain person or circumstance as subject to their rules, now everything must be measured against the code.

Often escape will come from someone showing you something to which your code couldn't possibly apply, and that is therefore free of your totalizing outlook. But it could also come from somebody taking a pure action that is clearly right, but is technically against your code.

GATHER INFORMATION QUESTIONS

When you gather information, you can ask these questions:

- ◆ What is most dangerous here?
- ◆ Who here is afraid?
- ◆ How can I help [X]?
- ◆ Who will my foes try to single out?
- ◆ Who here is willing to do violence?
- ◆ Who here is hurting?

STARTING ACTIONS



Defy

Perceive

SPECIAL ABILITIES

You begin with **Honour bound**, and choose one more:

Honour bound: You live by a code. Your code forbids all but one of the following: violence, lying, admitting fault, asking for help. At the end of a mission, if you did not violate your code, mark xp. If none of the protagonists broke your code, also mark series xp.

Just because something is against your code, does not mean you cannot do it (in fact, you might be really good at it), though doing it forfeits your extra xp after a mission. What is the origin of your code? What is your relationship to it?

Watchful: When you **protect** an ally, take +1d to your resistance roll. When you **gather info** to anticipate possible threats in the current situation, you have +1 effect level.

You don't have to feel it: You reduce all penalties from harm by one level. Level four harm is still fatal.

This means level one harm has no penalty, level two harm gives reduced effect, and level three harm gives -1d.

Constant care: When you **help a friend recover**, you also recover based on your roll. When you **gather info**, you can always ask "Who here is hurting?" for free.

Here for you: You may expend your special armour to resist consequences suffered when you **protect** an ally, or to give +1d to someone else's action.

When you use this ability, mark the special armour box on your play-book sheet. If you use this to resist a consequence, you negate the consequence completely.

Righteous: When you confront a deadly foe, they are humbled by your bravery. When you **forgive** a humbled foe, take +1d on your roll.

Deadly foes should be ones that pose a credible threat to the protagonists or their friends. How your foes behave when they are humbled is up to the director, and the circumstances—maybe a violent foe will parley, or a proud foe will treat you as an equal.

TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

Indomitable: You suffer at most 2 stress when resisting consequences, and get +1d when rolling eclipse.

How dare you: When you strike back against someone who has harmed one of your friends, gain +1 effect. If your action succeeds, you recover 1 stress.

This works against any foe that has caused harm the protagonists have on their sheets, even if you strike back much later, or in different circumstances. If the other protagonists have no harm on their sheets, then this ability has no effect.

Striking back need not be violence, but it should always aim to put a stop to your foe's destructive behaviour.

Bolstering presence: When you **assist** or **set up** a teammate, they mark 1 segment on their recovery clock.

THE HARMONY

Two voices speaking as one, a beacon of hope



Confident, earnest, and attentive, the Harmony is an inspiration to their allies. They understand the power of relationships better than anyone, because it is their power. The Harmony can be a booming presence leading the way, or lift other voices that have gone unheard.

When you play a Harmony, you earn xp when you address a challenge with understanding or coordination. Your voice can keep hope alive, and you are never truly alone.

Which parts of yourselves do you share with others? Which are yours alone? How will you light the way?

NAME

For your **Mundane Name**, choose:

- ◆ A lofty name
- ◆ A romantic name

For your **True Name**, choose:

- ◆ A musical name
- ◆ A beautiful name

PROMISES

Make each of these promises to one of the other protagonists:

- ◆ A shared promise
- ◆ Two conflicting promises

ECLIPSE

When you eclipse—You are fractured. A sour note has shattered your harmony, and now there is uncertainty and conflict. Your relationship, once a source of strength, is suddenly tenuous. You are divided, and a difference of opinions keeps you separated.

You escape eclipse when someone else mediates your dispute, and your halves are able to reconcile their differences.

In eclipse, something drives a wedge between the Harmony's parts. Whatever the cause, this conflict puts the Harmony's very nature in question. Will they be able to reconcile and become whole once more, or will they remain apart?

The answer is ultimately up to their friends, who will need to step in and help the Harmony navigate this existential crisis. This flips the usual dynamic of the group, where the Harmony is the one bringing others together. It will also require a deeper understanding of the relationship at the center of the Harmony, which has in some ways been hidden until now.

Playing out this fractured version of your character by yourself is challenging. Ask another player to help out if you are struggling to give voice to the different sides of the conflict.

GATHER INFORMATION QUESTIONS

When you gather information, you can ask these questions:

- ◆ Who here can best help me?
- ◆ What are you really feeling?
- ◆ Who here is at their limit?
- ◆ How are [X] and [Y] connected?
- ◆ Who here feels alone?
- ◆ What here is incomplete?

STARTING ACTIONS



Empathise

Forgive

SPECIAL ABILITIES

You begin with **In harmony**, and choose one more:

In harmony: You are a relationship, two people whose love has bound them into a single form and identity. Should you ever be separated, all actions you make are desperate until you are reunited. You roll +1d to **gather info** about relationships.

When choosing the Harmony, the essential element to define is what exactly it means to be 'in harmony'. This definition is an important and exciting expressive choice that reflects how you feel about your character, and about relationships in general.

Decide how this harmony exists in both the mundane and supernatural aspects of the story. Do you appear to be just one person most of the time? Is your dual nature obvious to everyone around you?

Split attention: You may take an additional action in each downtime phase.

Inseparable: You may expend your special armour to resist any consequence that would impact your relationships with others, or within yourself, or to magically appear from within your allies.

To use this ability, mark the special armour box on your playbook sheet. When you use this to resist a consequence, you negate the consequence completely.

Appearing from within your allies can be interpreted differently. This might be very literal—you magically emerge from inside them. It might be more abstract—you appear suddenly among your allies, with no clear explanation how.

Synchronized: When you are involved in a group action, you may count multiple 6s from different rolls as a critical success. When leading, you take at most 1 stress regardless of the number of failed rolls during a group action.

Bonds of love: You start each downtime with 2 links with yourself.

You can spend these links for effects on your character, just as you would for another protagonist.

Perfect pitch: Your voice is polyphonic, and eerily beautiful. Your allies can always hear you speak, regardless of distance or other interference. When you sing to inspire your allies, or soothe the troubled hearts of foes, roll +1d.

TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

Powerful presence: When you transcend, your scale increases, and your effect level changes accordingly where size is a factor.

When you take this ability, talk to the other players about what kind of change makes sense for your game. This could mean you become a head taller than the tallest person, or that you become as big as a house, depending on the tone and circumstances of your particular series. This increased size is often an advantage, letting you lift massive objects, or smash through barriers. Sometimes this increased size will put you at a disadvantage, though, preventing you from moving in tight spaces, or manipulating delicate objects.

As one: When you lead a group action or receive an assist while transcended, you briefly incorporate others into your harmony. You may roll the highest action rating among all participants instead of your own action rating.

Beacon: Once per transcendence, you may uplift your allies with a speech or song. When you do, it counts as spending a link on each ally that can hear you. They choose which link effect to use.

THE **OUTSIDER**

A renegade with a troubled past and something to prove



Reckless, jaded, and combative, the Outsider has an antagonistic relationship with their allies. The Outsider is in the fight as much to prove their superiority as anything else. Though they'll never admit it, the Outsider just wants to belong, and is nothing without their rival to square up against.

When you play an Outsider, you earn xp when you address a challenge with individual action or aggression. Let none fall prey to weakness, and show them what real strength means.

What exactly are you trying to prove? What is most infuriating about your rival? What weakness does your bravado conceal?

NAME

For your **Mundane Name**, choose:

- ◆ A fierce name
- ◆ An arrogant name

For your **True Name**, choose:

- ◆ A rebellious name
- ◆ A villainous name

PROMISES

Make each of these promises to one of the other protagonists:

- ◆ A promise to your rival
- ◆ A competitive promise

ECLIPSE

When you eclipse—Your friends are leeches and sycophants who will never wield real power. The strong do not owe the weak an explanation. Pursue your goals in the most violent and cruel manner you can. Doubly so if it would put your rival in their place.

You escape eclipse when you see that your rival isn't intimidated by you, and the two of you accomplish something together. You may choose a new rival.

Whatever kept the Outsider on (relatively) good behaviour before, is no longer enough to keep them in check. Something has confirmed their darkest fear that these are not really their friends, that they can never be truly accepted, and so they lash out. Since they no longer believe that being friends is possible, they treat the others as subordinates at best, and impediments at worst.

If you choose a new rival, this might mean a sudden change of attitudes, or the beginning of a slow shift inside your character. Announce the change to the other players to give them opportunities to play into these new relationships.

GATHER INFORMATION QUESTIONS

When you gather information, you can ask these questions:

- ◆ Where's my rival, what are they doing?
- ◆ What are your secret pains?
- ◆ How can I gain an edge here?
- ◆ What's the danger no one else sees?
- ◆ What's really going on here?
- ◆ What here can be broken?

STARTING ACTIONS



Defy

Express

SPECIAL ABILITIES

You begin with **Something to prove**, and choose one more:

Something to prove: Choose another protagonist to be your rival. You always have exactly one rival.

This rivalry might be loud and out in the open, a two way contest. It might be seething and one-sided, a resentment that only the Outsider harbours. Talk to your prospective rival when you make this choice to be sure they are interested in holding up their end of this relationship.

Reckless: When you make a desperate roll, you may choose to get +1d for the roll if you also take -1d to any resistance rolls against consequences from your action.

The penalty still applies if someone else tries to protect you from the consequences.

Jaded: You may expend your special armour to resist any consequence of your rival's actions, or to act before your rival does.

To use this ability, mark the special armour box on your playbook sheet. When you use this to resist a consequence, you negate it completely. When you spend it to act before your rival, this can also make you faster than your opponents, depending on the circumstances.

Pathetic!: When you **gather info**, you can always ask "Where's my rival, what are they doing?" for free. If your rival is about to suffer fatal harm, or fall into eclipse, you can choose to be there and protect them, regardless of circumstances.

Old loyalties: The group's adversaries are not immediately hostile towards you, and you can interact with them as peers. What role did you once serve among them?

This ability does not make them your friends. Most of them are probably willing to hear you out, but they didn't take you leaving their ranks lightly. Others might benefit from this good will while with you, but their presence is a liability during these interactions.

Anything you do, I do better: When you **assist** your rival, you grant them +2d and take 2 stress. If you refuse your rival's help, or they refuse yours, mark xp.

The +2d and 2 stress are instead of the normal +1d and 1 stress for assisting an ally. These changes do not apply when using links to help a friend.

TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

Brutish: When you **push yourself**, choose one of the following additional benefits: *perform a superhuman feat of physical force - destroy an obstacle between you and your rival*

A superhuman feat of physical force could mean lifting a massive chunk of rubble, or smashing the armoured plates of a terrifying sea monster.

When you destroy an obstacle between you and your rival, you can't use this to destroy any and all opposition, but you definitely create a path to your rival, and traverse to them.

This one's mine!: Once you engage a foe, neither of you may back down until one of you is defeated. While you are engaged with your foe, only your rival can assist you, and other foes will not interfere. Your rival may take your place at any time, but must finish what you started.

Your chosen foe will focus their attention on you exclusively until they defeat you, or your rival takes your place. Once your rival takes your place, they have no way out but to defeat the chosen foe.

The nature of defeat should be made clear up-front.

Relentless: While transcended, each other protagonist counts as your rival.

Abilities that reference your rival work with any of your allies, but only one at a time.

THE STRANGER

A cold and distant luminary



Deliberate, withdrawn, and perceptive, the Stranger can access secrets and knowledge that others cannot. This focus means that they struggle to express their feelings to others, though they often feel them very deeply. To the Stranger, the world is a beautifully complex machine to be approached with curiosity and ingenuity.

When you play a Stranger, you earn xp when you address a challenge with knowledge or subtlety. You see the world as no one else can, but will they trust the knowledge you offer?

What knowledge do you seek? Why do you struggle to relate to others? What truths do you deny about yourself?

NAME

For your **Mundane Name**, choose:

- ◆ A confusing name
- ◆ A model name

For your **True Name**, choose:

- ◆ An alien name
- ◆ An unnerving name

PROMISES

Make each of these promises to one of the other protagonists:

- ◆ A promise of growth
- ◆ A misguided promise

ECLIPSE

When you eclipse—No more wasting time with ‘friends’ or ‘feelings’, they just get in the way. It’s time to focus on something real and tangible, something that makes sense. You find a concrete, rational, and entirely impossible task to pursue to the exclusion of all else.

You escape eclipse when someone works alongside you on your task, without judgement, and you let the task go incomplete and unresolved.

This fixation might come about slowly, steadily taking up more of your time and attention over a long period, seemingly harmless at first. Make sure that other characters are involved in this process, or can witness the change in the Stranger’s behaviour, otherwise they might not notice before it’s too late.

It’s important that the escape not happen as a matter of course—be protective of your project, shutting the other protagonists out when they first try to help. It’s also important to emphasize how impossible your chosen task is. They work alongside you out of solidarity and friendship, not because they expect it to actually work.

GATHER INFORMATION QUESTIONS

When you gather information, you can ask these questions:

- ◆ What is hidden here?
- ◆ Where can I gain an edge?
- ◆ What is the purpose of [X]?
- ◆ Who/what doesn't belong here?
- ◆ What might happen if I [X]?
- ◆ Who/what here is isolated or alone?

STARTING ACTIONS



Analyze

Conceal

SPECIAL ABILITIES

You begin with **Stranger to kindness**, and choose one more:

Stranger to kindness: You cannot **make a connection**, or **help a friend recover** in downtime. When you roll obligation, always roll stars. When you **investigate**, take +1d.

Always rolling stars is a big advantage, making the Stranger less likely to suffer stress during obligation. Why is that so? How does your character cope with society's expectations?

Others can still make connections with you, but this means that by default your friends cannot spend links to help you during difficult situations. Is your character content in their isolation?

Oblivious: You may expend your special armour to resist consequences of emotional trauma, or to be completely overlooked until you take a direct action.

To use this ability, mark the special armour box on your playbook sheet. When you use this to resist a consequence, you negate the consequence completely.

Safe distance: You can **make a connection** and **help a friend recover** by leaving anonymous gifts. When you do so, take +1d. If you watch them receive the gift, you can ask their player one question from their **gather info** list.

This lets a Stranger make a connection and help a friend recover so long as they do so by leaving gifts. You may watch them receive the gift secretly, or not, but the gift is always given anonymously.

No sleep: During each downtime phase, you get two ticks to distribute among any long term project clocks. Whenever you complete a project, mark xp.

You may mark ticks on any project clock, not just your own, but can only complete your own projects.

Things feel: You can **empathize** with non-human things as if they were people. If you use this to **gather info**, you may ask questions from any playbook currently in play.

Non-human things can mean inanimate objects, animals, robots, plants, or any other thing that you find interesting. Humans, or human-like beings are generally not what this ability is for.

Know it all: You have encyclopaedic knowledge on one of the following topics: *plants and animals* - *magic rituals* - *engineering* - *ancient lore* - *pop culture*

Take +1d when you gather info relating to the chosen topic. Take this ability again to choose an additional option.

TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

Ex machina: When you push yourself, choose one of the following additional benefits: you compel non-human things around you to hinder or distract your foes, or you compel the environment to change itself to suit your needs.

You might cause a swarm of woodland creatures to trample through the middle of a scene. You might make a broken bridge briefly reform to allow your friends to cross it.

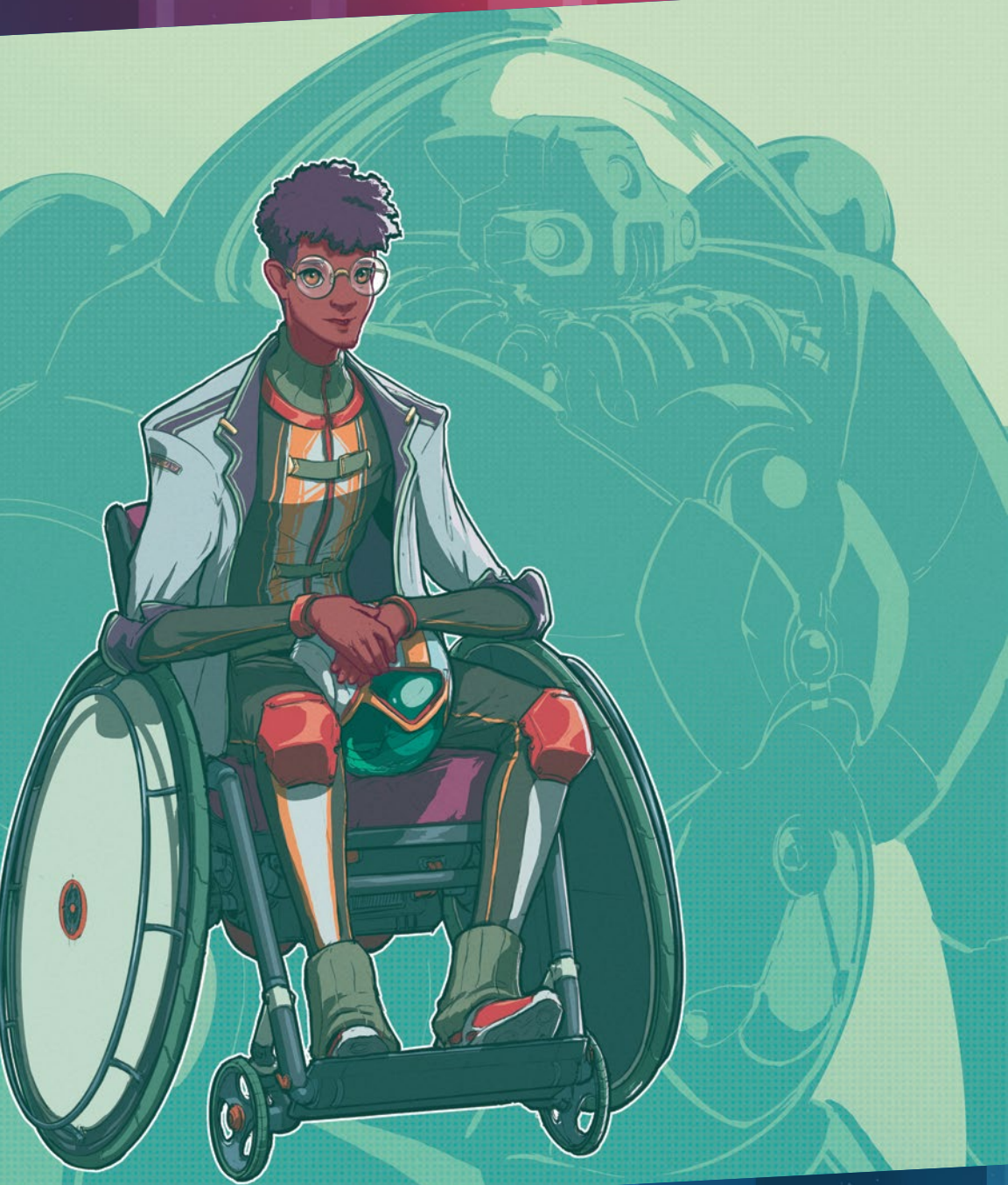
Deeper understanding: When you **gather info**, gain +1 effect. When a transcended ally acts on information you provide, they gain 1 link with you.

You and your ally must both be transcended for them to gain a link with you.

Here's one I prepared earlier: Once per transcendence you may activate a flashback without spending stress to create a device that does one of the following: *Allow for an escape* - *reveal unexpected information* - *create an opportunity for an ally*

THE **TIME TRAVELLER**

A secretive oracle and dedicated friend



Ominous, strange, and full of impossible knowledge, the Time Traveller seeks to defy fate. They have seen a possible future, and that gives them a unique perspective that others lack. This can also alienate them from their friends, making it hard for them to trust that good things will happen without their direct intervention.

When you play a Time Traveller, you earn xp when you address a challenge with foresight or revelation. You have seen and survived a perilous future—sharing what you know may be the only way to help your friends find a brighter path.

What do you miss about the future? What is most precious about the present?

Is knowledge of your past enough to change their future, or will your meddling just cause them to repeat it?

NAME

For your **Mundane Name**, choose:

- ◆ An anachronistic name
- ◆ A clever name

For your **True Name**, choose:

- ◆ An historic name
- ◆ An ominous name

PROMISES

Make each of these promises to one of the other protagonists:

- ◆ A forgotten promise
- ◆ A paradoxical promise

ECLIPSE

When you eclipse—You’ve known all along that changing fate was impossible, yet here you are. So much wasted effort, wasted time. But if this fate is inevitable, why not embrace it? You set aside caution for instinct, and pursue a direct course of action, heedless of consequence.

You escape eclipse when your fated person defies your predictions and shows you they can alter the course of fate. Change either your fated person, their fate, or both.

Eclipse shows the Time Traveller losing faith in their plan to change fate. This might lead to them acting selfishly, or accelerating outcomes they once sought to avert.

Escaping eclipse requires that you change some detail of the doom you foresaw for one of the other characters. This change represents the Time Traveller trying to keep their grip on the shifting and ever-changing threads of fate.

GATHER INFORMATION QUESTIONS

When you gather information, you can ask these questions:

- ◆ What do I remember about [X]?
- ◆ What really happen(s/ed) here?
- ◆ What defies the flow of time?
- ◆ What is already in motion here?
- ◆ What might happen if I [X]?
- ◆ What is different about [X] this time?

STARTING ACTIONS



Confess

Analyze

SPECIAL ABILITIES

You begin with **Fated**, and choose one more:

Fated: You travelled through time to change another protagonist's fate. What perilous fate are you here to prevent? Whose fate is it?

This can be taken very literally, but it might also be that your character had visions of the future. Adjust the fictional circumstances implied by this ability to suit the broader story, and your character concept, as needed.

It's okay to leave this fate somewhat ambiguous, or subject to interpretation, so that changing events in the story do not easily invalidate it.

Ominous: When you use your impossible knowledge to persuade someone, gain +1 effect level. If a fate you warned of comes to pass, mark xp.

Saw it coming: You can expend your special armour to resist any consequence relating to surprise or misfortune, to be in two places at once, or perform some similar feat of time manipulation.

To use this ability, mark the special armour box on your playbook sheet. When you use this to resist a consequence, you negate the consequence completely.

When you perform a feat of time manipulation with this ability, discuss your idea with the director. Work with them to keep it in line with the tone of the story, and the overall power and impact of the example, being in two places at one time.

Oracle: You can **perceive** the myriad timelines leading from past to future. When you **gather info**, gain +1 effect level. If it relates to your fated person, take +1d as well.

My very best friend: When you **make a connection** with your fated person, gain +1d. When they connect with you, mark +1 link.

Out of time: You are outside the regular flow of time, and injuries fade from you quickly. Permanently fill one segment of your recovery clock. Other players roll +1d to help you recover.

Rewind, return: You have been through this timeline at least once before. Flashbacks cost 1 less stress than normal. How did this go wrong the first time?

This creates opportunities for you to gather information by racking your memory about your previous experiences in this timeline.

TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

Clock stopper: If ever there is a question of who acts first, it's you. Once per mission, when the director advances a clock, you may say "no" and the clock does not advance.

On the other side of time: When you push yourself, choose one of the following additional benefits: You trade places with your fated person, or you briefly remove an ally or foe from the flow of time.

This could allow you to freeze an enemy in place to slip past their guard, or pull your friends through an alternate timeline to escape a burning building. While there is a lot of room for creativity and strangeness here, any time-manipulation lasts only as long as the action itself.

Lost cause: Once per transcendence, when an ally suffers severe consequences, you may choose to abandon this timeline for a better one. Whatever consequences they would have suffered are replaced by your suffering level 3 harm: Traveller's despair. Your relationship to the person you save is different in this timeline, they will tell you how.

Consider changing a promise that connects your characters, if it feels appropriate. The detail that changes might be subtle, or big and dramatic, it's up to the other player to decide.

THE **UNLIKELY HERO**

An unproven prospect and heartfelt companion



Hopeful, honest, and unproven, the Unlikely Hero does their best to keep up with their companions. They carry great potential within them, but will that potential be realised? They struggle with the weight of their destiny, and bear the hope that they will one day change the world.

When you play an Unlikely Hero, you earn xp when you address a challenge with compassion or honesty. Get in over your head, and trust that your friends will be there to see you through.

What future do you hope for? What do you fear will be your undoing? Who will save you, when you over-reach?

NAME

For your **Mundane Name**, choose:

- ◆ An innocent name
- ◆ A pretty name

For your **True Name**, choose:

- ◆ A sacred name
- ◆ A renowned name

PROMISES

Make each of these promises to one of the other protagonists:

- ◆ A naive promise
- ◆ An impossible promise

ECLIPSE

When you eclipse—You are not who they need you to be. You're weak, useless, unworthy of their friendship. They have given so much to you, and in return you give them nothing. You throw yourself into danger, desperately seeking any way you might possibly be of use.

You escape eclipse only when someone engages you in a dialogue about your feelings, and shows you that they have felt the same.

The Unlikely Hero struggles with feelings of inadequacy and guilt while in eclipse. They deny the value of their own contributions, and hold themselves to unreasonable standards. There may also be resentment, about being coddled or protected, and therefore not given the chance to really be a full member of the team.

It's important that the conversation that leads to escaping eclipse be a real dialogue, where your feelings are acknowledged. When in eclipse, simple reassurances feel condescending or untrue, just things they're saying to keep you 'safe' and out of the way.

GATHER INFORMATION QUESTIONS

When you gather information, you can ask these questions:

- ◆ What is most dangerous here?
- ◆ Who here is feeling [X]?
- ◆ What are you really feeling?
- ◆ Who here is strong or vulnerable?
- ◆ Where can I find beauty here?
- ◆ What are your unmet needs?

STARTING ACTIONS



Confess

Forgive

SPECIAL ABILITIES

You begin with **Only mortal**, and choose one more:

Only mortal: You cannot transcend, and you cannot have special armour.

You get an additional action during downtime. You get +1d when rolling to make a connection. When only you can save one of your friends from fatal harm or severe consequence, and you do it, you can discard this ability and gain **Hero's destiny** instead.

Talk with the other players about how your character fits into the group. Why do they bring you along, if you can't transcend? Is your potential clear to your friends? To your adversaries?

'Severe consequences' can be anything with a significant impact on the story beyond the scope of the current mission: the group's destiny, the central conflict of the series, etc.

*Trading this ability for **Hero's destiny** signifies an important shift in your character's role in the story. Make the change when a moment in the story feels important, or when the impact of the change will be most keenly felt. The change is optional, so it is always up to the player of the Unlikely Hero if and when they want to discard **Only mortal**.*

Hero's destiny: You have embraced your heroic destiny. You gain increased effect when fighting your most powerful foes. Gain +1d when rolling while in eclipse. You may only transcend when an ally suffers consequences from an action. Immediately mark one transcendent ability on your playbook when you gain this ability.

*You can only gain this ability by way of **Only mortal**.*

Confronting your greatest foes is part of your destiny, and the director should take this into account when evaluating effect for your actions against them. (It's okay to remind them if they forget, you are the hero after all.)

Call out: When you confront someone about their hurtful behaviour roll +1d. If they are unrepentant, mark xp.

Worth saving: When you run foolishly into danger, and no one comes to help you, mark xp. Your allies roll +1d when they protect you from consequences.

Heartfelt: When gathering information about someone's emotions, roll +1d, and you can always ask a player "what is your character really feeling?" for free.

Believe in me: Links on your sheet, and links with you on other player's sheets, may be spent to affect any character.

Other players still choose when and how to spend their links.

TRANSCENDENT ABILITIES

The Unlikely Hero does not have their own list of transcendent abilities. When you exchange **Only mortal** for **Hero's destiny** you immediately gain one transcendent ability taken from another playbook. Once you have **Hero's destiny**, playbook advances may be spent to gain additional transcendent abilities, which can be taken from any playbook.



THE DIRECTOR

The director's role is about providing a foil to the protagonists. A world and characters for them to reflect against, with opposing viewpoints and overlapping interests. The game is a conversation, and the director is focused on asking questions of the protagonists. Sometimes you ask them directly, player to player, but you also ask indirectly, through your contributions to the fiction and the actions of their adversaries.

THE DIRECTOR'S AGENDA

As the director, it is your job to follow the collective player agenda, as well as:

- ◆ address the characters
- ◆ address the players
- ◆ ask questions and build on the answers
- ◆ express consequences by way of the fiction first

ADDRESS THE CHARACTERS

Speak to the protagonists as if they were their characters. Speak as if you are the character you are portraying. The immediacy and intimacy of roleplaying characters will help bring real emotion to your game, and it can be a lot of fun for its own sake.

ADDRESS THE PLAYERS

Speak to the protagonists as players of the game. Keep this channel of dialogue open during play. Ask them about their hopes for the game as players, and the themes they are interested in exploring. Talk about what you want to get out of the experience, and regularly check on how things are proceeding. This player to player channel allows you to make sure other players are feeling safe and supported during play, by you, as well as by each other.

ASK QUESTIONS AND BUILD ON THE ANSWERS

When you pose a question, take note of the answer. Reincorporate that answer later on. Think about the ramifications of that answer, and write down new questions that interest you. Not every answer needs to result in a big callback, but keeping track and thinking about them will inevitably inform your contributions. Some of your questions might not get asked out loud, instead ending up as private musings and considerations for you to keep in the back of your mind. Cultivate curiosity, ask questions, and let your questions guide your collaboration with the other players.

EXPRESS CONSEQUENCES BY WAY OF THE FICTION FIRST

When it comes time for you to describe consequences, start by describing what is happening in the next moments of the story. If you decide that a character should suffer harm as a result of a missed roll, describe how their failed confession leads to an embarrassing misunderstanding. If you decide that a bold speech rallying protesters should have longer-term repercussions, don't just create a clock called 'the Authority cracks down'—show the players a frowning observer, arms crossed in the corner of the cheering room.

The game's fictional world is where the feedback loop of play happens, the rules and mechanics exist to drive that loop. Events in the story prompt actions, which in turn create new outcomes, and new circumstances in which to act.

USING THE SERIES PLAYSET

Your primary resource is the series playset, which will help you establish content and themes for the game. Though each playset is arranged slightly differently, they all share some common elements:

DIRECTOR'S PLAYSHEET

Each playset includes a sheet named after the adversity particular to that series (the Blight, the Abyss, etc.) This sheet has several series-specific agendas, a name list, series specific rules, and advice for making judgement calls around action rolls and their consequences. It is also where the director records progress in the tracks they will use during play. Taken together, these sections will help you and your fellow players create a story with a consistent tone and themes appropriate to the series you have chosen.

SERIES RULES

Each series has rules specific to that playset. In some cases these will be new rules—for example, *At the Brink of the Abyss* has rules for expanding the protagonists' magical hideout. But just as often, these series rules will modify or even replace core rules from the game. Protagonists in a series using *In a Maze of Dreams* **share an intimate moment** instead of making a connection, and the pilots in *On a Sea of Stars* don't investigate, they **make preparations** for the next attack.

All series-specific rules will be explained on the playset sheets themselves, but you can also find a detailed explanation in the Series Reference section. It also contains some additional details and advice not found on the playsheets themselves.

SERIES REFERENCE

This section contains all the information included in each series playset, along with additional clarification and advice on all of the series-specific material. This includes advice on pacing the series, mission tiers, and how different series rules and tracks interact.

The series playsets are:



At the Brink of the Abyss

Heroic magical girls reclaiming a corrupted world.



Beneath a Rotting Sky

Tragic magical girls doomed to an inevitable fate.



On a Sea of Stars

Mecha pilots struggling against extinction at the hands of the Leviathans.



In a Maze of Dreams

Dream travellers seeking the truth of a magical conspiracy.

AT THE BRINK OF THE ABYSS

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Heroic magical girls reclaiming a corrupted world.

At the Brink of the Abyss is about redemption and heroism. It has an optimistic outlook, in which monsters have hearts—often fragile or broken hearts, in need of healing. The transcendent powers of the protagonists are a pure and truly good thing, and they use that power to change the world for the better. There's still danger and struggle, but ultimately this series aims for an uplifting and optimistic narrative.

WHY PLAY THIS SERIES?

- ◆ You love seeing fantasy elements in a mundane setting, like in classic magical girl stories
- ◆ You want a dramatic story where pure hearts can triumph in the end
- ◆ You want to redeem a broken world, changing it for the better



BUILDING THE SERIES

As a group, select an option for each of these questions and elaborate on them as needed. The answers will help shape both the series and the protagonists' roles within it.

WHAT LIES IN THE ABYSS?

an eternity of pain, an endless hungering, the poisoned heart of a world, a grand cosmic order, a cruel and ancient deity, a twisted reflection of our reality

WHAT IS ITS AGENDA?

to see its emptiness reflected in others, to sterilize and preserve, to rule in glory, to propagate and thrive, to order the universe, to exact retribution

WHO ARE ITS HARBINGERS?

disgraced royalty, interstellar invaders, travellers from a cursed future, a court of petty gods, saints and their attendant priests, the forces of a peerless general

THE MUNDANE WORLD

(choose one or two)

an ancient city, authoritarian government, religious hierarchy, class struggle, a rural community, a futuristic megacity

WHAT IS HELD TO BE SACRED?

(choose one or two)

order, power, tradition, control, edifices, organizations, achievement, privilege

WHAT IS CONSIDERED PROFANE?

(choose one or two)

bodies, love, emotion, gender, nature, community, friendship, tenderness

OUR MAGICAL ORIGIN

Reincarnations of interstellar royalty, a magical world hidden within the mundane, a crossing of timelines, embodiments of the stars, defectors from the adversary, a heroic refutation of the Abyss

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY?

(each protagonist choose one or two)

royal heir, loyal knight, hopeful suitor, secret lover, demanding mentor, forgotten child, lowly servant, enemy turned friend, fledgling mystic

Instruct each protagonist to select a playbook that reflects the roles they have chosen.

WHAT IS OUR SHARED OBLIGATION?

high-school, day job, temple, royal court, summer camp, family expectations

OUR HIDEOUT

an ancient temple, a majestic castle, a star chamber, an overlooked place, a place between worlds

- ◆ How did we find it?
- ◆ What ritual grants us access to it?

TRANSCENDENCE

- ◆ What does it feel like to transcend?
- ◆ What aspect of it is shared by everyone?
- ◆ What is different for each of us?
- ◆ Your transcendence is an expression of your truest self. How?

OUR TRANSGRESSIONS

- ◆ How do we transgress against that which is sacred?
- ◆ How do we represent that which is profane?

ULTIMATE DESTINY

- ◆ What are we striving for?
- ◆ What calamity do we seek to prevent?
- ◆ What great change are we destined to bring?

Choose a name for the series that reflects these answers.

SERIES ABILITIES

During series creation, the protagonists will choose one series ability and one transcendent ability for the group to start with. Additional abilities are chosen whenever the series' xp track is filled.

By starlight: Each protagonist may assign +1 action rating to **forgive**, **empathize**, or **flow**.

This can raise your starting value in an action rating to two, if you already have one dot in that action. Each protagonist may choose a different option for their character, they need not choose the same option as the other players.

Pure hearts: Gain +1d when you roll **moon** or **make a connection**.

Never alone: Protagonists may use **teamwork** regardless of the distance separating them. When you **assist** a teammate from afar, ask that player one question about their character from your **gather info** list.

Power of the moon: The protagonists hold on to hope until the very end, even in the face of utter despair. When rolling for **eclipse**, you may adjust your result by one level.

Adjusting your result level means that if you got a 4/5 result, you could count it as a 1-3, or 6 at your option. You may not have a 6 count as a critical success.

Shrine keepers: The protagonists gain a new downtime activity: **Maintain the sacred shrine**. If one protagonist takes this activity, they all receive the shrine's benefit until the end of the next mission. Choose a shrine power from the following list when this ability is taken.

- ◆ **Fox shrine:** The protagonists can always tell if someone is lying. Ask an extra follow up question whenever you **gather info**. What price does the fox demand?

They always know if people are lying to them, but not why. It also means they can see through lies made in kindness, or to protect others.

- ◆ **Valkyrie shrine:** Once during the next mission, one protagonist may choose to ignore level 4 harm. They die, but return to life moments later. What did death feel like? Whose face did the Valkyrie wear?

There should be a narrative beat between a character dying and whatever they do next. This doesn't let the protagonists plough through obstacles, or become completely unstoppable.

- ◆ **Shrine of eyes:** The protagonists count as being 1 tier higher on the investigation track. How does the shrine reveal secrets to those that maintain it?

A higher investigation tier allows for higher-tier missions, and can also provide bonus dice on mission engagement rolls. It might also be a relevant factor for position or effect in some situations.

Redemption: When determining dice for your engagement roll, if you answer yes to "Is this mission particularly noble or heroic?" all protagonists clear 1 stress. When you rescue an innocent or redeem an enemy, mark series xp.

Hope is strength: Each protagonist marks a transcendent action dot in **forgive**, **empathize**, and **flow**.

Mark this action dot only in the third or fourth position. If this provides your only dot in a given action, it does not count towards your attribute rating for resistance rolls.

Unshakeable: While transcended, each protagonist gets +1d to all resistance rolls.

Tireless: Your first and last action rolls made while transcended count as recovery rolls for you, in addition to their other effects. If you are still transcended at the end of the mission, mark 2 segments on your recovery clock.

The last action is the one which causes you to tick the last segment of your transcendence track.

DIRECTOR'S PRINCIPLES

GIVE MONSTERS HUMAN HEARTS

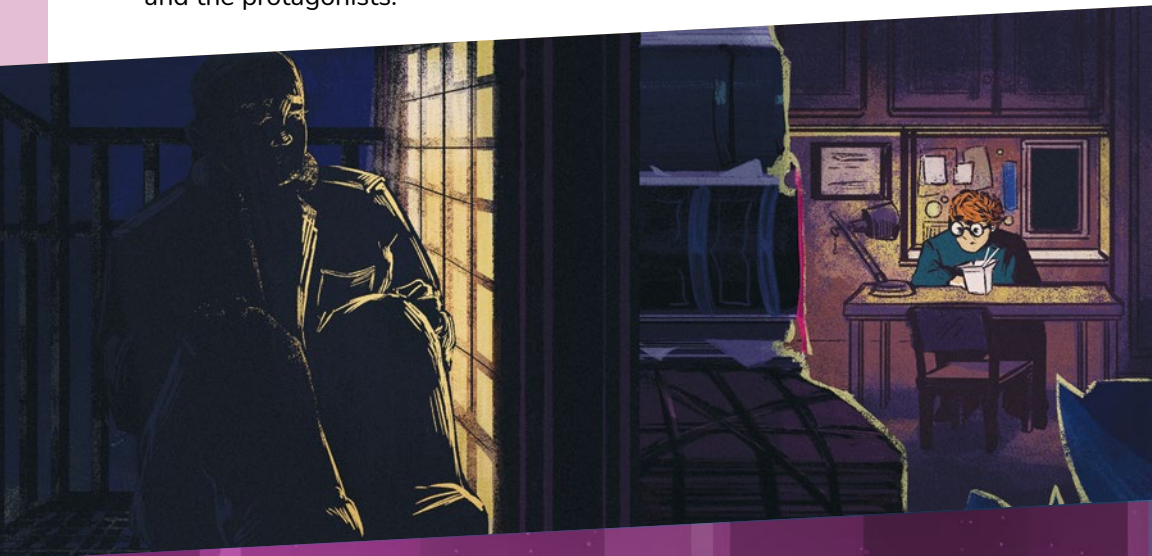
When including monsters in your fiction, they should be driven by emotion that the protagonists can recognize. If they have human hearts, then monsters have hope of being reconciled, redeemed, or perhaps made human once more. Use these monsters to show the nature of the Abyss, and to stand as a warning of the cost of failure for the protagonists.

MAKE ADVERSARIES, NOT VILLAINS

Give adversity human faces, with motives that justify their antagonistic position. Think about what emotions or circumstances drove the antagonists to this action. Look for opportunities to show the protagonists the true nature of their adversaries. Show how, if circumstances were different, the antagonists might have been allies or friends. Use these adversaries to tempt the protagonists with twisted reflections of their own goals.

LET THE MUNDANE WORLD GIVE VOICE TO THE ABYSS

The Abyss is just as much part of the day to day mundane struggles of the protagonists, as it is responsible for the supernatural perils that they contend with. Use mundane supporting characters to embody this. Their actions and words are humble, insidious reflections of the loftier and more obvious magical threat. Magical and mundane troubles are rooted in the same themes, and carry the same gravity for the world and the protagonists.

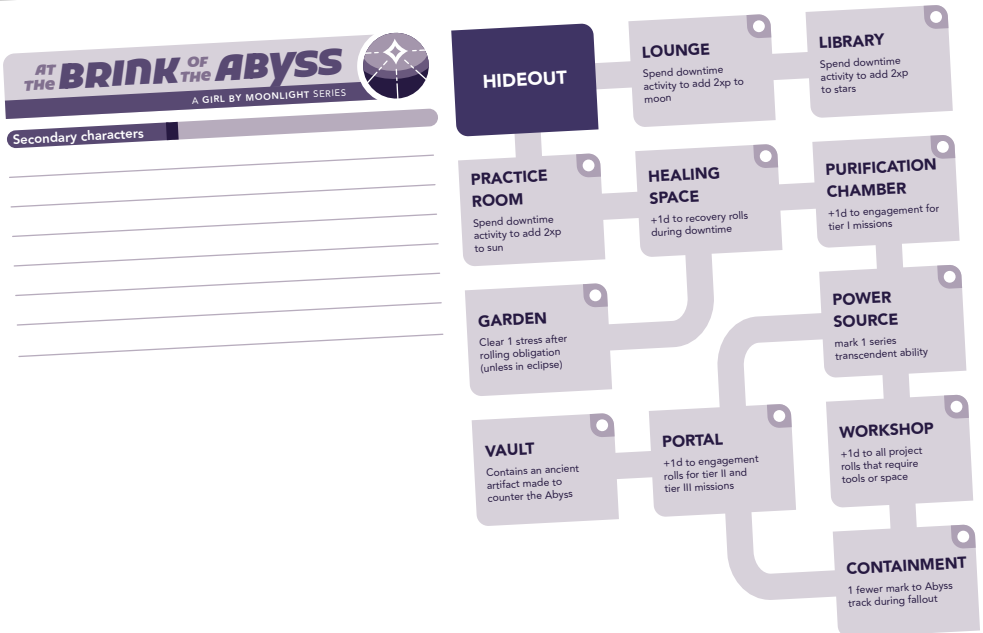


SERIES RULE: THE HIDEOUT

In this series, the protagonists have a hideout. The hideout is a secret place that they alone can access, and which they expand and improve during play. The hideout is divided into different 'rooms' which each provide a unique advantage to the protagonists once that room is unlocked. The hideout is the one place the protagonists can truly call their own. It is connected to the same magical origin as their transcended selves, and should reflect similar themes as those deeper identities.



The protagonists can expand the hideout by completing a long term project, or by reclaiming an object of power. Projects to expand the hideout should be simple at first, maybe as easy as a 4-count clock, but will become more involved as the protagonists reach the deeper rooms. Some rooms might only make sense as outcomes of missions. Unless otherwise noted, hideout expansion must follow the connections on the diagram, beginning from 'Hideout'.



Lounge: Spend downtime activity to add 2xp to moon

How do you pass the time here?

Which is your favourite corner?

Library: Spend downtime activity to add 2xp to stars

What forgotten books do you study here?

By what light do you read them?

Practice room: Spend downtime activity to add 2xp to sun

How does the floor feel beneath your feet?

How do you train here?

Healing space: +1d to recovery rolls during downtime

What presence do you feel here?

What other place does this remind you of?

Garden: clear 1 stress after rolling obligation (unless in eclipse)

How does it feel to tend to the garden?

Do you nurture ancient life, or something new?

Purification chamber: +1d to engagement for tier I missions

What purified remnants do you find when you first open this chamber?

What sort of maintenance does it require?

Power source: mark 1 series transcendent ability

What feeds this power source?

How is its power kept contained?

Workshop: +1d to all project rolls that require tools and/or space

Who built this workshop?

What could they teach you if they were still around?

Containment: 1 less to the Abyss track during fallout

What ancient threat is contained here?

Does anyone deserve such a fate?

Portal: +1d to engagement rolls for tier II and tier III missions

Do you know where all the portals lead?

What realms do the portals pass through?

Vault: Contains an ancient artifact made to counter the Abyss

Who left this artifact here for you to find?

What great change does it promise?

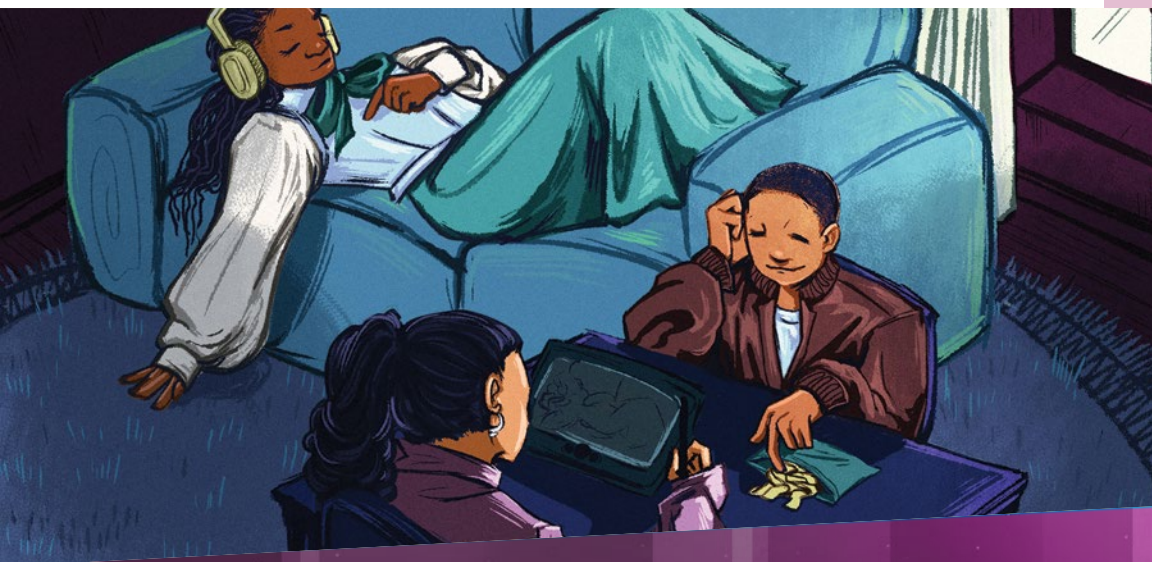
OBLIGATION

In the obligation phase, we see the protagonists struggling with their shared obligation. Whatever the players choose, this obligation dominates their lives, and takes up most of their time, even if we do not see every moment of it in play. The group's answers to 'What is held to be sacred?' and 'What is considered profane?' also inform this phase. People who hold power in the day-to-day lives of the protagonists will try, whether deliberately or thoughtlessly, to enforce these societal norms.

DOWNTIME

Downtime in this series happens after school, on weekends, and late at night when no one else is around. It is an opportunity for the protagonists to relax and connect with one another, outside the bounds of their day-to-day routines and obligations. In moments where the protagonists are alone together, they can find temporary reprieve from the suffocating pressures of the world.

This part of play will present counterpoints to the punishing norms of the mundane world. Consider the group's answers to 'How do we transgress against that which is sacred?' and 'How do we represent that which is profane?' as these questions show us how the protagonists define themselves on their own terms.



MISSIONS

TIER I

Cleansing: Free a special person or place from the grip of the Abyss.

How has the Abyss claimed this person or place?

Face a creature of the Abyss: A deadly creature has emerged to advance the Abyss' agenda. Stop it.

What creature are they facing?

Who or what did it used to be?

What is this creature trying to accomplish?

What drives it to act?

TIER II

Seek answers: Look for clues to the nature of the Abyss, or its intentions, in unexpected places. Investigation does not reduce by half after this mission.

What price will you pay, to find your answers?

How do you stumble onto this unexpected source?

Reclaim an object of power: Retrieve a lost relic that relates to the group's destiny. Unlock a related hideout option for free after successfully completing this mission.

How did you learn of this relic?

Who else seeks it?

What answers might it contain, about your past or future?

TIER III

Brave the Abyss: Face the Abyss where it is strongest, in the hopes of disrupting its plans, and giving it pause. After this mission, the season ends.

Where has the Abyss made its home?

How has this place been transformed?

How will it transform you, if you fail?

POSITION, EFFECT, AND CONSEQUENCES

At the Brink of the Abyss features a light tone, in which the protagonists can overcome danger without necessarily suffering lasting consequences. This tone informs conversations around position and effect, as well as how consequences are resisted.

When the protagonists face supernatural adversaries, leave room for mundane characters to find some way to challenge them. Whether it is by finding clever approaches, or appealing to the hearts of their foes, even non-transcended characters may be able to act with standard effect. When they are transcended and embody their most heroic form, the protagonists can achieve moments of total triumph, redeeming their foes, and making the world meaningfully better. Protagonists will often act with great effect, when the circumstances line up in their favour.

This is most likely to happen when they use teamwork, another key theme of this series. While there is room for dramatic individual actions against their adversaries, the series emphasizes cooperation—protagonists are heroic, but not in the style of lone heroes from other genres. Reserve the brightest triumphs, and most sweeping successes for situations where the protagonists work together.

When assigning consequences, ramp up the severity alongside the story's rising action. Use smaller consequences to threaten the possibility of larger more severe consequences later. Severe consequences should always be telegraphed, allowing protagonists to take risks deliberately, knowing what they are getting themselves into. Not only will this stay true to the spirit of the series, it will create a sense of mounting tension and excitement throughout a confrontation.



FALLOUT

TIER I

- 1-3** an enemy acts against the group
- 4/5** a friend needs urgent help
- 6** omens loom in the mundane world

TIER II

- 1-3** an enemy is embraced by the Abyss
- 4/5** agents of the Abyss stalk a friend
- 6** an obligation causes trouble for the group

TIER III

- 1-3** the Abyss advances its agenda
- 4/5** a friend succumbs to the Abyss
- 6** an important place falls to the Abyss

PACING THE SERIES

The pacing of this series is determined by the interplay of the Abyss and investigation tracks. The protagonists must find a way to brave the Abyss before they are tracked down by its agents. As the Abyss track fills, the protagonists face more severe fallout results, and the looming threat of discovery by their adversaries. Every player should keep an eye on these tracks throughout a season of play, as they represent how successfully the protagonists and their adversaries are pursuing one another.

The director should also consider the balance of the two tracks, incorporating the relative momentum of each side into their descriptions of the world, the pressure of obligations, and the framing of missions. A similar tier mission should feel different at the beginning of the season than it does when the Abyss track is nearly full, and the director can use foreshadowing to build towards the most likely conclusion.



HOW DOES IT END?

If the protagonists are able to steadily fill the investigation track, they develop a feeling of growing momentum towards their ultimate goal. They will have the information they need to locate and confront their adversaries before they enact their sinister agenda. But if their missions go poorly, and the agents of the Abyss track them down before they can complete their investigation, the final confrontation of the season will surely catch our heroes on the back foot, unprepared when the Abyss seeks to eliminate them.

NAMES

Aquila, Libra, Corvus, Topaz, Sapphire, Caspian, Scorpio, Taurus, Crux, Aquarius, Gemini, Virgo, Lyra, Capricorn, Cygnus, Drake, Canis, Hydra, Auriga, Leo, Saggita, Carina, Cetus, Lynx, Wren, Hawk, Osprey, Faun, Spinel, Minnow, Lumina, Diamond, Charybdis, Castor, Talc, Oryxian, Silver, Tourmaline, Raven, Stella

BENEATH A **ROTTING SKY**

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES

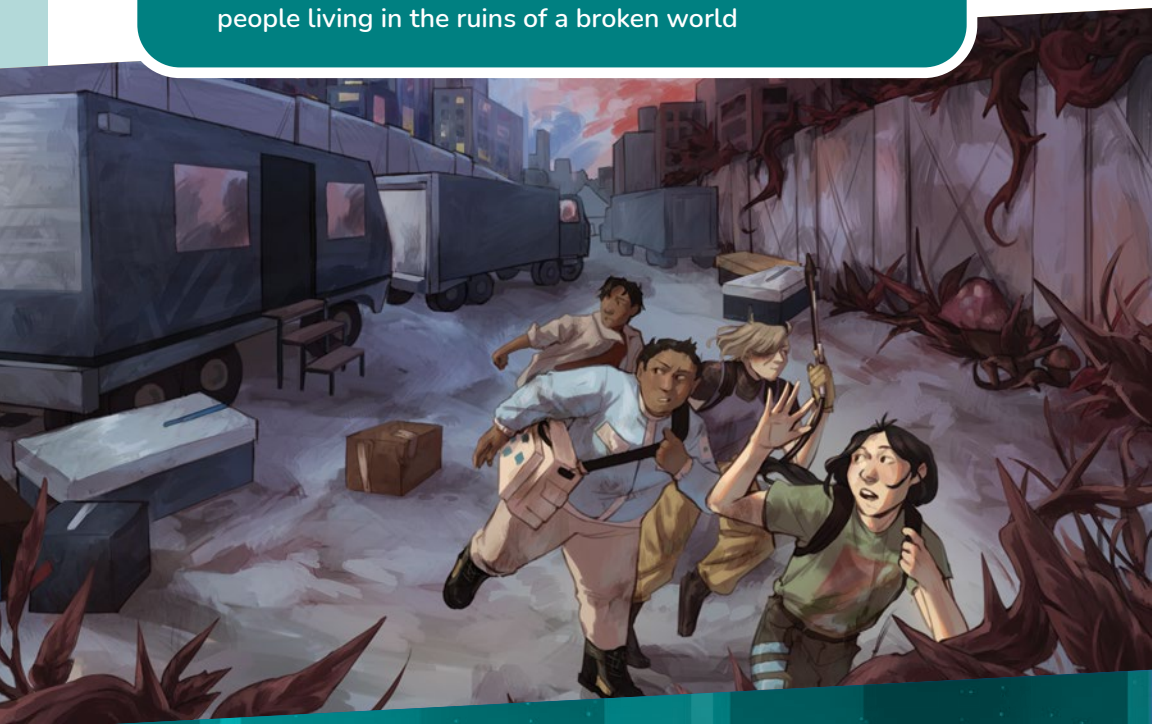


Tragic magical girls doomed to an inevitable fate.

Beneath a Rotting Sky is about tragedy and betrayal. Most, if not all, of the characters will be complicit in the world's oppression, with little hope of redemption. The protagonists' own power plays a role in their undoing, and their story ends with an almost inevitable tragic fate. Though this series is bleak, there is still struggle and triumph—and moments of brightness made all the more luminous against the backdrop of a crumbling world.

WHY PLAY THIS SERIES?

- ◆ You want to explore intense or challenging emotions, or question the optimistic assumptions of magical girl stories
- ◆ You want a tragic story about betrayal, hardship, and the struggle for self-definition
- ◆ You want to see visceral descriptions of strange and violent creatures, unnatural wildness infiltrating urban spaces, and people living in the ruins of a broken world



BUILDING THE SERIES

As a group, select an option for each of these questions and elaborate on them as needed. The answers will help shape both the series and the protagonists' roles within it.

THIS DYING WORLD

WHAT BLIGHT IS UPON THE WORLD?

an alien infestation, the rotting body of some dead god, a haze of otherworldly spores, a mutagenic plague, an ancient curse

WHAT IS ITS AGENDA?

to harvest human emotions, to pervert our bodies, to secretly replace us, to consume the world, to poison our hearts, to drive us all to despair

WHO ARE ITS PERPETRATORS?

an unknowable and ancient people, technicians and scientists, heroes fallen to the blight, cultists and prophets, heartless outsiders

THE MUNDANE WORLD

(choose one or two)

a tangled metropolis, poverty and hardship, wealth and affluence, a society in ruins, a pristine and sterile world, a city cut off from the world

WHAT DO ITS PEOPLE HOLD SACRED?

(choose one or two)

material things, hierarchies, control, hatred, ambition, reason, suffering, conflict

WHAT DO THEY CONSIDER PROFANE?

(choose one or two)

bodies, love, emotion, difference, nature, sincerity, the past, generosity

WHO ARE WE THAT HUNT BY NIGHT?

WHAT PRICE DID WE PAY FOR THIS POWER?

duped into carrying the blight, poison seeds blooming in our hearts, test subjects in foul experiments, our own bodies made alien, banished from the mundane world

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY?

(each protagonist choose one or two)

innocent hero, best friend, naive protector, embittered fighter, hapless dupe, weary veteran, hopeless victim, an agent of dystopia, an unwitting traitor

Instruct each protagonist to select a playbook that reflects the roles they have chosen.

WHAT IS OUR SHARED OBLIGATION?

boarding school, internment camp, isolation ward, government lab, supporting dependants, maintaining appearances

- ◆ What traps us in this life?

TRANSCENDENCE

- ◆ What does it feel like to transcend?
- ◆ What aspect of it is shared by everyone?
- ◆ What is different for each of us?
- ◆ Your transcendence is an expression of your truest self. How?
- ◆ It offers hope of escape from our mundane lives. Why?

OUR TRANSGRESSIONS

- ◆ How do we transgress against that which is sacred?
- ◆ How do we represent that which is profane?

WHAT IS OUR PREY?

(choose one or two)

grotesque wildlife, former humans, deadly spirits, living death, mouths and claws, venom and spines, technology and flesh, feathers and eyes, spores and haze

WHERE DO WE HUNT?

a derelict district, a beautiful place, an underground network, a surreal place, a dead place

WHO ELSE IS HUNTING?*(choose one or two)*

a rival crew of magical girls, blighted predators feeding on their own kind, agents of the mundane world, noble heroes, desperate survivors, naive victims

OUR TRAGIC FATE

- ◆ How does it end? Why can we never win?
- ◆ What will ultimately be our undoing?
- ◆ Who will betray us, knowingly or otherwise?

Choose a name for the series that reflects these answers.

SERIES RULE: TRAITORS!

Each protagonist creates one secondary character as normal, but the other character must be a member of the dystopian authorities, a rival hunter, or a former magical girl fallen to the Blight. These traitors were once trusted friends or allies, but betrayed you to forward their own interests.

**SERIES RULE: HUNTERS IN THE NIGHT**

The protagonists are not the only ones hunting, there is a rival pack of hunters that is established during series creation. These hunters are another threat to be reckoned with, and include former friends or allies of the protagonists. It is not simply competition—it is a personal and spiteful rivalry, a hard fought contest for meager resources.



The protagonists will need to fend off these other hunters in order to secure their hunting grounds. If left unchecked, these rival hunters will cause trouble for the protagonists by interfering with their other missions, and stealing their prey.

SERIES ABILITIES

During series creation, the protagonists will choose one series ability and one transcendent ability for the group to start with. Additional abilities are chosen whenever the series' xp track is filled.

Troubled hearts: Each protagonist may add +1 action rating to confess, defy, or conceal.

This can raise your starting value in an action rating to two, if you already have one dot in that action. Each protagonist may choose a different option for their character, they need not choose the same option as the other players.

Tormented heroes: You gain +1d when rolling stars. When you take harm, recover stress equal to the level of the harm.

Bitter Embrace: When you accept a poisoned promise, gain +2d instead of +1d. Gain +1d to all action rolls made while in eclipse. When rolling eclipse, take -1d.

Elusive: Gain +1d to all rolls made during fallout. When you advance the Blight track at the end of a mission, mark 1 less.

Gazing into the abyss: Permanently fill the first 3 spaces of the Blight track. Gain +1d when you investigate, and mark xp.

This means that the Blight track will never be lower than 3 for the remainder of the series. Taking this ability does not advance the Blight track if it is already past 3.

Vengeful drive: Gain +1d when you help a friend recover from physical harm. The protagonists have a magical awareness of the location of foes who have harmed them.

Harming any individual protagonist makes the whole group aware of the foe. Depending on the circumstances the location might be general, like 'they're in the paper district of the city', or specific, like 'they're around the corner, waiting to ambush you as you approach'.

This can be a factor for position or effect in some situations.

Night hunters: When you set out on the hunt, take +1d to your engagement roll. When your mission involves staging an ambush, mark series xp.

Fighting in shadow: Each protagonist marks a transcendent action dot in **confess**, **defy**, and **conceal**.

Mark this action dot only in the third or fourth position. If this provides your only dot in a given action, it does not count towards your attribute rating for resistance rolls.

I won't allow it! If you take fatal harm while transcended, you do not die. When your transcendence ends, roll eclipse. If the roll succeeds you are out of action for the remainder of the mission, but still alive. If the roll fails, whatever power held death at bay fades, and you die.

Who catches you when you fall?

This prevents protagonists from dying, but does not make them unstoppable. They can still be pinned, trapped, or heartbroken, and therefore unable to act freely. If the lethal harm is somehow removed before transcendence ends, the protagonist must still roll eclipse, and can still die.

For the thrill: Desperate rolls made while transcended also count as recovery rolls. While transcended, count all controlled rolls as risky.

This means the protagonists can no longer make controlled rolls while transcended, for any reason. The director always starts their evaluation at either desperate or risky when considering factors that modify position while a protagonist is transcended. For example, a protagonist is using flow to climb down a cliff to reach their allies, they're away from any other dangers, and normally the roll would be controlled. For the thrill makes that roll risky. Maybe they slide down the cliff face, or vault over the edge, instead of climbing down sensibly.

DIRECTOR'S PRINCIPLES

DRIVE THE VIRTUOUS TO RUIN

Whether it is the protagonists, or supporting characters, aim to put them in difficult positions that call their principles into question. Give them dilemmas in which all solutions compromise them in some way. In the case of supporting characters, have them let the protagonists down, betray their confidence, or prove unable to uphold their words with action. Exact a painful price for their virtue, and push them to betray their principles.

SHOW THEM PIECES OF THEMSELVES IN THEIR ADVERSARIES

Adversity in this series should act as an ominous example of a twisted fate that the protagonists might suffer. Former friends who betrayed them, blighted heroes who ultimately fell short of their potential, and hopeful souls betrayed by their own naivety. These figures should be relatable, tragic, and every bit a match for the protagonists. When facing defeat, these adversaries refuse redemption and opt for grim, fatalistic choices.

ENTRAP THEM IN DYSTOPIA

The mundane world is profoundly broken and dysfunctional. It is almost openly complicit in the Blight's agenda. Its efforts to save itself all serve only to hasten its unravelling. Society's institutions actively victimize people, communities close ranks and reject outsiders, and paranoia and scarcity leave people bereft of their basic needs.

EMBRACE DRAMATIC IRONY, BETRAYAL, AND TRAGEDY

This series thrives on these challenging elements, and everyone is at the table to revel in them. Lean heavily into the answers given in the series setup regarding the protagonists' tragic fate. Give them opportunities to play into that fate, and trust the protagonists to be excited about it.

OBLIGATION

Beneath a Rotting Sky presents the players with particularly harrowing obligations. The protagonists are directly, actively being victimized by the society they live in. They are trapped in this life at the margins because they are seen to be inherently unworthy—their very identity is a transgression against the social order, and this has made them expendable, or subject to punishment. Yet also, in a world resigned to its own downfall, the protagonists are the only people who somehow find hope, or at least seek change.

Given this context, it may make sense for the director to let the protagonists take the lead on describing what their obligation phases look like, building on what the other players provide while staying within the boundaries they've set. The series starts from a very heavy place, so there is rarely a need to push it further; even seemingly mundane provocations will have the weight of the larger story behind them.





SERIES RULE: CURSED FATES

This series includes **cursed fates**—dramatic and costly effects that the protagonists can use to endure the hardships of their struggle, that also advance the world towards ruin. Each fate is a deadly bargain, power or safety can be had, but there is always a terrible price to be paid for it. These fates culminate in the possibility of defying the world's undoing, though it is a slim chance, that comes at great cost.

Once per episode, during obligation or downtime, the protagonists may choose to use one available fate. Start from the top and choose only fates connected to 'the beginning', or fates that have already been used. Each fate has a benefit and a complication, both of which occur when that fate is chosen. When deciding to use a fate, take some time to discuss the possible consequences of its cost. Once the protagonists commit to a fate, the director will describe how the cost manifests. Some costs will occur immediately, while others will be foreshadowed in the moment, their full effects waiting to be revealed later in the story.

The protagonists choose whether or not to use a fate in a given episode of play. They might decide that none are needed, and save them for later use. Sometimes the protagonists might use a fate to no benefit, so that they can get access to fates further down the chain in later episodes. In such cases, the complication still occurs and the fate is marked as used.

BENEATH A ROTTING SKY

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES



Secondary characters

Secondary Characters

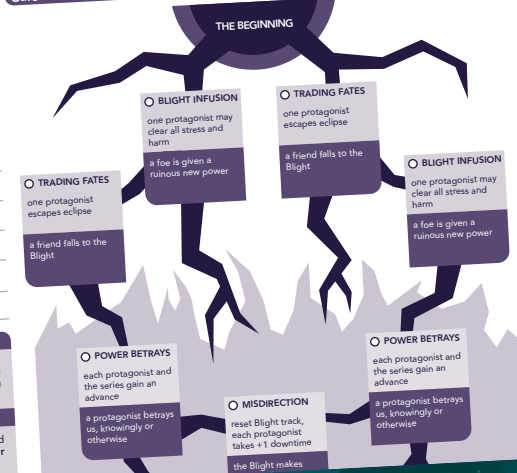
Each protagonist creates one secondary character as normal, but the other character must be a member of the dystopian authorities, a rival hunter, or a former magical girl fallen to the Blight. These traitors were once trusted friends or allies, but betrayed you to forward their own interests.

Series Rules

Devour Blighted Hearts: When you complete a mission, do not clear stress and transcendence as normal. To recover stress and transcendence the group must devour blighted hearts. During fallout, roll the mission's tier and consult the following chart:

6: clear all stress and transcendence

Cursed Fates



Blight infusion: one protagonist may clear all stress and harm

a foe is given ruinous new power

How does this infusion feel?

What does it change in the character that receives it?

How is this foe's new power connected to the protagonists, and their choices?

Trading fates: one protagonist escapes eclipse

a friend falls to the Blight

Why does their friend succumb?

Who do they blame for their fall?

Do the protagonists feel any guilt or remorse?

Power betrays: each protagonist marks an advance, and the series marks one advance

a protagonist betrays us, knowingly or otherwise

What grants this new power?

Do the others recognize the betrayal for what it is?

Why does the group tolerate the continued presence of a traitor?

Misdirection: reset the Blight track to zero, each protagonist takes an additional downtime during the current downtime phase

the Blight makes meaningful advances in its agenda

How does the group escape notice?

Who does the Blight pursue instead?

How does the group react to this period of relative calm and safety?

Defy fate: the director offers the protagonists a sliver of hope

the next mission must be to face our tragic fate

What hope are they granted?

What forces the final confrontation?

What gives them the will to defy fate itself?



DOWNTIME

In this series, downtime is fraught and tense. The mundane world is crumbling, and offers little respite for anyone, let alone those at the margins—like our protagonists. In the few moments the protagonists have between their obligations and their regular hunts, they eke out a few meager moments in which to recover. They lick their wounds, and exchange bitter words about what to do next, or how to best survive another night.

The group's choice of details for the mundane world, and what society values and rejects are important background for these brief moments of respite. The grim backdrop of the setting makes even the smallest moments of beauty or tenderness stand out all the more, and players should look for opportunities to reveal the objects, or actions, or feelings that still have real value to their characters. Reeling from the demands of their obligations, the protagonists must somehow scrape together the means to face another hunt, to challenge the rot at the very heart of their world.

SERIES RULE: HAVE A DISAGREEMENT

Make a connection is replaced with **have a disagreement**. All abilities relating to make a connection apply to have a disagreement instead.



When you have a disagreement, pick another protagonist and describe what sets off your conflict. Ask the other player “Is your heart in this fight?” then take a moment to play out the disagreement.

Each player marks 1 stress on their sheet, the player initiating the argument rolls an appropriate action, the other player rolls an attribute, as though they were resisting.

- ◆ The character with the higher result gains 3 links.
- ◆ The character with the lower result gains 1 link.
- ◆ If the results are tied, both players mark 1 additional stress and each gain 2 links.

On a critical success, that player marks 1 additional link, and the other player marks 1 additional stress.

Violet is still fuming from Amaranth’s betrayal, she thinks it was all Carmine’s fault. She corners Carmine before lights-out, spoiling for a fight. She shouts at him, and shoves him around, letting all her anger boil over, but Carmine just shuts down. Her words only confirm what he already feels is true. As she turns and leaves, Carmine collapses into his bunk and sobs.

Violet rolls express, and gets a 6. Carmine rolls stars in response, and gets a 3. Violet marks 3 links with Carmine on her sheet, while Carmine marks 1 with Violet. They each mark 1 stress.

MISSIONS

TIER I

The Hunt: Locate your prey, best it, and claim its heart. Roll +1d when you devour blighted hearts after this mission.

What prey are they hunting?

What is their prey doing, and why?

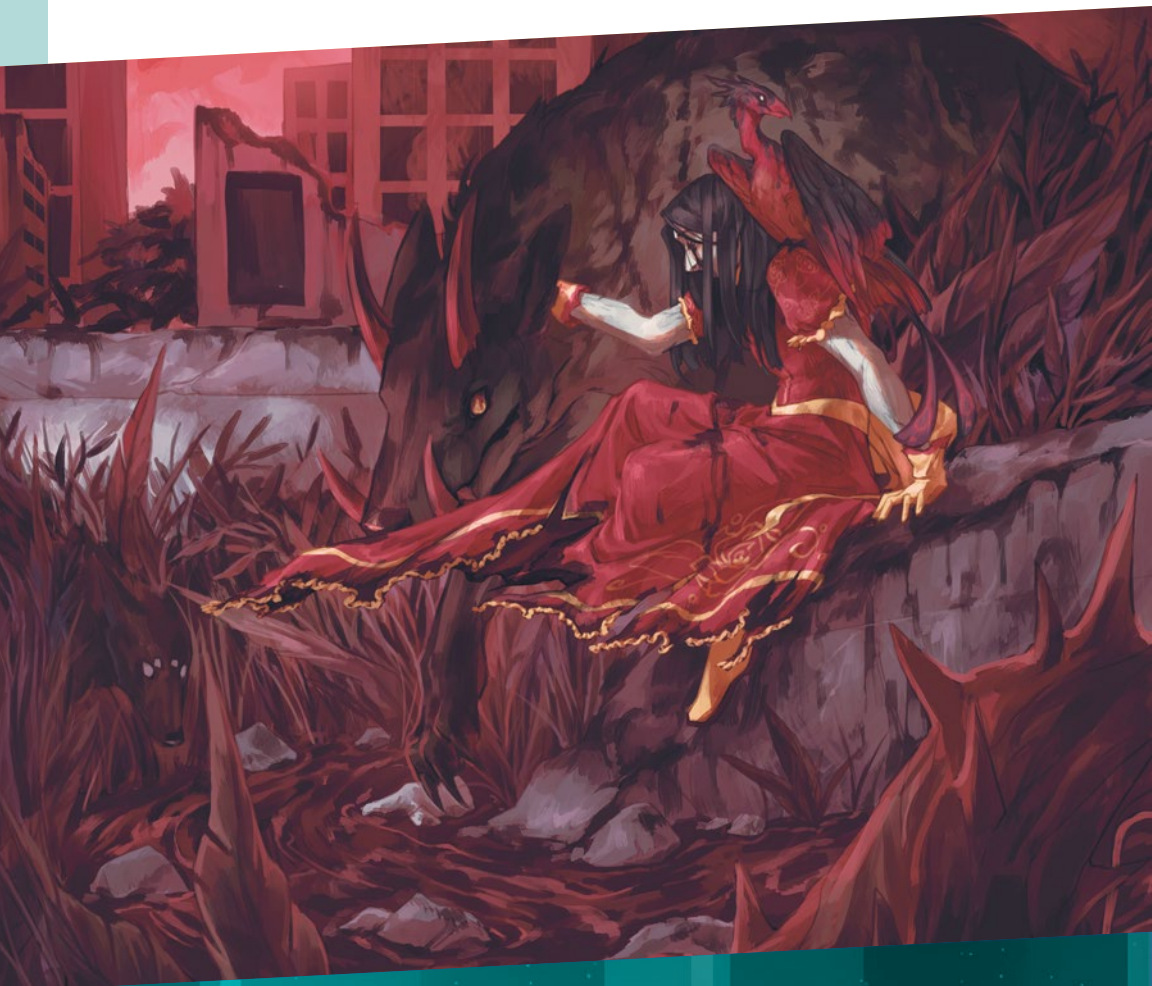
Are their hunting grounds secure, or contested?

Secure your hunting grounds: Patrol your territory and fend off other hunters that would take it from you.

Who threatens their territory this time?

Where does the confrontation take place?

Why do their rivals risk hunting here?



TIER II

Seek answers: Look for clues to the nature of the Blight, or its intentions, in unexpected places. The investigation track does not reduce after this mission.

What unexpected place has the Blight infiltrated?

Who knows more about the Blight than you previously suspected?

What signs does the Blight leave behind, and how can you read them?

Steal power: Use force or deception to claim an object of power. Roll +1d when you devour blighted hearts after this mission, and -1d when you roll fallout.

What prize do they seek to claim?

Who are they taking it from?

Why should it be destroyed, rather than claimed?

TIER III

Drive back the Blight: Face the Blight where it is strongest, in the hopes of disrupting its progress, and delaying the world's undoing. After this mission, the season ends.

What is protecting this place of strength?

Who nurtures the Blight there?

What does the Blight provide, that sustains them?

What must be lost, if the mission is to succeed?

TIER IV

Face our tragic fate: Fight a hopeless battle against impossible odds. After this mission the series ends.

What is the Blight that will unmake the world?

Do they have any hope of stopping this?

Where do they make their final stand?

POSITION, EFFECT, AND CONSEQUENCES

In this series, the actions the protagonists take are dangerous and volatile. Consequences sometimes come abruptly, viscerally changing the course of the story. The evaluation of position and effect is a key way to deliver on the series' promises of tragedy and hardship.

The protagonists face substantial opposition from many sides, even from within the group. They will often find themselves outnumbered or outmatched, and be forced to take greater risks to overcome their foes. This dynamic will shift the director's evaluation of position towards more desperate actions. While these actions may also lead to greater effect, characters will often have less control over exactly how that effect manifests. Poisoned promises are another key tool to emphasize the volatility of their power, and its often unexpected consequences.

Consequences in this series will bias towards lethal threats, and crushing emotional burdens. Resisting these consequences should rarely if ever avoid them completely—wounds will leave scars, both physical and emotional. This leads to a story with more continuity between episodes and missions—harm and consequences accumulate, and even clearing their stress track requires a special action.

FALLOUT

TIER I

- 1-3** a dread power makes itself known
- 4/5** an obligation becomes grotesque
- 6** a friend asks a favour

TIER II

- 1-3** an enemy is empowered by the Blight
- 4/5** agents of dystopia accost a protagonist
- 6** a friend is taken by rival hunters

TIER III

- 1-3** the Blight advances its agenda
- 4/5** hunters stage an ambush
- 6** a friend is lost to the Blight

SERIES RULE: DEVOUR BLIGHTED HEARTS

When you complete a mission, do not clear stress and transcendence as normal. To recover stress and transcendence, the group must **devour blighted hearts**. During fallout, roll the mission's tier and consult the following chart:



1-3 clear 3 stress and 1 transcendence

4/5 clear 6 stress and 2 transcendence

6 clear all stress and transcendence

On a **critical success**, also mark 4 ticks in recovery

Discuss what this looks like as a group, either while setting up the series, or after each relevant mission. According to your tastes, it might be a visceral and gory affair, or maybe a formal magic ritual, perhaps something else entirely. Whatever the case, each protagonist must participate if they want to get the benefits. No shying away.



PACING THE SERIES

As with other series, *Beneath a Rotting Sky* uses the tension between the investigation and Blight tracks to set the pace of each season of play. In addition to this core pacing tool, there are also the **cursed fates**, which provide a similar tension but for the entire series. Both the cursed fates and the Blight track contain the looming possibility of triggering the series' Tier IV mission 'Face our tragic fate', which ends the series. While in other playsets the tension is about how each season will end, *Beneath a Rotting Sky* always contains the threat of a catastrophic end to the entire series when things go wrong.

In this series, it is especially important to foreshadow the possible doom that failure will bring. This higher stakes playstyle makes for more intense conflicts, and forces the protagonists to make more desperate and dangerous actions, since the cost of failure can be absolute.

HOW DOES IT END?

Reaching the end of the Blight track triggers a calamitous final mission, in which the protagonists face impossible odds. If they have not managed to defy fate (the final cursed fate in the chain) then triumph is not an option, and instead we play to see how they face their final moments. This outcome delivers on the fatalistic and cynical aspects of the series, in some ways the expected outcome.

On the other hand, if the protagonists manage to defy fate, and reveal a sliver of hope for the world, the stakes change. There is the possibility of transformation, or redemption, though it must still be earned through struggle and sacrifice. In either case, the final mission should be a harrowing and punishing affair, in which the story's heroes are pushed beyond the limits of their endurance, and must make difficult choices about what will survive.

NAMES

Violet, Amber, Acajou, Alabaster, Amaranth, Sienna, Umber, Carmine, Lavender, Eton, Fallow, Flax, Icterine, Isobel, Jet, Midnight, Dawn, Dusk, Twilight, Sunrise, Orchid, Scarlet, Thistle, Verse, Puce, Cerulean, Steel, Ochre, Jonquil, Aurora, Gloam, Maize

ON A SEA OF STARS

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES

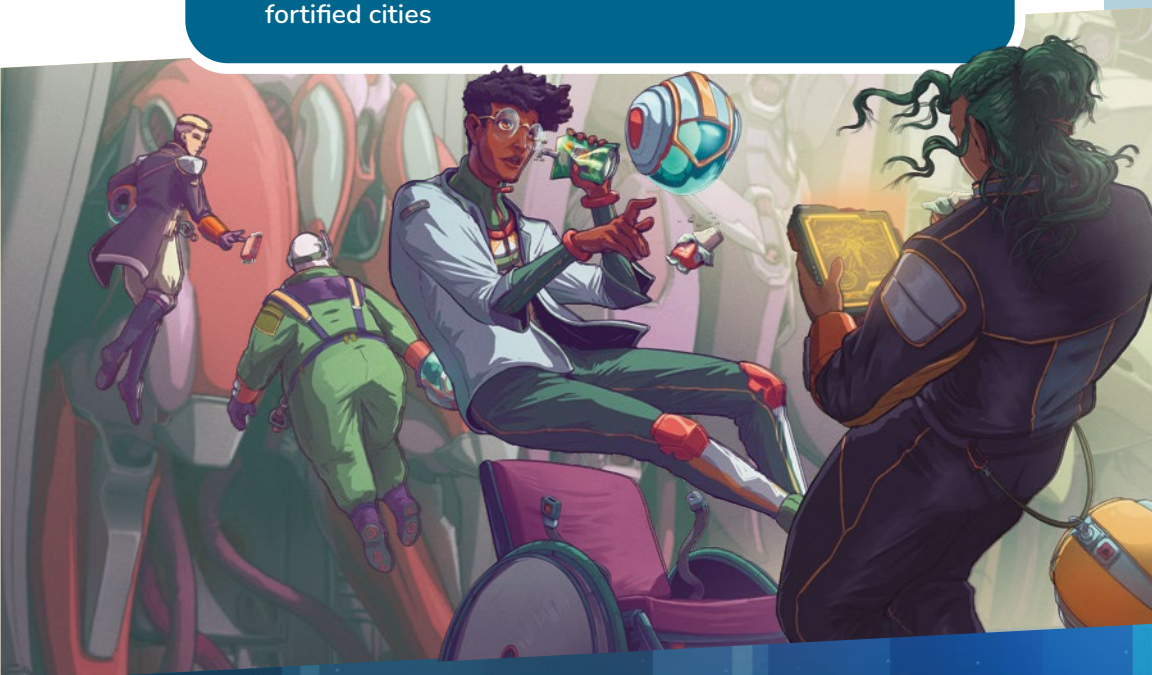


*Mecha pilots struggling against extinction
at the hands of the Leviathans.*

On a Sea of Stars is about institutions, and hope in the face of extinction. The protagonists are captive heroes, forced to fight a slowly losing war against an overwhelming enemy, all while being alienated from the people they protect. They rely on the Engines to stand a chance against the Leviathans, and the Engines, in turn, are fueled by their pilots' emotions and transcendent powers. The series does not point towards any particular outcome for humanity—instead, it highlights the price that must be paid for its continued survival, and asks the players to collectively decide whether this remnant of humanity is worth saving.

WHY PLAY THIS SERIES?

- ◆ You love giant robots, or space operas
- ◆ You want a high stakes drama about humanity facing extinction
- ◆ You want to see strange landscapes, massive aliens, and fortified cities



BUILDING THE SERIES

As a group, select an option for each of these questions and elaborate on them as needed. The answers will help shape both the series and the protagonists' roles within it.

THE VOID:

WHAT LURKS IN THE VOID?

a world of ghosts and demons, a storm of psychic energy, ancient gods re-awoken, guardians of the natural order, a vast all consuming organism, our basest fears made manifest

WHAT ACT OF HUBRIS BROUGHT DOOM UPON US?

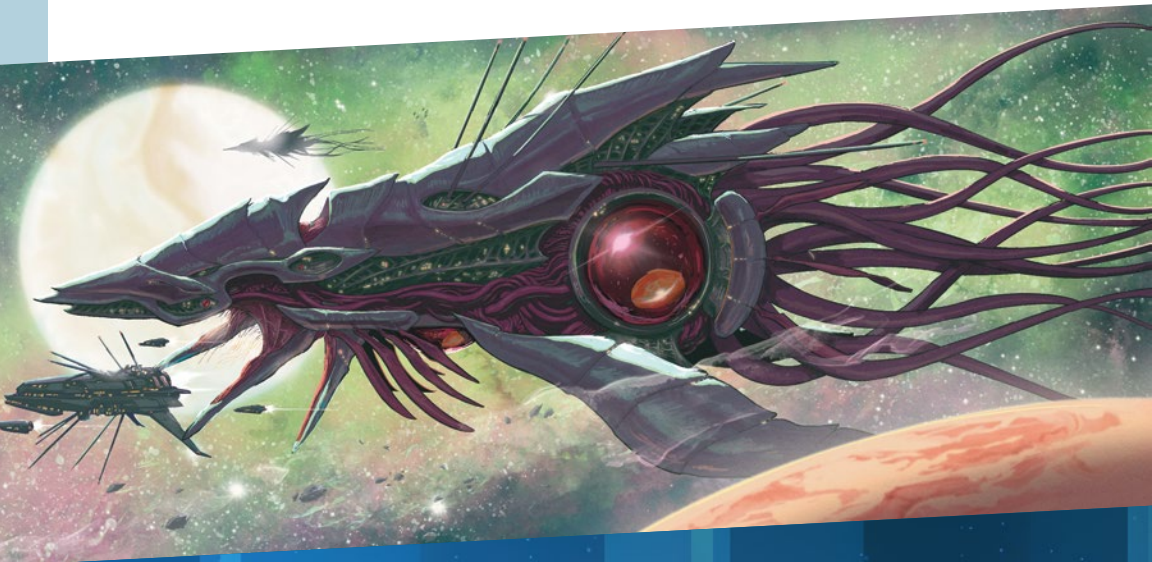
an ancient king shattered the gates of death, our first attempt at interstellar travel, casting signals across all realities, meddling with the flow of time, harnessing a forbidden source of power, trespassing in their domain

WHY DO THE LEVIATHANS COME?

to reclaim something we stole, to consume minds and bodies, to silence our civilization, to entrap and contain us, to tear down our great works, because we are in their path

WHAT FORM DO THE LEVIATHANS TAKE?

massive demonic sea monsters, space faring cephalopods, cyclopean mechanical horrors, a hive of colossal insectoid mutants, mountainous perversions of nature, blind-eyed subterranean abominations



THE LAST BASTION OF HUMANITY:**WHERE DO WE TAKE SHELTER?***(choose one or two)*

an isolated city-state, an ancient fortress, quarantined and sealed, rebellion and strife, law and order, a mobile bunker

WHAT IS HELD TO BE SACRED?*(choose one or two)*

order, strength, hierarchy, obedience, edifices, organizations, hatred, sacrifice

WHAT WAS HUMANITY FORCED TO GIVE UP?*(choose one or two)*

community, bodies, intimacy, emotion, gender, growth, comfort, hope

WE PILOT ENGINES AGAINST THE LEVIATHANS.**WHAT SEPARATES US FROM THE MASSES?**

doomed volunteers, elevated by the authorities, vat-grown, chosen by the Engines, changed by the Leviathans, our drive and ambition

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY?*(each protagonist choose one or two)*

ace pilot, insubordinate rebel, weary mechanic, civilian, troubled captain, rejected candidate, press-ganged convict, forbidden lover, naive idealist

Instruct each protagonist to select a playbook that reflects the roles they have chosen

HOW DO THEY KEEP US IN LINE?

impossible quotas, spies and informants, propaganda and lies, drugs and addictions, gilded cages, threats and fear

◆ Why can't we just leave?

WHAT IS OUR REPUTATION?

celebrated heroes, figureheads for the authority, cursed warriors, cultural icons, hopeless leviathan fodder, monsters in our own right

- ◆ What part of our reputation is deserved? What isn't?

THE FLAGSHIP

the last leviathan hunter, a floating fortress, a top of the line ship, a former civilian vessel, a swarm of smaller ships, a sleek corvette

- ◆ What is its name?
- ◆ What is its history?

THE ENGINES

Engines are semi-sentient combat mechs, each unique from the others. They have identities, memories, and emotions of their own.

- ◆ Why can't we build more?
- ◆ What do they yearn for?
- ◆ What names are they given?
- ◆ How does our transcendence affect them?

Each player adds 1 Engine to the hangar, doing the following:

- ◆ Describe it, name it, and assign it 1 virtue and 1 impulse.
- ◆ Answer the following prompt: Your character is incompatible with the Engine you created, and cannot pilot it. Why?

OUR TRANSGRESSIONS

- ◆ How do we transgress against that which is sacred?
- ◆ Humanity gave it up, so why is it alive in us?

WHAT HOPE DO WE HAVE?

- ◆ What hope do we have against the leviathans?
- ◆ Who believes we have a chance? Who doesn't?

Choose a name for the series that reflects these answers.



SERIES RULE: THE LAST BASTION OF HUMANITY



Whatever remains of humanity in this series takes shelter in the Last Bastion. The Bastion is fortified, and tightly controlled by military authority, at least at first. Its fortifications are battered by the continual assaults of the leviathans, and unrest threatens to tear it apart from within. Should the Bastion fall, humanity will surely fall with it.

The protagonists fight to protect the Bastion, but they will also get opportunities to visit it. This could be during downtime, as a rare bit of shore leave, or during a mission to explore the ruined world. The Bastion is also where consequences of the protagonists' missions might manifest, perhaps as a district damaged during the recent leviathan assaults, or crowds clashing with authorities enforcing new rationing restrictions.

The Last Bastion has a track which represents the state of the Bastion and its population. It starts play completely filled, and will reduce as a consequence of the protagonists' actions during missions, or when the Bastion is left unprotected. The state of the Bastion track is reflected in the narrative; as the track is reduced, the Bastion is damaged, and its population becomes increasingly frightened and desperate.



SERIES RULE: THE ENGINES

The Engines, and their pilots, represent the last hope for humanity's survival. Engines are semi-sentient combat mechs, each unique from the others. Precious few remain, and no more can be built.

Engines are alive, and have identities, memories, and emotions of their own. They are not simply machines that respond to the pilots inputs, they are living beings. The pilots must build relationships with the Engines, and earn their trust.

Engine pilots are exceptional people, singled out for their ability to connect with these strange machines. The Engines draw on their pilot's transcendent powers, allowing them to vastly exceed their normal capabilities. With the wrong pilot, they are temperamental, unwieldy, vulnerable, or worse—driven by their impulses, running amok. When a pilot and their Engine are truly attuned—in their hearts, their minds, and their hopes—they both unlock their full potential. They stand a chance of stopping the Leviathans, and saving humanity.

ON A SEA OF STARS
A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES

The Hangar

	NAME	STRENGTH	RECOVERY
1	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY
2	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY
3	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY
4	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY
5	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY
6	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY
7	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY
8	VIRTUE & IMPULSES	● ○ ○ ○	RECOVERY

Engine Rules

Each Engine has a hidden second impulse, sealed by a poisoned promise. During play, if a situation seems compelling, offer a poisoned promise that adds an impulse for an engine someone is piloting. The Engine permanently acquires that impulse.

Each Engine begins play with 3 strength. Engine strength is reduced when:

- A character's last transcendent action is used while piloting it
- When a consequence affecting the engine goes unresisted
- When its pilot falls into eclipse
- As the cost from a poisoned promise
- When a pilot suffers level 4 harm in it
- When it is abandoned in the field

When an Engine's strength is completely depleted, it is non-functional and cannot be piloted. It can be retrieved and repaired, but its prospective pilot must bond with the Engine in downtime before it can return to action.

Engines have recovery clocks of their own, which advance when protagonists help them recover in downtime. When an Engine's recovery track fills, it recovers 1 strength.

ENGINE VIRTUES

elegant, fierce, clever, powerful, bright, wise, brave, serene

When a pilot's actions align with their engine's virtue, the engine provides a bonus die.

ENGINE IMPULSES

cursed, imperious, sentimental, lost, tormented, weary, lonely, ancient, principled, haunted, wounded, unfinished, morbid, calculating, feral, hungry

When a pilot's actions align with their engine's impulse, or they accept a poisoned promise based on its impulse, they mark xp and that action does not deplete their transcendence track.

The Last Bastion

TIER I ☐ TIER II ☐ TIER III ☐

The Last Bastion track represents the state of the population of the Bastion. It starts play completely filled. At the beginning of downtime, the Bastion performs a number of downtime actions equal to the current Leviathan track tier (always at least 1), and rolls a number of dice equal to the current Bastion tier. It prioritizes actions as follows:

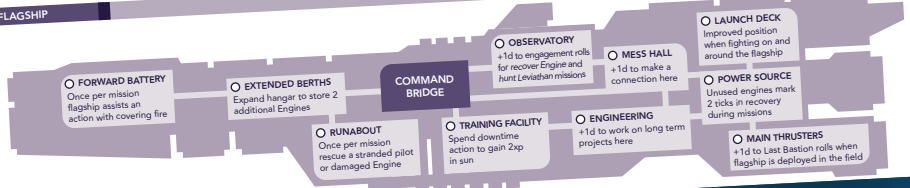
1 Pride: Work on a long term project for the flagship upgrade, if one is already under way.

2 State of emergency: Make preparations if Leviathan track exceeds Readiness.

3 Patchwork: If Bastion track is depleted, repair Bastion track. Roll as make preparations, but apply result to Bastion track.

4 Complacency: Increase the adversary track. Roll as make preparations, but apply result to adversary track.

THE FLAGSHIP



Each Engine is given 1 virtue when it is created. When a pilot's actions align with their Engine's virtue, the Engine provides a bonus die.

elegant, fierce, clever, powerful, bright, wise, brave, serene

Each Engine is given 1 impulse when it is created. When a pilot's actions align with their Engine's impulse, or they accept a poisoned promise based on its impulse, they mark xp and that action does not deplete their transcendence track.

*cursed, imperious, sentimental, lost, tormented,
weary, lonely, ancient, principled, haunted, wounded,
unfinished, morbid, calculating, feral, hungry*

Each Engine has a hidden, second impulse, sealed by a poisoned promise. During play, if a situation seems compelling, offer a poisoned promise that adds an impulse for an Engine someone is piloting. The Engine permanently acquires that impulse.

Each Engine begins play with 3 strength.

An Engine's strength is reduced when:

- ◆ A character's last transcendent action is used while piloting it
- ◆ When a relevant consequence affects the Engine and goes unresisted
- ◆ When its pilot falls into eclipse
- ◆ As the cost from a engine
- ◆ When a pilot suffers level 4 harm in it
- ◆ When it is abandoned in the field

When an Engine's strength is completely depleted, it is non-functional and cannot be piloted. It can be retrieved and repaired, but its prospective pilot must **bond with the Engine** (page 193) in downtime before it can return to action.

Engines have recovery clocks of their own, which advance when protagonists help them recover in downtime. When an Engine's recovery track fills, it recovers 1 strength.



SERIES RULE: THE FLAGSHIP

The flagship is the pilots' mobile base of operations. It carries the Engines, houses the pilots and its own crew, and can be upgraded to include other useful facilities. Flagship upgrades are unlocked by completing a long term project initiated by one of the protagonists. The facilities can be unlocked starting with those adjacent to the command bridge, branching outward through the links on the flagship diagram. The progress for flagship upgrades is tracked in the upgrade track provided with the flagship diagram. Only one upgrade can be under way at a time.



Observatory: +1d to engagement rolls for **recover a fallen Engine** and **hunt a Leviathan** missions.

Training facility: During downtime, any pilot may spend one of their actions to gain 2xp in sun.

Extended berths: Expand the hangar to allow it to store 2 additional Engines.

Mess hall: Gain +1d when you **make a connection** in the mess hall.

The mess hall is a common space for all members of the ship's crew. This means the pilots can be seen socializing, and might be overheard or interrupted.

Engineering: +1d to **work on a long term project** in the engineering bay.

Engineering is a busy, open space, with many crew members coming and going. This means the pilots can be seen working on their projects, which could be subject to scrutiny by other members of the crew.

Forward battery: Once per mission, the flagship can assist a pilot's action (granting them a bonus die) by providing covering fire.

Power source: Unused Engines mark 2 segments of their recovery clocks after a mission.

Launch deck: Pilots have improved position when fighting on the flagship itself, or in its immediate vicinity.

Main thrusters: +1d to the Last Bastion's rolls when the flagship is deployed in the field.

A faster flagship means the Bastion is left exposed for a shorter time when the pilots deploy, and is less likely to get into serious trouble.

Runabout: Once per mission the runabout can be deployed to rescue a stranded pilot, or retrieve a damaged Engine.

SERIES ABILITIES

During series creation, the protagonists will choose one series ability and one transcendent ability for the group to start with. Additional abilities are chosen whenever the series' xp track is filled.

Academy trained: Each protagonist adds +1 action rating to **perceive**, **flow**, and **analyze**.

This can raise your starting value in an action rating to two, if you already have one dot in that action. Each protagonist may choose a different option for their character, they need not choose the same option as the other players.

Esprit de corps: Gain +1d when you roll **sun**, or **help a friend recover**.

Sync ratio: When you receive an assist and your action succeeds, clear 1 stress. When you use a link to help an ally, they gain +2d instead of +1d.

High alert: During downtime, the group gets additional downtime actions to distribute among its members equal to the current Leviathan track tier. These extra actions can only be used to make preparations.

When you take this ability from another series, gain downtime actions based on the adversary track tier for your series, and use the extra downtime actions only to investigate.

Heroes of the people: When your mission protects someone or something important, gain +1d to the engagement roll. When no innocents are harmed during the course of a mission, mark series xp.

On borrowed time: During downtime you may remove one segment from the Readiness track after a roll to improve the result level by one step. This cannot be used to make preparations.

What is neglected or goes unfinished elsewhere?

Plugged in: Each protagonist marks a transcendent action dot in **perceive**, **flow**, and **analyze**.

Mark this action dot only in the third or fourth position. If this provides your only dot in a given action, it does not count towards your attribute rating for resistance rolls.

Heavy gear: Harm of level 3 or lower is fully negated when you spend armour to resist it. You may spend your armour to improve your position for a single roll.

Eject!: When you suffer level 4 harm while transcended, you may choose to not take the harm, and instead immediately end your transcendence.

What do you leave behind? Who gets left in a bad spot by your bailout?

Ending your transcendence means you cannot transcend again for the remainder of the mission. This might mean your character ejects from their Engine, or runs away from the current situation—talk to the table and get a sense of what feels right, but remember that this escape is never free. You always leave something behind, and someone is always left in a worse position as a result of your actions.

DIRECTOR'S PRINCIPLES

THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE BASTION ARE ALSO MONSTROUS

While the Leviathans seek to destroy the Bastion from the outside, the institutions of the Bastion are rotting it from within. If ever the Leviathans are contained or under control, bring institutional pressure to bear instead. The institutions of the Bastion make impossible demands of those who work in them, and turn otherwise good people into tools of oppression. Rigid ranks and orders leave the institutions unable to adapt to changing circumstances, or be kind to anyone serving them.

GIVE THE ENGINES HUGE EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPES

The Engines are not simply machines that do exactly as the pilots direct them to—they are sentient beings, with emotions at once familiar and vastly alien. The Engines likely cannot communicate directly, but their hearts are an immense weight that the protagonists must bear. Often they must be convinced or cajoled to act at all, and their impulses may drive them to contrary actions. Should the Engines ever lose hope, and give up the fight, humanity is doomed to extinction.

MAKE THE LEVIATHANS FUNDAMENTALLY ALIEN

The Leviathans' goals and methods are strange, and ultimately unknowable. Offer only fragments of understanding. The pilots might find ways to relate to them, but the Leviathans will not be reconciled with the Bastion's institutions.

OBLIGATION

In this series, the protagonists are constantly faced with their obligation—they are Engine Pilots. Their lives are defined by rigid order and military hierarchy. They are specialized military hardware, inconveniently housed inside a human being.

The group's answers to 'How do they keep us in line?' and 'What is our reputation?' combine to inform the character of the obligation phase. In this phase we see the pilots being subjected to control by the authorities of the Bastion, and pressured to live up to their reputations.

Consider as well the group's answers to the questions under 'Our Transgressions' during series creation. The protagonists are held apart from the rest of humanity, they have things the rest of humanity has given up, and they defy the values of the authorities they serve. This leads to friction when the pilots interact with the crew of the flagship, or everyday people in the Bastion.

DOWNTIME

Downtime in this series comes as stolen moments in the spaces between deployments, drills, and duties. It might be that two pilots pass each other in a corridor and share a brief moment of camaraderie, a hand on a shoulder, eyes locked. We might instead see a pilot missing much needed sleep to check on a friend in the infirmary, or contemplate their Engine in the hangar (while it watches them, in turn).

When framing these interactions, remember the group's answers for 'How do they keep us in line?' The pilots are rarely alone, or able to do as they wish. They spend most of their time on the flagship, separated from the Bastion they fight to defend. Their very human needs for connection and care are subsumed in the demands of their duties, and the military order that dominates their lives.

SERIES RULE: MAKE PREPARATIONS

Investigate is replaced with **make preparations**. All abilities relating to investigate apply to make preparations instead.

When you make preparations, describe how you are readying the Bastion for the next attack, and roll an appropriate action. Advance the Readiness track based on the result. Ask the director one or two questions from your gather info list.



Surt studies records from when the Leviathans were first engineered. He looks for patterns, vulnerabilities, anything that might help drive the creatures back. He shares his findings with the naval authority, and helps them calibrate the Bastion's defences to better endure the assaults of the Leviathans.

SERIES RULE: BOND WITH AN ENGINE

Pilots can **bond with an Engine** as a downtime activity.

When you bond with an Engine, you make a connection with it. Write the Engine's name in the link section of your sheet and assign all links to it. The director answers for the Engine, using its impulses and virtues as guides.

While piloting that Engine during a mission, you may spend links with it to gain benefits, as though someone had spent a link with you.



Falin works in the maintenance crews as part of their regular duties. As their shift ends, they steal a moment alone with Stygal, the engine they plan to steal during the next deployment. In their strange and mumbling way, they speak to the massive engine, whispering their hopes and fears. The engine stands silent and motionless while they speak, did it even hear them? As they turn to leave, Stygal rumbles in its berth, Falin looks back to see Stygal's massive face turned to watch them. The two contemplate one another for a moment, reaching a silent understanding of what must be done.

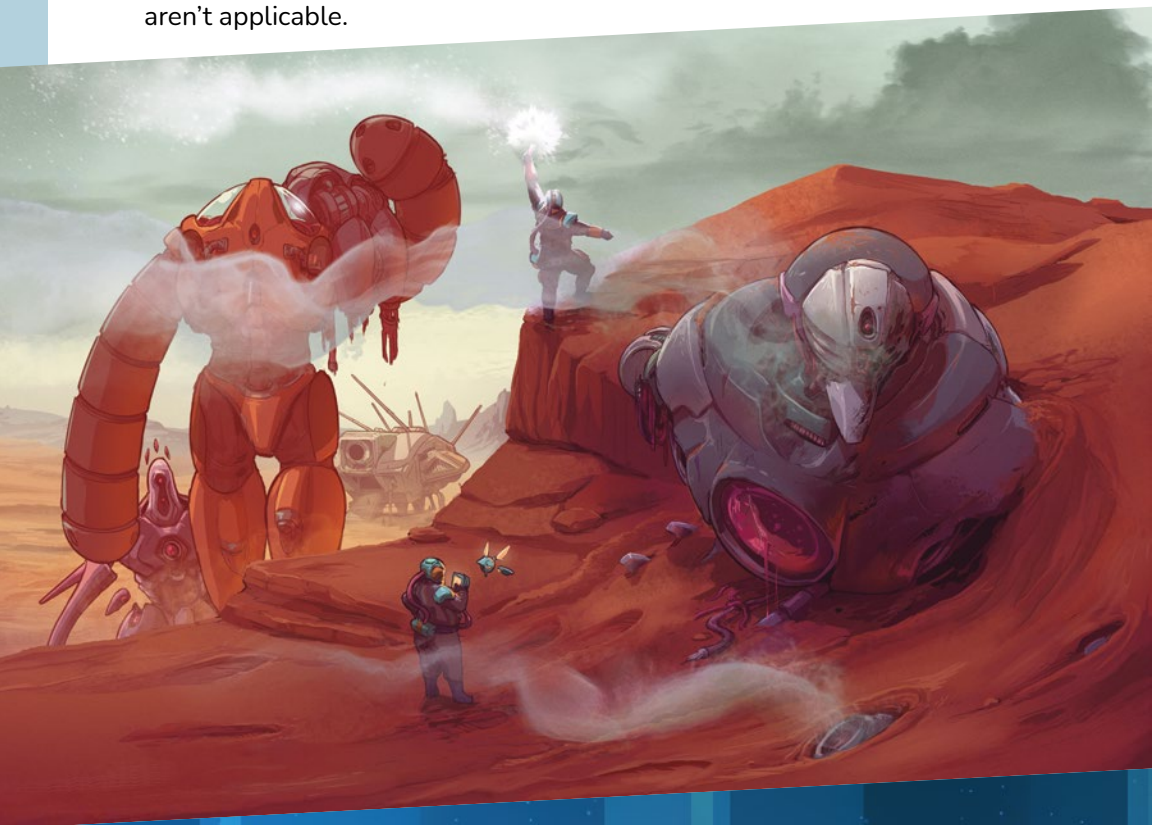


SERIES RULE: THE LAST BASTION REACTS

At the beginning of downtime, before any protagonists act, the Bastion performs a number of downtime actions equal to the current Leviathan tier (always at least 1), rolling a number of dice equal to the current Bastion track tier. It prioritizes actions as follows:

- 1 **Pride:** Work on a long term project for the flagship upgrade, if one is already under way
- 2 **State of emergency:** Make preparations if Leviathan track exceeds Readiness
- 3 **Patchwork:** If the Bastion track is depleted, repair Bastion track. Roll as **make preparations**, but apply the result to Bastion track
- 4 **Complacency:** Increase the Leviathan track. Roll as **make preparations**, but apply result to Leviathan track

The Last Bastion always chooses Complacency during the first downtime of the series, because the conditions of the first three priorities aren't applicable.



MISSIONS

TIER I

Defend the Last Bastion: Fend off a Leviathan attack on the Bastion

Which Leviathan is attacking?

What new approach or point of attack are the Leviathans taking?

Explore the ruined world: Explore the world beyond the Bastion, or within it, looking for information, solace, and hope. Gain +1d to the next engagement roll.

What are the protagonists looking for?

What stands in their way?

Who else is interested?

TIER II

Hunt a Leviathan: Make a sortie on the flagship to pursue Leviathans in the wider world.

Which Leviathan are they hunting?

What do they hope to gain by taking it down?

What is the Leviathan doing, and why?

Recover a fallen Engine: Make a sortie on the flagship to secure an Engine that was thought to be lost. If successful, create a new Engine.

When and how was this Engine lost?

What events was the Engine last involved in?

What does it know that has since been forgotten?

TIER III

Stage a desperate counter attack: Make a strike against the Leviathans that gives them pause, and buys a moment of peace for the Bastion. After this mission, the season ends.

What vulnerability are we exploiting?

What unknown threat exists there?

POSITION, EFFECT, AND CONSEQUENCES

When assessing position and effect in this series, in addition to the normal considerations around transcendence, the director should include the Engines in their evaluations. The protagonists can act outside of their Engines, and draw on their transcendent powers even when the Engines are absent, but most missions will involve the two working in tandem. The protagonists need the Engines to stand a chance against the Leviathans, and similarly, without its pilot's transcendent powers fueling it, an Engine is not operating at its full potential.

On a Sea of Stars has high stakes, humanity's extinction is on the line, and the consequences of the protagonists' actions should reflect those stakes. When they make mistakes, people die, buildings are ruined, and things are lost that cannot be recovered. Even successful missions will usually come at a cost.

Attrition, and steady grinding losses are essential to making this series feel right. Whenever something is lost, consider its effect on the pilots, or their Engines. Who died, and how were they connected to the characters we've seen in the story? When buildings are destroyed, ask what memories they had of those places, or who lived and worked there. These connections will help inform the emotional consequences that follow from the material ones. Each loss also highlights how little remains. One less piece of an ever dwindling remnant, struggling to survive the end of the world.

TRANSCENDENCE AND ENGINES

Should a protagonist find themselves acting against a Leviathan without their Engine, the stakes will primarily be survival and escape. The difference in scale is so great that direct opposition is impossible. Indeed, it is likely the Leviathan would not even notice their existence, though being near a rampaging Leviathan is dangerous, whether it notices you or not! A transcended protagonist might catch a Leviathan's attention, and even be able to act with limited impact in very particular circumstances, but they are as insects before the vastness of a Leviathan.

When the protagonists are piloting an Engine but not transcended, they will typically be outmatched, reacting and struggling to keep pace with a Leviathan. Often they will need to resist consequences before acting, or have limited effect. Sometimes, due to an Engine's virtues or impulses, a mundane pilot's intent might align with the Engine's nature such that they act unimpeded, and with full effect, but this is the exception and not the rule.

FALLOUT

TIER I

- 1-3** dissent spreads in the Bastion
- 4/5** an engine is reassigned
- 6** institutions pressure the pilots

TIER II

- 1-3** strife breaks out in the Bastion
- 4/5** an engine goes dormant
- 6** a pilot is reprimanded

TIER III

- 1-3** a Leviathan infiltrates the Bastion
- 4/5** an engine breaks down
- 6** the pilots are assigned an overseer

SERIES RULE: THE LAST BASTION EXPOSED

Sometimes the protagonists will need to leave the Bastion undefended to pursue their goals elsewhere. This will require the Bastion to look out for itself, and rely on the preparations that the protagonists have made.



When the protagonists pursue a mission that leaves the Bastion exposed, or internal strife and politics are left unchecked, roll the Readiness tier.

- 1-3** It's a disaster. The Bastion track reduces by 3, and the protagonists must answer for it.
- 4/5** The Bastion weathers the trouble. The Last Bastion track reduces by one. There is resentment of the protagonists among the citizens.
- 6** The Bastion handles the trouble, and grows complacent. Reduce Readiness by 1 after it drops by half at mission end.

On a **critical success**, the Bastion handles the trouble, and rallies around the cause. Readiness does not reduce during fallout.

PACING THE SERIES

The pacing of this series is determined by the interplay of the Leviathan, Readiness, and Bastion tracks. The protagonists must find a way to strike at the heart of the Leviathans, before the Leviathans overwhelm the Bastion and silence humanity forever. They must also ensure that the Bastion is ready to protect itself in their absence, by making preparations for the inevitable assaults of the Leviathans.

As the Bastion is damaged, and losses are suffered, its track decreases, and with it the Bastion's ability to contribute to its own protection. The protagonists must somehow balance the needs of the Bastion with their goal to drive back the Leviathans.

As the Leviathan track fills, tensions in the Bastion heighten, and the Leviathans' attacks become more frequent and severe. Often at this late stage, the protagonists need to pursue missions that leave the Bastion undefended, and risk calamity befalling it in their absence.

HOW DOES IT END?

The Leviathan track filling brings an overwhelming final assault, and threatens total defeat of the protagonists and the Bastion. Even if the protagonists succeed, costs are likely to be high, with the next season bringing an even darker outlook. If, on the other hand, the protagonists manage to stage a desperate counter-attack (the season-ending tier iii mission), the stakes shift towards the possibility of a genuine reprieve for humanity.

NAMES

Ace, Adnach, Alastor, Cass, Dagon, Eoligos, Ferug, Forcas, Hagith, Ipos, Malphas, Och, Ophiel, Rauym, Stygal, Nono, Stolas, Surgat, Uphir, Vetis, Zura, Van, Folken, Alen, Dilandau, Norna, Falin, Byrlir, Hildar, Lenneth, Silmeria, Surt, Raumur, Lalc, Himna, Unnar, Ulfsgin, Ofraun, Jokuls, Skrumnir, Pursa

IN A MAZE OF DREAMS

A GIRL BY MOONLIGHT SERIES

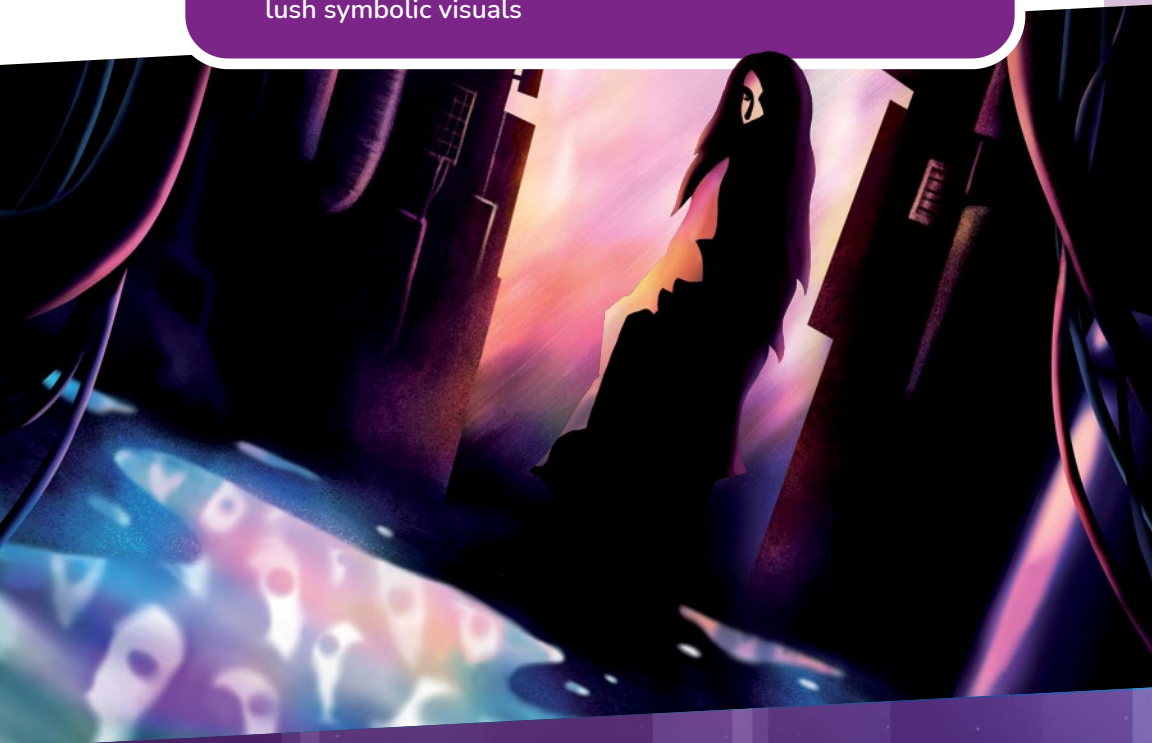


Dream travellers seeking the truth of a magical conspiracy.

In a Maze of Dreams is about desire, mass culture, and ideas developing a life of their own. It is filled with guarded hearts, whose truth can only be found in dreams. The protagonists have learned to take refuge in those dreams, but now find themselves tangled up in the Conspiracy—a multifarious sinister plot, a virus of human thoughts. They must unravel the Conspiracy, lest it devour our dreams, and make a nightmare of the waking world.

WHY PLAY THIS SERIES?

- ◆ You love psychological thrillers, occult mysteries, and things left unknown
- ◆ You want to focus on individual characters, and the inner world of their dreams
- ◆ You want to explore dream logic, surreal landscapes, and lush symbolic visuals



BUILDING THE SERIES

As a group, select an option for each of these questions and elaborate on them as needed. The answers will help shape both the series and the protagonists' roles within it.

WHAT IS THE CONSPIRACY?

an ideology turned virus, a single dream that plagues the world, a toxic cultural movement, history haunting the present, the pull of some alien mind

WHAT IS ITS IMPULSE?

to re-shape our dreams, to drive us to self destruction, to make us shed our bodies, to shatter the barrier between waking and dreaming, to instill an alien morality in us, to turn reality to farce

WHO ARE ITS HOSTS?

a secret society, artists and luminaries, a cabal of sorcerers, an online gestalt, a sentient dream, ghosts and echoes

BY WHAT VECTOR DOES IT INFECT US?

insular communities and coded language, hopes and desires, passions and conflict, fashion and ritual, consumption and excess, a half forgotten song

THE WAKING WORLD BELONGS TO EVERYONE AND NO ONE.

WHAT DEFINES THE WAKING WORLD?

(choose one or two)

looming spires, the press of bodies, criss-crossing wires, media saturation, protests and riots, smog and haze

WHAT SHAPES OUR DREAMS?

(choose one or two)

money, work, surveillance, possessions, edifices, status, sexuality, conformity

WHAT DO WE HIDE FROM OTHERS?

(choose one or two)

passion, emotions, gender, vulnerability, authenticity, sexuality, intimacy, dissatisfaction



**WE HAVE LEARNED TO BREACH THE BARRIER OF DREAMS.
WHY DO WE WANDER IN OTHERS' DREAMS?**

to uncover truths that others ignore, to help those whom society has forsaken, to escape the tedium of our day to day lives, to understand our waking lives, to banish the ghosts of our past, to experience real intimacy

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY?

(each protagonist choose one or two)

forbidden lover, best friend, reformed conspirator, disillusioned cynic, tragic genius, weary caretaker, object of desire, oracle of the dream, target of the Conspiracy

Instruct each protagonist to select a playbook that reflects the roles they have chosen.

HOW DO WE PASS OUR DAYS?

mind numbing repetition, boredom and despair, isolation and detachment, grueling dirty work, fruitless labour, morally compromising jobs

- ◆ How does the world see us, if it notices us at all?

THE DREAM IS A PERSONAL REFLECTION OF THE WAKING WORLD.

- ◆ How do we know when we are in the dream?
- ◆ How do we navigate the dream?
- ◆ What unconscious tell accompanies each of us throughout the dream?

YOUR AVATAR IS A SUBCONSCIOUS EXPRESSION OF YOUR TRUEST SELF.

They live inside you, but have their own thoughts, emotions, and desires, and are alien to you. When you transcend, your Avatar manifests and takes possession of your body.

- ◆ How did you learn to manifest them?
- ◆ What terrible secrets are they hiding?
- ◆ What do they yearn for?
- ◆ Why do you fear yours?

Describe your Avatar, name it, and assign it 1 virtue and 2 desires from the series sheet.

WE TRANSGRESS AGAINST SOCIETY, WE TRANSGRESS AGAINST THE DREAM.

- ◆ How do we defy the dream's form and order?
- ◆ What truths can we share only with each other?
- ◆ What would happen if anyone found us out?

WHAT COMES AT THE DREAM'S END?

- ◆ What will be left of the waking world, should the Conspiracy devour the dream?
- ◆ If our dreams were free of the Conspiracy, what might we wake up to find?

Choose a name for the series that reflects these answers.

SERIES RULE: SUSPECTS

When creating secondary characters, each player at the table names two suspects. Describe them, and write their name and a detail in the suspects section. All suspects are part of the Conspiracy, but the nature of their involvement remains unknown until it is established in play. Though they are suspects from the point of view of the Conspiracy, these characters are also connected to the protagonists in some way. They can be friends, family, co-workers, or parasocial relationships. Whatever the case these are people the protagonists know, even if they don't know that they are part of the Conspiracy.



At the end of the season:

- 1 Clear all conspirators from the Conspiracy map
- 2 Each player removes one suspect from the list
- 3 Any known conspirators that remain are assigned new roles in the Conspiracy, resulting in them once more being unknown factors
- 4 Each player makes one new suspect, and notes their name and detail on the list

When the time comes to remove conspirators, choose one that no longer feels interesting to you. This might be because they have featured a great deal in the story, and we've seen everything there is to see. It might be that they never came up, and no longer fit into the narrative.

The change in roles and assignments represent a new cell of the Conspiracy, a mutation or adaptation in response to the efforts of the protagonists.





SERIES RULE: AVATARS

Your Avatar is a subconscious expression of your truest self, which you have learned to manifest in dreams. Though it was born from your mind, it is not quite you—it is you as you could be, if you were completely yourself, free from the constraints and obligations of society. In many cases, your Avatar includes aspects of yourself that you cannot fully recognize, a manifestation of uncomfortable or even overwhelming desires.

When you transcend, your Avatar takes possession of your dreaming body, magnifying your presence and impact. Transcended, you become an iconic version of yourself, stronger and more real than the dreams you travel through. But even as you share in your Avatar's outsized power and virtue, you also share its desires—intrusive impulses that tug at your heart and mind, demanding expression and satisfaction.

Regardless of the details your group comes up with, your Avatar is ultimately a tool to explore self-expression and identity—it is a version of your character that is in many ways more true, more like how they want to be. But an Avatar is also a creature that exists only in dreams, untouched by the compromises and obligations of day-to-day human life—a complete freedom from repression that gives it an alien, sometimes unsettling perspective.

It is also important to conceive of your Avatar as a separate being, with agency and its own desires—even if they may be reflections of some deep subconscious aspect of your character, there should always be some tension between how your character thinks they should act, and what their Avatar would have them do. Either way, you will still be playing your character—it is up to you how strongly your Avatar's personality will come through in any given moment. Your Avatar's agency can also be represented in play through poisoned promises, where the other players offer you additional dice if you act on your Avatar's desires instead of your own. The more clearly you can define your Avatar's goals and personality, the easier it will be for other players to provide these juicy dilemmas and character moments.



Choose 1 **virtue** for your Avatar. When your actions align with your Avatar's virtue, clear 1 stress.

elegant, clever, brave, serene, bright, curious, playful, beautiful

Your Avatar also has 2 **desires**. When your actions align with one of your Avatar's desires, or you accept a poisoned promise based on its desires, that action does not deplete your transcendence track, and you mark xp.

supremacy, apotheosis, adoration, intimacy, overthrow, control, scandal, agency, escape, prestige, indulgence, truth

SERIES ABILITIES

During series creation, the protagonists will choose one series ability and one transcendent ability for the group to start with. Additional abilities are chosen whenever the series' xp track is filled.

Curiouser: Each protagonist may add +1 action rating to forgive, express, or conceal.

This can raise your starting value in an action rating to two, if you already have one dot in that action. Each protagonist may choose a different option for their character, they need not choose the same option as the other players.

Looking for answers: Gain +1d when you investigate. When a lead turns out to be a dead end, mark series xp.

A lead being a dead end is up to everyone at the table. Award this whenever it makes sense, or feels right.

Shared burden: If you share an intimate moment that reveals your secrets or inner pains, clear 2 stress and your ally marks 1 stress. They ask you one question from their gather info list.

Another face in the crowd: Gain +1 effect when concealing yourself in a crowd. When you defer to the majority, mark xp.

As with a lead being a dead end, it is up to the table what counts as deferring to the majority, though it should generally be something that has consequences for the protagonists.

Daydreamers: Gain +1d when rolling obligation.

Moment of crisis: If you answer yes to 'does this mission determine the fate of a friend?', gain +2d instead of +1d on your engagement roll. Gain +1d when you help a friend recover from emotional harm.

Lucid: Each protagonist marks a transcendent action dot in **forgive**, **express**, and **conceal**.

Mark this action dot only in the third or fourth position. If this provides your only dot in a given action, it does not count towards your attribute rating for resistance rolls.

Dream logic: When you trigger a flashback while transcended, you receive all applicable benefits of transcendence for any actions taken during that flashback.

These action rolls still deplete transcendence as normal.

Just a dream: While you are transcended, others must speak to you truthfully, and you ask an additional follow up question when you gather info during an interrogation.

Other protagonists are not obliged to be truthful with you, though you can tell if they are lying to you. Speaking truthfully does not require characters to divulge all their secrets, or speak to larger truths that they do not understand.

Hold back the nightmare: While you are transcended, any eclipse roll result of 4/5 counts as a 6 for you. While transcended and in eclipse, roll +1d on actions to frighten or upset others.



DIRECTOR'S PRINCIPLES

ENTANGLE EVERY CHARACTER IN THE CONSPIRACY

Connect everyone to the Conspiracy in some way. Think of direct connections, like membership in a secret society or perilous online delving, but also indirect connections, like having a friend who was changed by the Conspiracy, or an artist whose work the Conspiracy has co-opted. Have traces of the Conspiracy appear in unexpected places and ways, infringing even on the protagonists' most safe and private spaces.

LET THE SUSPECT'S INNER WORLDS SPILL OVER

When in the mundane world, show the suspects' interior life through body language, what they say, and what they don't say. In their dreams, their inner world spills forth, and exists concretely as embodied symbols and manifested metaphors. A suspect's dream shows their personal reflection of the broader tensions and themes at play in the story. Incorporate visual motifs that are shared across the suspects, and use them to adorn each suspect's personal memories and traumas.

MAKE SUSPECTS SYMPATHETIC IN MOTIVATION, AND APPALLING IN THEIR ACTIONS

Give suspects well intentioned or relatable reasons for getting involved in the Conspiracy. Then show how this leads to them doing unconscionable acts, in service to their hearts desires. Let us see the Conspiracy twisting their desires, and ultimately corrupting them.

BURY THEM IN EVERYDAY DETAILS

Dreams are built out of mundane places and objects, but twisted and turned surreal. The mundane world, while seemingly ordered and sensible, is filled with dizzying human creations and constant activity. Show how their attunement to dreams makes them sensitive to this immensity, even in the mundane world. Build a labyrinth for the protagonists out of routine and pressure, make them feel tiny and alone.

AVATARS ARE AMORAL ALIEN EGOS

The protagonists' Avatars are not strictly on their side. They are powerful, capricious, and exist to fulfill their own desires. Their power comes at a cost, sometimes obvious, other times subtle and insidious, and always paid by the protagonists. Lead them towards an inevitable reckoning—sooner or later, it must be decided who is truly in control.

OBLIGATION

In a Maze of Dreams presents obligations that alienate and isolate the protagonists. They are just a few among the faceless crowds, shuffling back and forth through the daily crush of commute and labour. How can they possibly change the world, when they are just a drop in this human ocean?

Follow through on the group's answers to 'How we pass our days?' as well as their answers about the waking world. The protagonists pass their days chasing society's dreams, while hiding or denying their own. Build their obligations from the interplay of those ideas. Rather than a direct and confrontational experience, these obligations are a slow and inexorable grinding down of the protagonists. This is how the waking world seeks to smooth them into the same uniform shape as everyone else.

Obligations can also provide an opportunity to encounter suspects in their everyday lives, providing contrast and insight into their lives—and into the dreams they have given over to the promise of the Conspiracy. In many ways, these suspects are reacting to the same alienation and isolation as our protagonists. What relief does the Conspiracy provide?

DOWNTIME

In this phase we see the protagonists seeking connection in a deeply alienating world. Travelling in dreams has given them a shortcut into other people's lives, but during the day they must learn to find less intrusive ways to connect. Downtime is an opportunity for them to let their guard down and make genuine connections with each other, though that might not come easily to them. These moments of vulnerability are fleeting and tenuous, as they defy every lesson the waking world has taught the characters.

It is also where they can work through the events and insights they experience in dreams. At night, they discover strange insights about their suspects' lives, and see their own desires recast through the eyes of their Avatars. On waking, they must somehow process these discoveries in the clear light of day.



SERIES RULE: SHARE AN INTIMATE MOMENT

Make a connection is replaced by **share an intimate moment**.

All abilities relating to make a connection apply to share an intimate moment instead.

In downtime, you may **share an intimate moment** with another protagonist. Describe the circumstances of your encounter, and how you are vulnerable in this moment. Ask them “Do you share this moment, or hold yourself apart?”

If they share it with you, roll +1d. If they hold themselves apart, mark xp.

Roll a suitable action. The other player assigns links as they choose between your characters.

1-3 2 links

4/5 3 links

6 4 links

On a **critical success**, assign 5 links.

The waking world forces people to hide parts of themselves from others, but in these moments, the characters try to overcome that pressure. This breach of expectations leaves them vulnerable to judgement, rejection, or misunderstanding. There is no safe way for these friends to be fully authentic with one another in the waking world, and so these interactions are fraught, and tentative.

Shay and Kyo get a booth at a local bar, and drink late into the night. Shay meets Kyo’s eyes across the table full of empty glasses “My place isn’t far from here... Do you want to come over?”

Kyo freezes. He wants to go home with Shay, they’ve been circling each other for a while now, each trying to figure out if the other is interested. Kyo’s heart catches in his throat when he goes to answer, he just can’t overcome his fears—what if he’s not ready? What if he opens up too much, and Shay rejects him?

There’s an uncomfortable pause while Kyo struggles to speak his heart to Shay, who abruptly stands up. “Nevermind,” he says, as he walks out, slapping some cash on the bar before stepping out into the rainy night.

Since Kyo held himself apart, Shay marks 1 xp and rolls his express with no extra dice, he gets a 5. Kyo marks 2 links on his sheet, and offers 1 link to Shay.

SERIES RULE: THE CONSPIRACY



The Conspiracy is represented by a map in the playset. This map shows the organizational structure of one cell of the Conspiracy, which the protagonists will seek to unravel. While the cell remains functional, it actively impedes the protagonists' efforts. By confronting key members of the cell, and identifying their subordinates, the protagonists can dismantle it sufficiently to identify and confront the host, and send the cell into disarray. The protagonists will not typically be able to shut down all three branches of the cell, as the Conspiracy track will force a confrontation before too long. The protagonists must carve a path to the host quickly and strategically, then strike before the Conspiracy moves against them.

The protagonists are always able to **identify** a conspirator by successfully exploring a suspect's dream. They might also identify additional conspirators during missions, through investigations in downtime, or by some other means that makes sense in the story. Once a conspirator is identified, add them to the Conspiracy map, writing their name in the blank space next to their role in the Conspiracy.

Overseers will need to be **confronted** to shut down their associated penalties, while their subordinates only require that the other conspirators of their same type also be identified to nullify their effect. Confronted conspirators do not disappear from the story, necessarily. They behave in whatever way makes sense given their circumstances, and their nature. They might stick around to cause trouble, or turn on their co-conspirators, giving up names and details of their involvement.

Branches of the Conspiracy are shut down by identifying all the conspirators in that branch, and confronting its overseer. The ultimate goal of each season is to identify and confront the host of the Conspiracy. Doing so ends the current season.

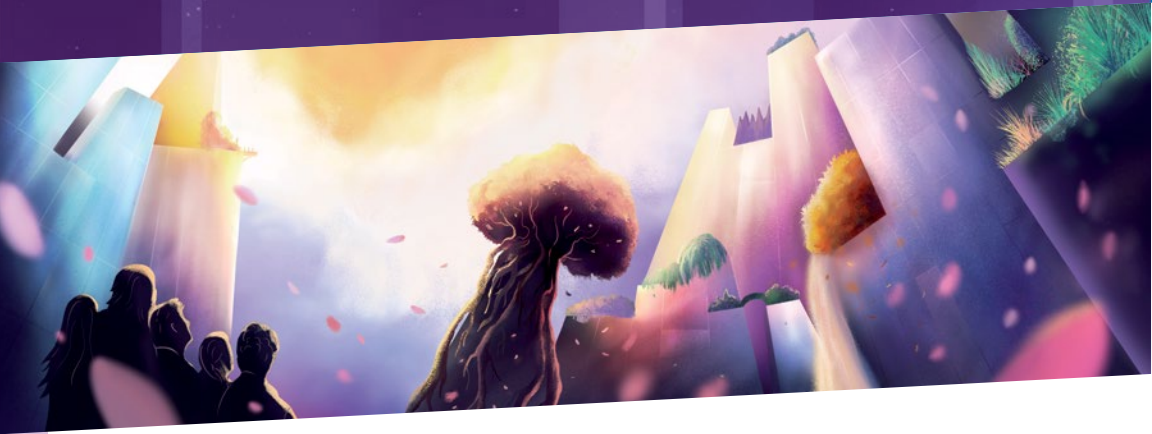
MISSIONS

This series takes a very different approach to missions. Rather than drawing from a set of predefined missions, the protagonists always enter the dreams of the suspects, searching for the truth of their involvement or confronting known conspirators. Missions are explorations of the dreaming psyches of the suspects, and are as varied as the suspects themselves. As the story unfolds, and a suspect's character is revealed, use those personal details to inform the dangers and obstacles that their dream will present to the protagonists, as well as give form to the landscape in which the action takes place.

Each suspect's dream will be a microcosm of their psyche, actively processing and incorporating their experiences, emotions, and hopes into a unique landscape with its own themes and ongoing activities. It is a place defined by the pressures of the mundane world and the Conspiracy, which play themselves out in symbols and metaphors. How this manifests in a specific dream should naturally lend itself to different kinds of action and conflict, and this is the primary source of variety between missions.

Entering this space will invariably lead to trouble, as they disrupt a dreamer's natural rhythms with their searching and probing of forbidden places. Their presence in the dream will not go unchallenged, and danger escalates the longer they stay. The Conspiracy might also come to the defence of its members, particularly if the protagonists are there to confront a known conspirator. Just how much resistance the protagonists face will depend on what they have come to do, and how important that suspect is to the Conspiracy.

The tier for a given suspect is derived from the Conspiracy map. A suspect's tier is equal to that of the lowest open position in the Conspiracy map while their involvement remains unknown. A known conspirator occupies a role in the Conspiracy, and derives their tier from their role. When the protagonists consider who to pursue next, refer to the Conspiracy map to help understand the context of that decision.



The protagonists choose one of these options when they undertake a mission:

EXPLORE A SUSPECT'S DREAM

Enter the dream of a suspect, seeking the truth of their involvement in the Conspiracy. The mission's tier is equal to that of the lowest unfilled role in the Conspiracy map. The investigation track does not drop by half after this mission.

- ◆ *What clues to their involvement are already established? Who knows this suspect best?*
- ◆ *What happened today, that their subconscious is trying to process? What has the Conspiracy promised them, and how does that manifest? What impulses does the suspect indulge here, in secret?*

When a suspect's complicity becomes clear, add them to the Conspiracy map in the appropriate position. They are **identified**.

CONFRONT A KNOWN CONSPIRATOR

Enter the dream of a known conspirator and confront them about their involvement. What judgement awaits them?

- ◆ *Does the suspect know you are coming? Which of their misdeeds are you willing to forgive? How do you plan to confront the conspirator, once you find them?*
- ◆ *What traps has the Conspiracy laid for you? What strange power has the Conspiracy granted the dreamer?*

When the protagonists enter the dream of a suspect and face the full truth of their involvement, that suspect is **confronted**.

POSITION, EFFECT, AND CONSEQUENCES

In *In a Maze of Dreams*, the greatest threats and consequences are emotional in nature. The action of this series unfolds in dreams, which are built of symbols and metaphors that, while grounded in the waking experiences of the dreamers, are only real in a psychological sense. Thus this series has a unique relationship to harm and consequences, and they fluctuate more from mission to mission, as each dream is a world unto itself, with its own internal logic and themes.

While the dreamlike nature of the missions can lend itself to surreal actions and experiences, it is still best to keep the majority of the action grounded, and tangible. The characters are still constrained by their sleeping bodies, and their conscious minds, unable to let go of things like gravity, causality, and pain just because it would be convenient. Without these constraints, action will feel arbitrary and unreliable, and conflict and obstacles might be unclear. Instead, situate the protagonists in elaborate venues constructed by the dreaming minds of the suspects, that (mostly) conform to all the usual arrangements and functions they see in the waking world.

All this means that the protagonists' actions will be subject to the usual evaluations for position and effect, with some extra weight being given to actions that play into the emotional fabric of the dream. This might be through more conventional means seen in the waking world, or by interacting with objects laden with metaphor and symbolism in the dream. Sometimes the protagonists will find clever ways to bend reality, or make use of the internal logic of the dream, and these should be rewarded with suitable advantages in position and effect.

There is also room for actions and consequences that push beyond the baseline reality of the dream, breaking with the dream's logic or directly confronting some larger psychological context. Actions of this sort tend to have extreme consequences, whether they fail or succeed, fraying the edges of the dream world. The presence of the Conspiracy is another way to raise the stakes, in terms of consequences; while the exact details will always depend on your particular story, it may often make sense to allow the Conspiracy and its dream-minions to act in ways that defy normal expectations or logic.

While most of the action of the mission will take place inside the logic of the dream, there is also room for consequences that escape that container, affecting the psychology of the suspect on a deeper, possibly destructive level. Players should always be thinking about how their dream-actions will reflect back into the waking world, both for the protagonists and their adversaries. The fallout phase can be a good place to discuss these types of consequences as a group, either on top of, or as part of, the standard fallout roll.

How consequences and harm translate between the dream-world of missions and the real world can also have a big impact on the tone of the series, and how actions are evaluated in a mission. Does a wound taken in a dream appear on the dreamer's body when they wake up the next day, or is it instead converted into a psychic wound, an emotional echo that carries forward? Can their Avatars be wounded, separately from themselves? These questions will need to be answered by the group as they arise, to fit with the story and the world they have built together.

Regardless of the group's decisions, it is important that harm and consequences persist in some form, as to do otherwise would undermine the core systems of the game.

FALLOUT

TIER I

- 1-3** an agent of the Conspiracy acts
- 4/5** a suspect reveals their complicity
- 6** a suspect lets slip a terrible secret

TIER II

- 1-3** the Conspiracy acts on its agenda
- 4/5** a suspect is put in danger
- 6** the dream bleeds into the waking world

TIER III

- 1-3** the Conspiracy makes a suspect its host
- 4/5** the dream claims a suspect
- 6** a suspect weaponizes the dream

PACING THE SERIES

In a Maze of Dreams relies on the Conspiracy map as its primary pacing tool, in addition to the Conspiracy and investigation tracks. The protagonists race to unravel a cell of the Conspiracy (as represented in the map) before it can act against them. Early on, their efforts will be tentative and exploratory—they try to understand who is involved, and how. As the tension peaks, the protagonists shift to confronting important members of the Conspiracy, actively dismantling the cell in order to reach the host and confront them in their stronghold of dream.

The protagonists need information in order to make progress, and the director should be forthcoming with that information, even generous at times. If the protagonists are locked out of the information they need, the story will lose momentum, or become repetitive. As suspects are identified, and the shape of the Conspiracy becomes clear, the protagonists will naturally need to face higher tier conspirators, whose meddling is more troublesome, and whose dreams are more dangerous.

There is also a second sort of progress, running in parallel with the investigation, where both players and characters make new discoveries about the world of dreams and its particular rules, including the origin and intentions of their Avatars. While this progress is being made by the whole group playing to find out, the director should make sure that new missions and dreams build on the discoveries the group has made so far, and provide opportunities for the characters to delve deeper into those questions.



HOW DOES IT END?

If the Conspiracy track fills, the host of the cell comes after the protagonists, to put a stop to their meddling. This provides an opportunity to invert the typical framing of missions, and see the dream world of one of the protagonists. For such missions, the player whose character is being targeted by the host can work with the other players to define the logic and landscape of their dream, which the director will then take responsibility for during the mission. Where possible, make these host invasions pointed and personal. The Conspiracy has some particular goal in mind for this character, and threatens some terrible outcome for them, should the protagonists fail to stop the host. It is also an ideal opportunity to show the hostile and unknowable aspects of that character's Avatar, which is perhaps sympathetic to the host in some way, or being offered something that the protagonists cannot provide.

On the other hand, if the protagonists seize the initiative, and manage to identify and confront the host before the Conspiracy track fills, the final mission will take place in the dream of the host itself. The host's dream has been transformed, given over completely to the Conspiracy. Its impulses and nature manifest fully here, and we see the future the protagonists are working to prevent. Other conspirators might be here as well, coming to the defence of the host, especially those whom the protagonists did not have time or opportunity to confront.

NAMES

Mol, Ryde, Turn, Boon, Nore, Stell, Fran, Vik, Love, Hen, Ann, Lane, Harp, Best, Jo, Puc, Sol, Case, Gunn, Hart, Deed, Len, Phyl, Kyo, Skip, Win, Char, Cat, Shay, Luce, Faye, Heff, Eve, Cross, Rip, Bog, Tif, Spice

INDEX

- action rating, 31, 38, 112
- actions, 31-33, 35-50
 - action, choosing, 38-39
- action rolls, 37
- advancement, 100-101
- advances, 101
- adversary track, 97
- analyze, 33
- armour, 53, 75
- assist, 45, 49
- At the Brink of the Abyss, 13, 151-163
- attributes, 34
- avatars, 204-205
- background, 111
- Beneath a Rotting Sky, 15, 164-180
 - cursed fates, 172-173
 - devour blighted hearts, 179
 - have a disagreement, 175
- bond with an engine, 193
- bonus dice, 45
- character creation, 110-116
- clocks, 79-80
- complication, 65
- conceal, 33
- confess, 32
- consequences, 63, 71-72
 - armour, 75
 - protecting your allies, 74
 - special armour, 75
- conspiracy, the, 211-212
- critical success, 48
- cursed fates, 172-173
- defy, 32
- devour blighted hearts, 179
- director, 7, 10, 147-148
- downtime, 25, 35, 84-87
 - downtime roll, 35
- eclipse, 6, 57-58
 - escaping, 62
 - falling into, 60
 - rolling for, 59
 - when in, 60-61
- effect, 42-44
- empathize, 33
- engagement roll, 90-92
- engines, the, 186-187
- Enigma, the, 109, 118-121
- episode, 25, 27
- express, 32
- fallout, 25-26, 96-99
 - roll, 98
- flagship, the, 188-189
- flashbacks, 95-96, 106
- flow, 33
- forgive, 32
- fortune roll, 36
- gather information, 81-82
- goal and action rating, choosing, 38-39
- group action, 49
- Guardian, the, 109, 122-125
- harm, 67-69
 - examples, 69
 - links and, 69
 - loss and death, 76
 - penalties, 48, 68
 - recovering from, 70
- Harmony, the, 109, 126-129
- have a disagreement, 175
- heart of the matter, the, 93-94
- help a friend recover, 85

- In a Maze of Dreams, 19, 199-218
 - avatars, 204-205
 - conspiracy, the, 211-212
 - share an intimate moment, 210
 - suspects, 203
- investigate, 87
- Last Bastion of humanity, the, 185
- Last Bastion reacts, the, 194
- links, 55-56, 69
- loss and death, 76-78
- lost opportunity, 66
- make a connection, 84
- make preparations, 193
- materials of play, 21
- mission, 25-26, 88
 - tiers, 89
- Moon, 34
- obligation, 25, 83, 111
 - obligation roll, 36
- On a Sea of Stars, 17, 181-198
 - bond with an engine, 193
 - engines, the, 186-187
 - flagship, the, 188-189
 - Last Bastion of humanity, the, 185
 - Last Bastion reacts, the, 194
 - make preparations, 193
- Outsider, the, 109, 130-133
- perceive, 32
- playbook, 7, 108-109
- playbook advances, 101
- player agenda, 28-29
- poisoned promise, 46
- position, 40-41
- progress clocks, 79-80
- promise, 115-116
- protagonist, 7-9, 107
- protect, 74
- push yourself, 45
- queerness, 9, 29
- reduced effect, 64
- Resisting consequences, 71-73
- resistance roll, 36
- role, 111
- rolling the dice, 35, 48
- safety, 21
- season, 27
- secondary character, 113
- series advances, 101
- series playset, 7, 11-19, 102, 150
 - begin in season two, 106
 - series creation, 104-105
 - touchstones, 105
 - using the, 149
 - what's in a series, 103
- series xp, 101
- set up actions, 50
- setting up the game, 22
- share an intimate moment, 210
- Stars, 34
- Stranger, the, 109, 134-137
- stress, 57
- Sun, 34
- suspects, 203
- teamwork, 49-50
- Time Traveller, the, 109, 138-141
- transcendence, 6, 51-54
 - benefits of, 53
 - how to transcend, 52
 - limits of, 54
- transcendent abilities, 53
 - choosing 112
- transcended action ratings, 31, 53
- Unlikely Hero, the, 109, 142-145
- veteran ability, 101
- work on a long term project, 86
- worse position, 66
- xp, 100

ACTIONS

ANALYZE

When you analyze, you search beyond the surface presentation of the world, and discover secrets. You might study an ancient book for information on magic rituals. You might discern a gap in your foe's defences.

CONCEAL

When you conceal, you hide your true intentions and feelings. You might pass unnoticed, as just another face in the crowd. You might choke down your true feelings and lie to someone.

CONFESS

When you confess, you expose the inner world of your thoughts and feelings to another. You might reveal to someone that it was you who left anonymous gifts at their doorstep. You might admit to a friend that you were once a servant of the evil empress.

DEFY

When you defy, you muster your courage and face opposition head on. You might stand up to a bully, fixing them with a stern glare. You might unleash your mightiest attack against a dangerous foe.

EMPATHISE

When you empathise, you understand a person intuitively, and feel their emotions as if they were your own. You might listen to someone's story, and gain an understanding of their perspective. You might touch a horrifying monster, and feel the frightened heart that beats within it.

EXPRESS

When you express, you use words with an agenda in mind. You might teach someone a valuable lesson about friendship. You might convince a longtime rival to work with you for a time to solve a shared problem.

FLOW

When you flow, you move with grace and adapt to your circumstances. You might leap across a gap to reach safety. You might act in accordance with other's expectations.

FORGIVE

When you forgive, you show that you care for someone despite a mistake they have made. You might offer a chance for reconciliation to a friend that wronged you. You might embrace a monster that was once human, in the hopes that it might be human again someday.

PERCEIVE

When you perceive, you see the world as it presents itself, without judgement. You might observe someone and note their daily routine. You might see the beauty present in even the darkest and strangest corners of the world.

ACTION ROLL

- 1d for each action dot
- ⊕ +1d if you have assistance
- ⊕ +1d if an ally uses a link to help you
- ⊕ +1d if you pushed yourself -or- accepted a poisoned promise

Each time you roll a desperate action, mark 1xp in that attribute

CONTROLLED

You have a perfect opportunity, you have the advantage.

Critical: You do it with increased effect.

6: You do it.

4/5: Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a minor complication occurs, you have reduced effect, you suffer lesser harm, or you end up in a risky position.

1-3: You falter. Press on by seizing a risky opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.

RISKY

You act under duress, there's no clear advantage in the situation.

Critical: You do it with increased effect.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer harm, a complication occurs, you have reduced effect, or you end up in a **desperate position**.

1-3: Things go badly. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you end up in a desperate position, you lose this opportunity.

DESPERATE

You overreach your capabilities, circumstances are set against you.

Critical: You do it with increased effect.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer severe harm, a serious complication occurs, or you have reduced effect.

1-3: It's the worst outcome. You suffer severe harm, a serious complication occurs, or you lose this opportunity for action.

RESISTANCE ROLL

Choose an attribute based on the nature of the consequence you are resisting.

- ◆ **Sun:** Consequences from violence and fear.
- ◆ **Moon:** Consequences from despair and heartbreak.
- ◆ **Stars:** Consequences from panic and social pressure.

You reduce or avoid the consequence, and take **6 stress minus your highest die result**. When you roll a **critical** on resistance, clear 1 stress.

LINKS

Recover stress: Spend a link to recover 2 stress. This can affect you, or the linked character, at your option.

Shrug off harm: Spend a link with a transcended ally to allow them to ignore the effects of a single harm tag until their transcendence ends.

Helping: You may spend a link with someone to give them a bonus die. You do not need to take stress, or even be present in the scene to help them directly.

Lending strength: When someone rolls a 4/5 result on an Eclipse roll, you may spend one link with them to prevent them from falling into Eclipse.

TEAMWORK

Assist: Take 1 stress to give another player +1d. You might also suffer consequences from the roll. Only one person may assist a roll.

Lead a Group: Roll for each character who participates. The single best roll counts as the action result, which applies to every character that rolled. The leader marks 1 stress for each 1-3 result rolled by the group.

Protect: Face danger on behalf of a teammate. Step in to suffer a consequence in their place. You may roll to resist as normal, if you wish.

Set Up: Set up another character with your action. If you achieve it, any team members who follow up get +1 effect or improved position.



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Carly is a freelance illustrator from the UK, creating dramatic, colourful art inspired by nature, science, myth and magic.



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