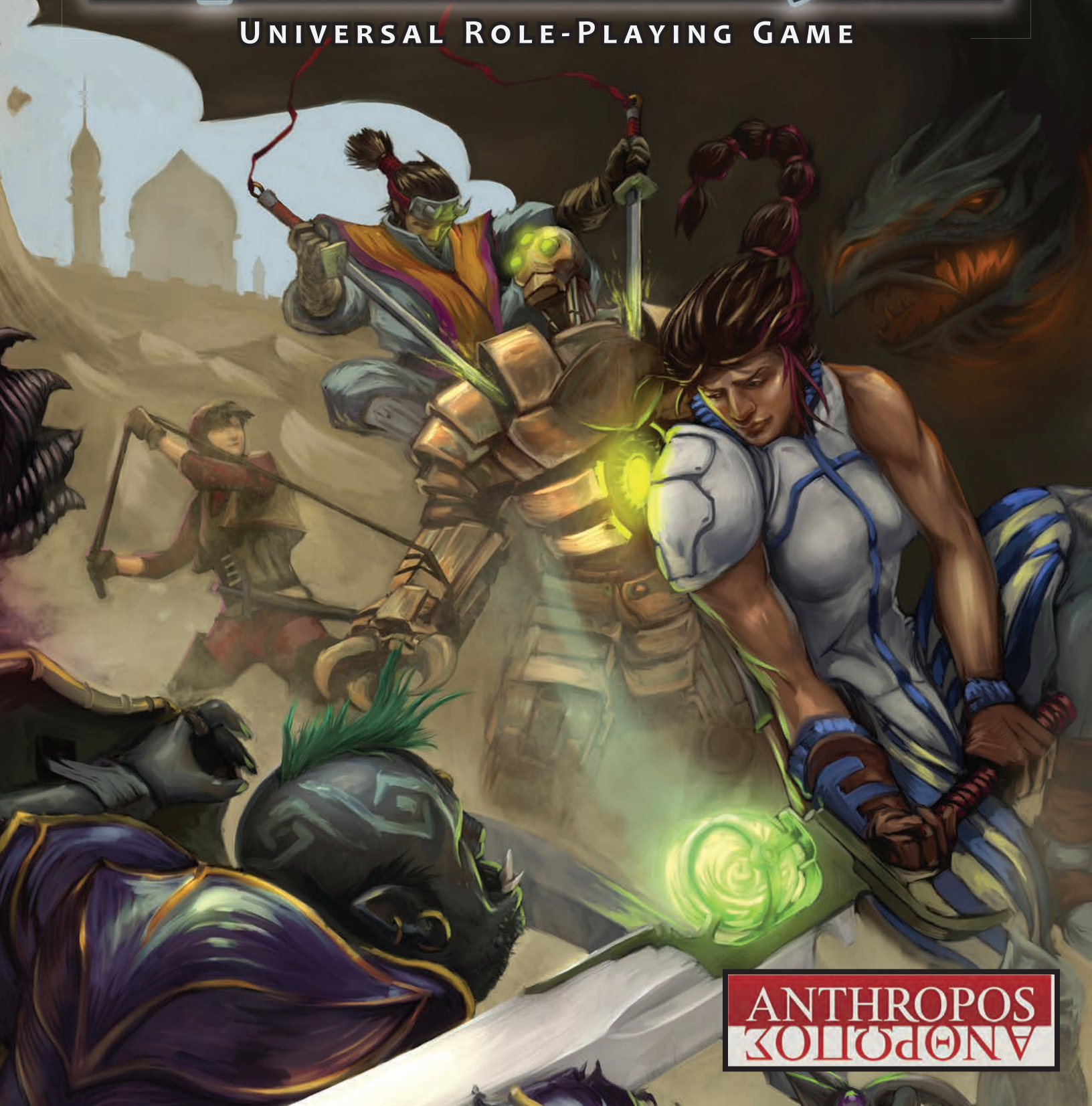


FANTAJI

UNIVERSAL ROLE-PLAYING GAME



ANTHROPOS
ANAPOLLOS

KICKSTARTER BACKERS

There would be no book if not for the ardent—and patient!—support of these visionary gamers, who chose to step up and give **FANTAJI** a chance. We have been playing for two years now, and the book in your hand represents the culmination of all those last-minute conventions, late night brainstorming, online conversations, debugging Skype sessions, and long hours of battling rogue Hangami across the Plains of the Nopo Continent.

Many Thanks!

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*In memory of Chad Anderson,
may the Spillwood grow*

And Tom Andrew Vestal

For Carlee, who is always lovely

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

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Each Chapter heading page will include one highlighted element from the cover illustration and a Tile that represents how you could create that particular feature, item, or enemy in your own FANTAJI game



Introductions are funny things, especially when they overlap with first impressions. May this introduction find you animated and interested, and may any first impressions be pleasant for all parties involved. Good to meet you, new friend. Game on.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

What This is All About, Narrative Theory, Getting Into The Mindset, Traits & Drama

The **FANTAJI SYSTEM** is given a quick intro in the pages that follow. First, we highlight some interesting features of the game, letting you in on the down and dirty in bullet-point fashion. It will feel like an advertising pitch... because it is.

We quickly move into the main conceit of the game: That a good story emerges from the interplay of interesting characters, meaningful conflicts, and relevant themes. This fact of narrative theory is what inspired the design of the Tiles and the mechanics that make up the heart of the game.

Most of you can skip the middle part of this chapter, where we give you the basics of what role-playing is all about, how to use this book for maximum fun, and the supplies you need to play.

We then introduce two of the central features of the **FANTAJI SYSTEM**: Traits and Drama. These are the elements that bridge narrative and crunch. Read those pages carefully so the rest of the book makes sense without too much page-turning and glossary-checking.

Traits: The qualitative descriptors of your character that replace the “stats” of other games. Traits are literary, figurative, often poetic. You will roll more dice when you allude to or reference your Traits.

Drama: Represents a character’s momentum, energy, intensity, threat level, and ferocity. We measure Drama in tokens stacked on the character sheet. Some powers cost Drama, while others become unlocked when you maintain enough.

SYSTEM

RELIC BLADE

◆ THE RAZOR’S EDGE

BLADE: THIS TILE FUNCTIONS AS A BLADE ASSET, GRANTING THE HERO A 3DT OVERPOWER THAT CAN TURN ANY 1[2] INTO 1[3] IN COMBAT



INTRODUCTION

The **FANTAJI ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEM** is a tabletop role-playing engine designed with three goals: To maximize creative input from players on every turn, to reward tactical play and strategic problem-solving, and to direct unique characters along personal and communal story arcs with engaging climaxes. Hefty aims? Maybe. But if that sounds good to you, then this is your game. **FANTAJI** offers all the tools you need to play your game in your world. Whatever your story, this book will help you build the system and the setting perfect for you. Of course, it also works right out of the box!

☼ The conflict resolution engine is **crazy versatile**. Game masters can tell any kind of story and reproduce any kind of dynamic situation, whether politically suspenseful or violently explosive.

☼ Designing a monster, a puzzle, an argument, or a hidden treasure all follow the same steps. Each conflict, or “Obstacle,” in the scene is written on an index card and made official as soon as it is placed on the table.

☼ Players create new “Conditions” on the fly, concrete details or unique circumstances that then become mechanical factors in the ongoing encounter.

☼ Character development is based on players engaging with new and recurring “Themes” that direct meaningful action and track both the experience and personal story arc of each hero.

☼ Combat strategy is heavily team-focused. Players decide in what order to take their turns, planning the best series of Checks and Challenges, responding to surprises and new developments together.

☼ A complex encounter of several interesting Obstacles laid out on the table works wonderfully as a one-off, role-playing adventure game.

☼ This book concludes with four campaign settings to have your group playing **FANTAJI** today. Each comes at the fantasy genre from a different angle, and your gamers are sure to fall in love with one or all of them!



ANY GENRE, ANY STYLE

The best part about **FANTAJI** is you! While the combat mechanics ahead cover everything you need to play a fully developed RPG right now, the slant of this book emphasizes how to customize things to fit your group's unique tastes and style.

Whether you desire a world of dragons and sorcery, high-tech espionage, mecha pilots and aliens, or wild west heroism, **FANTAJI** provides.

Every time you play, the session is precisely as violent, light, lewd, witty, or somber as you are. Levels of difficulty and seriousness follow the players naturally as Traits, Themes, and Conditions are written down in the moment. Even in the same campaign setting, a group of comedians can have a silly, satiric romp where a group of veteran war-gamers might have a deadly confrontation with madness and the arcane.

The feel of the mechanics will match your group as much as the campaign and setting you design will. While the rules are sharp and concise, they respond to your style and scope organically.

FAMILY FRIENDLY

FANTAJI is family-friendly and easy to explain to new and young gamers. In all honesty, we did not mean for it to be that way, but it happened. A hardly-stripped version of the game went over well with a four-year-old and a nine-year-old in attendance.

We had each child draw a picture of her hero and then asked her to come up with two things that made her character cool. Sage Nicole said her ninja had "*Green Hands*" and was "*Very Loud.*" Boom! There were her Traits, and she was ready to play.

This book includes a small section dedicated to running family-friendly versions of the **FANTAJI ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEM** (see page 59).

There are even ways to create the look and feel of a board game to keep things familiar for those new to role-playing games (see page 91).

A MECHANIC FOR ROLE-PLAYING

In other games, the mechanic is there to determine whether or not the action you are attempting succeeds. You decide what you (the player) want to do, and then you use the mechanics to see if things happen as you want.

FANTAJI does things a little differently. Part of the mechanics are actually in place to help you decide what you (the character) are likely to do in the first place. The mechanics at least partially guide the development of characters and narratives, and the goal is to role-play an action that is relevant, meaningful, and tactical on every turn.

A "good" action is one that fits into the story, builds up a character, invokes the themes, and addresses the pressing conflicts. The better you do all those things, the more damage you deal and the more rewards you gain.

FANTAJI is explicitly and intentionally not about maximizing probabilities or scanning lists of powers to choose the "right" action. The game encourages good stories by rewarding meaningful actions. The Traits and Themes in play inspire your actions, and each turn is a creative "riff" or "play" off the qualitative and quantitative facts important to the scene.

Strategy factors into play not only when deciding what actions your character takes but on choosing the consequences of those actions. When you win a roll, you have to be smart about what effects your actions have.

THE BASICS

How to Use This Book, What You Need to Create Your Own Dramatic Role-Playing Game

FANTAJI is a simple engine with a deep potential for both creativity and strategy. The moving parts come together on the tabletop to produce a truly unique and dynamic gaming experience. Every Scene is a puzzle that the players work towards solving, and every turn includes dramatic actions that reflect the desires and motives of the heroes and further the overarching themes of the story.

HOW IS FANTAJI DIFFERENT?

Let's imagine your party is pitched to fight what looks like a losing battle against a vast army led by a champion who recently revealed himself to be the father of your party's noble swordsman.

FANTAJI & TRADITIONAL GAMES

In a traditional "d20" game, you would stage a battle between your party and the army. There are sure to be "mass combat" rules that get in the way of things for a while, but eventually you would stand toe-to-toe against the champion. And then fight him. All of the dramatic themes your players know to be present (resignation to a losing battle, the emotions of fighting your own flesh and blood, human limitations and mental exhaustion) are pure fluff outside the mechanic of the game, a mechanic which focuses solely on chopping bodies.

In **FANTAJI**, the Themes are built into the Scene. You roll more dice whenever your action highlights one of those Themes, and your character is rewarded *in the game* for taking part in the drama. Moreover, emotional responses and shouted accusations can have mechanical effects just as powerful as any sword or spell. Some conflicts are resolved through chopping, others through conversation, forgiveness, or realization. How you write the Tiles at the beginning of each Scene will determine how you play and how you "win."

FANTAJI & OTHER STORY GAMES

The typical story game overcomes the limitations of traditional d20 mechanics by changing the focus of play: Games become story-focused rather than combat-focused.

FANTAJI doesn't merely reward role-playing. The game is role-playing.

On any given turn, a player answers the question "What happens next in the story?" This shift in focus produces some novel game mechanics: Players use meta-game points or tokens to influence the narrative *outside* the actions of their characters, a *player's* desires for the story will often go contrary to her *character's* desires, and the need for tactics is replaced by an emphasis on narrative flow.

In these ways, a story game can often be more about collaborative storytelling than heroic role-playing. In fact, the *primary* mechanic of most story games is the meta-game exchange of points or tokens among the players, while the struggles among the characters and villains in the story are decidedly *secondary*. And while some players find that shift a new and exciting way to game, we found it too high a price to pay for overcoming the one-dimensional reliance on "hacking and slashing" in a traditional d20 game.

In **FANTAJI**, player excitement surrounds the question "What am I going to do next?" Even before you attempt an action, the qualitative mechanics come into play to help you figure out what your character is motivated or likely to do.

The result is neither a Combat Game nor a Story Game, but a Character Game. What we may even be so bold as to call a Role-Playing Game.

OBJECTIVES

We had three goals in mind when designing the **FANTAJI SYSTEM**, three facets of a singular focus: Problem-Solving. **Creativity** and **Strategy** are both modes of problem-solving, which is why both artists and industrial designers call their assignments "problems." Likewise, the **Personal Arcs** built into the experience system trace your

character's growth as a problem-solver as well as your art as a role-player.

The hobby of tabletop gaming is not only similar to the arts of theater and storytelling; it is like painting or industrial design as well. A game is a voluntary puzzle you attempt to solve, a voluntary problem you take on for the fun of solving it. **FANTAJI** is built around this idea of problem-solving, creativity, art, and design. Every turn you take will be a creative attempt to grapple with the situation and resolve the conflicts that are afoot.

CREATIVITY

The first major tenet of **FANTAJI** is that the core mechanic makes sure each and every turn is creative and fresh. The game uses qualitative "Traits" instead of quantitative attributes or stats. You will use these Traits to come up with character-driven actions and wild stunts. And the things you come up with on the spot *matter*!

Whether you "Run at the beast and slash him in the face with your sword" or "Swing off the chandelier and land on the beast, stabbing your blade deep" actually matters! Role-playing in character is part of the mechanic of the game and gets you more dice to roll, which means the specific narration of your turn is not theatrical fluff but integral to the system. The more creative and exciting the player is, the more powerful her hero will be.

STRATEGY

But creativity should not come at the cost of strategy. Despite our love of creativity, we believe that role-playing is about more than coming up with "cool" moves. We wanted a highly creative game that still involved battle tactics and smarts.

In your **FANTAJI** game, players will need to be clever as well as creative. They will have to manage the escalating momentum of enemies and allies, come up with smart responses to new information, and master the mechanics of the game to push things in the direction they want. It will take planning. It will take wits. The smarter and sharper the player, the more effective her hero will be.

For example, dealing damage to an enemy is only one of several possible options on a turn. Would it

be smarter to wear down the enemy before you try to attack? Or maybe you should build up your own momentum somehow. Would the conflict resolve more quickly if you changed up the situation, knocked over a table, set up a trap, or climbed to another level? Or maybe you could bolster an ally to put her in a better position to attack later.

Whichever options you choose will have real, mechanical effects on every other character in the mix. Each turn changes the field for everyone else; the turn you take now will not be forgotten when the next person makes another strategic choice.

PERSONAL ARCS

The third major root of the **FANTAJI SYSTEM** is the way characters "level-up" and grow over time. We wanted to incorporate individual creativity even at the level of advancing your hero, to design a process that would help to embed the motivations and beliefs of each character within the larger story. The result: Players create personal **Milestones** for their heroes and reach them by incorporating the Themes of each encounter into Character actions.

We wanted important moments to function qualitatively as well as quantitatively in the advancement process, and so a character earns new personal Traits that echo and reflect the very Themes they have utilized most often. When reaching a new level, you digest your stack of won Themes to come up with a fresh new Trait for your character. In this way the story truly impacts the directions your character will take. Everything is decided as the narrative progresses over time.



How to Use This Book

You do not have to read this book from cover to cover to play the game. It is an instruction manual, not a novel. Many elements of play will be familiar to most gamers. Everything flows in a logical order, but feel free to flip through as you see fit.

By the time you start playing your **FANTAJI** game, these rules will be second nature and the manual in your hand only a reference book.

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

A tabletop role-playing game is a process of collaborative storytelling that includes at its core a set of rules for determining how you figure out what happens next. This book will teach you how to make a strategic and exciting game out of telling stories around a table with your friends.

One person will take on the role of the *JUDGE*, the job with the heaviest responsibility for determining the obstacles and environments that the players will encounter. This character is in charge of role-playing all the monsters and mayhem that turn up. The characters controlled by the Judge are called *NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS* or *NPCs*.

All other players take on the roles of characters in the world of the game. These *PLAYER-CHARACTERS* are the heroes who make hardy adventure across dangerous environments in a world you create.

FORMAT

The book is divided into four parts. **FANTAJI** offers a wide range of customization that might seem daunting to a new player so we decided to explain the complete “default” game in place at the beginning. The depth of the system and examples of how you can tweak things come in later sections.

⚙️ Part I - System

Part I lays out the default engine in its entirety. Anything Judges do not customize is here in one place. The basic rules give you the full and complete game right out of the box!

This is the only section players need to read to have a handle on playing **FANTAJI**. The rest of the book is mainly for Judges and campaign designers.

⚙️ **TEN-SIDED DICE**

⚙️ **COUNTERS (4-7 PER PLAYER)**

⚙️ **PENCILS**

⚙️ **PRINTED CHARACTER SHEETS**

⚙️ **A STACK OF INDEX CARDS**

⚙️ **COLOR MARKERS (BLUE, BLACK, RED)**

⚙️ Part II - Judging

The second group of chapters covers advice and tactics for Judges. You will become familiar with some implicit opportunities within the default engine that are not immediately seen. Over time you may have discovered these on your own, but we wanted to give you the reward of our years of testing up front. You will see dozens of examples of how to run a campaign, organize complex Obstacles, create enemies and dangerous encounters, and make the most of **FANTAJI**.

⚙️ Part III - Worlding

The third section is dedicated to helping you create your own game and campaign setting around the default engine.

These chapters begin with questions you can ask yourself and your group when coming up with a campaign setting of your own. We then lead you step-by-step through creating the most dynamic and engaging campaign world imaginable for your players. Take all of your favorite elements from film and fiction to create a truly unique setting.

⚙️ Part IV - Settings

The final chapters of the book start with three genre-neutral “mods” that take the default system in new directions and provide further or optional rules for use in any setting.

The final sections then cover four unique, fantasy-inspired settings complete with two “mods” each. Start your **FANTAJI** game in one of these worlds to see how the engine responds to a small variety of specific genres right away.

TRAITS & DRAMA



The Qualitative Meets the Mechanical, Being Creative Each Turn, Role-Playing is the Only Rule

The core mechanic of **FANTAJI** rests on “playing to” qualitative markers that fuel each scene. **Traits** are markers that reflect the personality and history of individual characters, and **Themes** mark the overall moods of the story relevant at that time.

To increase your character’s **Drama** and bank dice for later use, you take small actions that “play to” only a single marker. To attack an enemy or resolve an obstacle, you invoke as many of the qualitative markers as you can and roll a pool of dice.

A TALK ABOUT TRAITS

Traits in **FANTAJI** are a little different than the “traits” or “aspects” of other qualitative, story-driven games. Traits not only define a character, but factor into every single moment of the game.



Traits are designed to *inspire* creative role-playing. They are not simply aspects or facets of your hero that are activated when needed, but poetic turns of phrase that *instigate* your hero to act on every turn. Each move is an *interpretation* of your Traits, a creative expression of them.

Inspire

FANTAJI Traits must be open-ended and figurative to function. They introduce the creative role-playing on every turn. Only the dullest of foes have Traits such as *Armed*, *Large*, or *Tough*. Even a more developed Trait is still mediocre when it remains too explicit or direct: *Cares for Others*, *Torn by a Dark Past*, *In Search of a New Home*. While these may be deep or dramatic, they amount to little more than cliché descriptors in the game. In **FANTAJI**, Traits should be more poetic and punchy than merely descriptive.

For example: A Trait such as Torn by a Dark Past, while metaphoric, leaves little open for multiple interpretations. The cliché hints that a past exists but offers no content to inspire creative actions by the hero. The Trait needs to inject creative potential and possibilities for action turn after turn.

Instigate

In other games, traits are meant to represent certain aspects of your hero: Certain histories, strengths, abilities, features, or facets. However, **FANTAJI** Traits should each represent a core truth about who the hero is, not a single element sometimes in play and sometimes dormant. Think of the hero’s Traits as *sources* of the action, those truths that provoke your hero to act and instigate certain choices at any given moment.

For example: Your Trait is not “activated” or “triggered” when some part of the action dictates. Rather the exact opposite is true. Let the Trait determine what your hero attempts and how she

attempts it. Start with the Traits, and then decide what to do and how to respond to the situation based on them.

⚙️ Interpretation

The result is that each Trait becomes a kind of poem that you repeatedly re-interpret as you role-play your hero. Think of how your favorite song lyrics come to mean different things to you at different times. If you can easily summarize or explain what a Trait means, then it is not open enough. Being open to interpretation is the biggest strength of a Trait; they do not describe a fixed character but help you learn your character over time.

For example: If someone chooses the Trait Fullmetal Altruist, they will re-interpret what that could mean each and every turn. In fact, it does not actually mean anything in itself, but offers new meanings as it is re-interpreted in each moment. The player will come to decide what her hero will do based on the Trait and how it can be pushed, twisted, and reapplied.

“PLAYING TO”

Each turn your hero takes in **FANTAJI**, whether a small gesture or a complicated attack, involves you “playing to” the qualitative markers of the scene, your own **Traits** and the available **Themes**.

“Playing to” a Trait or Theme means that the character’s action reflects, alludes to, invokes, or demonstrates that particular qualitative marker. A story grows when dynamic characters take meaningful actions, and the markers ensure that your characters develop and that your actions matter on every turn. This mechanic is how **FANTAJI** invites your group to create, sustain, and role-play cinematic drama on your tabletop.

For example: Emily’s spy hero, Garre, has the Trait Never Leaves On the Light, which describes Garre as an inconsiderate person who would not wait up for a friend, is stingy with resources, and disregards the needs of others. It also entails a literal interpretation of one who performs well in darkness. Emily “plays to” this Trait anytime Garre picks a locked window in the dark, snubs the host of a feast after he tells a joke, or kicks a soldier in the head to knock him unconscious (knocking his lights out!).

Garre also has a Slip Sliding Away Trait. This describes Garre as one who gets acrobatic to sidestep trouble but also as a woman who accepts the entropy of life, maybe a fatalist. Emily “plays to” this Trait anytime Garre resigns herself, slinks, or shirks something.

CHECKS & CHALLENGES

Checks are small moves or gestures that only require one die, so the hero’s action must “play to” only one Trait or Theme. Checks are rolled against a target number and have a “pass or fail” outcome; they are used to generate momentum for the hero or establish a new condition or detail in the story. Read more on page 34.

For example: Here are a few ways a hero might “play to” Fullmetal Altruist in a Check:

“I take a bold step in front of my brother, putting myself in harm’s way to ensure his safety.” This alludes to both the altruism and the feeling of toughness present in the Trait.

WHEN YOU CHECK

⚙️ STEP 1

You describe what your character wants to do with very few limitations. In two sentences or less, declare a *single* action or moment in the story.

⚙️ STEP 2

Everyone in the group decides which qualitative marker your action hit.

⚙️ STEP 3

The Judge sets a Difficulty, the target number you must tie or beat to “pass” the Check. It is always 3, 5, or 8.

⚙️ STEP 4

If you pass, use the success to generate **Drama** or manipulate a **Condition**.

This is just a quick introduction for those skimming **FANTAJI**. See pages 34–37 for the details.

“I leap in the air and spin my iron cudgel around over the villains.” This riffs on the presence of metal.

“Without counting the exact change, I return a handful of coins far exceeding the amount.” This is a simple demonstration of altruism in mundane form.

“I pick up his disarmed sword and toss it back towards him, my honor forbidding me to fight an unarmed soldier.” While this looks altruistic, the player actually thought to “play to” the nature of jacketed ammunition as more humanitarian and honorable than non-jacketed, flattening bullets.

“I drop into the chair, breaking it with my weight.” The Check simply invokes the weight of dense metal.

Challenges can use many dice, so the player will declare an action that “plays to” as many Traits and Themes as possible. Each Trait or Theme invoked adds one die to the pool for that action. Most Challenges take the form of an attack. They are discussed in detail on page 38.

For example: When Emily attacks with Garre, she declares actions that “play to” both her Traits and any Themes present.

“Leaving my allies to fight as they like, I bolt towards the beast, sliding between its legs and slashing at its meaty underbelly.” She “plays to” both Traits by taking into account Garre’s tendencies to ditch teammates (Never Leaves On The Light) and get acrobatic (Slip Sliding Away); she hits the Theme (The Quick and The Dead) by bolting instinctively.

“As the roof crumbles, I let myself fall backwards off the edge without looking below, pointing my mini-crossbows at the boss and taking my final shots.” The attack easily “plays to” both Slip Sliding Away and The Quick and The Dead for Garre’s slow, resigned fall towards death, and the group even gives Emily Never Leaves on The Light due to the air of almost suicidal finality to the slow-motion, movie-ending image she described.

SUBSTANCE OVER STYLE

Our one major guideline: When “playing to” a Trait or Theme, focus on what the hero is concretely doing or feeling, not on the words or the flowery

WHEN YOU CHALLENGE

STEP 1

You describe what your character wants to do with very few limitations. In two sentences or less, declare a single action or moment in the story.

STEP 2

Everyone in the group decides how many of the qualitative markers your action hit, counting one die for each. You also get a die for each Drama Token your hero has!

STEP 3

Your opponent covers Steps 1 and 2 as well, and you roll your pools of dice against each other. Each one of your dice that beats her highest die counts as a success.

STEP 4

Use your successes to deal damage, deploy **Status Effects**, alter **Conditions** in the narrative, and help your allies.

For complete rules about taking your turn and dealing damage, see pages 38–41.

description of the player. While puns and wordplay can be part of the game, let the focus lie in the punny or playful quality of the action itself, not the words alone.

For example: Emily declares, “Never leaving my place, I slide my torso around and quickly punch the monster in the face.”

While the words Emily used allude to both her Traits and the Theme, the image in the players’ minds of the nimble Garre punching a monster so artlessly does not seem to be in the spirit of her personal Traits or the sharpness of the Theme.

Of course, this is just a tip for making the most of our system: “Playing to” markers can be as technical or as loose as your group decides.

WHAT DRAMA LOOKS LIKE

Drama represents all at once a hero's energy, intensity, alertness, rage, and momentum. We measure rising Drama in Tokens, and each Token is worth one extra die when you Challenge. For more on Drama in combat, see pages 34–40.

But what does Drama look like? While Drama will not always represent animated rage or fury, it is always visible to characters in the world of the game. That is to say Drama is not a meta-game record of “action points” or “mana” at all. At times, a hero's growing Drama might be visible in less animated ways, but it is always tangible somehow.

0 Drama Token

Hakkunen is idle, tired, or caught off guard.

1 Drama Token

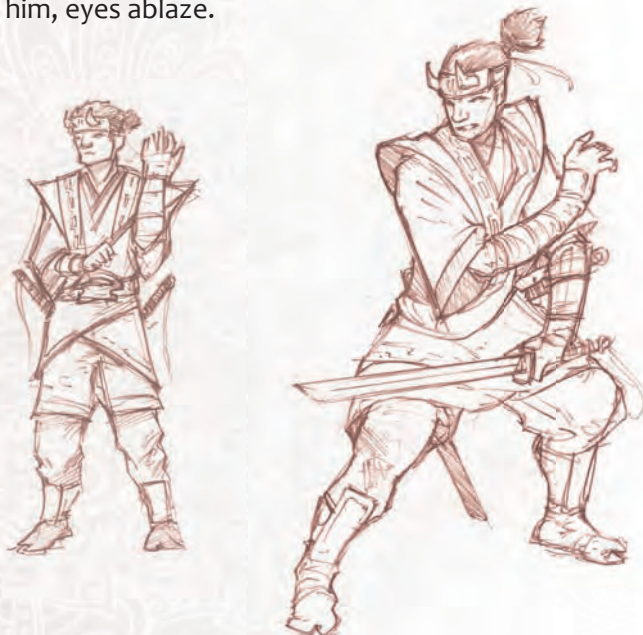
Hakkunen is now alert, intent, or aware.

3 Drama Tokens

Hakkunen is intense and charged. Whether in violent animation or unnerving composure, his swords shine.

5 Drama Tokens

Our man Hakkunen is bursting at the seams, erupting in rage or terrifyingly still and pregnant with power. Either way, he attracts a swirling wind around him, eyes ablaze.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE**BLOODSBANE**

(**Dark Fantasy**) Our most somber campaign setting hosts a motley crew led by the bumbling Dieter, self-proclaimed “Guru GM.”

Lance is **BROSTAR**: *Large And in Charge, Pondering Monsters*. Powers: Dual Wield, Flurry

Allyson is **ALANDRA**: *Smooth Like Silk, Style Over Substance*. Powers: Burst, Forbidden Magic (see Addiction)

Andrew plays **XINJIN**: *Shaves in The Dark, Burning Gaze*. Powers: Phaser Asset, Mind Control

MAZAKI

(**Anime Fantasy**) Wamae runs a campaign of exploration and liberation with three players experienced with **FANTAJI**.

Tony plays **DYLLA**: *Mind Over Matters, Pulling The Strings*. Powers: Counter (see Spines, and see Spite [sets Snare])

Neal is **NYELZ**: *Tough as Nails, Rough Trade*. Powers: Grappling (see Aim), Jinx.

Emily plays **GARRE**: *Never Leaves on The Light, Slip Sliding Away*. Powers: Gadget Asset, Parry

WANING MOON

(**Urban Fantasy**) Chang leads a game at a FLGS in Austin, TX. His players live out their television fan-fiction aspirations through role-playing.

Gwen plays **TELA**: *Underneath it All, Throw My Toys Around*. Powers: Decoy Asset, Addiction

Anindita is **ESTHER**: *Seen Not Heard, Library of Congress*. Powers: Composure, Bond

Omer is **PROFESSOR ACIKSOZ**: *Tried and True, Two Hearts Living in Just One Mind*. Powers: Gadget Asset, Slow

GAMMA CENTAURI

(**Space Fantasy**) Heidi runs a pulp sci-fi setting with the heart of a space opera. Her players are all old friends and enjoy over-the-top action.

Erick is **TYKUS**: *Cool Hand Juke, Finger on The Pulse*. Powers: Aim, Clarity

Justin plays **GORIO**: *Too Old To Rock ‘n’ Roll But Too Young to Die, Two Track Mind*. Powers: Pacify, Reflex

Nadya is **HELENA**: *Pride Before Prejudice, Sense Before Sensibility*. Powers: Doppel Familiar, Ward

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Opening Your Mind, Getting an Idea of How Things Work, Preamble to Rules, Mic Check

The following text is an introduction to your **FANTAJI** game in the making. We have decided to include a lengthy example of play here at the beginning of the book for those skimming the first chapter and trying to get a feel for the system:

Dieter runs his **FANTAJI** game in the **BLOODSBANE** campaign setting (see page 158). His party is made up of hardened survivors of a plague that currently ails cities and villages across the known world.

Dieter: *The cave darkens as you go, and the moving air gives you the feeling it reaches far into the cold earth. The twinkling light of the phosphorescent moss increases as your torches approach. There, snorting at the sight of you, stands an ogre with the head of a bull, a Minotaur. Stretching its mass upright, it reaches over eight feet tall. With a sudden roar, the sound a mix of animal and magic, it charges.*

The Judge places the **MINOTAUR** Tile on the table with four Drama Tokens stacked near it. It's a glossy postcard with a fearsome illustration alongside the Traits and the Health of the beast. He reveals three handwritten Theme Tiles as well: *Horror Unseen*, *Flight From the Dark*, and *Flashes of Flesh*. These provide the emotional feel of the Scene and will offer more dice to players who find ways of incorporating any of those particular vibes into their actions.

Dieter: *The bull is charging forward. I'll give you each a single Check to take stock and prepare for battle!*

A Check is a quick action, a way to earn Drama Tokens or create some kind of advantage for the upcoming battle; nobody can directly attack the **MINOTAUR** just yet. The players will act in whatever order they decide, with every action potentially changing the scene for those who follow.

Andrew: *I turn up the oil in my torch, causing a messy burst of light, and I ready myself to dodge the charging brute.*

Andrew has “played to” the *Flight From the Dark* Theme by using Xinjin’s small action to lessen the darkness. Dieter sets the Difficulty of the Check at 3, and Andrew rolls 7. He has passed the Check and decides to use that single success to gain Drama.

Andrew takes a Drama Token from the chalice near Dieter and places it on his Character Tile for Xinjin.

Allyson: *I see the Minotaur already charging and run straight at it myself. Just as we are about to collide, I hop up and roll across its shoulder—like I'm sliding over the hood of a muscle car—to end up behind it.*

Allyson is using her Check to create a Condition Tile that will hopefully protect her from upcoming attacks. She has creatively “played to” her character’s *Smooth Like Silk* Trait by attempting such a cool maneuver. Dieter sets the Difficulty of the small Check at 5, and Allyson rolls a single die. She rolls 5 and just barely passes!

Dieter pulls a blank index card from his stack and opens the cap on his red marker: *Okay, so what Condition are you setting up?*

Allyson: *Can I say “Alandra is behind the charging bull” maybe?*

Although her Check included physically touching the **MINOTAUR**, it was not a Challenge. Checks often include actions that could pass for attacks in other contexts, but the crucial distinction is how they are rolled mechanically and what you can do with any successes. Checks allow heroes to gain a single Drama Token or manipulate a single Condition, while Challenges allow you to deal damage to an enemy and/or manipulate one or more Conditions.

Dieter writes “Alandra is Behind the Charging Bull” on the index card and places it on the table. While other details in the scene are still undefined and open to the interpretation of the players, the fact that Alandra is behind the monster is now set.

Lance: *Brostar the Mighty draws his righteous blade and charges forward. He runs out from the darkness and leaps over Xinjin's flaring torch towards the oncoming Minotaur!*

The group decides that Lance has “played to” the *Flight From the Dark* Theme by leaping from the shadows dramatically. Dieter sets the Difficulty for the action at 3 not just because it is a relatively easy thing to do but also because such an action would be very blatantly dramatic in the story.

Worth noting, the Difficulty of a Check is always 3, 5, or 8. It is either good, bad, or somewhere in between. This helps the Judge make the decision, cutting down on caprice. No matter how bad a Check is, the player has a 30% chance of success. On the other hand, no matter how good a Check is, the best chance you have to pass is 80%. We feel this keeps all **FANTAJI** action cinematic and intense.

Lance rolls a 2, failing the Check. The group can now decide what that means for the story: Does Brostar get caught up in flames? Fall on his face? Or just land near the monster in a non-dramatic way?

Dieter: Brostar leaps over the flashing torch towards the Minotaur, but his motion is not imposing enough to build any Drama for the hero.

Each player has made his or her “reaction shot” to step into the scene, and so Dieter now starts the real combat with the MINOTAUR’s turn. The beast could very well perform a Check to generate more

Drama or to influence a Condition as his turn, but Dieter is ready for some action. He Challenges!

Dieter: Okay, so let’s say the reason the Minotaur didn’t notice Brostar was because he was already turning to strike at Alandra. The Bull reared up at the brief contact with Alandra’s skin and turns from his charge to try crushing her against the jagged wall.

Because Alandra already set herself behind the bull and Dieter is now declaring an action for the MINOTAUR that would obviously be hindered by that particular Condition, we say the bull-ogre has “tripped” the Condition. Dieter must remove a Drama Token from the MINOTAUR before he rolls the attack. This does not affect the Condition in any way: Alandra is still officially behind the MINOTAUR, and she will be so until someone uses a success to eliminate that Condition explicitly. Players can “trip” a Condition on a Check, while Challenging, or during a defense. Had the MINOTAUR just “kicked his hind legs out towards Alandra” as his action, he would not have “tripped” the Condition at all.

Dieter adds up the MINOTAUR’s dice: The bull has three Drama Tokens left, “played to” the *Flashes of Flesh* Theme by reacting to Alandra’s glancing touch and the *Flight From the Dark* Theme by turning away from Xinjin’s light, and also “played to” his own *Hulking Brute* Trait by using his body size as his primary weapon. That gives him six dice to roll against Alandra!

Allyson: Let’s say I am still rolling across his back when I feel him rear up and start to twist. I want to kick myself off his back before his horns find me!

Allyson picks up 3 dice because she played to two Themes and one Trait. She has no Drama to offer her more dice on the roll.

Dieter rolls: 2, 4, 5, 8, 8, 0
Allyson rolls: 1, 2, 7

Three of Dieter’s dice rolled higher than Allyson’s highest die, so he scored three successes: [3].

Dieter could deal [3] damage to Alandra, or deal [2] damage and eliminate the Condition with [1], or really any combination. The winner decides.





CHAPTER 1: COMBAT TILES

Your game features four kinds of Tiles that direct the dramatic action of your campaign. Every important element of the story is written on an index card and placed on the table, becoming part of the mechanics. In that way, the story and the system are one.



SUMMARY

The Fantaji Role-Playing System Uses Index Cards and Printed Tiles to Track The Action

This chapter acts as your introduction to the four Tiles that make up the **FANTAJI ENGINE**: Characters, Obstacles, Themes, and Conditions. We built the game with the idea that a great story needs only those four elements. The pages that follow are focused on giving you diagrams and examples of each Tile. Exactly how those Tiles work and what they can do will be handled in the next chapter.

The chapter opens with a diagram of the default Character Tile and explanations of each feature. Different versions of the **FANTAJI** Character Tile are available from our website for free download.

We introduce two major categories of Obstacles, Typical and Abstract. The distinction is not hard and fast, but the two categories mark the two

ways an Obstacle could be overcome in combat: Typical Obstacles are defeated by taking damage, while Abstract Obstacles are defeated by losing all their Drama. We have developed dozens of tricks for creating and managing awesome Obstacles that are included in later chapters.

Themes act as shared, ambient Traits. They can be “played to” by both heroes and villains, giving the Scene a mood or energy that colors every action. Whoever best role-plays each Theme wins it at the end of the Scene. Players save up Themes and redeem them to “level-up” their heroes.

Conditions are the booby traps of the battlefield. When they are triggered, the target loses a Drama Token to reflect her struggling with the Condition.

SYSTEM

BURGLAR'S WHIP

◆ ENOUGH ROPE TO HANG THEMSELVES

GADGET: THIS WHIP WORKS AS A GADGET, GRANTING THE HERO THE OPTION OF ROLLING A CHECK @5 ON HER TURN TO STEAL 1DT FROM ANY ENEMY TILE AND GIFT IT TO HERSELF OR AN ALLIED TILE



THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF THE STORY

How the Tiles Interact, What Inspired the Design, How to Make a Story, Plot Doesn't Matter

The four Tiles of the game are based on the four elements of a good story: **Characters**, **Obstacles**, **Themes**, and **Conditions**. It is in the way these elements come together that a story becomes great.

Character Tiles are printed from our website and come in a variety of styles to make sure they match the game you create. Obstacles can be handwritten on index cards, or we offer gorgeous printed Tiles for modules and climactic boss battles. Judges write Themes on index cards to give a feeling or mood to the role-playing, and Conditions come up on the fly as combatants vie for advantage in the fray.

Each Tile functions in a different way to guide the story and provide exciting role-play opportunities for your group. In **FANTAJI** you can be creative and invent interesting additions to the tale, but stay smart to avoid painting yourself into a corner.

WHY NOT THE PLOT?

We wanted to design a game that encouraged good stories, but the truth is we designers have little control over the stories you tell. How can we make a game that focuses on good stories if we are not the ones writing the stories? Well, as it turns out, after a little research we found that good stories have very little to do with the actual plots. Having colorful, responsive characters and meaningful conflicts is key.

The actual plot, or sequence of events, is then just a record of the interplay among characters and conflicts. It turns out that *what* is happening is less important than *why* it is happening and what it *means* to the characters.

We decided to build a mechanic that focused on everything needed to guarantee an exciting and eventful plot. Each Tile in the game is one element of a good story, and the narrative thread will emerge as the Tiles come and go. The details of the story emerge and unfold as the game is played.

The fun of any role-playing game is the adventure of attempting great feats of heroism together. And adventure is fun because the heroes are accomplishing something, solving something, overcoming something. And satisfaction comes only when those *somethings* are meaningful to your heroes. So we built a game where everything is meaningful right from the beginning.

FANTAJI uses the Tiles to guarantee each scene pulls the heroes further into a meaningful story.

ANY KIND OF OBSTACLE

As you will learn on pages 21–23 and 92–97, the Obstacles of **FANTAJI** can represent any kind of conflict, whether violent combat or subtle investigation. The Obstacles become the cornerstones of each scene and campaign, and the narrative action emerges as the players fight to overcome them. The Judge does not need to plot each step along the way. That's the players' job.

This means prep time in **FANTAJI** is spent designing the Obstacles themselves, not worrying about the routes players might take to address them. Even if the players go far off script, the Obstacle Tiles will largely remain the same and be the focus of the narrative. While the problems are designed ahead of time, the problem *solving* can be as spontaneous and fast as the players themselves are.

See page 23 for more on creating basic Obstacles and pages 92–97 for advanced tips and strategies.

Check out “Building a Campaign Deck” on page 112 for a look at how to prepare several Obstacles and enemies ahead of time. Your Deck can hold Conditions, Obstacles, and Themes for quick, easy deployment during play.

For “Constructing a Boss,” see page 114.



CHARACTERS

Every story has Characters. The more colorful, the better. These Tiles represent the heroes controlled by your players as well as their menacing archvillains (and even the rare complicated monster). Character Tiles hold all the information needed to role-play a dynamic hero.

OBSTACLES

All the weaker enemies you fight, puzzles you solve, and traps you encounter are Obstacles. These represent the many hurdles, hindrances, and hazards of adventuring as heroes. Obstacles can be active or passive, brutally concrete or rather abstract.

THEMES

Every Scene has one or more emotional cue cards. Themes represent the tenor or mood of a Scene, giving the action a particular hue. Characters “play to” Themes to roll more dice on a turn, and earning Theme Rewards is the only way to advance (or “upgrade”) your hero.

CONDITIONS

Think of Conditions as touchy triggers or land-mines in a Scene. Conditions are spontaneous situations that arise in combat, details or circumstances that players need to be wary of lest they lose Drama. Utilizing Conditions is the best way to sap dice from your opponents.



A UNIVERSAL ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEM

CHARACTER:

PLAYER:

1

POLITICAL:

SOCIAL:

PERSONAL:

2

Traits

4 9 16 25 36 49

◆◆	
◆◆	3
◆◆	
◆◆	
◆◆	

Powers

4 9 16 25 36 49

1:	4
2:	
3:	
4:	

Gear

Slot:

Slot:

Slot:

5

Milestones

1:

2:

3:

4:

5:

6:

7

Health

9 16 25 36

■	■	■	■	■	6	■	■
■	■	■	■	■		■	■

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The small boxes that contain the squared numbers (4, 9, 16, etc.) mark how many Themes you must win to unlock the next Trait, Power, or Health Block. For example: To earn your third Trait, it will cost 4 Themes. Your fourth Power will cost 9.

CHARACTER TILES

All Heroes and Recurring Villains Will Have Full Character Tiles, Often Incorporating Other Tiles Too

Character Tiles in the **FANTAJI SYSTEM** are concise and crisp. The game is simple enough, and just in case players have questions we even built a few reminders into the Tiles themselves. While most enemies will come in the form of Obstacles, Character Tiles can be used for recurring villains and powerful monsters as well as heroes. The seven sections of the Tiles are described below:

1. NAME AND BACKGROUND

Straightforward information about your Character. Your **FANTAJI** game may specify what kind of background needs to be recorded here.


2. NICHE

During Character creation, each player rolls three aspects of her **Niche** that describe the character's relationship to her greater culture or nation.

3. TRAITS

Traits are the backbone of the **FANTAJI SYSTEM**. They are the qualitative descriptors that give your Character her personality and the mechanical triggers that give your Character her power.

Each character begins the campaign with at least two Traits. The best Traits are poetic or literary (song lyrics, titles, clichés, proverbs, puns) and work well in both combat and conversational situations. The Traits you select index the overall temperament or persona for your hero.

The **Dice Icons** on the left represent how many dice the Trait is worth when “played to” in a Scene. By default new Traits offer only a single die, but some Powers and settings feature Traits worth two Dice (2 ). Because Characters begin with two Traits, the first two rows of Icons are already filled in.

See page 79 for a huge list of example Traits and page 8 for rules about “playing to” Traits.

4. POWERS

These are the special abilities, magical skills, or technological talents of your hero. Use the shaded line to write the name of the Power and the white

line beneath to record a short summary of how the Power works (just as a reminder). In the default Character creation process, each hero begins a campaign with two Powers already.

5. GEAR & EQUIPMENT

While **FANTAJI** does not have mechanics or proper “modifiers” in place for items, **Gear** can still be very important during play. Trying to cut a captive free? Without a knife, that would be a Check with a Difficulty of 8 (see page 34). With a knife in your Gear, cutting the same ropes could have a Difficulty of 3. Gear and equipment, while offering no direct bonuses by default, are crucial to accomplishing tasks and overcoming Obstacles. Pack wisely.

When all is said and done, your own **FANTAJI** game may require a slightly different Character Tile, but this covers the default Tile and the basic skeleton of every hero. Check our website for alternate versions of the Character Tile.

6. HEALTH & RESISTANCE

Health comes in blocks called **Wounds** that come in three sizes: [3], [2], and [1]. The size of the block represents how many Successes are required to deal the Wound. The entire block must be scored in a single Challenge to count. Written in algebraic notation, a shorthand we use in text-based modules, each hero begins with:

$$1[3] / 2[2] / 4[1]$$

For a longer discussion of Wounds and Health, see page 67. To learn about dealing damage, see 39.

7. MILESTONES

Every hero can improve her Traits, Powers, or Health by winning Themes and redeeming them. When ready to advance, the player must reach her next **Milestone** and have the appropriate number of Themes available. See page 68 for more information on Milestones.

Name of Obstacle

Most Obstacles will have generic names and can be used repeatedly to represent new enemies

Description

A brief description of the Obstacle

Illustration

Gorgeous artwork from our team of designers

SPINED TERRASAUR

These giant lizards roam wide territories near the Enna Desert. They consume mostly carrion but have been known to eat humans and large herbivores when provoked or starving.

THICK SKIN
RAZOR-TOOTHED MAW
TITAN OF THE SAND

"Thrashing Tail" (Condition): Affects anyone caught behind the Terrasaur.

Roar (Move): Causes a one-round **Shock** on all players who fail a Difficulty 5 save.

Bite (Attack): Any [2] die it does an additional [1] from clenched jaw.



Traits

Every Obstacle will have at least one Trait

Special Powers & Rules

This will include strategies the enemy might use in combat as well as Powers and special rules for the Obstacle

Resistance

Resistance represents the health or "hit points" of living Obstacles and the structural integrity or complexity of passive Obstacles

OBSTACLE TILES

All of The Enemies, Traps, Hurdles, and Objectives You Face Will be Written as Obstacles

Obstacle Tiles are used to represent most enemies, monsters, problems, and events that get in the way of the characters and their heroic aims. The majority of battles, contests, and dangerous situations will revolve around Obstacles of one kind or another. While they have many stats similar to those of full Characters, Obstacles are meant to be temporary foes or hurdles that do not last from scene to scene the way important villains do.

A fancy Obstacle Tile could look like the example opposite, while a simple handwritten Obstacle may look something like the image below. Either works just fine. There will always be index cards on the table so handwritten Obstacles will fit right in. When creating Obstacles from scratch, Judges can be as sparse or as creative as they want filling out the cards with descriptive and mechanical information. We recommend using a black marker for Obstacles, distinguishing them from Themes (Blue) and Conditions (Red) on the table.

TRAITS

Obstacles will always have at least one **Trait**, and these function exactly the way the Traits of heroes function. Coming up with an interesting Trait is a great way to add a bit of personality to an Obstacle and potentially trigger more amusing role-playing. Reusing Traits to connect similar enemies or just to save time is okay too. You learned about “playing

Obstacles can be active, such as monsters and warriors, or passive, such as locked doors, barred gates, broken engines, hidden traps, and heavy boulders.

to” Traits and Themes on page 8, and a huge list of solid, robust Traits can be found on page 79.

RESISTANCE

Resistance functions the same way for Obstacles as Health does for Characters. Whether representing the health of a living enemy or the toughness of a locked door, Resistance is most often overcome through the Damage Effects of Challenges.

Each **Wound** is made up of one, two, or three Successes, representing how powerful a Challenge must be to damage that particular Wound.

For example: The TERRASAUR opposite has one [3] block and two [2] blocks of Resistance. We would write this in shorthand as [3] / 2[2]. This means it would take a Challenge of at least two Successes to damage the TERRASAUR.

See page 38 for more information on Challenging and damaging Obstacles. See page 46 for more on Wounds and healing.

SPINED TERRASAUR

- ◆ THICK SKIN
- ◆ RAZOR-TOOTHED MAW
- ◆ TITAN OF THE SAND

Powers: ROAR (CAUSES DAZE TO ANY PLAYER WHO FAILS A CHECK @5, AUTO), ATTEMPTS “THRASHING TAIL” CONDITION AFFECTING ANYONE BEHIND IT, BITE (SEE CHARGED)



SPECIAL POWERS & RULES

An Obstacle could very easily have some of the same **Powers** available to the Characters. However, more menacing Obstacles might augment the limitations of standard Powers or introduce new abilities entirely.

This area of the Obstacle Tile may also contain information about the Obstacle’s favorite **Conditions** and particular strategies the Obstacle may attempt in combat. Marking these on the Tile allows Judges to implement



powerful, far-reaching Conditions that might seem too advantageous or unfair if not printed ahead of time as part of the unique abilities of the Obstacle. The SPINED TERRASAUR, for example, will attempt to set up a “Thrashing Tail” Condition, which can then sap Drama from any hero who ends up behind the lizard. This Condition might seem too powerful if not set as a “special ability” on the Tile itself.

ABSTRACT OBSTACLES

“Typical” Obstacles are overcome when they lose all their Resistance/Health by suffering damage during Challenges. “Abstract” Obstacles are those hindrances or situations that can only be overcome indirectly, by the party reducing its Drama to zero through creative problem-solving.

For example: Let us imagine our **MÁZAKI** group encounters the SPINED TERRASAUR from the previous page. Alongside the lizard, Wamae creates an Abstract Obstacle to represent the plight of the locals titled “THE LOCALS IN DANGER!” The Tile has no Resistance and instead begins the Scene with a handful of Drama to represent the intensity-level of the threat. To overcome the Obstacle, the heroes

will have to establish Conditions that address the danger and eventually reduce the Tile to zero Drama. At that point, Wamae will consider the Obstacle “neutralized” and remove it from play.

Abstract Obstacles often take turns just like other Obstacles, most likely to increase their own Drama or hinder the heroes in some way. Such Obstacles may also have a “goal” or “breaking point” built in.

For example: Wamae writes a warning on his “THE LOCALS IN DANGER!” Obstacle. If the Tile reaches eight Drama before the TERRASAUR is killed, Wamae will consider the heroes “failures” at protecting the village and direct the narrative accordingly. Suffering the loss of many lives, the town will not help the heroes with resources or healing in the future.

This affords us a method for incorporating all kinds of conflict on the table, conflicts impossible to represent in most other role-playing games. Every dangerous element of your story can be placed within the mechanical grid of the Tiles.

For example: In another village, Wamae’s party had to earn the trust of the elders before anyone would help the heroes. Wamae made a “HARD HEARTS” Obstacle with three Drama that required clever Conditions and lots of role-playing to overcome.

The divide between “Typical” and “Abstract” Obstacles is not a hard and fast boundary. The labels are just shorthand for describing the two major ways of overcoming an Obstacle: Either by dealing it damage, or by sapping its Drama. Feel free to create Obstacles that combine these two, bend these rules, or include other quirks.

See pages 72–76 for the complete table of Powers and special abilities.

See page 25 for a quick introduction to Conditions and pages 42–45 for more on how they work in combat.

See Chapter 4 on Page 81 for several creative ways to manage Obstacles.

STAT BLOCKS

When writing the features of an Obstacle in print, we can fit an entire Obstacle in a single paragraph as demonstrated in the following:

OBSTACLE NAME: Brief description giving the overall appearance of the Obstacle and any notable features if needed. **Traits:** *First Trait in italics, Second Trait in italics* (“2◇” when worth two dice). **Powers:** First Power (explanation if needed), Second Power (explanation if needed). Extra information about special rules, important Conditions and Overpowers, or instructions for what happens when the Obstacle is defeated. **n[3] / n[2] / n[1].** Begins with nDT.

It is not as pretty as an illustrated Tile, but it is not always possible to have every Obstacle illustrated and printed on glossy cardstock. If the Obstacle has no listed Resistance, it is considered Abstract.

CRAZY VERSATILE

The possibilities are indeed endless. Any enemy, objective, situation, or conflict can be written onto a Tile and made into an Obstacle. The most intangible struggle can be made clear, and the players focus on overcoming whatever it is by role-playing within the mechanics of the game.

CALMING THE CROWD: A mob has gathered in the city square, and it will take a great effort to settle or sublimate their bloodlust. **Trait:** *Raging Contagion*. **Power:** Contagious (Gains DT+ whenever any two Tiles in the Scene Clash). **4[1].** Begins with 4DT.

AVOID THE NIGHTWATCH: Keep yourself secret; keep yourself safe. **Trait:** *The Walls Have Eyes*. Should the tile reach 6DT, you are spotted. Begins with 4DT.

VETERAN SOLDIER: Beware the man with a gun and a cause. **Traits:** *Too Old to Rock ‘n’ Roll But Too Young to Die, Eagle Eyed* (2◇). **Power:** Aim. **2[2] / 3[1].** Begins with 2DT.

DROP TO THE AIRSHIP: You must drop from the silent glider down to the airship to take it

hostage. **Trait:** *Freefallin’*. Should you lose any Challenge, your character slides off the ship and plummets. If you Clash or score [1], you collide with the ship and roll across its surface; you must Challenge again to gain a footing. **[2].**

LOCALS IN DANGER!: A monster is destroying the village, and hundreds of villagers are at risk. **Trait:** *Easy Pickin’s*. If the Tile reaches 8DT, your party has failed to be the heroes this village needed. Begins with 5DT.

PACK OF WOLVES: The young wolves, hungry for meat and eager to please their leader. **Traits:** *Gnashing Teeth, Haggard But Hopeful* **Powers:** Howl (Can swap up to 2DT with any Tile that is part of the pack at will), Pin (When Creating a “Pack Pinning Their Target” Condition, the WOLVES automatically sap 1DT at the same time). **3[2] / 3[1].** Begins with 2DT.

DIRE ALPHA WOLF: The aged leader of the pack. **Traits:** *Long in the Tooth, Never Follows, Eater of Bears*. **Powers:** Howl (see above), Alpha Stare (Can “play to” a single Trait of his target on any Challenge or defense). **1[3] / 2[2] / 2[1].** Begins with 4DT.

ESCAPE THE WOLVES: They will still be on your trail, but at least you can get a mile ahead of them and come up with a plan. **Traits:** *Longsuffering Hunters, On Your Scent, Masters of The Territory*. If the Tile reaches zero Drama, you have escaped. Begins with 1 more than twice the Drama present on all remaining WOLF Tiles.

CLOCKWORK GOLEM: A giant robot made of ticking gears and exposed springs. **Traits:** *More Machine Than Man* (2◇), *Ticking Titan, More Than Meets the Eye*. **Powers:** Power Coil (see Dynamo Asset), Spite, Crushing Fist (OP3: Can deal [2] automatically). **1[3] / 3[2].** Begins with 3DT.

CLUTCH OF GOBLINS: *Creeping & Crawling*. **6[1].**

LASER-HEADED SHARK MUTANT: A bipedal mutant, part-shark and part-human that can swim through asphalt like water. **Traits:** *Landshark, Weird Ways, Street Surfing*. **Powers:** Laser (see Burst). **1[3] / 2[2] / 2[1].** Begins with 2DT.

THEME TILES

Extra Dice For “Playing To” The Scene’s Emotional or Thematic Tenor, How You Gain Experience

Every Scene has a small number of Theme Tiles that provide a tenor or feel to the action that occurs. Themes function just like **Traits**, but anyone can play to them. You can think of them as “environmental” or “ambient” Traits, shared qualities that everyone present takes part in.

Because both heroes and enemies play to Themes, they are the most direct factor in deciding the flavor and mood of a Scene. You will learn more about managing Themes on page 98. A list of great sample Themes is provided on page 78.

In home games and convention play, we color-code **Themes** using a blue marker. This distinguishes them from Obstacles (Black) and Conditions (Red) during the chaos of battle!

Themes do not take turns or actions at all. They are static Tiles in place to give players and Judges solid, mechanical motivation to stay in character and to maintain an agreed upon mood or energy for the encounter. The group can discuss at the beginning of a Scene what each Theme brings to the table.

For example: In creating the TERRASAU encounter, Wamae decides on three Themes for the battle: Monster Mayhem, Disturbing the Peace, and Hot Sun, Cold Blood.

The players ask questions about Monster Mayhem first: Is this Theme meant to be silly? Does Wamae expect the battle to look like a 1970s monster movie? The group comes to see the Theme as a dangerous temptation to cause massive destruction and take huge risks in combat. Disturbing the Peace seems straightforward enough, referring to the air of instant chaos that interrupts the village. The artsy Hot Sun, Cold Blood is intended to reference the environment, to somehow represent both the blistering heat of the desert’s climate and its cold, inhospitable ruthlessness.

Themes come alive and grow definitions organically during play. Take some time figuring out exactly what a good Theme can do and then keep the best ideas around for reuse throughout a campaign.

For example: Several rolls in the battle use the “Hot Sun, Cold Blood” Theme to reference the blaring sun and the many dangers of the natural environment. The players begin to like the Theme, seeing it as a way to show their characters’ growing knowledge of the desert terrain. Against anyone’s intentions, it comes to act as a “knowledge” or “lore” check for the environment. Wamae decides to include this Theme in more encounters, inviting the players to continue exploring the desert world and learning about the creatures of the arid sands.

Because Themes will often be unique to the interests and passions of your group, Themes written for official adventure modules might not be appropriate to your campaign or relevant to your characters. Consider pre-written Themes as suggestions for dramatic alternatives, or just keep a running list of your own interesting Themes and bring them in whenever you feel like it.

Players may end up suggesting Themes that would be particularly meaningful to their characters or to the results of a previous Scene. Run with it. By all means, let the experiences from an earlier Scene (a tragic loss, a close escape, a hard decision) inspire the Themes for the next few encounters.

CHARACTER PROGRESSION

At the end of every Scene, the Judge will decide which character demonstrated or enacted each Theme most devotedly, and gives that Tile to the player who earned it as a marker of experience.

Players spend Theme Tiles they have earned to improve their characters by upgrading **Powers**, purchasing **Traits**, or building up their **Resistance**. The costs for each improvement are written on the Character Tile in small boxes just above each section. Check out page 68 for an extended discussion on **Milestones** and redeeming Themes.

CONDITION TILES

Creative Situations or Circumstances That Sap Drama, Booby Traps, Land-mines, Penalties & Debuffs

This is where **FANTAJI** gets truly interesting and strategic. **Conditions** are new “matters of fact” that players and Judges introduce to combat in the middle of the action. When an opponent builds a great charge of momentum, dealing him damage becomes increasingly difficult. Conditions are the special trick required to sap Drama and overcome such enemies.

Conditions do not take turns or act. Think of them as land-mines or booby traps that wait to be “tripped” by accident or to be “forced” against an opponent when her adversary scores a Success.

Players use Condition Tiles and the narrative effects associated with them to sabotage the escalating **Drama** of enemies. You will learn all about managing the momentum of enemies on page 42. For now, just note that Conditions are the best way to attenuate the rising Drama of enemies. See page 99 for more creative uses of Conditions.

While Conditions are created on the spot to fit unique situations, it is likely that players and Judges will remember and reuse successful Conditions for hindering similar enemies. Think of managing Conditions as an art: It’s never the same twice, but you eventually get a knack for approaching familiar monsters or situations.

PRAGMATIC & CONCRETE

Unlike the lyrical nature of Traits and Themes, Conditions are straightforward and literal. The Tile should be written as clearly and concretely as possible to represent the “matter of fact” situation or circumstance being created.

For example: When Andrew’s warlock creates a Condition to hinder his GOBLIN opponents, he decides to push them closer to a raging fire. Dieter writes

“The Goblins are Near the Fire” on an index card in red marker and places it on the table. Note that the card is straightforward and concise, not artistic or literary like a Trait would be.

NEUTRAL & UNIVERSAL

We like to say that Conditions are both *neutral* and *universal*. They are neutral because they are meant to create situations that are not *inherently* bad, negative, or dangerous. A Condition is just a fact or circumstance that happens to be true. While the clever player will find ways to make a Condition hinder her opponent more than herself, the Condition itself is neutral in its level of threat.

For example: Andrew would not set “The Goblins are on Fire” as a Condition. “Being on fire” is not neutral and would be decided more appropriately by dealing damage with a Challenge or Status Effect. A “Goblins are Near the Fire” Condition represents a neutral state of affairs that Andrew hopes to exploit.

Likewise, Conditions are universal because they can in theory sap Drama from anyone, even the person who created them. Of course, while all Conditions can affect anyone, the best Conditions will be designed in such a way to hinder the creator’s enemies more than her allies.

For example: On a later turn, Andrew spends a Success forcing the Condition, saying “I smash through a nearby door, causing a backdraft that fans the flames.” Because Andrew already noted that the Goblins were close to the flames, the imps will suffer a Drama penalty, which represents the effort it takes for them to scurry out of the way. No damage is dealt; rather the Goblins were hindered by the flash.

Importantly, the Goblins are still near the fire. Neither forcing nor tripping a Condition erases it.

Whenever a new Condition is created, the players and Judge should discuss briefly just what is happening so everyone is on the same page. Surprises can be fun, but confusion rarely is.



CHAPTER 2: HOW TO PLAY

Everything revolves around two basic actions: **Checks** utilize a single d10 and represent small stunts or moves, while **Challenges** require you to roll an entire pool against a specific Obstacle you are hoping to overcome. Various Powers and abilities can help.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

Getting an Idea of How the Game Works, How to Create an Encounter, How to Spend Turns

While the previous chapter covered the *what* of **FANTAJI**, this chapter covers the *how*. Readers will learn how Characters take turns and overcome Obstacles. We start with details on setting the Scene relevant to both Judges and players. These pages cover determining initial Drama and how initiative works. Judges will learn how to place Tiles on the table and what to expect as the Rounds roll on back and forth.

Whether in combat or conversation, any Character or enemy taking a turn has two options: Checking or Challenging. Checks are rolled against a Difficulty set by the Judge and let characters build Drama or manipulate Conditions. They represent small stunts or moves that only *indirectly* affect other Obstacles in the Scene. Challenges are rolled *directly* against

an Obstacle and represent the attacks, gambits, and accusations that aim to damage the Obstacle. A successful Challenge can manipulate Conditions or deal damage to an Obstacle.

A large portion of this chapter is dedicated to clear directions and examples of how players take turns in **FANTAJI**. An extended example runs along each section, working you along step by step.

The next section handles Condition Effects and the many creative ways of handling Conditions during Checks and Challenges. These are the Tiles that introduce real strategy to the system.

The chapter ends with the process for ending a Scene, where you record experience and heal.

SYSTEM

CONDITION

THE DETECTIVE HAS "LINE OF SIGHT"
ON THE RAVEN HORROR UNTIL THIS
CONDITION IS ELIMINATED



SETTING THE SCENE

Laying Tiles on The Table, Deciding on Starting Drama, How to Open a Scene

So let's take this one piece at a time. When a **Scene** begins, there will be at least three kinds of Tiles on the table. **Character Tiles** will always be present, each representing one of the heroes controlled by the players. If any recurring villains are part of the Scene, their Character Tiles can be placed on the table as well. To keep Traits and Powers secret, Judges may wish to hide important enemies behind a gaming screen or the like. That's allowed.

We use the example of a "Scene," or an "Encounter," here to keep things simple. In your campaign, many events will take place outside the neat-and-tidy boundaries of a Scene. Going further, you may skip out on playing prescribed "Scenes" at all. That works. More information on alternative styles of play can be found on page 88.

The Judge will then lay out the **Obstacle Tiles** that make the Scene possible, describing each enemy, puzzle, or hindrance that the characters perceive. Lay the cards out in an "Us against Them" formation (see the image opposite). Players may have particular objectives or strategies that require unique Obstacles as well, and Judges should add them as needed.

Every Scene also includes one or more **Theme Tiles** that provide the emotional tenor of the encounter. A small battle may have 3 or 4, while a more pivotal Scene could easily have 5 or 6 Themes. Because Themes are used to measure the growth and increasing experience of the characters (as the "XP" of other games do), the Judge should consider the number of players as well when deciding which and how many Themes to include.

Scenes may or may not begin with **Condition Tiles** in place. Initial Conditions are typically used to convey key features of the environment, to mark facts or flaws about a combatant, or to suggest a particular strategy or approach to players.

For example: Wamae narrates the destructive entry of the TERRASAUR, laying out each Obstacle in turn and underlining the Themes. He explains that the players will have to slay the beast and protect the locals to best win the Scene. The group converses over the Themes and takes the Scene as it is drawn, adding no objectives of their own.

Wamae decides not to start the Scene with any Conditions in play, leaving it up to the players how they will address the frenzied lizard.

INITIAL DRAMA

While the table is being arranged and the Tiles set, the Judge reveals how much **Drama** each of the Obstacles has. Drama represents the momentum, energy, or intensity of the Obstacle. If an action Scene is starting, it is likely that something is already energized and moving at the heroes.

For example: Picture a hungry TERRASAUR bursting through the walls of a small religious community, surprising heroes and villagers alike. The monster easily has momentum already. Wamae places three Drama Tokens on the TERRASAUR Tile and five on the Abstract Obstacle representing THE LOCALS IN DANGER.

Starting Obstacles with Drama forces players to create clever Conditions right from the beginning. Keep this example in mind: When designing a gnarly boss fight, it is smarter to intensify the main villain by including a handful of starting Drama than by buffing him up with extra Health.

An intimidating stack of Drama creates the image of an already violent, aggressive, fuming enemy. The scene is alive and boisterous from the start, and players must establish important Conditions early on before the enemy uses all that Drama to unleash devastating attacks on the party. Adding Health to a boss only makes for a longer battle, which may or may not be more exciting.

When the action begins, the table could look something like the diagram on the opposite page.

CHANGING UP A SCENE

Once the table is set, the action ordinarily unfolds like a large puzzle the players must solve. The Judge controls the monsters while the players control the heroes, and Obstacles are tackled in turn or in tandem until the Scene ends.

While most Scenes play out like fixed puzzles, a confident Judge should feel free to change up the Tiles to respond to any new ideas or objectives.

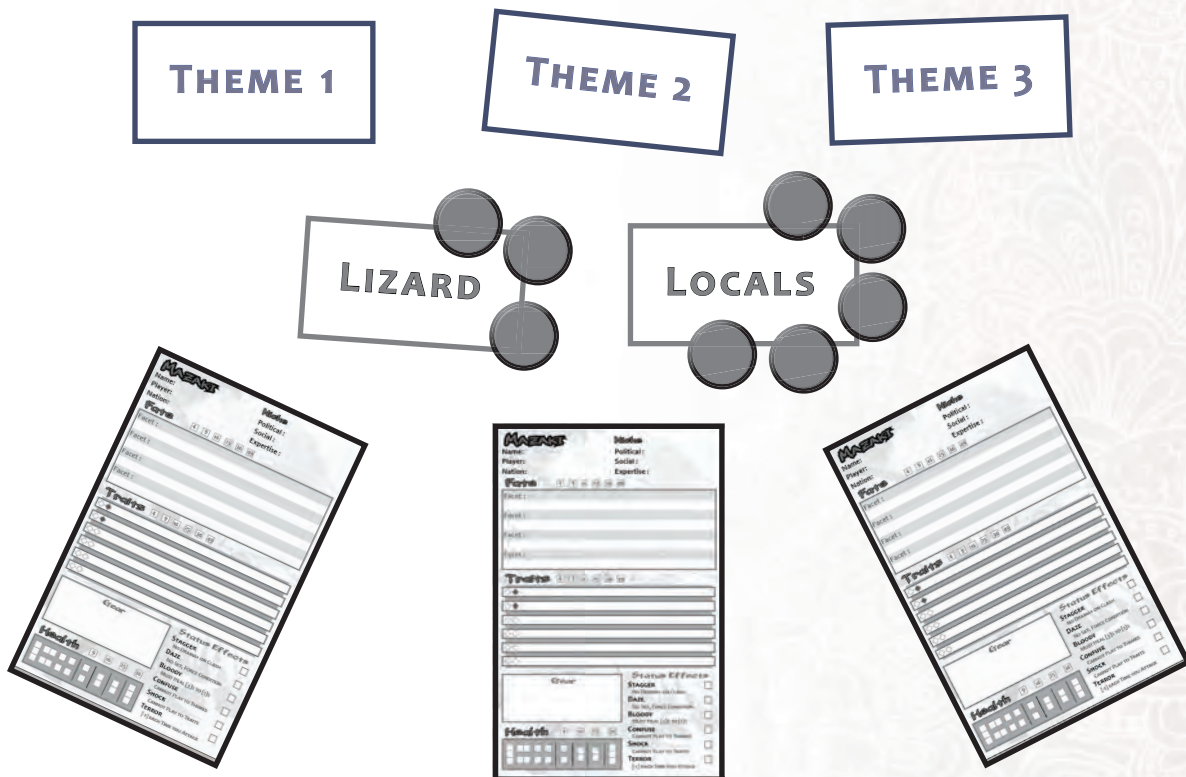
For example: If the heroes decide to flee from a fight, the Judge could create a GETTING OUT OF HERE Obstacle with its own Traits and Resistance based on the current situation. This Tile gets added to the table mid-combat without anyone needing to roll.

Or: If the players are attempting to break into a locked vault in a populated barracks, the Judge may have started with OPEN THE RUSTED VAULT and GROUP OF SOLDIERS Obstacles. Now let us imagine that during the Scene, a player has the idea to subdue one of the guards and muscle him into opening the VAULT for them. The Judge declares: "Okay, you need to

weaken the Soldiers down to a single [1] remaining AND reduce them to zero Drama. That will represent singling out a lone survivor and then calming him down to listen." This very well may obviate the need for the VAULT Tile entirely. If the guard plays along.

Or: The party is struggling to repair their tractor beam in order to stop a dangerous satellite from escaping into space. In desperation one of the players cries out, "Let's just blow it up!" The group agrees, and the Judge replaces the "REPAIR THE BEAM" Tile with a new "DESTROY THE SATELLITE" Tile. This may have consequences in the narrative, but so it goes.

Always focus on the role-playing, and let the Tiles follow the ideas and interests of the players. Designing an intricate battle that is sprung on the players as a puzzle is great, but you can keep things fluid too. Think of the Tiles as ways to track your open-ended and story-driven play, not lead it. If you feel stuck, change it up.



THE GAME IN MOTION

The Order of Things, Team-Based Turns Called Rounds, Setting Initiative, “Reaction Shots”

In a typical combat Scene, each side takes turns Round by Round until the Obstacles have all been overcome or until the heroes die. Typical Obstacles are overcome by taking damage, while Abstract Obstacles are overcome when their Drama reaches zero, i.e. when they are, in effect, “neutralized.”

ROUNDS

A **Round** includes every Tile on one side or team taking a turn. This means it will take a Player-Round and an Enemy-Round for every Character and Obstacle in the scene to have an action. The specific circumstance of the scene will determine which side gets the first Round.

Even passive and/or Abstract Obstacles will take turns: Flames will grow higher, ships will sink farther, clocks will tick. The more Obstacles in play, the more strategy surrounding who moves first, who second, and so on. Unless a special ability is in play, each Tile can take only a single turn.

Some characters may be better at winnowing down enemy Drama and so take their turns first, with other characters moving in to deal damage later. At certain times, the team may want to attempt damage with the bruiser characters first and only resort to other strategies if the frontal assault fails. Characters with multiple talents may want to hold back for a while and see how earlier actions turn out. Or maybe one player is just a bully and always wants to go first. Really, it’s up to you. Play is fast, and “table talk” often necessary.

WHAT TO DO ON A TURN

The mechanics of the **FANTAJI SYSTEM** center on two kinds of actions, **Checks** and **Challenges**. On any turn, within combat or without, a player will execute either a Check or a Challenge. Even when using a Power or special ability, the two basic options are the same.

Checks are small actions that characters take to build momentum or generate an advantage in preparation for later Challenges. Checks represent

indirect ways to engage with Obstacles. Though Checks may or may not succeed, they are not generally considered risky or dangerous. They entail one die being rolled against a Difficulty set by the Judge, and have a “pass or fail” result.

Challenges represent *direct* actions or attacks against an Obstacle that come after a series of smaller, preparatory movements. Challenges can take many forms and will not always look like the concrete attacks of lethal combat. Outside combat a Challenge might represent a clever insult, an attempt to stay awake, or a gutsy grift.

While Checks are rolled against a Difficulty to determine if they succeed, Challenges are opposed by the Obstacle itself. And because enemies are rolling dice in defense, Challenges inherently



OPENING “REACTION SHOTS”

While monsters typically begin a Scene with Drama in tow, heroes are likely to be caught flat-footed. Unless an ambush is in place, the heroes will need a while to warm up to the action.

Offering “Reaction Shots” for players is a great way to introduce them to the Scene and to give them the chance to grab some early Drama of their own. Starting with reaction shots can also clue the Judge in to how the players view and assess the Scene. It’s an easy way to make sure everyone is on the same page before larger action begins.

In home games and at conventions, we generally set the Scene first, offer the players a couple Checks to wet their feet, and then start into the combat with the monsters taking initiative.

CINEMATIC “CUT-SCENES”

Sometimes a complex Scene has more than one phase to it. What begins as the party battling a giant ROJO CHIMAERA on the steppe can quickly turn into a chase through the wilderness after the beast gets stuck by a mighty spear. This can change the Tiles on the table and generate an entirely new feel.

The best Judges have a few ideas up their sleeves for changing up longer battles in the middle of the action. One method is to trigger a “Cut-Scene” whenever a Mortal Wound is dealt. Try thinking up two or three new Themes or Conditions that can be triggered automatically after someone suffers a [3]. See discussions on pages 102 and 116 for more on combat in phases.

contain a potential counter-attack. Even a passive Obstacle such as a LOCKED DOOR can deal Stress Wounds, [1], to a hero who botches a Challenge!

Checks are how characters build the Drama and momentum that they will take advantage of on later Challenges. The more **Traits** and **Themes** you can sufficiently “play to” on a single Challenge and the more Drama you have already earned, the more dice you will roll. Keep in mind that a typical Challenge does not “cash out” or expend Drama Tokens at all. The Drama you earn carries over turn after turn unless you use a Power or trip a Condition. Keep using that momentum!

We will cover the manifold forms that Checks and Challenges can take over the following pages.

USING A POWER

Technically, there is another option available to a player on her turn, using a Power. However, most Powers can be understood as specialized ways to make a Check or a Challenge, and so do not require separate explanation here.

Some Powers will expend Drama, and others open up new ways to gain it. Some deal damage, others heal. Some cause Status Effects, others play with Conditions. Nothing is very complicated, however, and each Power will be handled in detail on pages 72–76 in the following chapter.

Once the Judge and all her players master the complementary effects of Checks and Challenges, they can start customizing the **FANTAJI SYSTEM** to suit their own games and campaign worlds.

REACHING A MILESTONE

At very specific moments of the game, players will also have the option to trigger a **Milestone**, which allows them to gain a new Trait, Power, or Health block. This is how characters “level up” in **FANTAJI**. Reaching a Milestone does not necessarily take up an entire turn, and it can even happen outside of a proper Scene. Every Milestone is unique and fits into the narrative in a unique, creative way.

We will cover the ins and outs of Character development in Chapter 3, which you can find beginning on page 55.

HOW TO TAKE A TURN

The first thing to do on any turn is describe what your character is doing. Period. It is a role-playing game, and the core of every turn is to act in line with your hero's personality and the story.

Be creative, be smart, be funny. But whatever the style, describe in one or two sentences what your character is doing. Try to be concrete and concise.

Declare what your character is doing within the action of the story and then decide if that action is intended as a Check or a Challenge. The character's quick decision about what to do comes first, and the player's tactical decision to Check or Challenge comes second.

By being concrete and concise, everyone around the table will have a solid image of what your character is doing, whether the nature of that action is physical, mental, or emotional. Take a moment to think and then declare the action.

For example: Tristan's character, Tanis, has the Iron Maiden Trait, which marks his character as tough, open to torture, and stoic. On his turn, Tristan pauses for a minute and offers: "I see the field in front of me and stand at the ready." This simple phrase—almost a non-action really—is enough to add to the story and "play to" the character's Trait. Tanis demonstrated her stoicism and responded to the imminent battle in her way. A textbook Check.

Or: Kyle's character, Hakkunen, has the versatile The Sound and the Furious Trait. The Trait covers how Hakkunen is a loud, quick-tempered, and sturdy warrior. Kyle declares: "I draw both swords and run towards my enemy, scraping the tips of my blades along the walls on either side of me. As I engage, I let out a bloody warcry and slice both blades upwards in an 'X' across his body." A textbook Challenge.

It takes Kyle two sentences, but he is still describing one concrete moment or image to the group. They can all imagine his attack as a single action.

The goal is to stay true to the character while declaring a colorful, meaningful action. The goal is not to offer a flowery or theatrical description that merely accompanies your "I wanna attack" roll.

Many actions will naturally imply whether the turn is spent as a Check or a Challenge, but not always.

For example: On a later turn, Tanis "jolts upright and tries to shake off the guards who clutch at her; she wants to send them flying as she emerges in a burst from the bottom of the dog-pile." It is a great turn, but it is not immediately clear whether the action is meant to deal damage to the guards or simply build Drama around Tanis. That's okay.

Tristan will then decide whether he wants to directly Challenge the guards for a chance at dealing damage—which could be smart if he hit several Traits and Themes in that description—or if the maneuver is meant as a display of power alone, which could be a Check and potentially build Drama.

The same action could go either way depending on the tactics and motivations of the moment.

SIGNALING TRAITS & THEMES

It is only after you describe your action and intent that the group will sort out which Traits and Themes were adequately "played to." Stopping intermittently throughout your turn to point out which Traits and Themes you are targeting breaks the immersion of the moment and more often than not results in a choppy, convoluted string of actions instead of a clear, singular image.

For example: A less experienced Kyle could have taken Hakkunen's turn with "I take out both my blades to play to my Measure Once, Cut Twice Trait, and I run down the hallway. And then I let out a warcry, playing to my The Sound and the Furious Trait. I run headlong at him to hit the Good Day to Die Theme. Oh, and I kicked off Tanis when I started running to play to the Strangers Become Friends Theme." A choppy mess of a turn.

The veteran player will give a direct and orderly description of her action and let the rest of her group point out each Traits or Themes the action "played to" to settle on her dice pool for the roll.

In clear prose declare your action. Be concrete and concise. Even if the action is mental or emotional, describe what is happening in the world of the game in one or two sentences. All you need to do is role-play the meaningful desires and instincts of your character.

The group decides together what Traits and/or Themes were “played to” in the action.

Check Challenge

“PLAY TO” 1 TRAIT OR THEME

1. Declare Check
2. Judge Sets Difficulty
3. Roll 1d10 to tie or beat Difficulty
4. Spend [1] Success on DT+ or Condition Effect

Spend [1] on:

DRAMA EFFECT: Add another Drama Token to your stack, which we write as “DT+”

“PLAY TO” MANY TRAITS & THEMES

1. Declare Challenge
2. Roll Dice
One per Drama Token
One per “Played” Trait and Theme
3. Defender Does Same
[n] = All Dice that Beat Opponent’s Highest.

Ties are Called “Clashes” : DT+ to Both

Spend [n] on any combination of:

DAMAGE EFFECT: Deal damage to an enemy in blocks of [1], [2], or [3]. With three Successes, you could deal 3[1] or 1[3] as needed

OR

AND/OR

CONDITION EFFECT: Use [1] to create, Force, or eliminate a single Condition. Multiple Successes can be used to manipulate multiple Conditions, even those created on the very same turn

MAKING CHECKS

Small Actions for Drama or Conditions, Not Risky, Pass or Fail Result, 3-5-8 Rule

A **Check** is an action meant to give the character or the entire party an advantage somehow. Checks represent small, strategic maneuvers that come before the more risky Challenges or attacks.

Checks require “playing to” a single Trait or Theme and a roll of 1d10 against a **Difficulty** that typically has a “pass or fail” outcome. A “pass” gains the character success at whatever stunt was attempted in the narrative as well as a mechanical advantage: Either a strategic benefit for the party (a **Condition Effect**) or an increase in personal momentum (a **Drama Effect**). A “fail” results in a negative outcome in the narrative and no mechanical benefit.

We will discuss Drama Effects below and wait to fully cover Condition Effects until page 42.

HOW TO ROLL A CHECK

1. The player declares a concrete and concise action for her character and her intent, and the group decides which Trait or Theme is “played to.”

2. The Judge then sets a Difficulty for the action. This is the “target number” of the roll. To keep things consistent and as objective as possible, we follow the **3-5-8 Rule** (see sidebar).

The Judge may ask what exact effect the player is aiming for to help set the Difficulty. That’s okay.

3. The player rolls. Any result that ties or beats the Difficulty results in one die worth of success, which we record as [1]. If the roll is lower than the Difficulty, the Check fails.

The group decides what a fail entails. Does the character fail the stunt, or does the stunt go through but not offer the desired advantage?

4. A winning player then decides what to do with the [1] that scored. Checks allow either a Drama Effect or a Condition Effect.

THE 3-5-8 RULE

We set all **Difficulties** at either 3, 5, or 8. That means **Checks** will have an 80%, 60%, or 30% chance of passing. This gives the Judge a simple rigor to keep the game play consistent. If the Check is good, give it a low Difficulty of 3. If it is pretty poor, give it the high Difficulty of 8. Is it somewhere in between? Then give it a 5. This keeps things simple, consistent, and still fun.

DRAMA EFFECTS

Drama is how **FANTAJI** records momentum, excitement, and intensity. You can use the [1] generated from a successful Check to score a Drama Token. We write this as “DT+” and keep track of a Character’s or Obstacle’s total Drama with physical tokens stacked on or near the Tile.

For example: Andrew says, “My warlock Xinjin stares into the embers, awaiting the coming soldiers.” The simple action plays to his character’s Burning Gaze Trait, and the Judge sets the Difficulty at 3. Andrew rolls one die and passes the Check. He then takes a Drama Token and stacks it next to his Character Tile.

The simple description above adds dramatic detail to the Scene and allows Andrew to develop his character as an ominous, slow-to-speak warlock. He is rewarded with a Drama Token for role-playing these little moments in line with his Character.

Drama Tokens offer your character more dice when Challenging and are also used to deploy certain Powers or abilities. The Grief Power, for example, allows a hero to spend her own DT to reduce an enemy’s. Note that rolling Challenges does not expend or “cash out” Drama. Keep rolling with that stack of Tokens until you lose Drama by deploying Powers or by tripping up on Conditions.

PASSIVE OBSTACLES

Some Obstacle Tiles represent passive puzzles, problems, or hurdles that do not include living beings or active agents: Obstacles such as LOCKED DOOR, SUNKEN ANTIDOTE VIAL, RUNAWAY MELON CART, or IMPRESS THE LOCAL CRIME LORD.

While such Tiles are still considered “Typical” Obstacles—they have Resistance blocks and need to be Challenged directly—they have no minds to choose actions. Despite this, such Obstacles can still make Checks as needed to further the story.

GAINING DRAMA

The Judge can take turns building Drama for the Obstacle as needed to represent how the problem or puzzle increases in intensity or danger over time.

For example: The Judge takes a turn for the RUNAWAY MELON CART, saying, “The Cart bounds further down the road, bouncing hard on the cobblestones.” This plays to the Tile’s Rickety Roller Trait. Any Drama gained can be used when the Tile rolls defense, making it harder for the players to win the Challenges needed to eventually stop the CART.

Or: The LOCKED DOOR has an Old & Rusty Trait, and the Judge takes a turn every few Rounds to build Drama and let the players know that time is running out. She says, “The Lock crumbles as the cave quakes,” and sets the Difficulty at 5.

CREATING CONDITIONS

Some passive or non-living Obstacles could even make Checks that create or manipulate Conditions.

For example: The party is at a meeting trying to IMPRESS THE LOCAL CRIME LORD. This Tile represents pretty much the entire Scene: The group of criminals, the crime boss himself, time passing, objects in the room, etc.

On the Obstacle’s turn, the Judge rolls a Check: “So far you are all dressed just like a bunch of street shmoes, and you look just like every other band of jerks who step into this office.” She plays to the Tile’s Seen It All Before

Trait and sets the Difficulty at 5. With the [1] scored by passing the Check, the Judge then establishes a “Nothing Special About the Heroes” Condition. While a bit abstract, this Condition is still a matter of objective fact about their appearance, and other Tiles can now use this fact to sap Drama from the players. For more on creating tricky Conditions see page 100.

Or: A PENETRATE THE ESTATE Obstacle stands between the party and the treasure they have been hired to steal. On the Obstacle’s turn, the Judge plays to the Tile’s A Maze of Marble Trait: “The high walls make keeping your bearings almost impossible, and every marble surface looks the same as the next.” She rolls a die against a Difficulty of 5 and passes, setting up a “The Heroes Are Lost” Condition that will sap Drama from the players as they spend turns avoiding guards and moving closer to the compound.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

In some cases a Check specific to the Obstacle and a fixed Difficulty can be written on the Tile itself. These special abilities can provide direction for how the Judge takes turns, and might act to clue the players in to the Obstacle’s severity.

For example: A LASER TRAP Obstacle with the Silent But Deadly Trait has a Special Ability written on the Tile that lets it roll against a Difficulty of 3 to “Adjust Aim,” an act of targeting that increases the Drama of the LASER. The Judge simply states, “The Laser silently adjusts its aim” on the Tile’s turn. Notice how the Difficulty alerts the players to just how dangerous the trap is. A less deadly LASER, for instance, might roll against a Difficulty of 8 instead.





Or: The **SUNKEN ANTIDOTE VIAL** represents an artifact that the players need to recover at the bottom of a large pool. The VIAL has a “Leaking Stopper” Special Ability written at the bottom of the Tile. On any turn, the Judge can roll against a Difficulty of 5 to increase the Drama of the Tile, which will make it harder for players to deal the [2] needed to recover it. Another rule written on the Tile states that the VIAL will be completely empty if it reaches 4 Drama, meaning even when the artifact is recovered it will have no nectar left. The clock is ticking for the party.

THEN AGAIN...

Of course, for certain passive Obstacles, Checks might not be appropriate. A **GIANT CHASM**, for example, could be placed on the table and never take a turn at all. Players know that sooner or later they need to get over the CHASM, but the crevasse does not itself make any Checks or Challenges.

ABSTRACT OBSTACLES

In most cases, it is easy to imagine an Abstract Obstacle making Checks to build Drama, since they generally represent a gradually escalating situation to begin with. Such an Obstacle will often roll a Check that represents little more than time passing and/or whatever danger approaching.

For example: In Heidi’s **GAMMA CENTAURI** campaign, the players are caught in a spaceship on a collision course with a nearby star. The players are frantic. Heidi creates a **CRASHING SHIP** Obstacle that will cause the death of all on board if it reaches eight Drama. Each turn she says, “The Ship pushes ever closer to the star,” and rolls against a Difficulty of 5 with the Ship’s Set Your Controls For the Heart of the Sun Trait to gain Drama. You could imagine the Difficulty changing to 3 if the ship is sped up somehow.

Or: In Chang’s **WANING MOON** campaign, he wants to make stealth a large part of the party’s infiltration of a Fey compound. Chang creates a **STAYING QUIET** Obstacle that summons guards if it reaches 4DT. The Obstacle does not take proper turns in the Scene, but a special rule on the Tile states that whenever the players do something that makes a noise, Chang rolls against a Difficulty of 5 to see if it gains Drama.

Or: A **CRASHING BUILDING** Obstacle, partially designed by Chad Stevens, rolls a Check each Round with its Moments From Ruin Trait. The Judge declares, “The walls continue to shake, dust swirling like smoke,” and rolls against a fixed Difficulty. The escalating Drama represents the building continuing to crumble with each passing minute. See page 136 for this Tile’s unique consequences.

After the SPINED TERRASAUR bursts into the Emishi shrine complex, Wamae gives the players two Checks each as “Reaction Shots” to the awesome spectacle that just threw the village into chaos. Because the TERRASAUR has 3DT to start the Scene, the heroes need a chance to build some momentum of their own. See page 29 for setup.

EMILY TURN ONE

Emily: *I do what I do best and look out for myself. Spotting a stone structure, Garre grapples up onto the top of it acrobatically, like Jackie Chan style. That’s totally both my Traits!*

Wamae: *Well, you only play to one Trait or Theme in a Check. Either way, I’ll give you a Difficulty of 3.*

Emily rolls 1d10 and passes, taking a Drama Token for Garre: *Drama plus!*

NEAL TURNS ONE AND TWO

Neal: *My rogue hardly flinches, drawing his two daggers and broadening his stance in preparation.*

He has easily played to his *Tough As Nails* Trait. Wamae sets the Difficulty at 3, but Neal fails the roll.

Neal responds quickly: *I stumble against the crowd and begin just pushing people over as they run into me, still trying to steady my stance and get a handle on what the hell is happening with that loud crash.*

He has artfully played to the *Disturbing the Peace* Theme by getting frustrated with the villagers and pushing them, and Wamae likes how Neal worked the failure of his first roll into the very source of his next. He gives Neal another Difficulty of 3, and this time Neal passes, taking a Drama Token.

Because the order of turns is up to the players, the group is fine with Neal taking his two “reaction shots” in a row. And it fit the narrative well.

ANTHONY TURN ONE

Anthony: *The great beast destroys the wall right next to Dylla, and he remembers these creatures very well. Years ago, a pair of fighting Terrasaurs snatched Dylla’s airship out of the sky as it coasted over the sands and ate half its crew. Dylla barely*

escaped. Dylla takes the moment to calm his nerves. Can my chilling flashback play to Hot Sun, Cold Blood?

The group nods, already seeing the Theme as a way of relating to the desert and its dangers. Wamae sets the Difficulty at 5, and Anthony passes.

EMILY TURN TWO

Emily has been studying her Character Tile and sees that Garre has the Gadget Asset that acts as a Check: *Can I use this now?*

Wamae was intending these Checks to be simple reaction shots to the crashing lizard, but he likes Emily’s initiative and lets her go for the Gadget.

Emily: *Okay. I’m on the roof, and I shoot my whip out to wrap around the Terrasaur’s jaw. Then I slide off the other side of the building, pulling the thing to crash into the building I was just on. That’s Slip Sliding Away.*

Wamae gives her a Difficulty of 5 because the lizard is so heavy. Emily rolls a 7 and passes! The Gadget Power lets players take a Drama Token from their enemy and move it somewhere else. Emily takes a Token from the TERRASAUR and gives it to Garre.

ANTHONY TURN TWO

Anthony decides that setting up a Condition early would be smart for a fight wherein the LOCALS IN DANGER! Obstacle starts at 5DT.

Anthony: *Knowing what these beasts are capable of, Dylla starts yelling at the locals and bossing them around. He grabs and shakes an old lady, commanding her to get the villagers into some kind of order. I think I’m playing to Disturbing the Peace, maybe?*

Wamae chuckles at how on edge the TERRASAUR makes this mild-mannered engineer and sets a Difficulty of 3, which Anthony passes.

Anthony uses the [1] to create an “Orderly Escape Plan” Condition that the group can use to sap Drama from the LOCALS IN DANGER! Obstacle. The four players talk about the Condition and pitch ideas on how they might be able to Force it later.

MAKING CHALLENGES

Moving in For The Kill, Dealing Damage, Rolling Multiple Dice Against an Obstacle

Challenges represent direct attempts to overcome an Obstacle or strike out against your enemy. Depending on the Obstacle, a Challenge could represent a physical attack, an artful performance, making an accusation, translating a joke, or even long hours of study. Whatever the case, they target an Obstacle *directly*. Challenges capitalize on Checks made and advantages gained earlier in the encounter. They engage as many dice as the player can muster and are aimed at overcoming an Obstacle's Resistance.

Keep in mind that Challenges are two-way affairs. In **FANTAJI** every Challenge entails the possibility of a counter-attack. If the defender wins, she wins.

HOW TO ROLL A CHALLENGE

- 1.** Declare your Challenge by choosing a target and describing your hero's action. Everyone decides together how many Traits and Themes are invoked by the character's declared action.
- 2.** Roll one die for each Trait and each Theme "played to" and one die for each Drama Token your hero already possesses. Grab the handful and let the dice all fly at once!
- 3.** Your opponent will declare a response, which does not necessarily have to stay defensive. Opponents can declare a counter-attack during any Challenge. The group decides which Traits and Themes have been invoked, and the defender rolls a big handful of dice (including Drama) also.
- 4.** Compare the results. The highest die wins. In fact, ALL the dice that out-score the loser's highest die win.

For example: Neal's Emishi rogue has 4DT. In a gruesome dagger strike, Neal plays to 2 Traits and 1 Theme so he rolls 7 dice. Wamae rolls for the EMBER GOBLINS with 2DT, playing to 2 Traits:

Neal rolls: 3, 4, 4, 6, 8, 9, 0
Wamae rolls: 5, 5, 6, 7

Neal has scored three "Successes" because his 8, 9, and 0 ALL beat Wamae's highest result, 7. We write this as [3].

The winner then decides how to deploy all the dice that hit, which we call "Successes." Challengers can deal Damage Effects and/or Condition Effects with their Successes, and each die that lands can be used to do something different.

Damage Effects will be discussed below, while **Condition Effects** are covered in a lengthy section dedicated to them on page 42.

DEFENDING

Defenders have the same narrative freedom as Challengers, and they can declare any action that responds to the opponent's Challenge. This could be a simple block, parry, or dodge; or defenders could interrupt or skew the attacker's actions in some way, preemptively striking on their own.

CLASH

If the two fighters' highest dice tie, it is called a "Clash." No damage is dealt, and both parties gain "DT+" from the intensity of engaging in even, heated combat. Think of how combatants tie in Kung-Fu movies or anime. Typically, it does not matter *how many* dice tie.

For example: If Andrew rolls two 9s high, and his opponent rolls one 9 high in defense, it is still a tie despite Andrew rolling more than one tying die.

Several Powers allow special things to occur "on Clash," and some of the custom mods at the end of this book offer new rules for Clashing specific to one genre or another. Check out page 155 for a good, genre-neutral example.

For Example: Wamae rolls a Challenge against Neal with the **EMBER GOBLINS**, the beasties crawling up the rogue's legs to singe his hair and bite at his flesh. Neal declares a defense: "As the goblins crawl up over my body, leaving small burns with their hot digits, I give no cry but coolly grab each one and toss it away in turn." Nyelz is letting the **GOBLINS** burn him in the narrative; his defense is not about blocking the little buggers but stylishly resisting the pain. If Neal wins the roll, then he suffers no damage from the burns.

Or: When being attacked by the electric claws of a ghost-cold **BLACKSPAWN LICH**, Erick's space cowboy, Tykus, defends: "I run towards the Lich before he gets close enough to swipe at me, jumping up in the air and bicycle kicking him three or four times square in the chest." Though Erick's defensive actions interrupt and preempt the actions declared by the attacker, that is okay.

DAMAGE EFFECTS

Dealing damage is the primary aim of most Challenges. When you win an attack or counter-attack roll, each Success is worth a single block of damage, which is why we use the shorthand "[1]" to represent both a Success and a single, small Health block.

HEALTH BLOCKS & WOUNDS

FANTAJI arranges Health as Wounds that are made up of 1, 2, or 3 squares each. Scoring with multiple Successes in a single strike is the only way to deal the bigger Wounds of damage. Typically the winner gets to decide which Wounds are dealt to the victim during combat.

For example: In **WANING MOON**, Gwen scores a solid hit against the **OGRE** with her character, Tela, landing two Successes. She can either deal a single [2] of damage to the **OGRE** or two individual [1] blocks, allocating the damage to the loser strategically.

To deal any Wound, the set number of Successes must be done all at once, meaning it takes three Successes in a single roll to deal a [3] in battle.

For example: Gwen cannot "bank" or "save" the [2] from her turn in hopes of scoring [1] later and combining the hits into a [3] block. Neither can she

cross off two of the three squares within the [3]. If the **OGRE** has only its [3] Wound left, then Gwen's attack of [2] could deal no damage at all.

For a longer discussion of how Health works in **FANTAJI**, see character creation on page 67.

MULTIPLE TARGETS

Some Powers or special situations will allow characters to roll a single Challenge against multiple targets. When this occurs, we treat each opposition individually for the most part.

For example: Andrew's warlock Xinjin can shoot fire from his hands, a Custom Power that deals magical damage and is capable of targeting a cluster of nearby enemies. Andrew describes an action that targets two enemy Tiles and rolls eight dice in the powerful Challenge.

Andrew rolls: 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 6, 9, 9

First Defender rolls: 1, 2, 7, 8, 8

Second Defender rolls: 3, 4, 5

Andrew scores [2] against the first target and [3] against the second. He deploys his Successes as though he made two separate rolls, scoring damage against each target separately.

Or: Let us say the second defender had rolled better, scoring 7, 9, 0. In this case, Xinjin would still have dealt [2] to the first target but suffers [1] from the second. Andrew deploys his Successes as he sees fit against the first Obstacle, and the Judge decides what to do with the single Success scored by the second Obstacle.

The risk in attacking two targets is that the defending Obstacles can combine their Successes against you to form a single Wound.

For example: If BOTH Obstacles from the previous example had rolled better and each scored [1] against Xinjin's fire Challenge, the two Obstacles together could deal a single [2] to the warlock instead of 2[1].

COMBO ATTACKS

In special situations and at the discretion of the Judge, two or more players may decide to attempt

a “Combo Attack” against a single target. The same theory from above can be used in reverse here: The benefit is that Successes scored by the attacking team can be added together to deal larger Wounds, while the risk is that the defending Obstacle automatically “doubles down” and may deal damage to both attackers with a single roll.

PASSIVE DEFENDERS

Rolling a Challenge in **FANTAJI** often represents a character making a literal, physical attack against a foe, but really any risky action directly targeting an Obstacle counts as a Challenge. This means that players overcoming passive Obstacles will roll Challenges just like players who are fighting.

For example: Kyle’s swordsman, Hakkunen, decides to dive after the **SUNKEN ANTIDOTE VIAL** and retrieve it. The Obstacle has a Resistance of [2], meaning it will take a solid victory of two dice in one roll to overcome. Kyle declares, “Without taking a breath, I jump into the pool and scramble in a froth of splashing water down towards the vial.” He is directly addressing the Tile and hoping to overcome the problem of the **SUNKEN VIAL** by diving after it.

In defense, the Judge rolls one die for the **VIAL**’s Small & Slippery Trait, declaring “It’s hard to keep your hands on the small bottle.” Kyle needs two dice to beat the Judge’s roll to retrieve the **VIAL**. If he scores only a single Success, he is out of luck.

Or: The **LOCKED DOOR** has a Resistance of 2[1], reflecting the two picks that need to be in place to pop the tumblers. On Erick’s turn, Tykus “blows a strand of hair out of his face and fiddles with the picks, clicking them in place while looking back over his shoulder, relying only on sound and touch.” This Challenge plays to his Cool Hand Juke and Finger on the Pulse Traits.

The Judge defends: “The heavy lock is dented and filled with flakes of rust.” Let us say Erick scores [1] in the bout. He crosses off a single Wound from the **LOCK**, and needs another Success later to finish it.

Or: Lowell’s wrestler, Smelko, “Chases down the melon cart, losing his footing and rolling down the hill after the sucker. He aims to intercept the

runaway wagon.” The Challenge directly goes after the tumbling **CART**. In defense Ryan declares that “the Cart barrels onward, hitting the stones and taking an unpredictable path.” The roll then decides if Smelko gets closer to the wagon or not.

Or: The party spends almost an hour role-playing their bravado in the gang’s office, making small Checks to build Drama now and then. Finally, it is time to pull a stunt that will win the mobster over. The **IMPRESS THE LOCAL CRIME BOSS** Tile has 3[1] of Resistance so as long as each of them scores a single Success, they will clinch the contract by the end of the Round.

Erick declares, “In a sudden but fluid movement, I slip the dagger from my boot, spin around, and throw my blade towards the biggest henchman, pinning his arm to the door and hopefully knocking the gun from his hand.” Erick scores [2] and talks with his friends about what to do. He decides to spend [1] dealing damage to the Tile—which means they have impressed the boss a little—and the other [1] creating a “Gun on the Floor” Condition.

Or: When it is finally time to leap over the **GIANT CHASM**, each member of the party needs to score [2] in a single Challenge to vault themselves over the gap. The Judge will roll one die in defense, reflecting the Tile’s Deep & Wide Trait. She does not narrate a specific “defense” but instead uses the single die as the random element in the leap.

A special ability on the **CHASM** Tile describes what happens if a players loses the Challenge. If the hero suffers any damage at all, she falls to her death in the bottomless gorge. Clashes or small victories of only a single Success will result in hanging off the edge.

STATUS EFFECTS

A few Powers and the rare piece of very fancy equipment can deal a Status Effect. The specific item will set how many Successes are needed to deploy the Effect or change its duration in some way.

For the complete list of the Status Effects, see page 77. For a discussion of dealing Status Effects with equipment, see the section on page 70.

CHALLENGE EXAMPLES

Challenges in Context, Making Attacks and Using Conditions, Players Figuring Out Strategy

After the initial reaction shots, Wamae is ready to take turns for the Obstacles. He starts with a recap of the opening actions.

Wamae: *Okay, our rogue is now standing at the ready with his knives out, the stampede of villagers giving way as it rushes along either side of him. Our engineer is shaking an old lady and organizing the masses. And Garre has just dashed the Terrasaur's head against a small hut with her whip. MY TURN!*

ABSTRACT OBSTACLE ROLLS

The Judge starts with a small Check for the LOCALS IN DANGER! Obstacle to get it out of the way.

Wamae: *In bald panic, several people run right in front of the Terrasaur. Playing on the Easy Pickin's Trait, I'm rolling against a Difficulty of 5 to increase the Drama.*

He fails the roll: *None of them get pinned or stumble, I guess. Drat!*

TERRASAUR'S ATTACK

Wamae: *The lizard just had its head slammed into the hut, but it shakes off the thud and proceeds to crash through the building to chase after Garre, chomping at her just as she lands.*

By "shaking off" the impact, Wamae played to the lizard's *Thick Skin Trait*. His "chomping" brings into play the *Razor-Toothed Maw*. And charging through the building triggers his *Titan of the Sand Trait* and the *Monster Mayhem Theme* both.

Wamae picks up six dice (2DT + 3 Traits + 1 Theme) to roll against Garre. That's an intimidating pool!

EMILY'S DEFENSE

Emily: *I guess we can imagine Garre still has the whip wrapped around his jaw if he followed her right through the building, no?*

Wamae gives a little nod, and she continues: *Garre feels the lizard above her and dives through a small window in another stone shed just across the way, trying to pull the Terrasaur into another stone wall.*

A pause: *And she, like, comes through the window and into a religious relic room or something, crashing*

over some important altar and landing amidst shattered jars and things.

Emily played to her *Slip, Sliding Away Trait* with the acrobatics and the *Monster Mayhem Theme* for aiming to add to the monstrous destruction. With her quick addition, she also snagged her *Never Leaves on the Light Trait* (disregarding the damage she herself is doing) and the *Disturbing the Peace Theme* (desecrating the religious room). Smart. Emily also rolls six dice (2DT + 2 Traits + 2 Themes).

Wamae ends up with: 3, 3, 5, 6, 8, 8
Emily scores: 1, 3, 4, 4, 9, 0

Garre has landed [2] on the TERRASAUR and decides to take that opportunity to deal 1[2] in damage. Even though Garre was only defending, she deals a significant hit to the lizard.

Wamae: *You dive into the sacred hut, breaking the altar and pulling the huge beast's head against the stone wall. THUD. Its body doesn't destroy the building, but instead just slams into the stone.*

PLAYER ACTIONS

Emily uses her *Gadget* again, this time hoping to pull the TERRASAUR's head into the small window and get it stuck. She passes, stealing a *Drama Token* from the lizard and giving it to Nyelz. This swap represents her holding the lizard in place with her whip and screaming at Nyelz: *STAB HER!*

Neal takes his turn: *I hear the crashing of the small sheds and kick my way through the crowd of peasants, knives twirling in my hands. I want to leap up at the Terrasaur and use my knives to climb up her body, stabbing and crawling up her.*

He plays to his *Tough as Nails Trait* and two Themes, *Disturbing the Peace* and *Monster Mayhem*.

Anthony: *Man! You should have said something like "I feel her heart beating as I crawl up her dry skin, stabbing and crawling up the monster." You might have gotten Hot Sun, Cold Blood for the reference to her physical touch.*

Wamae nods: *Yeah, you totally would have, but that's alright. You've still got a good roll ahead!*

CONDITION EFFECTS

Creating and Managing Conditions, How to Use Them, Guidelines, The Secret to Strategy

Characters and Obstacles can use Successes from Checks and Challenges to create and manage existing Conditions. In a Challenge, more than one Success can have a Condition Effect at the same time. For instance, scoring [3] in a Challenge could be used to create a Condition, force the very Condition just created, and eliminate another.

OFFICIAL MATTERS OF FACT

Conditions make certain elements of the story “official.” Whereas most of the descriptions and details players give on their turns are open and flexible, Conditions mark concrete “matters of fact” that are now true and “in effect” for everyone in the Scene. See the earlier discussion on page 25.

CREATING CONDITIONS

Most Conditions are made up on the spot, players turning a good idea into a mechanical advantage in the game. Creating a Condition is basically a way of saying something matters. Your character is bringing something new to the fore, making some element of the scenery or situation matter mechanically for everyone in the Scene.

While Conditions could be anything, they will make sense the more you use them. The following categories are not exclusive or exhaustive, more guidelines than true groupings.

CONCRETE NOUNS

Concrete nouns make good Conditions. When deciding what to write on the index card, think of the noun that is being invoked or introduced. What thing is it that now matters to everyone?

For example: Andrew’s warlock, Xinjin, uses [1] to create a Condition. Xinjin reaches into his belt and draws out a few handfuls of caltrops, spreading them around him in a circle. Andrew writes “Xinjin’s Scattered Caltrops” on an index card in red ink and places it down on the table. These objects matter. This Condition is open for anyone and everyone to trip on, but Andrew expects his encroaching enemies will suffer more than Xinjin by the circumstance.

It takes [1] to create, force, or eliminate a Condition. A Challenge or defense that results in several Successes will allow several Condition Effects at once.

Or: On a Check, Lowell scores [1] and uses his Success to create a “Fire on The Balcony” Condition. His character starts a fire with a tinder set he carries, and now the inferno is part of the Scene for everyone.

Or: After a powerful attack, Greg’s character, Alan, uses [1] to create “Heavy Pillar” as a Condition. The Judge had already said such a structure existed there, but Greg now makes it matter mechanically!

LOCATIONS & RELATIONS

Other than concrete nouns, relations in space also make good Conditions. Pointing out just where a character is or how she is oriented towards another object or enemy can make for smart strategy.

Or: Later in the fight, Lowell creates a “Smelko On The Opposite Balcony” Condition. In doing so, he sets up his character in a certain position in relation to the other elements of the Scene.

Keep in mind that once such a Condition is created, the character is then beholden to the position until someone spends [1] to remove the Tile. In other words, it may take an entire Check to get out of a position that you yourself created (See the example under “Eliminating Conditions” on the following page).

BROAD SITUATIONS

Outside combat, the most common Conditions are often broad situations or truths. Though abstract, situational Conditions are still “matters of fact” that are used to attenuate Drama in the same way more concrete Conditions are. Because they often relate to information on a grand scale, possible situations are likely to be predefined by the module, specific Tile, or the mind of the Judge.

For example: The city councilman has his fingers in at least a dozen illegal activities. The Judge creates a “Corruption Afoot” Condition that the party first uncovers through role-playing. Throughout the rest of the campaign, the players reference this Condition in Checks to gain leverage and reduce the Drama of the councilman before they try to take him down.

However, players can Create situational Conditions as well. Different Judges may vary on how much liberty they let players have when creating new information in a campaign, but your group will naturally settle on conventions and habits for determining the scope a Condition can take.

For example: With his back up against the wall, Taylor uses a small victory against the twin swordsmen to push the control panel on the airship and send the vessel spiraling. He tries to create a “Shaking Airship” Condition. It is up to the Judge whether a quick tug of a steering wheel could set such a universal Condition.

Or: Earlier in the campaign, when Xinjin was casting magics around a small village, Andrew used a spare [1] to intimidate the people with his power. He asked to create a “Villagers in Awe of Xinjin” Condition, and it was up to Dieter to determine if that fit.

For great ideas covering how to use situational Conditions, see the sections on running a mystery or a criminal investigation on page 101.

FORCING CONDITIONS

Conditions are like land-mines hiding out on the battlefield waiting for players to trip over them either on purpose or by accident. When a Condition is targeted strategically with [1] to harm a foe, we say it is being **Forced**. This means that one player comes up with a reasonable narrative effect that uses an existing Condition against her opponent.

For example: Later in his fight, when Xinjin is wrestling with an enemy, he scores [3] in a Challenge. Andrew uses [2] to deal damage and the remaining [1] to Force the earlier Condition: “I want to throw the guy down to deal the damage but make sure he lands on the caltrops to really mess with him.” The enemy loses a Drama Token. We say, “DT Minus.”

Or: After winning a Challenge with some undercover assassins, Lowell uses [1] to “kick and toss them off the ledge I’m on.” He Forces “Smelko On The Opposite Balcony” to justify his perfect position for such a move. No extra damage is dealt when the assassins suffer the Condition; the loss of Drama Tokens represents the pain and the lost momentum.

MULTIPLE VICTIMS

Depending on how you describe the way your hero Forces a Condition within the narrative, you may end up sapping Drama from more than one target at a time, potentially even yourself!

For example: The **GOBLIN KIDNAPPERS** module includes a Scene that begins with a “Loose Rocks” Condition. This can be used by anyone, but Forcing “Loose Rocks” would affect everyone in the room who has not explicitly found cover. Such a Condition would not allow you to name one specific target.

ELIMINATING CONDITIONS

Conditions can be eliminated from play at any time by a Character or Obstacle spending [1] to overcome the circumstance, so long as the actor actually has some feasible means to do so.

A Condition that seems to be connected to the free will of one character or another is not worded very well and will lead to arguments at the table. Conditions always require [1] to remove so they should represent a shared situation or matter of fact beyond the intentions of a single character.

For example: Let us say Greg has created an “Alan Has the Thief in a Headlock” Condition. When Greg later wants to simply “let go,” the Judge tells him he needs to score a [1] first. Greg is confused: “Why can’t I just let go? I want to release the headlock.” It was a poorly written Condition to begin with.

“Alan And Thief Grappling” is worded much better. It has the same purpose, but the language reflects that the situation is not under Alan’s direct control. Though initiated by Alan, the Condition is true for all, a fact everyone can utilize in one way or another.

In this way, characters can “paint themselves into a corner,” which makes Conditions the very rope

with which an unskilled player hangs herself. Every single Condition adds a tricky element to the story that could go for or against the heroes.

TRIPPING CONDITIONS

While Forcing Conditions becomes one of the most strategic elements in the game, that someone can **Trip** a Condition inadvertently is the true power of these Tiles. Conditions are always ready to cause trouble, and careless role-players will very quickly discover the impact a well-designed Condition can have on a busy battlefield.

An existing Condition is said to be Tripped whenever a player declares an action that would be reasonably hindered by it. This could happen on any Check, Challenge, or defense roll. Every word the player says in declaring her action is crucial. Drama loss from Tripping a Condition is immediate.

For example: Later in his fight, Andrew defends against an Eljuk swordsman and declares, “I roll backwards out of the way.” Dieter lifts a finger: “Ooh, looks like you rolled through those caltrops. Xinjin suffers the Condition. Drama Minus, my friend.” Andrew grumbles but removes a Token from his stack before his defense roll takes place.

Importantly, neither Forcing nor Tripping a Condition removes it from play. The loss of Drama represents the character suffering or struggling with the Condition, not overcoming or erasing it.

For example: Xinjin’s caltrops are still in play even though they have been Forced against the warlock’s adversary once and were also Tripped.

To decide if a Condition is Tripped, just ask:
Would **this** make it harder to do **that**?

SKIRTING AND SURFING

In most cases, Judges will not have to make an argument for a Condition being Tripped. Players will be vigilant, eager to remind the Judge when any declared action comes remotely close to Tripping

a Condition they have created. If the Condition obviously hinders the action of the character, one DT is immediately pulled from the offending Tile.

More often the trick will be explaining how a particular action does not Trip on a clever Condition. We have two guides that can help with that question. First, a character avoids Tripping a Condition if she **Skirts** it. This happens when the character acknowledges, addresses, or successfully avoids the Condition in her original declaration.

For example: On a later turn, Andrew makes sure to avoid the caltrops. He states, “Hopping over the ring of spikes, I unleash dark smoke and bursts of flame from my hands, raining down fire on my enemies.” His action explicitly avoids the Condition in a reasonable manner. No carelessness there.

Or: To defend the assassins’ pistols, Lowell “jumps straight up, grabbing a fixture on the ceiling and curling his body up over the paths of the bullets like a swinging gorilla.” Because Smelko is fixed on a small balcony by the Condition he created earlier, dodging bullets to the left or the right could have lost him Drama. Fortunately, he jumped straight up!

Simply mentioning a Condition is not enough to Skirt it so be careful to phrase your action in a way that truly takes account of or avoids the hindrance.

Another method of avoiding Conditions is by **Surfing** them, by turning them into an advantage or capitalizing on them somehow.

For example: With “Alan And Thief Grappling” in play, Greg declares, “I roll over the burglar’s back, grabbing at the sides of his neck as I land to flip him over me.” Greg perfectly uses the Condition as a pivotal part of what his action entails. He turns it into a good thing. Surfing the Condition does not offer him any extra dice, but Ryan will likely Trip it on the THIEF’S defense if he is not careful.

In these ways, even tricky Conditions can be surmounted by the clever player. Remember, Conditions are meant to elicit role-playing and creativity from players, and even a Condition that never gets Forced or Tripped still adds to the tension (and thus the fun) of the Scene.

CONDITION EXAMPLES



Conditions in Action, Creating and Tripping, Sapping Drama from Enemies, Interpreting

The following turns come scattered about over the next few Rounds, each dealing with a Condition.

WAMAE'S TURN

Wamae wants the TERRASAUR to pin Garre inside the little religious hut she escaped into and passes a Check to do so. Creating a Condition, he initially writes "Garre Pinned Inside Hut" on a Tile.

The group discusses the Condition to get a feel for its scope and substance, and Anthony suggests that the wording doesn't make the Condition sound particularly "universal" (See page 25).

After a little more discussion, Wamae changes the Tile to read "Terrasaur Guarding Hut Door," but then that seems more an intention than action. The group settles on "Terrasaur Blocking Hut Door."

This has the same initial effect, pinning Garre inside, but the focus is now on what the TERRASAUR is concretely doing, not what it is *intending* to do.

ANTHONY'S LATER TURN

Later in the fight, Dylla scores [1] against the TERRASAUR in a Challenge but wants to somehow sap a Drama Token from the LOCALS IN DANGER! Obstacle.

Anthony: *Can I target the OTHER Obstacle with a Condition during a Challenge?*

Wamae replies: You aren't exactly "targeting" an Obstacle with a Condition. You are Forcing, or "activating," the Condition. The way you narrate your maneuver determines who all will suffer. Absolutely you can Force a Condition that hinders the LOCALS IN DANGER! Just be careful the way you Force the Condition doesn't also sap Drama from you or your teammates as well.

Anthony narrates: *Instead of dealing damage to the titan, I bellow and demonstrate my power over him for just a moment, enough to spur the folks who are following the escape plan onward.*

He does a perfect job tying his original Challenge into the actions that Force the "Orderly Escape Plan" Condition from earlier. And nothing about his actions would hinder himself or his teammates.

WAMAE'S LATER TURN

The Judge rolls a Challenge against Neal's rogue: *The monster chases you through the streets, stomping structures and chomping at your heels.*

Neal immediately responds: *Dude, how can you chase me AND block the door? You just tripped that "Terrasaur Blocking Hut Door" Condition!*

Wamae concurs and immediately removes the final Drama Token from the TERRASAUR before he rolls his Challenge against Nyelz. Neal pulls together a weak defense, and the lizard scores [3], looking to deal some heavy damage.

Well, now what? The TERRASAUR just attacked despite the Condition. Is it still in front of the door? How can it be blocking the door if it just bit Nyelz in a far street? Do we get rid of the Tile? Is all lost? Is there some kind of time paradox? Is life unraveling?

Relax. The Condition Tile is still in play and still the "official" position of the TERRASAUR. The lizard suffered a penalty for charging away, and the basic details are unchanged. Be creative, and let the narrative resolve in a way that satisfies all the Tiles.

Wamae replies: *The Terrasaur grabs you up in its jaws and shakes you around, throwing you back towards the hut to deal [2]. It then charges at you and stomps over your injured body to deal the next [1], ending up again near the hut.*

EMILY'S LATER TURN

Emily makes a Check: *I slip out the same window I came in through and clamber up another building to secure a good vantage point.*

Wamae facepalms: *Yeah, that was a pretty easy way to avoid my silly Condition covering the door, huh? Difficulty of 3.*

Emily expertly "skirts" the Condition and passes her roll. It really was a fantastic maneuver. Garre passes her Check and so officially gets out of the hut, thus leaving the Condition behind for the foreseeable future. She also gains DT+ with her Success because she did not have to waste a [1] Eliminating the Condition. She skirted very well.

ENDING THE SCENE

Defeating the Obstacles, Earning Themes, Healing Characters & Familiars

When the Obstacles have all been defeated or the action halted, the Scene is over. The Judge can always set other victory or defeat conditions ahead of time as well when needed.

USE DRAMA TO HEAL

After the Scene, build a single stack of Tokens out of all the remaining Drama. Include the Drama from Characters and their Assets and Familiars as well as any Drama that was left on defeated Obstacles. In **FANTAJI**, this pile of Tokens at the end of a Scene is the only way to heal your characters naturally.

The entire party “cashes out” all their Drama, and then chooses how to heal individuals together. Heroes cannot hoard or claim their own Drama Tokens for themselves. Each Token can be used only once with Wounds healed in any order.

HEALING

- 1 Drama Token - Heals [1]
- 4 Drama Tokens - Heals [2]
- 9 Drama Tokens - Heals [3]

For example: At the end of a grueling battle, Dieter's players are heavily injured. Xinjin suffers 2[2] (two Flesh Wounds), Brostar [3] / [1] (a Mortal Wound and a Stress Wound), and Alandra [2] / 3[1] (a Flesh Wound and three Stress Wounds).

Dieter counts up 12 Drama from the heroes and adds to the pile six additional Tokens from Obstacles that were defeated while still holding Drama. The party has 18 Drama Tokens to heal with and must decide together what Wounds take priority.

They decide to heal Brostar's Mortal Wound first, which costs the group 9 Tokens. Xinjin and Alandra each heal a Flesh Wound next, costing 8 Tokens total. That leaves the party with only a single Drama left, which they offer to Alandra to heal one of her Stress Wounds.

RETAINING DRAMA

In a series of high-action Scenes, the Judge may allow the party to decide whether or not they want to “cash out” their Drama for healing. The default mode is to return all Character Tiles to zero Drama before the next Scene, but in certain situations it will better fit the narrative to maintain the party's Drama for the next encounter. What they miss in healing they retain in momentum.

OTHER DRAMA

The Judge may count Drama attached to ambient Obstacles and/or Tokens left over on “countdown” clocks (see page 96 for more on using Obstacles to record time). Any special rewards or Drama banked from outside rolls that led up to this Scene can be counted as well.

NOT ENOUGH DRAMA?

If the party has no Drama or very few Tokens, then they cannot heal. No matter how much time passes before the next Scene within the narrative, the stack of Drama Tokens at the end of a Scene is the only way to heal.

Any injury left after the battle is considered part of the narrative. These are the Wounds that become meaningful parts of recovery and role-playing.

For example: Xinjin cannot heal his second [2] with the Drama remaining, and so this Wound will carry over to the next Scene. Even if the following Scene takes place two months later in-game, Xinjin is still injured. Consider the Flesh Wound a true injury or ailment that does not simply fade with time. Maybe Xinjin suffers a broken bone or wears a bandage. Either way, the character is markedly “injured” from the battle and cannot heal until another dramatic, meaningful event occurs. This is the stuff of legend, and wearing a cast for a while isn't so bad.

Carrying over old Wounds is what makes combat dangerous in **FANTAJI**. It would be a rare and terrifying Scene that could wipe out a completely healthy hero from start to finish. But as a campaign continues, your heroes will find themselves in various states of injury between battles.

Resist the urge to let heroes heal outside the default rules of “cashing out” Drama. It will be the lingering ailments and injuries that make most encounters dangerous, and they aid the story.

For example: Three Scenes later, Xinjin is still suffering the Flesh Wound. The group has been low on Drama finishing out the previous encounters, and each time combat starts, Andrew worries if more injuries will accrue. The group has already decided that Xinjin has a concussion, and they use the injury during role-playing to further the narrative.

AWARDING THEMES

Also at the end of each Scene, the Judge decides which character demonstrated each Theme the best and awards her the Tile. While being strict and

discerning is important, a good Judge will also be fair-minded and make sure each player feels useful and invested in the game.

For example: At the end of the battle with the TERRASAUR, Wamae gives Dylla the Hot Sun, Cold Blood Theme because Tony developed a new meaning for the Tile and “played to” it the most. Emily receives both Monster Mayhem and Disturbing the Peace for her demolition work during the fight (See below for Neal’s reward).

Your group can be as serious and competitive as they want while awarding Themes. Creating your own guidelines or mini-game is allowed and encouraged. Whatever keeps people invested in their characters and the art of role-playing will keep the game fun.

REWARDS TIED TO OBSTACLES

Some Obstacles will unlock additional Themes during the Scene or offer hidden or secret Themes at the end of an especially tricky encounter. The Judge can be creative with tying Themes to particular kinds of actions or victories. However, make sure to begin each Scene with colorful, meaningful Themes as well: Don’t save too many for special triggers.

For example: When the players defeated the LOCALS IN DANGER! Obstacle, Wamae added a Bold Heroics Theme to the Scene. This was used just like any other Theme for the remainder of the fight, with Neal winning it by the end.

See page 98 for more ideas on using Themes creatively.

In the BLOODSBANE setting, TROLLS like these can use [3] from a Challenge to sap memories from their target, stealing a previously won Theme from the player hit.

See page 166 for more.



ENTIRE SCENE EXAMPLE

Spending a Few Pages Putting it All Together, Setting a Scene, Checks and Challenges in Order

Chang and his group of friends are playing their own **FANTAJI** game, **WANING MOON**. At this moment in the story, a group of professors is pursuing a young athlete into the woods near Norwich Academy after he showed signs of Fey shape-shifting during practice. The teachers are charged by the Order with protecting the local community from hellspawn creatures that infest the sleepy Maine township, and this student is a wildcard.

SETTING THE SCENE

Chang narrates how the teachers catch up with Troy just as he concludes his shape-shifting. He now argues with a fussy IMP while struggling to open an old, rusted gate that looks like it might lead to the Academy's underground boiler room:

Chang: *The Imp appears very upset that Troy is attempting to enter the doorway in broad daylight.*

You hear the two of them arguing in a goblin tongue as you approach, which suggests Troy has some familiarity with the Fey already. When they see you, they put aside their conflict and turn with weapons drawn. The Imp carries a spear and Troy brandishes newly grown claws on his fingers. It looks as though violence is upon you, though fighting fire with fire is not always the best response.

THEMES

The group already has a recurring Theme they like, *Raging Hormones*. The rest of the Themes are written by Chang while preparing the night's adventure: *A Whole New World*, *Hunters Becoming The Hunted*, and *Just The Beginning*. Chang imagines he will reuse one or two of these Themes in other Scenes tonight and in the ongoing campaign. He hopes that having a set of nine or ten recurring Themes will add a sense of emotional consistency and rhythm to the longer narrative.



OBSTACLES

Chang narrates: *The animated Imp looks fierce as he points a yard-long spear at you, his mind set on protecting whatever might lie behind the door.*

He reveals the IMP GUARD tile with three Drama Tokens already on it. The Tokens represent both how agitated the IMP is now in addition to his constant readiness to face intruders.

IMP GUARD: *Much to His Chagrin, Devil in The Details.* **Powers:** Charged, Reflex. 4[1].

He then places a KEEPING TROY FROM IRON GATE Obstacle on the table with no Drama Tokens.

Chang: *This is an Abstract Obstacle that represents keeping Troy outside the door. It will take turns generating Drama with small Checks. If the Tile reaches three Drama, Troy is through the door and locking it behind him.*

KEEPING TROY FROM IRON GATE: *Grate Escape.*

Resolution: If the GATE gains 3DT, the OGRE TROY has escaped beyond pursuit into the caverns.

He then reveals the OGRE TROY Tile: *Enraged in his new body, Troy begins with five Drama. He is a hulking Ogre, more monster than man now.*

OGRE TROY: This is the nascent Fey form of Troy. It replaces his human Tile entirely. **Traits:** *Inhuman*

The significance of Troy being able to fully shape-shift resonates with the players on both mechanical and narrative levels. Using an entirely different Tile for his OGRE form, rather than simply adding an Asset, alerts the players that Troy is a true “shape-shifter” and thus deeply intertwined with the Fey. In the **WANING MOON** campaign setting, only an individual heavily influenced by the Fey would require two Tiles. See page 190 for more on “Essence” in **WANING MOON**.

Instinct, More Monster Than Man, The Shoulders of Giants. **Powers:** Heavy, Big (see Dual Wield), Quake, Roar (see Pacify), Rumble (Whenever an “Ogre Beating Chest” Condition is in place at the start of his turn, OGRE TROY gains DT+). [3] / 2[2] / 2[1].

Chang explains that the team may have a chance of reasoning with Troy, but only *after* they get his Tile down to zero Drama and “Stress” him.

“REACTION SHOTS”

Chang gives each player one Check to let the team prepare for combat. Characters can aim for either building Drama or creating needed Conditions.

Gwen: *Tela shivers for a moment, imagining how much of Troy is left inside that drooling, snarling Ogre. She swallows hard and draws attention to herself as she darts between him and the door.*

She plays to Whole New World with her emotional response and rolls a successful Check against a Difficulty of 3. Gwen uses her success to Set a “Tela Between Troy and The Gate” Condition.

Omer: *Professor Aciksoz, a shape-shifter himself, knows what Troy is going through on his first transformation and tries to issue some soothing words, saying, “This is your first shift, and it will only get worse. Let us help you.”*

Omer plays to Just The Beginning and aims to establish a “Teacher and Student Suffering The Same Fate” Condition that points out the brute fact of their similar situations. Chang allows it, setting a Difficulty of 5, but Omer fails the Check.

Anindita: *I stay still, sizing up the imp and readying for a later attack.*

With that simple non-action, Anindita plays to Esther’s Seen Not Heard Trait. She lets the Character’s Trait inspire how she will respond to the surprising new situation. Chang likes how Esther’s personality is already coming into play in the Scene and sets the Difficulty at 3. Anindita passes the roll and takes a Drama Token.

Pay attention to which of your Themes provide the best variety of uses so you can select the right ones to replay later

ENEMY ROUND

Chang starts off the Scene with the passive Obstacle, playing to its *Grate Escape Trait*. The turn simply represents Troy inching closer to the door. Chang sets the Difficulty at 3 and passes the roll, giving one DT to the Tile.

THE IMP'S TURN

Chang, for the IMP: *The creature fumes, yelling at you all in goblin gibberish, before squinting his eyes and darting forward towards the talking Professor Aciksoz.*

He plays to both of the IMP's Traits (the first for being so irritated and the second for "squinting" to home in on the details) and two Themes (*Hunters Become The Hunted* for the IMP attacking the pursuers and *Just The Beginning* for this being the first move). With his three DT, Chang prepares to roll seven dice against Omer.

Omer: *Professor Aciksoz moves forward to intercept the spear, squatting down and parrying the head of the weapon up and out of the way.*

He blurts out his response before considering what Traits or Themes his actions play to, and the party comes up with few answers.

Anindita: *It seems like you play to Aciksoz's Tried and True Trait by executing a textbook Kung Fu defense. Maybe because it is your first physical move, you gain the Just The Beginning Theme?*

The group concurs, and the men roll:

Chang rolls: 3, 5, 6, 6, 8, 0, 0
Omer rolls: 2, 7

Chang: *The Imp scored three Successes, so I will deal your Mortal Wound!*

THE OGRE'S TURN

Chang, for OGRE TROY: *The Ogre growls loudly and beats his chest.*

Chang is rolling a Check to establish the powerful "Ogre Beating Chest" Condition and sets the Difficulty at 3. The players begin listing which Traits

and Themes are hit before remembering that a Check only requires one marker and one die. Chang decides that he has played to the Ogre's *Inhuman Instinct Trait* and passes the Check.

The three turns rolled by Chang count as one complete Round. The players will now get a chance to play a full Round too, each hero taking one turn.

At the onset of any new Round, see who has "At Will" Powers and think a little about when might be a good time to use them. An "At Will" Power grants the hero a small, free move once per Player Round that does not take up her regular turn. For more on Powers, see page 60 in the following chapter.

PLAYER ROUND

Anindita: *You seem the better fighter than me, Gwen, so why don't I try for the small moves while you jump in to help Aciksoz?*

Gwen: *I get your drift, but how can Esther make use of the Condition I made about Tela?*

Chang and his players discuss options just to be clear about how Conditions work, and nobody can think up a good way that Esther could target only the OGRE by Forcing the Condition Tela created.

OMER'S TURN

Omer: *Continuing with my parry, I pull myself forward along the spear and send three punches into the chest of the Imp. I think that's Tried and True again, and also Hunters Become The Hunted and Just the Beginning for continuing my motion.*

Everyone agrees, and Chang responds: *The Imp grimaces as the first punch lands, screaming more in frustration with himself than pain. He lashes out with his hand and grips Aciksoz around the neck, hitting a pressure point just as the third punch lands.*

Omer rolls: 6, 8, 9
Chang rolls: 1, 1, 3, 4, 7, 8

The **WANING MOON** setting can be played as a dark urban fantasy or as a “Monster of The Week” high school comedy with fantastic elements

Omer uses the single Success to deal damage with his punches, and Chang marks [1] off on the IMP GUARD’S Tile.

GWEN’S TURN

Gwen: *Tela draws up her cane and pulls off the false tip, revealing a blade. Taking aim only for a moment, she throws it like a helicopter blade at the Imp.*

Omer: *What about the Condition?*

Chang: *I don’t think Tela did anything that would trip over her being between the Ogre and the door. She’s solid. And I am fine giving her both of Tela’s Traits (Underneath It All, Throw My Toys Around) and Hunters Become the Hunted.*

Gwen: *Can I get Raging Hormones too since this is me avenging my boyfriend after his dire wound?*

Chang nods and offers a defense: *The Imp hears your raging, hormonal battle cry and spins just in time to block, cursing under his breath the whole time. He tries blocking with the professor’s body.*

Gwen rolls: 7, 9, 9, 0
Chang rolls: 5, 6, 8, 8

Whoa! With [3] landing, Tela slays the IMP.

ANINDITA’S TURN

Anindita: *We need to get rid of that “Beating Chest” Condition or he gains another Token on the next turn! Esther studies Troy’s Ogre form and ascertains its proper taxonomic class, running through her database-like memory for exploitable weaknesses. Without a sound, she bolts at the Ogre and smashes her cane against its knee.*

The group gives her both her Traits (*Seen Not Heard* and *A Library of Congress*) and *Just The Beginning*. With the Drama Token she earned during the reaction shots, that gives her four dice.

Anindita: *No! I just wanted that to be a Check to try removing the Condition. Would my cane strike not be enough?*

Chang: *The Ogre is huge and broad, and you explicitly mentioned striking his knee... If you are*



trying to cause enough pain or discomfort to make him flinch, I will set the Difficulty at 8.

Anindita rolls a single die and fails the Check. The players all groan at the failed intervention.

NEXT ENEMY ROUND

With the IMP dead, Chang starts off the Round by rolling for the IRON GATE Obstacle: *Troy charges towards Tela and the door, still mindless with the pain of transformation and bent on escape.*

Chang “skirted” the Condition by including Tela’s presence in Troy’s action. He rolls the Check and passes, the IRON GATE Tile now standing at 2DT.

THE OGRE’S TURN

Chang takes a Drama Token per the OGRE’s Rumble Power, the Tile now at 6DT, and declares: *Still beating his chest with one hand and running on three limbs like a hostile gorilla, the Ogre barges into both Tela and Esther with his lowered upper-body.*

Chang defends his playing to all three OGRE Traits as well as two Themes, *Whole New World* (for Troy testing out and stretching his new body) and *Raging Hormones* (for the obvious rage). With his Drama Tokens, that gives him 11 Dice to roll against both players (per his Big Power). He also “surfed” Tela’s Condition by co-opting it directly.

Remind players that attacking enemies with large stacks of Drama will only lead to more Clashes (and more Drama)

Anindita: *Damn. Esther got too close when she struck his knee, I guess! Okay... Without a peep, my eyes go wide as the Ogre turns on me and starts to run. Never having faced such a brute before, I try to see this monster as an abstract specimen from a book, lifting my cane to strike a second remembered weak point under its ribs.*

Her turn is a bit sprawling, but the players can see it as a single image or moment of the story. She grabs four dice (two Traits, the Whole New World Theme, and one Drama Token).

Gwen: *Tela throws her body at the oncoming Ogre, aiming beneath the waving arm and at his legs.*

She stops after the short sentence, and everyone settles on three dice for Tela (also two Traits and the Whole New World Theme).

Chang rolls: 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 6, 7, 9, 0, 0
Anindita rolls: 5, 5, 7, 8
Gwen rolls: 2, 3, 0

When settling three-way Challenges, imagine the solo enemy rolls two pools of dice with identical results. In other words, Chang's entire roll is lined up against Anindita's as in a typical Challenge. The same pool is then lined up against Gwen's as though an entirely independent Challenge. The only point of convergence (which does not come into play here) occurs when both defenders win, and their multiple Successes can be compounded into larger Blocks of damage.

In this instance, Troy scores [3] on Esther and "Clashes" with Tela. The party then works to negotiate what happened, with Chang finalizing.

Chang: *The OGRE's waving arms topple quiet Esther, who got too close when she struck his knee, and he stomps over her as he charges. He thunders toward Tela, who—*

Gwen interrupts: *Let's say I was rolling underneath him and trip him.*

Chang: *Well, you want to maintain your Condition, and we have to settle this as a Drama-building Clash, like two waves crashing together. Let's say he*

thunders toward Tela, who avoids being stomped by swinging herself under the brute's waving arm and up onto his back. Your weight throws him off, and you're both spinning in place near the door.

The group enjoys the narrative interpretation of the result, and both Troy and Tela gain DT+. Anindita cringes at her severe loss and marks the Mortal Wound off her Character Tile.

NEXT PLAYER ROUND

The power of the OGRE's Drama has been adequately displayed, and now the players realize the importance of useful Conditions. The passive IRON GATE Tile is not the only threat in the Scene!

GWEN'S TURN

Gwen: *I'm going to Force this "Tela Between Troy and The Gate" Condition somehow... With all her weight and new adrenaline, Tela pulls the Ogre towards the gate, hoping to damage it or jam it shut. That should make it harder for him to get in.*

Chang sets the Difficulty of the Check, which Gwen passes, and he removes a Drama Token from the IRON GATE Tile.

OMER'S TURN

Omer: *Well, I'm busted up, but still in the fight. While running towards the Ogre, Aciksoz tugs Tela's cane-sword from the Imp's body and replaces its discarded cap. He then comes at the Ogre like a hockey cross-check with the staff. I want to help Tela tip him over and Force that same Condition on him.*

The group deliberates for a while over the concrete effect of the Condition and whether Omer's Check is legitimate. Tela is officially between the OGRE and the GATE; that detail is set. However, the detail about her climbing the OGRE was only fluff that came up in the story. Which detail would Aciksoz's declared action actually be taking advantage of: Tela's lateral position between the OGRE and the GATE, or the fact that she is on top?

Chang declares that the narrative event of Tela "pulling" or "tugging" the OGRE against the door, willingly pinning herself to keep the GATE shut, is a good use of the official Condition that does not

change its core. He decides that Aciksoz is indeed pressing the advantage of Tela being between the OGRE and the GATE to hit it from behind.

Chang sets the Difficulty at 5, which Omer passes easily enough, and then takes 1DT off the OGRE.

ANINDITA’S TURN

Anindita: *Would it be too much if I did the same? Without any vocal communication or planning, I see what Aciksoz is doing and silently add my weight to the cross-check.*

The group agrees and settles on Esther playing to *The Hunter Becomes The Hunted* in vengeance against the beast. The players get a chuckle out of the image of two bloody and injured humans just throwing themselves at the monster.

Chang sets the Difficulty at 8 for Anindita’s piggy-backing effort. Luckily, she passes, and the Judge removes another Drama Token from the OGRE Tile.

FINAL PLAYER ROUND

After a few more Rounds back and forth, the players are all injured and tempted to flee. They have so far kept Troy from getting through the door, but the cost in blood has been high.

Chang declares that he would not create an Obstacle to stifle their flight; if they want to run, Troy will let them. The declaration comes across as a taunt, which is what Chang intended. The OGRE has no Drama left and serious injuries, and efforts to open conversation have failed. The party makes the hard choice: They resolve to slay him in order to protect the Academy and themselves.

GWEN’S TURN

Gwen: *Since Professor Aciksoz holds my cane-sword against the Ogre, I reach down and pull the handle with the blade out to make my final stand in front of the door. As the monster continues his barrage of fists and claws, I suffer beneath the blows and swing my weapon gracefully up towards his throat.*

The group decides she has played to both her Traits and two of the Scene’s Themes. Gwen prepares to roll four dice against Chang, who now shows fear.

Chang: *Troy does indeed barrage you with fists and claws, the monster in him fully awake.*

He has played to *Raging Hormones*, *A Whole New World*, *Inhuman Instinct*, and *More Monster Than Man*.

Gwen rolls: 5, 6, 8, 9

Chang rolls: 2, 4, 5, 6

The players cheer in unison as Chang marks the second [2] off the OGRE’S Tile, leaving it with only its Mortal Wound remaining.

ANINDITA’S TURN

Anindita: *I watch in stillness for less than a second as Tela jabs the sword up into the Ogre’s jaw, noting the durability of its skin and mandible. With a sudden blink, I leap up high and land against the Ogre’s head, pushing it further onto the blade.*

Chang: *Wow. Watching your trajectory, the Ogre pulls away from the blade and ducks his head, shrugging up his large shoulder to meet your blow.*

The players point fingers and yell, arguing that Chang just made an exceptionally human and calculating defense, wasting the OGRE’s best Traits.

Anindita rolls three dice (*Seen Not Heard*, *A Library of Congress*; *Whole New World*) against Chang’s one (*The Shoulders of Giants*) and scores [3]. Victory!

SCENE RESOLUTION

Chang awards *Raging Hormones* to Tela for her continued anger and energy throughout the combat. To Anindita he grants *The Hunters Become the Hunted* for Esther’s final attack and *A Whole New World* for always including observation and curiosity in her descriptions. And Omer’s Professor Aciksoz earns *Just The Beginning* to represent the trauma of his very first month on the job.

The IMP GUARD had 3DT when it died, and each of the players ended with a single Drama Token. That results in 6DT available for healing. Neither Omer nor Anindita can heal smaller Wounds before their Mortal Wounds are treated (see “Bloodied” on page 77). Gwen takes all six Tokens, healing 1[2] and 2[1]. The party is battered but alive.



CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER CREATION

Character creation is all about fleshing out a skeleton with narrative details. You roll up a random Niche and two random Powers, and then you connect the dots however you like. What do the elements each mean? How do they fit together?

SUMMARY

Making Sense of Character Creation, Covering The Process From Start to Finish

Creating a character for **THE FANTAJI ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEM** includes six broad steps: Niche, Powers, Traits, Health, Milestones, and Equipment. While your game may accommodate countless alterations and additions, these six elements will most likely be included in every **FANTAJI** game. The core mechanics take them for granted in one form or another, making them the skeleton of any game.

THE PROCESS

STEP 1: ROLL NICHE

STEP 2: ROLL TWO POWERS

STEP 3: CHOOSE TWO TRAITS

STEP 4: SET HEALTH

STEP 5: CHOOSE MILESTONES

STEP 6: DECIDE STARTING EQUIPMENT

Fitting your game with extra features, alternative builds, and character “mods” is totally possible, and even encouraged. We will discuss several such options in later sections (see page 151). If your game changes up or excludes any of these six elements, however, you may need to adjust other parts of the game as well. In most cases you will be totally fine.

This chapter covers each of the steps in detail with an ongoing example to follow.

After character creation, the **SYSTEM** section of the book ends with several pages dedicated to providing extensive reference lists of almost 200 Traits, nearly 200 Themes, an alphabetized list of Power descriptions, and the list of Status Effects.

SYSTEM

HERO-SLAYER ROBOT

- ◆ MINDLESS MACHINE
- ◆ STATE OF THE ART
- ◆ SUPERHUMAN SENSING

POWERS: BURST, HEAVY, SENTRY

MINDLESS: THE ROBOT IS ALWAYS “STRESSED”

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STEP 1: NICHE

Each Player Rolls Three Times, Once for Each Aspect on The Following Charts

Whatever your game's setting, each character will fit into the world along political, social, and personal axes. Such is the nature of society and personhood. Together, these three axes establish your character's **Niche**, her place in and perspective on the cultural world around her.

By default, **FANTAJI** includes no base classes or archetypes for new characters. It is a social fact that different societies produce different kinds and classes of people so providing a list of predefined "types" would directly undermine the universal scope of the game. Instead, we provide three vectors that situate any human or human-like individual within a greater community.

Moreover, a focus on "types" tacitly assumes that heroes arise in a cultural vacuum, without context or color. It suggests that the most important thing about your character is a stereotype. Not only do classes and archetypes reinforce tired assumptions about what fantasy characters can be like, they actually hinder unique personalities and character development. So we dropped them from the default character creation process. To check out how a game with characters classes might look, check out "Custom Niches" on page 144.

The concept of the **Niche** affords an open-ended way of creating new characters, an organic method that still offers ideas to draw from and a template to guide you. The generic Niche charts that follow will work in any human-centered world and will naturally incorporate your setting material into the creation process.

HOW TO READ THE CHARTS

The three charts that follow provide a kind of matrix within which your character will fit. You roll 1d10 on each chart and write the bolded terms on your Character Tile. The fun part is in fitting the three aspects together, "connecting the dots" to weave a personalized and unique backstory for your hero. This process of interpretation and creating consistency among diverse elements is very much at the heart of **FANTAJI**. It begins here!

Personhood and identity can be understood in very different ways. The theory of individualism, for instance, emerges only in certain societies at particular moments of their history. We wanted **FANTAJI** to incorporate other theories of personhood as well. Following, two of the three aspects of a character's personal identity come from her position in the greater society.

THREE ASPECTS

Honoring a long tradition in role-playing games, the player rolls for all character elements that could be considered naturally out of the character's control. These charts cover three facets of your hero that she had no say in deciding. And because the character had no say, the player has no say.

Well, to be honest, because you interpret the results and create a cohesive backstory yourself, you really do have a say.

Consider the details that follow part of your hero's skeleton. How you flesh out these minimal details and make sense of the results will be up to you. The choices you make will shape your hero into a person you can relate to and role-play, and also communicate to the group your own ideas about the setting and your aims in the campaign.

POLITICAL ASPECT

This aspect of a character's Niche determines where in the larger structure of society the character fits and how she views her relationship to the institutions of power in her world. In this sense, *politics* refers to the dynamic fluctuations of power in a society, e.g. which people are favored by the economic system, who has access to resources and authority, who controls the flow of bodies and knowledge, and which subcultures enjoy privilege in the cultural topography.

SOCIAL ASPECT

This chart determines in which cultural milieu your character feels most at home. This may not be your hero's actual career or trade, but may represent what domain your family or name is known for. In most cultures of the world, a person's family heritage is one of the central classifying aspects of who a person is and what she is worth to those around her. A character's social domain is rarely a matter of personal choice and instead corresponds to economic and cultural access, urban geography, social networks, and accidents of birth.

PERSONAL ASPECT

While we take for granted that two-thirds of the tastes and beliefs of any individual will come from her position in society, there are obviously uniquely personal factors as well. Temperament and attitude can be powerful forces in determining how an individual sees and relates to her world. A combination of temperament (a physiological setting) and attitude (a chosen tenor of response) constitutes the personal aspect of the character's Niche.

The third chart that follows represents ten such combinations of temperament and attitude. The results are precise enough to differentiate one from another, but generic enough to allow creative and meaningful interpretation.

RESOLUTION

The charts will offer three brute facts, but forming a cohesive backstory from those is the player's task. What does it mean if your character is hated by the current structure while outside it, a part of the medical cultural milieu, and personally a realist? That is up to you.

Maybe you spoke out against a new drug being made available to the masses and were stripped of your license after corporate lobbyists pressured the medical elite. Maybe your village considers medicine-women above the law, and you are beginning to irritate the political powers-that-be with your new treatments. You can bend, blur, or smudge these three facts however you see fit to create an interesting backstory for your hero.

For example: In Dieter's **BLOODSBANE** game, Allyson rolls 6, 4, and 2. Alandra then:

- ☼ Hates the Current Structure but is Loyal to Current Leaders
- ☼ Has "Fringe" Knowledge of Some Sort
- ☼ Dreamer

Taken together, these simple facts designate Alandra's Niche in the plague-ridden world of the Three Kingdoms. Allyson does some thinking and blurts out, "That screams 'young wizard' to me!"

She reasons that Alandra acts as an advisor to the current princess of Umbradhari but has wild ideas about helping the princess run away and form her own nation as queen. Alandra is more taken by the romance of the idea than the freedom or power that would result, and the actual hardships and labor of the process have never crossed her mind. Alandra has recently discovered an innate magical talent and suffers visions of an unknown landscape that haunt her. The dreams push her to take more seriously the idle thoughts of escape.

Or: Another of Dieter's players, the oafish Lance, rolls 7, 2, and 1. Lance's character, Brostar, then:

- ☼ Hates the Current Structure and Wants a New One
- ☼ Is Part of an Artisan Family
- ☼ Architect

Dieter helps Lance decide that Brostar is a former laborer on the construction of a massive palace in Umbradhari. Brostar's father was in charge of carving the religious icons of the palace, maybe passing some secret knowledge of their power onto his son. After a tragic "accident" on site killed his entire family, Brostar ran away from the construction slum and lives his life with one goal, revenge. His nature as a logical and focused Architect is the perfect complement to Alandra's passion and vision.

WORLD-BUILDING

Not only does the collaborative process of resolving each character's Niche at the same time build organic connections among the characters, it actually gives you several opportunities to incorporate important dynamics of your world into

ROLL D10 FOR POLITICAL ASPECT

1: CONSERVATIVE	Honor current structure but want new leader
2: LOYALIST	Honor current structure and loyal to current leader
3: ZEALOT	Honor current structure and bent on proselytizing
4: PRIVILEGED	Honored by current structure and have easy life in labor
5: CONTENT	Honored by current structure but have hard life in labor
6: SYMPATHIZER	Hate current structure, but loyal to leaders
7: ANARCHIST	Hate current structure, want whole new system
8: REVOLUTIONARY	Hate current structure and bent on proselytizing
9: FOREIGNER	Hated by current structure and outside it
0: UNCLEAN	Hated by current structure but stuck within it

ROLL D10 FOR SOCIAL ASPECT

- 1- MILITARY
- 2- ARTISAN
- 3- EDUCATION
- 4- FRINGE KNOWLEDGE
- 5- GOVERNMENT
- 6- HOSPITALITY / ENTERTAINMENT
- 7- MANUFACTURING / LABOR
- 8- HIGH KNOWLEDGE
- 9- MEDICAL
- 0- RELIGIOUS

ROLL D10 FOR PERSONAL ASPECT

1- ARCHITECT	Practical, Visionary, Focused
2- DREAMER	Artistic, Whimsical, Passionate
3- SCAPEGOAT	Underdog, Troubled, Defiant
4- LEADER	Decisive, Rational, Charismatic
5- REALIST	Serious, Learned, Pragmatic
6- SEEKER	Spiritual, Optimistic, Incredulous
7- PROTECTOR	Bold, Kindhearted, Responsible
8- COUNSELOR	Compassionate, Warm, Patient
9- AUTHOR	Creative, Orderly, Observant
0- PERVERT	Individualist, Misfit, Bitter

the lives of the characters. Why not make the characters already a part of the major events occurring in the world of the game? And why not let the players' ideas introduce new non-player characters, new events, and new factions into the plot?

Furthermore, a new character's **Milestones** will also tie into her Niche (See page 68). This couples the past and the future, giving a Judge many loose ends and juicy tidbits to include in the upcoming campaign. You can then allow the world of the game to grow organically from the paths the heroes take towards their goals.

Constructing a campaign that taps into the personal histories and goals of the characters is a good habit. And on the human level, including elements that the players themselves created makes everyone more invested in the narrative and more committed to the campaign as a whole.

When it comes to young gamers, **FANTAJI** is uniquely suited to promote creativity and problem-solving without getting bogged down in rules. Kids as young as four years old have enjoyed the game under the supervision of adults, and we are proud of how the system focuses in on the fun moments.

CHARACTER CREATION

Creating a **KIDDIE** hero takes just four steps and covers most of the same ground as the full version of the game. Simplified but not dumbed down.

STEP 1: DRAW A PICTURE

Have the players draw pictures of their heroes. Break out the washable markers and color pencils, and give them a sheet of paper. You can ask for specific kinds of heroes based on the campaign setting or just let their imaginations run wild.

STEP 2: TWO TRAITS

Now, ask each of them to come up with two unique, interesting, or special things about their hero. Their answers become the Traits.

For example: Penelope says that her hero has “Super Fancy Claws” and so there is her first Trait.

STEP 3: TWO POWERS

With young gamers, we connect the Powers to qualitative narrative effects rather than the detailed effects in this chapter. All Powers take up a turn to use, typically cost 2DT or 3DT, and always result in some kind of “cool effect” in the narrative that may or may not deal damage to enemies.

Roll on the charts in the next section for the name and/or nature of the Power and then come up with a suitable “cool effect” that will happen each time it is used. Think of these as storytelling devices.

For example: Penelope gets Haste. When she uses the Power for 2DT on a turn, the Judge helps her describe how “running super fast” helps the story.

STEP 4: HEALTH

For gamers over seven or eight, you can use blocks of any size, but we find that gamers of five or six have more fun when heroes and monsters have [1] blocks only. Obviously do whatever suits the kids.

We are not experts in child development, pediatricians, nor educators of young children. We just played the game with young relatives and found out that they were good at it and really liked it.

THE RULES

The default rules of **FANTAJI** still work when you are playing with kids as young as six or seven. Just use words they understand to represent the different Tiles and make sure to offer lots of suggestions.

“PLAYING TO”

This is probably the cognitive threshold of the game: If your kids can understand how to “play to” a Trait in their turns, then they will be able to play **FANTAJI** quite easily. There are likely dozens of cognitive and linguistic factors that allow someone to make that kind of connection, and every kid is different.

CHECKS & CHALLENGES

When playing with nine- or ten-year-olds, we could use the default rules in their entirety, but younger gamers benefit from fewer options. Try making Checks only about generating Drama Tokens and Challenges for dealing damage or using Conditions.

SHARED TRAITS

When playing with younger kids, we drop the word “Theme.” When you write your Theme Tiles, call them “Shared Traits” or the like and encourage the kids to use them when taking turns. We have found that Scenes work best with only one or two Shared Traits. Since most younger kids “play to” only a Trait or two per turn, there is no need to overwhelm them with options.

BOOBY TRAPS

We replace “Conditions” with “Booby Traps” when playing with young gamers. The kids can still trip them and Force them as usual, but using the concrete term seems to help them understand how the Tiles function in combat. If your little role-players are able to understand abstract Conditions and deploy them, then you can probably use the official term.

STEP 2: POWERS

Each Player Rolls for Two Powers, Requiring Two Rolls (Two Digits) For Each Power

The default **FANTAJI** setup provides characters with two Powers each. A Power is any special ability, item, or advantage that a Character or Obstacle has that sets them apart from the masses. Starting your Characters with two Powers produces diverse and colorful heroes right from the opening scene.

In the following charts we have written only a summary of each Power. The summary fits underneath the name of the Power on your Character Tile and acts as a shorthand of what its particular effects are. For a more thorough discussion of each Power and dozens of examples, check out the tables starting on page 72 at the end of this section.

When rolling for each Power, the player will actually roll two dice. The first die designates the type of Power (from the left-most column of the chart), while the second die determines which specific Power of that type the character gains.

EFFECT-BASED

All Powers in **FANTAJI** correspond to a mechanical effect they cause in the game. What the nature of the Power is and what it looks like are up to you. You get to decide whether the effect comes from magic, machinery, or muscle depending on the world of your game and the kinds of characters you want to play. Two characters may even have the same Power but choose to describe how it works very differently.

*For example: The Power Reflex below grants a character the ability to avoid suffering a Drama penalty from tripping Conditions. Your **FANTAJI** game might envision that Power as a super-mutant ability and rename it Instinct to refer to a preternatural sixth sense or an animal-like premonition.*

Or: You could affix the Reflex Power to a time-travel device implanted in the character's cybernetic body, granting the host a two-second rewind that lets her avoid losing Drama. Maybe you call it Shift and make it a sought-after ability in the world of the game. Maybe no one but the heroes possess it!

We created categories that suited the four fantasy settings included in this book and arranged the Powers accordingly. But as you can see, we encourage you to mix-up or mash these Powers to suit your world and your game. The Combat Skills, for instance, do not need to be restricted to use with weapons. They could reflect psychic powers, ninja training, or even with the hero's own fists.

*For example: In Wamae's **MÁZAKI** game, Neal's rogue has Aim, but Neal does not want to be an archer or use throwing knives. Instead, Neal changes the requisite Condition from "Line of Sight" to "Grappling" and considers the automatic [2] a kind of joint-strike or wrestling maneuver. So be it.*

Or: Tony's character Dylla rolls Spines but never took his Andhuran engineer to be covered in spikes. Instead, Tony explains the countering [1] as a product of his own reflexes. When he takes damage, he is poised to deal it back.

Even the Assets, which require creating secondary Tiles (see below), can be understood as natural, magical, or mechanical depending on the setting. Similarly, the Summons could represent undead wraiths, android servants, or friends connected to the Character via earbud. The details are up to you.

PLAYER EXAMPLES

Please recall that the following charts are designed predominantly for character creation. For Judges wanting to reference or research specific Powers, there is a more detailed list in the following section.

For example: Allyson rolls two dice for her first power, scoring a 2 and a 7. She checks her 2 on the first column, giving her a Combat Skill ability, and then her 7 in the second column, resulting in Burst. "That's perfect for a wizard," Allyson exclaims. "That's a straight-up fireball!"

For her second power, Allyson rolls a 5 followed by a 2. That results in Training-Addiction. "I don't want to be addicted to anything," Allyson pouts.

Dieter suggests, “Why don’t we come up with a magical way for Alandra to use the Power?” The group discusses ideas until Allyson decides on calling her power Forbidden Magic, describing how her mystical visions temporarily enhance her potency in combat. Alandra can close her eyes and focus on the landscape that arises in her visions, drawing magical energy to herself but leaving her with a splitting headache. Maybe she even has to sniff a hallucinogenic powder to trigger it. Taken together, Alandra’s Powers make for a dangerous wizard.

Or: For Brostar’s first power, Lance rolls a 1 and a 3. Dieter consults the charts, checking the 1 against the first column and the 3 against the second. He tells Lance that Brostar rolled up Dual Wield, the ability to fight with two weapons and Challenge two targets at the same time. Lance decides that Brostar is a fighter who does indeed have two swords.

Lance then rolls his second power, a 2 followed by an 8. Dieter explains to Lance that his swordsman has rolled Flurry, the ability to gain more Drama for himself whenever he deals big damage.

TERMS

The following terms will be used throughout this book for noting Power mechanics in shorthand.

⚙ Costing Drama Tokens (DT)

Some Powers will take a set amount of Drama Tokens to activate. If this is the case, that Power’s entry on the chart will have the cost written as a number followed by the letters “DT.” For example, *Haste* requires 3DT to use on a turn. The player must have 3 Drama Tokens to activate *Haste* and loses those Tokens once the Power is used.

⚙ Overpower (OP)

These are Powers that take effect when a certain amount of Drama has been generated by a Character or Asset. Overpowers do not “cost” any Drama to use. The Power or effect will stay in play until the Tile’s Drama drops below the threshold.

⚙ Stackable (Stck)

Stackable powers can be spent in escalating, incremental bursts at once. For example, the generic Weapon Skill Burst costs 2 Drama Tokens

to activate and deals [1] of damage. However, if the player has 4 Drama Tokens, she can spend them all to deal [2]. Likewise, 6DT would deal [3], etc.

⚙ At Will

Powers that can be used “At Will” can be activated once at any time between turns during the Player-Round. These Powers do not use up the character’s turn and may occur before or after she has taken her official action. In most cases, “At Will” Powers cannot be used in the middle of a roll or after another player has already started an action.

Some “At Will” Powers may be used during the Enemy-Round of combat at the Judge’s discretion, but only if the Power was not used during the previous Player-Round.

⚙ Automatic (Auto)

These are powers that can be used *instead* of the character’s normal Challenge or Check on a turn. “Auto” Powers can be activated only on a player’s turn and replace the normal Challenge or Check with the special ability. Typically, Automatic Powers do not require a roll to succeed. *Burst*, for example, deals damage automatically without rolling at all.



FAMILIAR TILES

- ⚙ In Most Cases Begin With The DT Used to Summon Them
- ⚙ Take Their Own Turns, Generate Their Own Drama, Make Checks & Challenges
- ⚙ Either Designed With Each Summon (Hoc) or at Character Creation (Pre)
- ⚙ When Killed or Dispelled, They Can Be Resummoned at Same Cost
- ⚙ Summoning is Considered “At Will,” But Familiars Cannot Act Until Next Player-Round

FAMILIARS

The Familiar Powers create separate Tiles that each correspond to a pet, ally, or companion who acts as the agent of your Player-Character. The exact form a Familiar will take depends on your game setting: Ghost, machine, hologram, animal, etc.

Familiars are entirely independent Tiles with their own Traits, Health, Drama, and abilities. They take their own turns during the players’ combat round and function in most ways as completely autonomous characters.

Permanent Familiars begin in play and require no Drama Tokens to summon. If a permanent Familiar loses all its Health, it is considered “Knocked Out” and cannot be healed until the end of the Scene.

Summoned Familiars cost Drama Tokens each time they are conjured or called. If a summoned Familiar loses all its Resistance, it drops out of the fight (and any Drama it had is forfeit) but can be summoned again for the same cost. Depending on your game, the defeated familiar may be said to fade back into the ether, run away to recover, or die.

⚙ Preset Traits & Powers (Pre)

Most Familiars are followers that will be the same each time they are summoned. Players create a Tile when choosing the Power and keep it handy for repeated use. Such Familiars typically represent a single being or person who is called on repeatedly.

⚙ Ad Hoc Traits & Powers (Hoc)

Other Familiar Powers grant players the ability to summon different persons or beings at different

times. Players may create a Tile from scratch with each summoning to fit the current situation.

See the individual Powers list on page 72 for more about specific information on Familiars, how to create them, and how to use them in play.

ASSETS

These Powers grant a Character (or an Obstacle) a subordinate Tile, typically viewed as an artifact, follower, or faculty of some sort. Mechanically, Assets offer extra Traits and/or Powers to whoever owns them. Like Familiars, they require their own Tiles created by the player. Unlike Familiars, Assets take no turns of their own and are only useful insofar as they grant extra abilities to Host Tiles.

The Asset is treated as an extension of the Character herself. If an enemy aims to Challenge the Character, it strikes the entire Character-Asset unit. The Character defends with all of her Traits and Powers as well as any available Traits and Powers provided by the Asset.

However, enemies *can* Challenge only the Asset itself. When attacking the Asset alone, only the Asset’s Traits and Powers can be used in defense. In other words, the Asset can be “singled out” and attacked by itself to weaken the Character.

For example: Andrew’s warlock Xinjin has Phaser, which his group treats as a pair of magic gauntlets that can unleash flames. Andrew chooses the Burn Status Effect as the ability tied to Phaser and gives the Tile the Scorching Touch Trait. The Trait is freely available for Xinjin to “play to” offensively

ASSET TILES

- ⚙️ Take No Turns (Unless Specified by Power), But Keep Their Own Drama
- ⚙️ Once Per Round Can Move Any Number of Drama Between Host and Asset (At Will)
- ⚙️ When Host Rolls: Use Host's Drama, But Traits & Powers of Both Tiles
- ⚙️ When Asset is Targeted: Use Asset's Drama, And Traits & Powers of Asset Only
- ⚙️ Must be "Healed" Between Scenes to Re-Equip

When Host Rolls:



When Asset is Targeted:



and defensively on any turn as long as the Asset is equipped, even when not using the spell specifically.

Once every Round, Xinjin can transfer Drama Tokens to or from his Asset to manage its Overpower (see chart opposite). When his PHASER Tile reaches 3DT, the Tile's ability goes into effect and Andrew chooses a target that is automatically struck with Burn. Role-play the narrative to suit the nature of the Power.

When an enemy attacks the PHASER Tile directly, Scorching Touch is the only Trait that can be used in its defense, and the Tile's own Drama factors into the roll. The Asset does not gain any abilities from the Host at all.

Later in the fight, a VETERAN SOLDIER wants to disarm the PHASER Tile to weaken Xinjin. Dieter has the SOLDIER "chop his sword over and over at the warlock's arms, attempting to damage the gauntlets." No Asset should be described in such a way as to make it invulnerable or unreachable by a foe (or having a separate Tile would be redundant).

Andrew can roll defense with the Tile's Trait and Drama Tokens as well as any relevant Themes, but none of Xinjin's Traits or Drama Tokens can be used.

When an Asset loses all its Resistance, it is said to be "Disarmed," "Jammed," or "Knocked Out" and

cannot be pulled into play again until it is "healed" at the end of the Scene with Drama Tokens.

STATUS EFFECTS

Status Effects are ailments, penalties, or limitations placed on a Character or Obstacle Tile. When you need to set your enemies up for big hits from your allies, deal them a debilitating Status Effect first.

Each of the seven central Effect lasts until the end of the following Round, giving you ample time to deal the needed damage. All of the Powers that result in a Status Effect being dealt require the player to choose which of the seven Effects is linked to the Power when it is first earned.

The latter two Effects, "Stressed" and "Bloodied," take effect when certain health conditions are met and last until the hero heals.

You can keep track of Status Effects with scraps of paper laid next to the Tiles or with printed chipboard and ceramic tokens available from our website. Each set can be used to mark Status Effects with one side and Drama with the other.

A full chart of the nine Status Effects is available on page 77 at the end of this chapter. For a discussion of adding Status Effects to pieces of equipment in your game, see page 70.

1-2: COMBAT SKILLS

1: HEAVY	3DT: Can improve any Wound dealt by [+1] (Stck)
2: SENTRY	2DT: May roll Challenge or defense <i>along with</i> any ally
3: DUAL WIELD	Can Challenge two targets with a single roll
4: CHARGE	Deal an extra [1] after dealing 1[2] or 1[3]
5: PARRY	Suffer 1[2] or 1[3]: Deal DT– to opponent
6: AIM	With “Line of Sight” Condition, Can deal [2] (Auto)
7: BURST	2DT: Deal [1] to any visible target (Stck, Auto)
8: FLURRY	Gain DT+ after dealing 1[2] or 1[3]
9: SPINES	Suffer 1[2] or 1[3]: Deal [1] to opponent
0: BLOCK	Can roll defense in place of ally (At Will, Enemy-Round)

3-4: ASSETS

Can move Drama from hero to Asset or vice versa “At Will,” All start at 2[1]

1: BLADE	OP3: Can increase any Wound dealt by [+1]
2: PHASER	OP3: Cause preset Status Effect on any one target
3: SHIELD	OP3: Host protected from being Challenged
4: DECOY	OP3: Enemy suffers DT– for Challenging Host or Asset
5: GADGET	Check @5: Move 1DT from any target to an allied Tile
6: DYNAMO	Check @5: Generate DT+ for Asset (At Will)
7: SAPPER	Check @5: Cause DT– to one target (At Will)
8: SYNCHRON	Check @5: Generate DT+ for ally (At Will)
9: MINION	Permanent Minion: 1 Trait, 1 Power
0: HEIRLOOM	Asset with one Double-Trait (2◇)

5-6: TRAINING

1. JINX	Any Forced Condition can cause 2DT– to one target
2. ADDICTION	Self-Inflct 1[2]: 3DT+
3. SPITE	Suffer 1[2] or 1[3]: Deal Status Effect to attacker
4. TOUGHNESS	Fuse a [2] & [1] into a [3] on your starting Health
5. REFLEX	Check @8: Negate DT– penalty whenever suffered
6. RETRY	Re-Roll any Failed Check once
7. TACTICS	The hero can spend nDT to create n Conditions (Auto)
8. CLARITY	On True Clash (i.e. when Clashing on “zero”): 2DT+
9. COMPOSURE	Suffer 1[2] or 1[3]: Gain DT+
0. GRIEF	1DT: Deal DT– to single enemy (Stck, At Will)

* These Charts include a summary of each Power meant for copying onto your Character Tile and for quick reference. For complete descriptions and examples of the Powers, check out the more extensive, alphabetical listing starting on page 72.

7-8: ABILITIES

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. SLOW | 3DT: Cause DT- to all enemies (Auto) |
| 2. WARD | 2DT: Reduce any Wound suffered by ally [-1] (Stck) |
| 3. HEAL | 2DT: Heal you or an ally [1] (Stck) |
| 4. QUAKE | Self-Inflict 1[2]: Force or Eliminate each Condition in play |
| 5. HASTE | 3DT: Grants DT+ to all allies (Auto) |
| 6. PACIFY | 3DT: Target cannot roll Drama Dice on its next bout (Auto) |
| 7. BOND | Self-Inflict [n]: Heal ally's [n] (Stck, At Will) |
| 8. PROVOKE | 2DT: Can Create a Condition that deals [1] when Forced |
| 9. CURSE | 3DT: Cause a preset Status Effect (Stck, At Will) |
| 0. MIND CONTROL | Self-Inflict 1[2]: Take/Choose target's next turn (Auto) |

9-0: FAMILIARS

Familiars considered "Summons" unless noted, Summoning does not take full turn

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. QUICK SPIRIT | nDT: 1 Trait, n[1] (Stck, Hoc) (Does not start with Drama) |
| 2. ELEMENTAL | 3DT: 1 Trait, A [2] dealt also causes Status Effect, 3[1] (Hoc) |
| 3. SENTINEL | 3DT: 1 Trait, Can "SHIELD" for free, 3[1] (Pre) (No Drama) |
| 4. PHANTASM | 4DT: 1 Trait, 2 Abilities, (Pre) (Abstract) |
| 5. ALLY | 4DT: 1 Trait, 1 Power, 1[2] (Pre) |
| 6. SPAWN | 4DT: 2 Traits, 1[2] (Hoc) |
| 7. DOPPEL | 3DT: Your Traits, 4[1] (Pre) (Does not start with Drama) |
| 8. FOLLOWER | Permanent Familiar: 2 Traits, 2[1] (Pre) |
| 9. MOUNT / PET | Permanent Familiar: 1 Trait, 1[2] (Pre) (Asset "At Will") |
| 0. REVENANT | Self-inflict 1[2]: Target rises after death as REVENANT (Pre) |

MORE POWERS

The charts in this chapter contain 50 unique Powers balanced for play in your **FANTAJI SYSTEM** game. Forthcoming **FANTAJI REALMS** books will include other Powers as well as other ways to organize those Powers to suit new campaign settings.

An expanded version of the **MÁZAKI** setting, for example, contains two tiers of Powers, 70 in total. Another proposed setting includes ten Powers that attach Conditions to specific enemies as "Stigmas." We are committed to providing new and interesting Powers in later publications for your campaigns, all balanced and ready for play.

Your own game may include new Powers, tweaked or customized versions of the Powers listed above,

and/or limitations on who can choose which Powers and when. Study the section on page 146 to prepare yourself for fixing up custom Powers and abilities for the heroes in your campaign.

All players should be encouraged to come up with new Powers and new ways of using the Tiles. **FANTAJI** is all about fluidity and fun. Stop by the forums on our website to share your own custom tricks, traps, and Powers. Unique Powers for special enemies that play to your group's specific strengths can spice up any campaign.

Maybe you have already seen some interesting new Powers listed on some of the dozens of Obstacle Tiles featured throughout this book. Some monsters have Powers a little too deadly for new heroes to adopt, so borrow wisely.

STEP 3: TRAITS

Players Must Decide on Their Traits, The Most Creative & Personal Part of Character Creation

Every character begins the campaign with at least two Traits. Traits are qualitative words or phrases that act as the mechanical and creative foundations of the character, the quirks and qualities that define who your hero is and how she approaches the world.

A solid introduction to how Traits work in **FANTAJI** can be found on page 8.

An extensive list of sample Traits is located on page 79, but remember that creating custom Traits is always best!

This will be the hardest part of character creation for the players. What kind of character will you play? And, after you figure that puzzle out, what literary turn of phrase will best suit that kind of character and fit her into the world of the game? Traits will determine how your hero acts and what he or she is apt to do. They reflect your character's personality, appearance, beliefs, and values. The best Traits are specific and unique, but at the same time fluid and open to interpretation.

For example: In Heidi's **GAMMA CENTAURI** game, Justin meditates on his proposed character, an athletic science buff with Pacify and Reflex. He wants his Traits to capture the feel of a semi-retired, dangerous secret agent. After scanning the list on page 79, Justin chooses Too Old to Rock'n'Roll But Too Young to Die and Two Track Mind. Justin feels that the first Trait plays on his character's semi-retired status and gruff personal history. The second Trait, reasons Justin, reflects both his agent's knowledge of the newest gizmos and his uncanny ability to see danger coming and avoid it.

Or: In Wamae's **MÁZAKI** game, his veteran player Emily looks to her favorite songwriters for inspiration. Emily's character is a nimble and selfish Andhuran spy, Garre. After humming a few tunes in her head, Emily decides on Slip Sliding Away

and Never Leaves on The Light. The first Trait alludes to Garre's tendency to perform acrobatics and her ability to escape tight situations. Maybe it also hints that her life of crime slowly wears on her, or that she's afraid she's already too far gone to change. Her second Trait sustains several layers of meaning, referencing how Garre never considers her teammates' needs, rarely wastes resources such as lamp oil, and literally performs well in darkness. Both Garre's personality and her personal history show in her Traits.

Or: Dieter's players are having a hard time coming up with Traits for their heroes. They decide to consult the long list of Traits at the end of this section and choose those that best fit their characters.

In the default **FANTAJI** game, heroes begin with two Traits. This affords a certain amount of flexibility and creative opportunity for each turn, and will ease players into incorporating multiple Traits and Themes together in pivotal Challenges.



STEP 4: HEALTH

Players Determine The Starting Health of Their Characters

As you learned in the section on Character Tiles, the **FANTAJI ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEM** measures Health in blocks of various sizes. Characters have a set of total Wounds, and each Wound requires a particular number of Successes in combat to be overcome. While Wounds could theoretically come in any size, the default categories are units of [1], [2], or [3].

STRESS WOUNDS: [1]

We designate the smallest blocks of resistance as Stress Wounds. These can be dealt through physical, social, emotional, or cognitive means. Stress Wounds can also represent ailments such as bruises, headaches, sore muscles, and confusion.

FLESH WOUNDS: [2]

The next unit of Health we call Flesh Wounds. These represent substantial but not generally life-threatening damage for a hero: Cuts, gashes, sprains, abrasions, and harsh illnesses. For weaker enemies, however, a Flesh Wound or two could represent deadly bodily trauma.

MORTAL WOUNDS: [3]

Mortal Wounds are severe injuries that will result in death if not treated. Characters who suffer from a Mortal Wound cannot heal any other blocks before the lethal injury is addressed. Since an untreated Mortal Wound is said to result in death, we typically avoid giving more than one [3] to any living creature.

CHARACTER TILES

On the default **FANTAJI** Character Tile, we have marked out the starting Wounds for you. The default recommendation is that heroes begin the game with a single Mortal Wound, two Flesh Wounds, and four Stress Wounds. In a “stat block” we would write this as [3] / 2[2] / 4[1].

Alternatively, your game may include different amounts of Health or different size blocks altogether. If you create such a game, be sure to download a Character Tile template that has hollow

The Resistance Blocks of non-living or inanimate Obstacles are not Health per se. Be creative when designing difficult feats or multi-step challenges. Climbing a wall, for example, could include one [2] block or several [1] blocks that represent each floor or storey along the way.

outlines around individual squares on a grid. With a dark pen or marker, you can designate blocks of any size that will not be erased or smudged when healing.

HEALTH STATUS EFFECTS

There are two **Status Effects** directly tied to a character’s Health. Whenever a person loses all of her Stress Wounds, she is said to be “Stressed.” Use counters of some sort or a small notecard to mark the Status. “Stressed” characters no longer gain DT+ on Clash.

Monsters or enemies that possess no [1] blocks may be considered automatically “Stressed,” such as all undead and many of the mechanical enemies featured in this book. On the other hand, enemies with no [1] blocks might instead be considered immune to “Stress.” In that case, it may be merciful to grant a strong monster at least one [1] just to open up the possibility of “Stressing” the beast.

For example: The TERRASAUR in the extended examples from the last chapter has [3] / 2[2] (see illustration on page 20). If the Judge were to give the terrible lizard an extra [1], it would very likely be easier to defeat because after suffering the Stress Wound it would no longer gain DT+ on every Clash.

When a character suffers her Mortal Wound, she is immediately marked as “Bloodied.” A “Bloodied” character cannot heal any Wound by any means before first healing the Mortal Wound somehow.

STEP 5: MILESTONES

Markers & Important Moments, Unlocked by Narrative or Triggered by Themes

FANTAJI keeps track of a character's growing experience and maturity with a system of Themes and **Milestones**. Characters earn Themes by playing to them effectively during a Scene. Once a set number of Themes are saved up, they can be exchanged for a new Trait or Power or for increased Resistance.

But how do you explain your character suddenly gaining a new rocket-powered implant, celestial follower, or magical power? **FANTAJI** smooths those sudden jumps or boosts in ability by tying the mechanical growth of your character to specific narrative developments. Every moment of growth in power is coupled with a personal or narrative victory for the hero. And your group can decide exactly how that will work.

CREATING A MILESTONE

Choose a single Milestone that your hero is aimed towards, a goal or objective that marks the next big moment in her life. Does the Milestone come from your Niche and back story? Is it something internal and personal, or external and social?

The Milestone is written as a short phrase on the Character Tile.

For example: Allyson chooses "Escaping with the Princess" as her first Milestone. It will mark the beginning of Alandra's journey towards her fate.

Or: Lance decides on "Confronting the Baron" as his Milestone, by which he means Brostar will find the man responsible for his family's death during the building accident and confront him.

Judges can then use the character's Milestones as inspiration for the pace and events of the party's long-term campaign.

For example: Dieter plans a climactic Scene wherein Brostar finds out that the Queen is actually to blame and must battle her guards to help Alandra and the princess escape. Both Milestones hit with a twist.

SETTING THE BENEFIT

You may or may not decide ahead of time the exact benefit attached to the Milestone, but it will be necessary at least to set the kind of upgrade you are aiming for: Trait, Power, or Resistance.

TRAITS

FANTAJI encourages players to use the substance of the Themes gained to inspire any new Trait. In other words, the exact Trait your hero will gain cannot be decided before the Themes are won.

For example: Lance knows that he wants another Trait and waits until he has saved up four Themes to start brainstorming new ideas. He knows the Themes he acquires will reflect how Brostar handled the confrontation with his rival and should impact who he becomes after that pivotal moment. Eventually, Brostar gains the Themes Strangers Become Friends, Tempest In a Teacup, No Rest For The Wicked, and Light at The End of The Tunnel. They are on one hand violent and the other hand compassionate, marking Brostar as someone dedicated to both paths. Lance ultimately resolves that he is working towards a "Never Let One Hand Know What The Other is Doing" Trait.

In this way, **FANTAJI** truly ties the role-playing of your hero to her personal development. How you play factors into the growing personality and new qualities of your character. Wow.

POWERS

Players may or may not roll the exact Power while deciding on the Milestone. However, some may feel that having the Power settled helps to create the Milestone in the first place.

For example: Allyson decides that she will want a new Power but leaves it open what Power that will be. Whatever happens, she figures a tumultuous

escape will open up plenty of opportunities for Alandra and enjoys the suspense.

Or: Neal's rogue decides to roll up his Power first and let the result inspire what his Milestone will be. After rolling Provoke on the chart, he characterizes his new ability as a spell that allows him to summon spikes up from the ground, making a deadly trap from nowhere. Neal then tries to think up an appropriate Milestone for that kind of change in his character and decides on "Drawing the Curse of the Witch." He writes that phrase on his Character Tile, and it is now up to Wamae to weave such a meeting into the campaign.

RESISTANCE

Upgrading your hero's Health is pretty much a straightforward benefit to stamina. This is the most expensive advantage to purchase, and we imagine it will be targeted only later in a campaign.

REACHING A MILESTONE

Some groups will see the narrative events of the Milestone as independent from the number of Themes already gained. The Milestone occurs after good role-playing and by making smart choices in the story. Seen this way, reaching a Milestone "unlocks" the new ability for later purchase whenever enough Themes are gained.

For example: Allyson pushes the story towards escaping with the princess, reaching her goal after smart role-playing leads the characters to Dieter's climactic battle. The number of Themes she has when reaching the Milestone in the narrative does not matter at all. Once Alandra has role-played her escape in the story, her Milestone is "unlocked" and her upgrade can be purchased right away or as soon as she gains the needed Themes.

Other groups will use the mechanical pacing of the Themes to decide when certain narrative Milestones can take place. Seen this way, gaining the set amount of Themes "earns" the Milestone, which is then role-played into the narrative.

For example: If Dieter ran his game another way, he would not let the party reach the Queen's chamber until both players had four Themes already. They

For more on how Milestones can be fit into the ongoing campaign, see page 111.

For a genre-neutral mod that offers you a more robust mechanic for setting your hero's Milestones, check out page 152.

build up personal momentum and work towards their goals in a few early Scenes before the climax is allowed to take place at all. The major battle is then a narrative reward for the mechanical gains.

FANTAJI works great both ways. More story-driven groups will likely follow the first method, while mechanically-minded players will prefer the latter. You can have your game demand one mode or the other, or leave it up to the individual players to decide. Maybe different moments in the life of the hero will work differently, and even the same player could use both methods at different times.

In either case, as soon as you reach one Milestone you choose another to work towards.

INSIDE A SCENE

In some cases, a character might reach a Milestone in the middle of a Scene.

For example: Lance realizes that the Queen directly killed his parents in the middle of his battle with her guards. He takes a turn to declare his challenge and swear vengeance, and so Dieter lets Lance exchange his Themes and adopt his new Trait immediately, boosting Brostar in the middle of the combat.

OUTSIDE A SCENE

Other Milestones will naturally take place between Scenes, during downtime.

For example: After the climactic battle with the Queen and her minions, the party is at rest in the woods. They can now safely say they have escaped and so Alandra takes the moment to exchange her Themes for a Power. Rolling up Shield, the group decides that Alandra swiped a royal relic in her dash from the palace, maybe taking time to narrate how Alandra stole it from the Queen herself.

STEP 6: EQUIPMENT

The Stuff, Your Gear, Tools & Weapons, Supplies, Everything Ready At Hand

The Judge will discuss starting equipment with the group of players and allow whatever makes sense in the setting. Think about the weapons or gear each character will be carrying on her person in the opening Scene, keeping track of selections on the Character Tile.

Your character can carry weapons even if you did not roll a Combat Skill as a Power. Because your hero's Powers will determine whether or not you carry an ancient relic or special weapon, the equipment list only needs to cover mundane tools and weapons reasonably available to characters in your world.

We use **Slots** when tracking equipment to simplify the Character Tiles. Each hero can carry up to three meaningful items or groups of items. For instance, while "A Good Knife" would take up only a single Slot, so would "Camping Supplies." **FANTAJI** does not measure weight or encumbrance when outfitting heroes, instead using the usefulness of the equipment as the limiting factor. Each hero gets three useful "packages" or "suites" to carry, whatever their size or physical form.

For example: Emily's cat burglar Garre has a GADGET Tile, her whip, which does not take up a Slot on her equipment list because it is handled with the Asset Tile granted by a Power. However, Garre carries a sword that does need to be recorded in a Slot.

With the Judge's word being final, the group will develop their own conventions and guidelines for organizing equipment. For instance, "Navigation Tools" may or may not be separate from "Camping Supplies" depending on the style of your game.

EQUIPMENT & DIFFICULTIES

Certain Checks may be easier if the right tool is at hand, and some actions may not be possible at all without the proper gear.

For example: Without her sword, Garre would not be able to spend a turn "Chopping the thin rope that holds the chandelier in place" or "Cutting Dylla

free after his wrists are bound by soldiers." The equipment lets her role-play those actions at all.

Or: Maybe Garre could try to "Untie the knot holding the chandelier in place" as a Check, but Wamae would set the Difficulty at 5 to represent the time needed to loose the rope by hand. With the sword, however, the Difficulty of the Check is only 3.

EQUIPMENT & STATUS EFFECTS

Powers and gear are the only ways to cause Status Effects in **FANTAJI**, which makes choosing the right gear for a mission important. You do not always have control over which Powers your party brings to battle, but you can have some say in what equipment you carry.

For example: Erick's smuggler spends a great deal of money on special exploding rounds of ammunition. With any [1], he can cause Burn on his target instead of dealing damage. The Judge limits the powerful weapon by allowing only six such bullets per Slot.

Or: Lowell's grappler, Smelko, wears a pair of weighted gloves that can cause Daze for [2]. A costly ability, but useful against a powerful enemy who has only a single Mortal Wound left.

You can represent the quality of a piece of Gear by how many Successes it takes to set the Status Effect or by how many targets it can affect.

For example: A "Soldier Rifle" might be able to cause Stun with [2], while an "Elite Guard Rifle" requires only [1] to deploy the same Status Effect.

Or: A "Gallant Longsword" may Stagger an opponent whenever a [2] or [3] is used to deal damage, while a less valuable "War Sword" may require dealing

We recommend that equipment be tangibly worse than any related Power and that equipment rely on Successes, instead of DT, to deploy Status Effects.

some amount of damage first and then spending an additional [1] to yield the same Effect.

Or: A “Flashbang Grenade” might cause Blind on any target it damages for [2] but also strike anyone else in the area who is “caught by surprise.” In that case, allies of the attacker would need to create a “Heroes Hiding Their Faces” Condition to protect themselves from the blast before the item is thrown.

EQUIPMENT & CONDITIONS

Speaking of Conditions, some equipment might grant your character the ability to set certain Conditions that would be impossible otherwise. The most basic example is starting a fire. Without some kind of technology, an unarmed human would not be able to start a fire with a single Success even during a Check.

For example: Luckily, Erick’s cavalier of the stars had his “Satchel of Clothes” on hand to weigh down the platform. Without the bag, he could not create a “Satchel in Place of Golden Idol” Condition and steal the treasure from the temple.

Or: Without a “Net” in her inventory, Nadya’s character, Helena, would not be able to Create the “Net Fitted into a Ladder” Condition. Having the equipment makes constructing a makeshift ladder possible at all.

Other pieces of equipment might only work—or only work well—when certain Conditions are already in place. Recall, the “Flashbang Grenade” example from earlier.

FANTAJI does not have mandatory rules for establishing an economy within your game. Your characters can keep track of currency and purchase goods in the narrative however you see fit.

However, for a genre-neutral “mod” that uses Theme Tiles to represent privilege, prestige, and favor that can be tapped for goods in-game, check out page 156.

SYSTEM



In the MÁZAKI setting, Andhurans such as Tanis here often carry Assets or pieces of equipment fitted with Flight Jade. Different cultures may have more or less access to particular technologies in your FANTAJI game.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF POWERS

Special Abilities, Mutant Powers, Magic, Robotic Enhancements

☸ Addiction (Training)

By self-inflicting 1[2], the hero generates 3DT+ for herself. This Power could represent any kind of self-harming substance, disease, or habit.

Customize: Maybe the hero can self-inflict 2[1] instead of 1[2] to generate the Drama Tokens, but she must use up resources that require a Gear Slot.

☸ Aim (Combat Skill)

As a master of ranged combat, the hero may create a “Line of Sight” Condition, such as “Hero Takes Aim on X,” where X is a specific target. Whenever the Condition is active at the start of the hero’s turn, the hero may automatically inflict [2] to that target as her turn. This power could represent any weapon skill that requires careful aim to deal repeated damage: Bow and arrow, sniper rifle, throwing daggers, magical missiles, etc.

For example: During a successful defense, Erick’s space smuggler uses [1] to establish a “Tykus Takes Aim on Drone” Condition. If the Condition is still in play on Erick’s next turn, he can deal [2] to the DRONE automatically. This happens without rolling but takes up Tykus’ full turn.

☸ Ally (Familiar)

When a hero receives this Power, she designs an ALLY Tile with 1 Trait, 1 random Power, and 1[2]. This could be a spirit, tamed beast, loyal servant, or robot guardian. In exchange for 4DT, the hero may summon this ALLY into combat, with the Drama Tokens then moving to the ALLY’s Tile.

☸ Blade (Asset)

The hero possesses a mighty weapon as an Asset Tile with 1 Trait and 2[1]. Whenever the BLADE has 3DT or more, the hero may increase any single Wound dealt in combat by [+1].

☸ Block (Combat Skill)

As a master of tactical combat, the hero may make herself the target of a Challenge made against an allied hero or subordinate Tile once per Enemy-Round. The hero must declare the Block *before* her ally makes a roll. As a result, the Blocker officially becomes the defending combatant in the bout, and any Damage Effects would then target her Tile.

☸ Bond (Ability)

Once per Player-Round, the hero may use her own life-force to heal a friend. By self-inflicting any number of Wounds to herself, the hero can restore the same number of matching Wounds for a single ally or living subordinate Tile.

For example: After her friend takes a serious hit, Anindita’s librarian, Esther, self-inflicts 1[2] and 2[1] to herself, healing the equivalent Wounds for her friend. Note that Esther could not deal 3[1] to herself to heal the 1[2] and 2[1] for her friend.

☸ Burst (Combat Skill)

As a master of incendiary combat, the hero can spend her turn expending DT to deal automatic damage to a single target. Spending 2DT deals [1], 4DT [2], and 6DT [3]. This power could represent any weapon or special ability that requires charging to deal bursts of damage: Cannon, bomb, rail gun, magic fireball, etc.

☸ Charge (Combat Skill)

As a master of opportunistic combat, the hero deals a small amount of bonus damage after inflicting a larger Wound. After dealing 1[2] or 1[3], the hero may inflict an additional [1]. This power could represent any maneuver or weapon that takes advantage of a big hit to press the assault: Monkey toss, boomerang, poison dagger.

This power may be “Stackable” at the Judge’s discretion, but only if multiple Wounds are dealt.

☸ Clarity (Training)

The hero attained true presence in the moment. On a True Clash (see page 155) the hero gains 2DT.

☸ Composure (Training)

The hero has trained to achieve focus in even the most grueling pain. The hero gains DT+ whenever she suffers 1[2] or 1[3] in a bout.

☸ Curse (Ability)

When the hero receives this power, she chooses one Status Effect to master. In combat, she may expend 3DT to inflict this Status Effect on one target “At Will.” Like all Status Effects, this Effect lasts until the end of the next Round.

For example: After his regular turn during the Player-Round, Lowell spends 3DT to have his wrestler Smelko set Snare on his enemy. According to the Status Effect the enemy will lose 2 Drama Tokens whenever it suffers any Condition until the end of the upcoming Enemy-Round.

⚙️ **Decoy (Asset)**

The hero possesses a deceptive Asset with 1 preset Trait and 2[1]. When the Asset has 3DT or more, any enemy initiating a Challenge against the Host or the Asset itself suffers DT- immediately. This Tile could represent a cloak, smoke bomb, ninja log, or any stealthy device.

⚙️ **Doppel (Familiar)**

By expending 3DT, the hero may summon a clone of herself. The clone begins with the hero's Traits and physical appearance, no Drama or special powers, and 4[1]. The Doppel could manifest as anything: Living being, illusion, golem, robot, etc.

⚙️ **Dual Wield (Combat Skill)**

As a master of the battlefield, the hero may Challenge two enemy Tiles with a single roll. Each enemy rolls defense as normal against the single attack. While each contest resolves separately, the enemies may compound any damage dealt to the hero. For more information see pages 39–40.

⚙️ **Dynamo (Asset)**

The Hero possesses a powerful generator as an Asset Tile with 1 Trait and 2[1]. At the beginning of each Player-Round, the DYNAMO rolls against a Difficulty of 5 to generate a single Drama Token. At any time during the Round the hero may also use her "At Will" ability to move such a Token between Host and Asset as normal.

⚙️ **Elemental (Familiar)**

By expending 3DT, the hero may summon an ELEMENTAL into combat. The ELEMENTAL has 1 Trait, 3[1], and the ability to inflict a single Status Effect whenever it deals 1[2] or 1[3] to a target. The Tile's Trait and Status Effect are chosen each time the ELEMENTAL is summoned. This Familiar Power could represent any kind of natural or technological presence that is designed and deployed on the fly: Shape-shifting golem, nature spirit, nanomachine robot, wraith, etc.

⚙️ **Flurry (Combat Skill)**

As a master of rowdy combat, the hero earns DT+ after inflicting any large Wound. Whenever the hero deals 1[2] or 1[3], she immediately gains 1DT. This power could represent any maneuver, special ability, or weapon: Taunt, charging phaser gun, victory pose, combo attack, etc.

⚙️ **Follower (Familiar)**

At the moment the hero receives this Power, she designs a companion with 2 Traits and 3[1]. The FOLLOWER always accompanies the hero and does not need to be summoned. The Follower takes her own turns and travels with the heroes almost as another Character entirely. Think of your FOLLOWER as a loyal servant, cadet, squire, or personal robot.

⚙️ **Gadget (Asset)**

The hero possesses a tricky device as an Asset Tile with 1 Trait and 2[1]. As the hero's full turn, she can use the GADGET to roll a Check that steals 1DT from an Obstacle and gifts it to herself or any friendly Tile. The GADGET Asset could represent any tricky gizmo or artifact: Lasso, net, boomerang, spring, grappling hook, holy sigil, psychic amplifier, etc.

⚙️ **Grief (Training)**

The hero has trained in the art of subversion to stifle even the most aggressive of foes. Once per Round, the hero may expend any number of DT to remove the same amount from a single enemy.

⚙️ **Haste (Ability)**

The hero has the Ability to inspire and empower her allies. Once per Player-Round, the hero may expend 3DT to grant 1DT to each of her allies.

⚙️ **Heal (Ability)**

The hero may use her own Drama to heal even the most serious of Wounds. This Ability grants healing powers greater than the passing of time: 2DT heals [1], 4DT heals [2], and 6DT heals [3]. The hero herself and/or other friendly Tiles can benefit from Heal at the same time on a single turn.

⚙️ **Heavy (Combat Skill)**

As a master of heavy combat, the hero spends DT to increase damage dealt to a target. After successfully winning a Challenge, the hero may

Maybe you boost the effect of a Power by linking it to a piece of equipment or other limited resource

spend 3DT to add [+1] to any Wound. If multiple Successes land, the Power can “Stack” to add [+1] to multiple Wounds. Heavy could represent any weapon or technique that deals harsh damage: Battle hammer, heavy gun, magic blast, etc.

⚙️ **Heirloom (Asset)**

The hero possesses a cherished artifact as an Asset Tile with one powerful Trait (written as “2 ♦”) and 2[1]. This means the Trait is worth two dice whenever it is “played to” in a Challenge.

⚙️ **Jinx (Training)**

The hero has trained in the art of sabotage to be able to exploit any opportunity and undermine her foes. Whenever the hero Forces a Condition, deal an additional DT– to relevant targets. In most cases, this will mean suffering a Condition results in 2DT–, but other outcomes exist.

For example: Passing a Check, Neal’s rogue Nyelz uses the Success to Force an “Uneven Ground” Condition, tripping the HUNGRY GNOME he is fighting. Instead of dealing DT– as normal, Nyelz’s Jinx Power deals 2DT– to the GNOME.

Or: Later in the fight, after the GNOME uses Provoke to create a “Stone Spikes All Over” Condition, Neal uses a Success to Force that Condition, tripping the GNOME again. Instead of just dealing [1] (per the rules of Provoke, which creates Conditions that deal damage), Nyelz’s Jinx Power makes the GNOME suffer the damage and a single DT– as well.

⚙️ **Mind Control (Ability)**

The hero endures great physical harm in order to dominate another’s mind. The hero may use her turn self-inflicting 1[2] in order to take her target’s next turn. While the target may be forced to Challenge any other Obstacle or make any kind of Check, the controlled enemy cannot be forced to self-inflict damage directly, such as by jumping off a cliff or cutting one’s own throat.

⚙️ **Minion (Asset)**

The hero commands the loyalty of a devoted MINION as an Asset Tile with 1 Trait, 1 power, and 2[1]. The MINION always accompanies the hero, functioning as an extension of the hero herself. While unable to take turns itself, the MINION can still be included

in narrative declarations and actions taken by the hero. It is expected that players will “play to” the Traits of the MINION in such ways. MINIONS can also take narrative actions outside combat Scenes.

⚙️ **Mount / Pet (Familiar)**

At the moment the hero receives this Power, she designs a MOUNT with 1 Trait and 1[2]. The MOUNT or PET always accompanies the hero and does not need to be summoned into combat.

While the hero rides the MOUNT, it is treated as an Asset and functions as an extension of the Character Tile. When the hero dismounts, the PET is treated as a Familiar again and takes its own turns, etc. The hero may mount or dismount “At Will.”

⚙️ **Pacify (Ability)**

The hero has the Power to subdue and quiet a single foe. Declaring a target, she expends 3DT to prevent that target from counting its Drama Tokens as dice on the next Challenge or defense it rolls. If not used right away, the effect remains in potential until the end of the following Round.

⚙️ **Parry (Combat Skill)**

Familiar with the ebb and flow of combat, the hero may hinder an enemy whenever she is harmed. Whenever the hero suffers a Flesh or Mortal Wound in combat, deal DT– to her opponent. This does not function as a Condition and so cannot be “Trumped” or avoided by external circumstance.

⚙️ **Phantasm (Familiar)**

Exchanging 4DT, the hero can summon an incorporeal being in combat. The Tile has 1 Trait and 2 Abilities that are chosen the moment the hero obtains the Power and appears with 4DT when summoned. The PHANTASM Tile could represent any kind of evanescent being: Ghost, computer virus, hologram, djinn, etc.

The PHANTASM must be dispelled or destroyed as though an Abstract Obstacle (see page 22), meaning it will disappear when it reaches zero DT.

⚙️ **Phaser (Asset)**

The hero possesses a nasty contraption as an Asset Tile with 1 Trait and 2[1]. Whenever the Asset has 3DT or more, the hero chooses a single target on

which to inflict a Status Effect that is determined at the time the PHASER Tile is created. The Effect lasts until the Overpower is removed somehow.

☸ **Provoke (Ability)**

The hero has a knack for setting up dangerous situations in combat. When creating a Condition, the hero may spend 2DT to have that Condition deal [1] when suffered instead of the typical DT–.

☸ **Quake (Ability)**

The hero endures great physical harm in order to shake up the environment. The hero self-inflicts 1[2] on her turn for the opportunity to Force or Eliminate every Condition on the table (at the Judge's discretion), choosing for each separately.

☸ **Quick Spirits (Familiar)**

In exchange for any number of DT, the hero may summon a group of small SPIRITS into combat. The SPIRITS have 1 Trait set on the fly, a number of [1] equal to the number of Tokens spent summoning them, and begin with no DT of their own.

QUICK SPIRITS can be invigorated “At Will” by their Host at the same 1DT:[1] cost. QUICK SPIRITS can represent any kind of small, myriad antagonists: Nanobots, pixies or sprites, a swarm of insects, etc.

For example: When the WITCH summons her QUICK SPIRITS, she spends 3DT and creates a Tile from scratch that suits the situation:

SWARM OF BATS: A cloud of 20 large bats. **Trait:** Bat Guano Crazy. 3[1].

Once per Player-Round, the WITCH can spend Drama Tokens to add more [1] to the SPIRITS, even if it makes them more resistant than when first summoned.

☸ **Reflex (Training)**

The hero has been trained in the art of evasion to escape dangerous situations. The hero can attempt to avoid any DT– penalty by rolling against a Difficulty of 8.

This Power can counteract the effect of any Condition, even one Forced by someone else's Success. If the hero suffers multiple penalties at the same time, they would need to roll for each

potential Token independently. Note that Reflex cannot prevent damage from Traps, only DT loss.

☸ **Retry (Training)**

The hero has conditioned herself to be resilient and confident even in the face of failure, and so she may re-roll any failed Check once. Retry also works with Check-based Powers such as Reflex and Assets such as Dynamo or Synchron.

☸ **Revenant (Familiar)**

The hero draws energy from her own life-force in order to imprint a foe with a portion of her being. By self-inflicting 1[2], the hero may select a target that will rise as a REVENANT Familiar upon its death.

A REVENANT retains any Powers and DT the target had upon death, but REVENANTS have only a single *Shambling Undead* Trait (2◇) and 1[2].

REVENANT'S can be killed through any traditional means. Also, if the self-inflicted Wound used to imprint the REVENANT is healed, the REVENANT dies.

For example: Imagine a necromancer casts Revenant on the DIRE ALPHA WOLF from page 23. Upon the WOLF's death, the following REVENANT arises as a Permanent Familiar of the hero:

REVENANT WOLF: Once the leader of his pack, now one of the hungry undead. **Trait:** *Shambling Undead* (2◇). **Powers:** Howl (Can swap up to 2DT with Host “At Will”), Alpha Stare (Can “play to” a single Trait of his target on any Challenge or defense). 1[2].

Because undead have no Stress Wounds, they are always considered “Stressed” and do not gain DT+ on Clash.

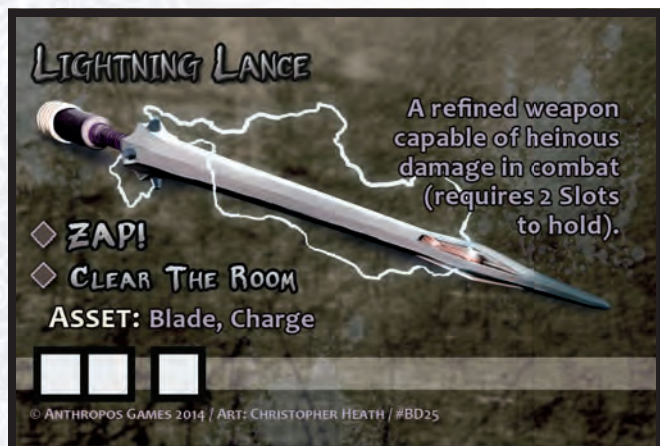
☸ **Sapper (Asset)**

The hero possesses a pernicious instrument as an Asset Tile with 1 Trait and 2[1]. At any time during the Player-Round, the SAPPER can roll a Check at a Difficulty of 5 to deal DT– to a single target.

☸ **Sentinel (Familiar)**

At the moment the hero receives this Power, she designs an ally with 1 Trait and 3[1]. For 3DT, the hero may summon the SENTINEL in combat,

These Powers are also listed on the back of our Judge's Screen to provide a convenient reference right at the table



who appears on the table with no Drama. The SENTINEL will immediately act as a SHIELD for the Host regardless of DT, and the lost Drama reflects this innate power taking effect. Despite acting as a SHIELD, the SENTINEL may roll Checks and Challenges as any other Familiar would during the Player-Round. Imagine the SENTINEL as a strong guardian of the Host: Spirit, bodyguard, undead thrall, living statue, etc.

⚙️ Sentry (Combat Skill)

As a master of fighting on a team, the hero can Challenge or defend alongside any ally by expending 2DT. This can occur as often as needed, but the Drama is spent *before* the roll. For more information on “combo attacks,” see pages 39–40.

⚙️ Shield (Asset)

The hero possesses a mighty artifact with 1 Trait and 2[1]. Whenever the Asset Tile has 3DT or more, the player may choose one Tile (including her own Hero) that cannot be Challenged. This SHIELD could represent any strong, defensive artifact.

⚙️ Slow (Ability)

The hero has the power to weaken and suppress her foes. As her full turn, the hero may expend 3DT to deal DT– to all enemy Tiles on the table.

⚙️ Spawn (Familiar)

In exchange for 4DT, the hero may design and summon a SPAWN Familiar with 2 Traits and 1[2]. The SPAWN takes its own turns and begins with all the Drama Tokens used to summon it. This summoned creature could be a demon, underling, spirit, adaptive machine, etc.

⚙️ Spines (Combat Skill)

As a master of vindictive combat, the hero deals damage in response to any large Wound she suffers. Let the hero deal [1] to her attacker after suffering 1[2] or 1[3] in combat. This power could represent any maneuver or weapon that deals reactive damage: Metal spikes, electro-shield, Okinawan drum technique, etc.

⚙️ Spite (Training)

The hero has trained herself in the arts of vengeance. When the hero receives this Power, she selects one Status Effect to master. Whenever the hero suffers 1[2] or 1[3] in combat, she may deal that Status Effect to her opponent.

⚙️ Synchron (Asset)

The hero possesses a synergistic mechanism as an Asset Tile with 1 Trait and 2[1]. At the beginning of each Player-Round, the SYNCHRON can roll against a Difficulty of 5 to generate 1DT for any chosen target, typically an allied Tile but not the Host.

⚙️ Tactics (Training)

The hero has been trained in combat strategy to always be in control of her tactical landscape. As her turn, she may expend any number of Drama Tokens to create an equal number of Conditions. However, Tactics cannot be used to Force or Eliminate any Conditions.

⚙️ Toughness (Training)

The hero has hardened her body and tempered her resolve to resist pain. Upon developing this ability, she permanently fuses 1[1] and 1[2] into a second 1[3] on her Character Tile. It now requires two Mortal Wounds to kill the hero! Any Powers that require self-inflicting 1[2] may target 1[3] instead for Tough heroes.

⚙️ Ward (Ability)

The hero may use her own Drama to reduce incoming damage as it is being dealt to an ally or herself. Whenever an enemy chooses to deal a Wound, the hero may expend 2DT to adjust the damage by [–1]: [3] reduces to [2], [2] reduces to [1], and [1] is negated. If the hero has a large amount of Drama, she may reduce as many Wounds on a turn as needed.

STATUS EFFECTS

Conditional Ailments, Weaknesses, Debilitating Effects, Magical By-products

The nine Status Effects introduce a new layer of strategy in any combat situation. The first seven are tied to any of the various Powers and equipment available in the game, while the latter two are specifically connected to the Resistance of the hero or enemy.

DURATION

Once deployed, each Status Effect will last throughout the current Round and to the end of the following Round.

For example: Anthony's character Dylla uses his Spite to set "Snare" after suffering 1[3] on a Challenge he initiated. The defender will suffer "Snare" for the remainder of the Player-Round and thru to the end of the following Enemy-Round.

Or: Later in the fight, Dylla suffers 1[2] when an enemy Challenges him. He sets "Snare" with his Spite Power as usual, and this time the Effect will last the remainder of the Enemy-Round and thru to the end of the following Player-Round.

THE NINE EFFECTS

Here is the complete list of the nine Status Effects available in **FANTAJI**. While they may be adjusted to suit your own campaign, keep in mind that these Status Effects have been carefully balanced.

Burn

This Effect represents physical pain or trauma of some kind. A character suffering from "Burn" self-inflicts [1] whenever she rolls a Challenge. If the hero or Obstacle has no [1] remaining, the "Burn" can deal no alternative damage and becomes obsolete. Defensive actions do not count and will not trigger damage when rolled.

Snare

This Effect represents some kind of hindering or obstructing ailment. Any Tile ailed by "Snare" will receive an additional DT- penalty whenever she suffers a Condition, adding to any other result.

Blind

A hero or Obstacle stricken "Blind" takes [1] whenever she suffers a Condition. This comes in addition to any other penalty on the Condition.

Multiple Status Effects can stack on the same Tile over the course of a Round, leaving an Obstacle wide open for attack. Layer Status Effects to reach victory!

Stun

When a target suffers from "Stun," the hero who inflicted the Status Effect can choose one Power or special ability that is negated or obstructed for the duration of the Effect. The target cannot use, deploy, or activate the chosen Power.

Daze

Anything suffering "Daze" cannot "play to" any Themes in Checks, Challenges, or defensive rolls. Consider the hero or Obstacle too confused to make sense of the larger situation.

Stagger

When a target suffers "Stagger," it cannot roll a Check or use any Check-like Powers on its turn. Heroes or Obstacles that are "Staggered" can roll Challenges and defense as normal.

Numb

Any "Numb" hero or Obstacle cannot use [1] to manipulate Conditions. Those who suffer "Numb" cannot create, eliminate, or Force a Condition using Checks or individual Successes from a Challenge.

TWO HEALTH EFFECTS

The Health-related Status Effects have special durations that fit the nature of the Effect.

Stressed

A hero or Obstacle is "Stressed" whenever it loses all of its Stress Wounds. Consider the character off balance or agitated and unable to make the most of opportunities. When "Stressed," characters will not gain DT+ on Clash. The condition lasts until a Stress Wound is healed by one means or another.

Bloodied

When a hero or Obstacle suffers from a Mortal Wound, it is considered "Bloodied." A "Bloodied" character cannot heal any smaller Wounds prior to the Mortal Wound being replenished.

SAMPLE THEMES

Ideas, Suggestions, Atmosphere, Tenor, Vibe, Make Them Up As You Go

Here is a list of over 100 Themes that you can use to start playing **FANTAJI** right away. Some of these may seem to suit only certain settings, but augment and fiddle with these however you like:

Quiet as The Grave
Maximum Exposure
The Darkest Hour Before Dawn
Comedy of Errors
Embracing The Symptoms
The Folly of Mankind
Horror Unseen
Flight From The Dark
Flashes of Flesh
Monster Mayhem!
Disturbing The Peace
Hot Sun, Cold Blood
Slithery When Wet
Good Day, Sunshine
Like Ducks in a Barrel
Bold Heroics
Strangers Become Friends
In For The Long Haul
Tempest in a Teacup
One Step Forward, Two Steps
Back
The Sky is Falling
Taking Care of Business
Age Before Beauty
Unbearable Lightness of Being
Instant Karma's Gonna Get Ya
The Hunters Become The Hunted
And It's Just The Beginning
Raging Hormones
Homeward Bound
Out of Sight, Out of Mind
Touchy Subjects
Mission Improbable
Through Dangers Unknown
Nothing Is As It Seems
Playing With Fire
Every Moment Counts
In Hot Pursuit
Seeing The Light
A Shade From Death
By The Skin of Their Teeth
The Devil in The Details
The Sky is The Limit
Death From Above
The Walls Have Eyes
But It's Cold Outside
Weeping And Gnashing of Teeth

On The Shoulders of Giants
No Rest For The Wicked
Light at The End of The Tunnel
It Takes A Village...
The End of The Line
Handle With Care
All Things Must Pass
The Living Daylights
Biting The Hand That Feeds
A Ballad of a Big Nothing
Brothers in Arms
The World is A Vampire
Every Rose Has Its Thorns
Winter Is Coming
Two Drink Minimum
Keep it Secret, Keep it Safe
Fortune Favors The Bold
All Cats Are Grey in The Dark
Needle in The Hay
The Going Got Tough
Circling the Wagons
Cutting Against The Grain
Knowing Me, Knowing You
The Winner Takes it All
All We Have is Now
Walk Don't Run
Smoke Rings in The Dark
Follow You Follow Me
Spirits in The Material World
The Door Swings Both Ways
The Pace is The Trick
Naked as We Came
Teeth in The Grass
Castles Made of Sand
Power to The People
If It Gets You Through The Night
Something's Gotta Give
Everything Put Together Falls
Apart
A Means to an End
Everything That's Shinin' Ain't
Always Gonna Be Gold
Give The People What They Want
Communication Breakdown
When The Levee Breaks
The Best is Yet to Come Undone
Gotta Keep 'Em Separated

For Whom The Bell Tolls
Gold, Guns, Girls
Privacy Not Guaranteed
Dawn is a Feeling
The Song Remains The Same
The Line Begins to Blur
Calm Like a Bomb
Neat Little Domestic Life
It's Like The Party's Crashing Us
Such Great Heights
Across The Universe Divide
Clash of The Titans
One Bad Apple Spoils The Bunch
Just a Walk in The Park
Better Days Ahead
Tomorrow Never Knows
Nothing to Get Hung About
Another Day in Paradise
Everybody's Got Something to
Hide
You Gotta Learn Sometime
The Final Countdown
False Advertising
On a Road to Nowhere
Dancing in The Dark
Welcome to The Jungle
Welcome to The Revolution
Harder Better Faster Stronger
Money For Nothing
Render Unto Caesar...
Bottle Up And Explode
Band on The Run
Blinding With Science
Run That Body Down
Coming in The Air Tonight
Do or Do Not, There is No Try
The Show Must Go On
The Needs of The Many...
Simple Twist of Fate
Steady As She Goes
High & Dry
Everything In Its Right Place
A House of Cards
Into The Brave New World
Alone With Everybody
This is Not an Exit
More Than You Can Chew

And here you have a list of over 100 Traits to help inspire your new **FANTAJI** players. Traits, like Themes, should be open-ended and artistic. The best Traits are poetic and literary turns of phrase:

Never Leaves on The Light
Measure Once, Cut Twice
Shaves in The Dark
High & Mighty
Age Before Beauty
Slip Sliding Away
Fools Rush In
Walking on Sunshine
Steel Reserve
Dust in The Wind
Still Waters Run Deep
Hot Under the Collar
Only Shooting Stars Break The
Mold
No Pussyfooting Around
Cheaper by The Dozen
Undivided & Conquering
Heavy Metal
Ghost in The Shell
Sting Like a Bee
Silence is Golden
Howling Mad
Death From Above
Lighting The Fantastic
No Honor Among Thieves
Thick as a Brick
If Looks Could Kill
Back in Black
Battle-Heartened
Fresh From The Fight
Larger Than Life
He Who Greet's With Fire
Just Following Orders
Mobbing Mentality
Hating The Player
Comfortably Numb
On The Shoulders of Giants
To The Pain
Life in The Fast Lane
Running With The Devil
Daydream Believer
And Never Been Kissed
Tough as Nails
The Sound And The Furious
Touch And Go
Oedipus Wrecks
Less is More

Ignoblesse Oblige
Locked & Loaded
Unorthodox Approach
Iron Maiden
Horseshoes & Hand Grenades
The One-Eyed Man is King
Everybody Knows Your Name
Hash & Slack
Slippery When Wet
Beast of Both Worlds
Bawdy Count
Heavy is The Head...
Passed Tense
The End of The Beginning
Private Eyes
Never Say Never Again
Live And Let Die
Sticky Fingers
Casting Cares Away
The Boy Who Sries Wolf
Smooth Like Silk
Holier Than Thou
Knight in White Satin
Right Makes Might
Too Big For Bridges
The Man Who Knows Too Little
Arrogance is Bliss
Come as You Are
Older Than The Gods
What You See is What You Get
Ironclad
The Bee in The Bonnet
Under Pressure
Midnight's Son
Killer Queen's Gambit
The Ace Up The Sleeve
The Humanoid Typhoon
Sharpest Tool in The Shed
Two Screws Loose
The Eye of The Maelstrom
Against The Grain
Hangs By A Thread
Silent But Deadly
The Long Arm of The Lawless
Stitching in Time
Creature of Habit
Fullmetal Altruist

More Machine Than Man Now
Tried And True
A Cut Above
Ragin' Contagion
Too Old to Rock 'n' Roll But Too
Young to Die
Long in The Tooth
Ticking Titan
More Than Meets The Eye
Finger on The Pulse
Cool Hand Juke
Much to My Chagrin
Inhuman Instinct
Underneath it All
Seen But Not Heard
Dark And Stormy
Brilliant Disguise
Large And in Charge
Like Clockwork
Unbeating Heart
Meddle Monstrosity
Eyes in The Dark
Tiptoe Through The Tulips
Blinding Prejudice
Sword And Pistol By My Side
Hold Onto The Night
Crazed And Confused
Rider on the Storm
Like A Rat in A Maze
Buried Alive And Kicking
Sent to Drain
The Smallest Slice
Shoot From The Hip
Heart of Stone
Born of a Broken Man
Fool in The Rain
Born At The Right Time
Blue Blood, Red Eyes
And My Bird Can Sing
This Gun's For Hire
Hungry Like The Wolf
Beyond The Law
No Sense of Crime
Follower of Fashion
I'm My Own Worst Enemy
Have Gun, Will Travel
The Man Who Sold The World



CHAPTER 4: HOW TO RUN A SCENE

While you now know the rules of the game, there are many possibilities you might not see yet. Obstacles can be toyed with to make your encounters more dramatic, and using Conditions outside combat situations will elevate your group's role-playing.

SUMMARY

Tips and Tricks, Secret Moves, Expert Advice, Getting the Most Out of The Engine

Though you know the fundamentals of the game already, this chapter offers options and ideas for how to run your game with the full power of the **FANTAJI ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEM**. There are quite a few possibilities that the system affords that new players and Judges may not at first recognize.

This chapter begins with a look at designing and managing Scenes. You will learn different ways to organize and understand a flexible Scene, what things can look like outside combat, and how to arrange a political conflict.

The **SYSTEM** works in other modes of play as well, though. Four different modes can change the way your group plays **FANTAJI**. "Smooth Flow" lets you play without fixed Scenes at all, riffing through your

world with as many Obstacles present as needed. "Shuffle Play" lets you form perfect one-offs and even makes for interesting campaign play that can keep the Judge on her toes. "Board Game" play lays Obstacles out in order to be handled by moving over them. And "Miniature play" changes things up dramatically and gives you tips for saving space.

Next we handle each form of Tile in turn and explain several implications that might not be immediately understood from the basic rules.

The final section of this chapter concerns troubleshooting Scenes. If your group does not get the hang of **FANTAJI** right away, we have a few suggestions for working out the kinks.

JUDGING

DARK ALTAR

- ◆ SOMETHING EVIL THIS WAY COMES
- ◆ SUFFER, THE LITTLE CHILDREN

UNHOLY AURA: THE DARK ALTAR WILL ACT AS A SHIELD AND A DYNAMO FOR ANY "UNHOLY" CREATURES IN THE VICINITY UNTIL IT IS DESTROYED, REGARDLESS OF DT



MANAGING SCENES

The Artistry of Constructing and Managing Scenes, Interesting Tiles, Going With the Flow

You were first introduced to a standard combat Scene on page 12, and all the fundamental rules for running such a Scene have been covered in previous sections. For the basics on designing and playing through exciting combat, see “Setting the Scene” and “The Game in Motion” starting on page 28. For advanced ideas, read on.

This section covers designing and implementing Scenes that do not fit the typical battle to the death. We encourage Judges to diversify the kinds of Scenes they design to keep their **FANTAJI** game fresh and engaging for players.

OUTSIDE COMBAT

Some of the best moments of any campaign are spent outside combat when role-playing takes the central focus and characters engage in political intrigue, conversation, and guile. **FANTAJI** is exceptional in its ability to represent such intrigue.

For example: Dieter spends two hours of gaming in small Scenes that take place outside any combat. His party has stolen an ancient idol from a long-forgotten temple and must now escape the island and get back to civilization. The resolution of the long journey takes three conversational Scenes:

Theme: Homeward Bound

FIND PROVISIONS: Your party must outfit a voyage over unfamiliar seas to Brekken. **Trait:** It Takes a Village... 2[2] / 3[1].

When using only a single Tile for something so broad, each block of Resistance can represent one particular task involved. The first [2] might be securing a captain, the second getting a ship. The individual [1] blocks might represent finding useful crew members, getting supplies, or covering their trail. Whatever actions the players take, the Resistance needs to be overcome by Challenges.

The players spend long minutes role-playing, rolling Checks to make small discoveries and Challenges when they think they can finish one of the tasks.

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Andrew: I want to look for any adventurers who have become stranded here and offer them a chance to return to the big city across the sea.

Dieter: Smart. Roll a Check against 3 to find a group like that and take a DT+ if you pass. We can assume you play to the Theme exactly on that one.

Andrew passes the Check, and the party spends half an hour talking with a group of former adventurers who now act as shepherds for the village. They make Checks and build Drama, waiting for the right moment to make their official pitch:

Allyson: It's time to return to your homes, men. None of you are getting younger, and the women here are rough. Why not make the voyage back when you still have some fight in you? What say you, men?

Dieter: Looks like you've played to the Theme and your Smooth Like Silk Trait. With your 3 Drama, that's 5 dice. I'll roll 1 die to represent the inertia of their new lifestyle in the village, playing to the It Takes a Village... Trait.

Allyson rolls: 2, 5, 8, 8, 9
Dieter rolls: 6

Dieter: Well, big success! Let's just say that knocks out the 3[1] and covers the entire crew. With a captain and a ship, you'll be set. He could have crossed out a [2] and a [1] instead, depending on the situation afoot, but this time Dieter feels wiping out the 3[1] was the right choice for the story.

After the [2]s are handled later, Dieter awards the *Homeward Bound* Theme to Andrew for coming up with the idea of looking for stranded adventurers. He then lays out the Tiles for the next Scene, which happens to have the same Theme:

Theme: *Homeward Bound*

TRAVELING TO PORT BREKKEN: Navigating the sea to reach port safely. **Trait:** *Dark and Stormy*.

Dangerous Seas: Players take turns Challenging the Obstacle to travel. Every [1] won by the Obstacle summons a SEA SERPENT. 10[1].

SEA SERPENTS: The heads of these serpents resemble that of the idol taken from the temple. Coincidence? **Trait:** *Slithery When Wet*. 1[2]. Each begins with 2DT.

A Scene this small may feel superfluous or “grindy” to some players so follow the tastes of your group. Dieter uses the opportunity to hint at the nature of the idol and offer some quick action. Once the party reaches Brekken, it is back to long-form role-playing for another hour at least:

Themes: *Out of Sight, Touchy Subjects*

LOCATE A FENCE: Once in Brekken, you must locate a man to buy the idol from your party. **Trait:** *Keep it Secret, Keep it Safe*. **Overpower:** If the Tile reaches 4DT, you have drawn too much attention to yourselves. No fence in Brekken will deal with the party. [2] / 3[1].

To begin, Lance makes a Check to build Drama and start off the role-playing: *I get us a small room in a tavern and tell the proprietor that we carry something valuable. That should put the word on the street, maybe get someone interested in us. Playing to Touchy Subjects, I imagine.*

The group makes dozens of similar Checks, building drama and Creating Conditions that will manage the Tile’s Drama once they start making Challenges to the Obstacle directly. Later on:

Lance: *I want to follow that guy with the out-of-place piece of art you mentioned, hoping he can lead us to some buyers. Can I roll that as a Challenge?*

Dieter nods, and the two work out what dice need to be rolled. Dieter rolls two dice in defense, one

What if Allyson fails the roll against the shepherds? Half an hour of role-playing wasted? Or, what if Andrew fails the Check to find them in the first place?

Any failure at the first idea just makes the story more interesting. Now you have a group coming up with something less obvious to try! Every failure forces them to get more creative and to think more outside the box.

Maybe after two or three failures, Dieter declares that a suitable ship arrives at the village on a trade mission. He puts out a new Tile, replacing FIND PROVISIONS with:

HIJACKING THE TRADE SHIP: The party must take over the newly arrived ship. **Traits:** *Bustling Boat, Vassal Vessel*. [3] / 2[1].

Dieter adds the *Vassal Vessel* Trait as a little loose thread. The boat belongs to someone powerful, and that someone might come looking for the party later...

for *Touchy Subjects* and one for *Keep it Secret, Keep it Safe*. Lance scores [1] and deals “damage.” Dieter explains that the group witnesses the man make a hand-off and collect what looks like a purse of coins from a shady figure in the alleyway. They were right, he’s involved in black market sales.

Allyson: *After witnessing the exchange of cash, I want to keep following behind the guy who made the sale and tail him. Playing to Out of Sight, I imagine?*

Dieter sets the Difficulty at 5, which Allyson passes: *Okay, you three can sneak behind him. It seems like he is just going to a public house to relax. Oh, and be sure to take a Token, Allyson.*

Andrew: *I’m going to Challenge too. I reach out and grab the guy before he gets to the bar, assuming he works as a broker. Staring in his face, eyes burning with magic flames, I speak in a slow voice, “We have*

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

the Genavhan Idol and we need cash for it. We know the local cult would pay a small fortune for it so set up a negotiation already.”

He has played to both his Traits and the Touchy Subjects Theme, and he scores [2] in the Challenge. While attackers get to decide how to mark off their target’s Resistance blocks in combat, the Judge usually makes certain blocks represent certain parts of the puzzle outside combat. Dieter marks off the remaining 2[1] and has the party meet the fence the following night. A big [2] still left!

Of course, every group will set its own pace and rhythms for role-playing. The Judge calls for a roll whenever she feels it appropriate, and players can ask for rolls whenever they want to determine a concrete effect. **FANTAJI** makes working through a story exciting and open-ended. In a way, the rolls simply punctuate the ongoing role-playing, guiding and directing without interfering.

JUST THE ROLE-PLAYING

Even when there are no specific Obstacles to be reckoned with players can simply ride the Themes. Scenes like this usually encompass casual role-playing, giving players something to “play to” even during the “down time” between more intense conflicts. They offer room for role-playing and invite friendly competition over the Themes.

For example: After the battle with the TERRASAUR described in previous chapters, Wamae places a single Tile on the table, a Reconstruction Theme. This will guide the casual role-playing to follow as well as offer something to “play to” while the heroes fix the village and work at coaxing the villagers into helping their quest. Before the next big conflict, the player who did the most to strengthen relationships with the village will gain the Theme as a reward.

Or: After a big battle, Dieter’s party decides to rest and build a small camp. The Judge creates a Resourceful Rest Theme and makes the players roll Checks to establish a perimeter, avoid predators, hunt for food, and fix their equipment. Even though Dieter writes no official Obstacles, he asks the players to roll Challenges against small chores he creates. See page 93 for more on voicing small Obstacles without taking time to write a Tile.

Your group will set the pace of play, and the Judge decides when you need to roll. Your game, your rhythm.

Imagine your character is performing stand-up comedy. Does the Judge accept “I say something funny” as your Check? Maybe you have to *actually* say something funny to earn the roll. What Trait or Theme does the joke play to? Is the crowd an Obstacle that needs to be Challenged with each joke? Each group can define conflicts their own way.

Any Drama gained during these smaller Scenes may or may not be maintained when a more tumultuous Scene begins. At the very least, experience is gained and an opportunity to heal is granted.

For example: At the end of the camping Scene, Xinjin wins the Resourceful Rest Theme, and the players “cash in” three more Drama Tokens that were earned from quick Checks to heal pesky Wounds from an earlier battle.

Or: Heidi is giving her players a short moment to rest up the night before a dangerous raid. She places a Somber Evening Theme on the table and lets characters do as they please.

Erick rolls a few Checks to replenish his exploding ammo (see example on page 70). He purchases more rounds and gains some Drama, but also makes sure to spend every turn narrating the painful regrets of a hired gun. At the end of the Scene, Heidi awards him the Theme even though not a single Obstacle was faced.

Maybe these moments lead up to an Obstacle being thrown on the table, and maybe they do not. After a time of role-playing, the Judge distributes the awarded Themes and starts up the next Scene.

BETWEEN SCENES

And even without Themes, players can roll small Checks “playing to” their own Traits to perform simple tasks between Scenes.



For example: Chang's **WANING MOON** players are attempting to break into a secure facility. Before he can design the exact Tiles for the Scene, he has to know what route they will take. The players roll small Checks to case the joint.

Gwen: I want to hang around the front doors for a day and see what kinds of guards are stationed there. You can never be sure, but research can help.

Chang: Smart. Playing to your Underneath It All Trait? I'll give you a Difficulty of 5.

Gwen rolls a 2 and fails. Chang has to decide what the failure means: Maybe Gwen is simply unable to gain any information about the guards, or maybe her failure at the front door signifies that the crew has to find another way into the building. For the sake of spicing things up, Chang chooses the latter.

Omer: Can I check out the specs of the building at the local city planner's? I want to see if I can find some secret way in. Playing to Tried and True.

Chang sets the Difficulty high because Omer's character has little knowledge of architecture or espionage. Omer rolls a 9 and passes!

After a few more "passes" and a few "failures," the party decides on their method of approach. Chang then creates the following Scene:

Theme: Mission Improbable

Condition: Slippery Glass

SCALING THE SKYSCRAPER: The party will use both suction and stealth to climb up the shimmering walls of the building. **Trait:** People Who Live in Glass Houses... **Secure Building:** Any [1] scored by the Tile deals a Stress Wound to everyone; a [2] deals Stress and sounds the alarm. 3[2].

POLITICS & MYSTERY

FANTAJI makes it easy to create a conflict that revolves around political intrigue, an unsolved mystery, or a delicate confidence game. Obstacles can be numerous, overlapping, and complicated in such a Scene; but that just makes things more interesting.

For example: Chang creates a complex Scene taking place during a masquerade ball at Norwich Academy, with the Obstacles based on earlier successes and plans laid by his players.

Themes: Dangers Unknown, Nothing as it Seems, Bustling Bouncing Balls, Lady in Red

Conditions: Crowded Ballroom, Sloppy Drunks

MAINTAINING CALM: The Life of the Party. If the Tile reaches 5DT, a panic erupts.

Draw Out the Killer: The party has a plan to catch the killer before anyone else dies by keeping an eye on the ball and making sure nobody goes missing. **Traits:** Only Have Eyes For You, Faceless Evil. **Another One Bites the Dust:** Every time this Tile scores [1], deal a Stress Wound to every player and the WHO'S WHO Tile (one more patron has gone missing). 2[2]. Begins at 4DT.

WHO'S WHO: Brilliant Disguises. **Crowd of**

Costumes: Each block represents one more patron who is identified and crossed off the list of suspects. When the final block is dealt, the killer is identified by elimination. 9[1].

The players spend all night role-playing the masquerade ball, making Checks whenever they need to posture or draw attention to themselves and Challenges whenever they need to act as bait or directly confront the Obstacle. They might identify the killer before locating him, or locate him before identifying him under his costume. Either way, when push finally comes to shove:

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

REVENGE DEMON: A powerful hellspawn that feeds on negative emotions and offers the pleasure of revenge to scorned souls. **Traits:** Best Served Cold, Steely Gaze (2◇), Devil in the Details. **Powers:** Heavy Weapon, Burst (Ice Blasts), Slow, Addiction. [3] / [2] / 5[1]. Begins with 4DT, depending on previous Condition play.

Keep in mind that **Checks** are for indirectly addressing Obstacles: Boosting Drama, sussing out or creating new Conditions, trying cool stunts. They work the same outside of combat and in.

Challenges are for those actions that directly address the Obstacle and aim to overcome it: Making public accusations, reaching for the villain's mask, eliciting a confession, forcing someone's hand. The players then interpret any Successes creatively just as they would in combat, turning the [1]s and [2]s into narrative.

HEAVY INTRIGUE

Games can involve a surprising amount of political intrigue while still including appropriate rolls that offer a bit of objectivity and chance.

For example: Wamae sets the players up as advisors in the Andhuran court, and the group must dedicate months to undermine one particular Count. This particular Scene could go on in the background for weeks while players pursue other goals, resolve other Scenes, and undertake other adventures.

Themes: Playing With Fire, Every Moment Counts

Conditions: Sensitive Issues, Vital Manners

UNDERMINE COUNT TAGOR: Refined Tastes, Two Cuts Above. **Smear Campaign:** Any damage dealt by this Tile is permanent until the Obstacle is defeated. 4[2]. Begins with 9DT.

Whenever the players make a smart move in their game of backstabbing and bartering, Wamae calls for a Check. Successes gain Drama for the character and uncover premade Conditions that shed light

on individual secrets of the court. Later encounters see players using those Conditions to sap Drama from the COUNT and his allies. This dance can drag on weeks before one side tries something more overt, and by then the stakes are high.

MIXED SCENES

Because non-combat Obstacles are handled the same way as tangible enemies, any Scene can have an assortment of Obstacles. There is no need to distinguish things happening “in” or “out of” combat at all.

THE CHASE SCENE

Creating an exciting chase Scene is easy in **FANTAJI**. Put together whatever enemies you would like with one Tile focused on the pursuit.

For example: Heidi creates a dangerous chase Scene on the forest moon of Edron. The players each ride jet-bikes and chase after a speeding hover-truck filled with enemy soldiers. If they cannot stop the transport vehicle, the soldiers will arrive at a nearby battle as reinforcements.

Themes: Hot Pursuit, Break-Neck Speeds

Conditions: Moving at Incredible Speeds, Narrow Forest Furrows

HOVER-TRUCK GETTING AWAY: There are various ways this Tile can be Challenged. **Traits:** Large Barge, Just Following Orders. 3[2]. Begins with 4DT.

SOLDIERS: New Recruits, Just Following Orders.

Powers: Aim, Heavy. 6[1]. Begins with 3DT.

Players Challenge the GETTING AWAY Tile by shooting at the vehicle's hover pads, knocking over trees to cover the path, attaching cables from one vehicle to another, distracting the driver, etc. Other characters can spend turns launching attacks directly at the SOLDIERS. Either Obstacle can attack players directly: The TRUCK can lead the heroes into danger with quick maneuvers, and the SOLDIERS can fire their rifles at the pursuers.

Depending on how the players attack the HOVER-TRUCK GETTING AWAY, they could end up crashing the vehicle, boarding it, or leading it astray. It is up to the group how the narrative unfolds.

THE SCOPE OF ANY GIVEN TURN

As Technical as You Want, More or Less Rolling, Focus on Role-Playing Not Dice, Still Tactical

While the system is open to every interpretation, we have found that each group will settle on a style or rhythm that guides the basic complexity of the role-playing. It seems that players naturally develop a consensus about how wild, rampageous, or declarative you can get on any given turn.

Of course, different times may call for different measures, and part of managing the Scene is knowing when to rein players in if they aim too big and when to animate players if they aim too small.

For example: In the **BLOODSBANE** setting, Lance plays to Brostar's Only Shooting Stars Break the Mold Trait, declaring, "I smash through the wall of the castle and scatter a handful of guards to make my entrance." The rest of the party rolls their eyes at Lance's choice in Traits, but beyond that they take issue with Brostar smashing a hole in the wall.

Dieter: I'm not sure Brostar could break through the stone walls of the castle, Lance.

Lance: Well, there is nothing saying I can't do it so I just went on a roll.

Dieter: Obviously getting through the wall would require an Obstacle Tile. I could write one up if you want, but hold off on just bursting through stone. **FANTAJI** is all about focusing on meaningful actions, meaningful conflicts, meaningful drama. You can celebrate the creative freedom of the system without reducing your turn to slapstick or physics-defying outbursts.

Lance: Okay.

Or: When the group of heroes attends a gala at the sultan of Aliphar's palace, Allyson wants to spend a Success building her reputation. She played to Alandra's Smooth Like Silk Trait in a Check and declared, "Alandra flashes her invitation to the doorman and slips inside the gala, bowing before the sultan and spinning across the floor to end up by the vizier seemingly by accident. Can I set an 'Alandra Impressed The Doorman' Condition?"

Dieter: You can go much bigger than that. You scored an awesome Success, and it totally fits your Trait.

Allyson: Okay, what if I impress the sultan instead?

Dieter: Bigger.

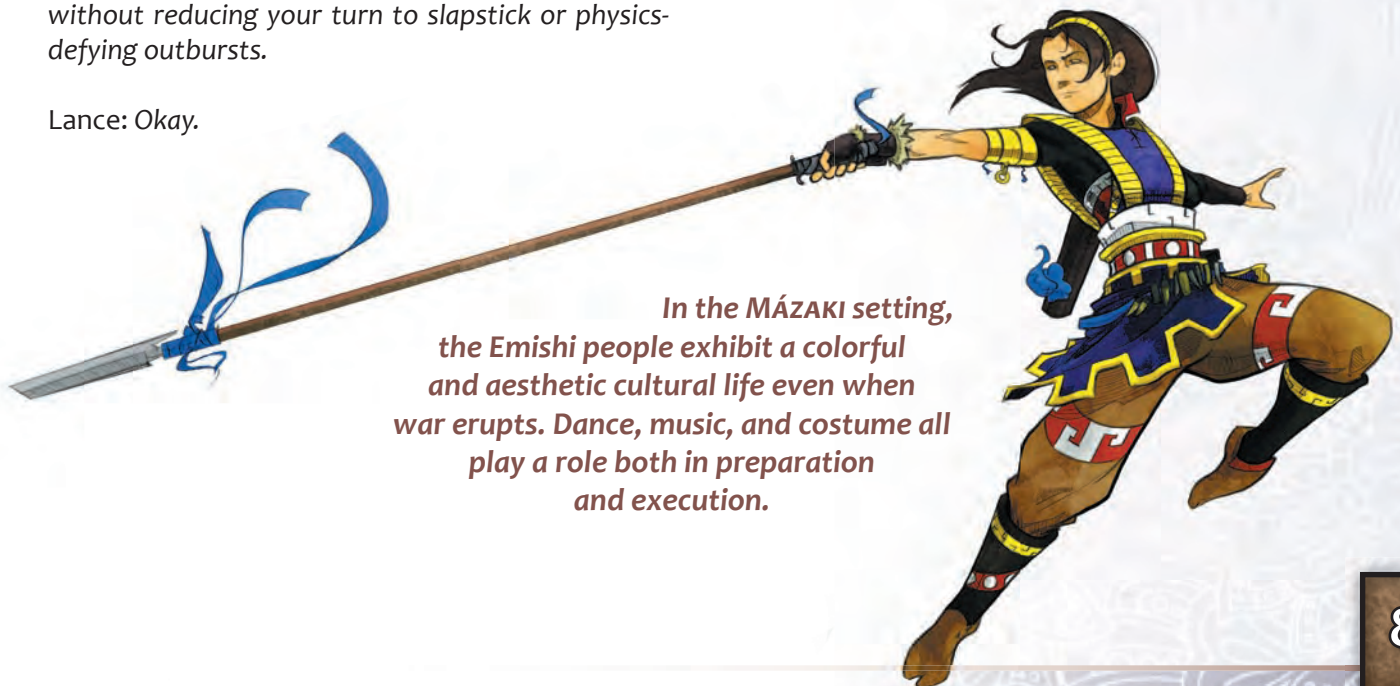
Allyson: Fine, I want to create a "Life of the Party" Condition that establishes Alandra as the center of attention and the belle of the ball.

Everyone nods.

WHAT YOU ROLL FOR

Sometimes the Judge may call for a Check when you want to cross the street without getting hit by a car. Other times, she may let you sneak past an entire parade of vehicles without asking for a roll. Maybe in an especially pivotal Scene, she turns crossing the street into a Tile that demands multiple Challenges.

In the MÁZAKI setting, the Emishi people exhibit a colorful and aesthetic cultural life even when war erupts. Dance, music, and costume all play a role both in preparation and execution.



OTHER STYLES OF PLAY

The Artistry of Constructing and Managing Scenes, Interesting Tiles, Going With the Flow

Though we focus on designing Scenes of several types in this chapter, your own game may include variable paces and forms of action that forgo a reliance on planned Scenes entirely. The following four styles of play implement the same rules as any other **FANTAJI** encounter but approach the use of Tiles from different angles.

SMOOTH FLOW

Maybe the idea of predefined Scenes sounds constricting to your players. Good role-playing is often spontaneous, and players are right to want control over what happens next. Fortunately, **FANTAJI** does not need premade Scenes to ensure a fun and challenging game for your group.

In “Smooth Flow” play, you do not have any fixed Scenes at all, and the story continues uninterrupted with new Obstacles coming and going as they are encountered in the narrative.

*For example: Our **GAMMA CENTAURI** players decide to try “Smooth Flow” for the night. The group of smugglers are on a small mission stealing supplies from a temporarily unmanned space station, and Heidi and her friends play the entire night without an official Scene.*

The intrepid Judge creates Obstacles in the moment, responding to the ideas of the players. When Nadya wants to hack into the computer system to lift some data, Heidi creates a Tile for that:

HACKING THE SYSTEM: The process is both tedious and tricky, and the station has viruses ready to infect any equipment connected to the SYSTEM. **Traits:** Systematic Ultramatic Lightning, Infectious Framework, Like Clockwork. **Defenses:** The SYSTEM can deal Flesh Wounds to hackers. Also, it gains DT+ on any roll in which it deals damage. 2[2] / 9[1]. Begins at 2DT.

When the players encounter drones protecting some important cargo, Heidi works up two Tiles. These can be triggered by various bad decisions throughout:

ALPHA DRONE: Steel Skeleton, Like Clockwork, Laser-Sharp Wit. **Powers:** Aim, Slow, Dynamo. 2[2].

DELTA DRONE: Like Clockwork, Mountains of Metal. **Powers:** Dynamo, Sync (see Grief), Zap (see Curse, sets Daze). [2] / 2[1].

When Erick searches an officer’s room, hoping for a piece of fancy firepower, Heidi makes a Tile:

SEARCH: A small Obstacle offering a big reward. **Traits:** What You See Ain’t What You Get. **Chances:** If the player loses or Clashes, there is nothing to be found. [1] can find basic item, [2] can find good item, [3] can find temporary Asset.

THEMES SET THE PACE

It may work well to decide on the number of Themes you want in play at any given moment. As long as the right number of Themes are on the table, Obstacles and Conditions can come and go as the story develops. When a player makes a particularly creative or clever action in line with one of the Themes, the Judge awards her the Tile and comes up with a replacement.

Maybe the Judge decides to reward one or two Themes every half-hour of real time. Or, maybe each Theme gets to stay on the table for only half an hour at a time. If nobody has earned the particular Theme within its set time on the table, nobody wins it. Replace it with another.

OVERLAPPING SCENES

“Smooth Flow” play often results in the feeling of a few Scenes happening at once. Some Obstacles demand attention until they are defeated, while others can be picked up and put down as needed.

For example: As Nadya is attempting to hack into the station mainframe, Erick triggers the DRONES and sparks a fight. Nadya can now ignore the SYSTEM Obstacle and focus all her attention on the DRONES.

Or: When Erick is searching the officer’s room, Nadya is still hacking into the computer. The two smugglers

are in separate rooms struggling with separate Obstacles as though each is engaged in his or her own Scene. While Themes are still shared, Conditions might be relevant in only one of the locations.

During “Smooth Flow,” it is not unusual for a party to be contending with four, five, or even six Obstacles at once, with combat and non-combat Tiles overlapping.

PLANNING AHEAD

Even when play is spontaneous or takes on a deliberate “sandbox” feel, the party will benefit from a Judge who designs certain Obstacles ahead of time. The narrative can follow a solid course whether you decide to use formal Scenes or not.

For example: Heidi had the DRONES and the SEARCH Tiles created ahead of time, all three of them included in her Deck for the campaign. See below for more on preparing a Deck.

SHUFFLE PLAY

What if there is time for only a single encounter? Maybe your players are new, or maybe they just need a break from the ongoing campaign. The **FANTAJI SYSTEM** handles one-offs with ease!

Just shuffle your **Deck** of Obstacles, Themes, and Conditions and see what happens (see page 112 for more on deck building). Because the story comes alive in play, any number of random elements can be translated into a gripping, exciting Scene.

For example: Dieter wants to add a random encounter to the night’s game. The Scene will take place in the middle of a long journey for the party, a little color in an otherwise blank event. He decides to draw nine Tiles randomly from his hefty decks, pulling:

Themes: *Seeing the Light, A Shade From Death*

Conditions: *Crumbling Rooftops, Biting Wind, Party Surrounded*

OBSTACLES: *RESTLESS WRAITHS, WANDERING BRIGANDS, LOCKED DOOR, SUMMONED SPIRITS*

At first, the Tiles look impossible to reconcile, and it takes a little while for Dieter to translate the

EVERYDAY GAMING

After familiarizing yourself with these other modes of play you may come to realize that **FANTAJI** works even without laying handwritten Tiles across the table.

While Conditions and Themes work best in writing because the precise wording of both elements is essential, Obstacles need not exist as such. Judges can write “stat blocks” for monsters and villains on their notes as they would in any other tabletop role-playing game and simply communicate the necessary information to the players as needed.

In fact, if the Judge has a sturdy gaming screen or a small dry-erase board handy, you can clip the Themes and Conditions onto the screen with paperclips or write them on the dry-erase board without taking up space on the table at all.

result into a meaningful story. After some thought, he declares: “Due to violent winds, you are forced to make camp in the ruins of a large manor house. Following strange sounds in the middle of the night, Xinjin and Brostar go to investigate. A door slams shut behind them, the lock clicking in place. In the dark room, ghosts of all kinds appear, circling the two male adventurers. Alandra moves to check the door, but before she gets there she is surrounded by rogues who have taken this opportunity to attempt an assault.”

It is an off-the-cuff translation of the random elements, but it sounds fun. Dieter hits all three Conditions easily, creates two separate fights divided by a LOCKED DOOR, and figures the players can be creative playing to the Themes. It works well as a random encounter, and the group is excited to role-play something fresh. Knowing that the encounter is random makes it feel more like a puzzle than a story, which offers a different kind of emotional reward for the group of gamers.

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

DECK-PLAY A CAMPAIGN

While “Shuffle Play” leaves the order of events out of the Judge’s control and seems only fit for one-off battles, an entire campaign can be played this way with a well-designed Deck. The many Obstacles that make up the conflicts of the world are present in the Deck and encountered in whatever order they arise.

Themes and Conditions are placed back into the Deck as the story progresses, and the campaign is over when the Deck is fully depleted of Obstacles or when one particular Obstacle, such as the major villain, is defeated.

Play Scene-by-Scene, interpreting each draw of Tiles as in the previous example. Your group may want to decide ahead of time how many Tiles to draw of each type or in total.

For example: Imagine Dieter and his group want to play more shuffled Scenes after the last. The Judge decides to draw four Themes, two Conditions, and five Obstacles in each Scene, resulting this time with:

Themes: Taking Care of Business, The Sky is Falling, Tempest in a Teacup, In For the Long Haul

Conditions: Torrential Rains, Crumbling Rooftops

OBSTACLES: PAINTED BULL OGRE, VETERAN SWORDSWOMAN, THE WAGON TIPPED OVER, GRIFFING THE MARK, DIRE WOLF

All of the players work to bring the narrative to account, adding parts of the story as needed to connect the earlier Scene at the crumbling manor house to the new encounter.

Andrew: After reaching the city, maybe we take a job from a member of my warlock’s guild... from an old friend of mine who needs a piece of the ogre’s body, an organ or something...?

Allyson: That would cover two of the Themes and the ogre. We can come upon the brute as it knocks



over our wagon. The swordswoman could also need the ogre for occult reasons and brings her pet wolf to battle it. We are caught in a three-way battle...?

Dieter: Okay. During a violent rainstorm, your wagon is stuck in the mud just outside an old barn that is falling apart. You are hoping to dig it out when the Ogre attacks the barn. Animals scatter. If you cannot slay the ogre, you’ll need the wagon to get away. The swordswoman and her pet were stalking the Ogre and show up to harvest it for themselves; and the grifting Tile represents you attempting to convince the swordswoman to join forces with you.

Everyone decides to run with it, adding elements and building the backstory as they role-play the Scene together, weaving details backwards and forwards.

With an unlucky draw, players may be caught with Scenes impossible to overcome. Maybe a major boss shows up too soon in the campaign, or an Obstacle comes out of turn. In such cases, it is best to retreat and “pick your battles” as it were.

For example: It could be that the OGRE proves too powerful for the party. If they fix the WAGON and get away, Dieter returns the OGRE to the Deck for another time, making sure to keep track of the Drama it gained during the first fight.

We have inadvertently played several exciting campaigns this way while testing the usefulness of pre-made Decks in the office and at conventions.

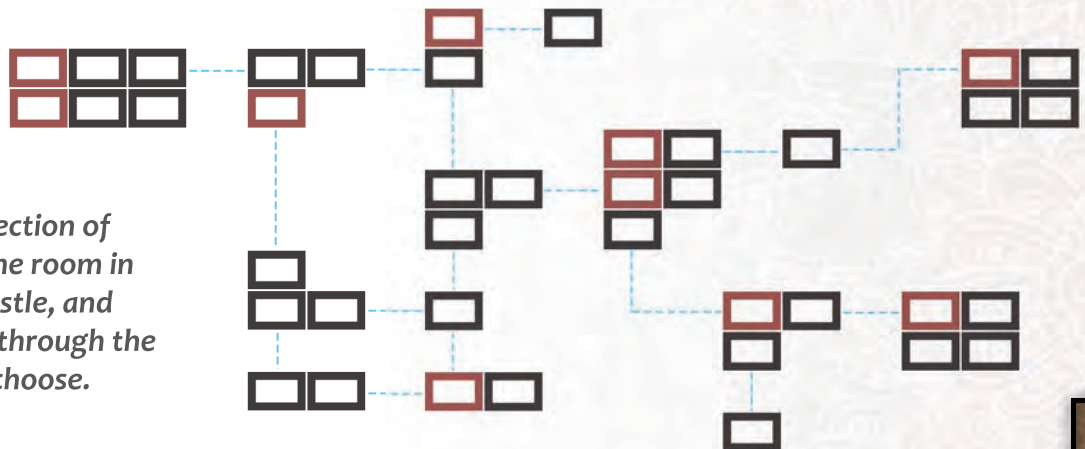
BOARD GAME

Judges can place Tiles facedown on the table in a pre-arranged order for “Board Game” play, creating a trail of sorts. Themes are visible to everyone on the side, but Conditions and Obstacles are made into a path with forks and clusters like a sprawling “hopscotch” pattern. The players encounter two, three, or four Tiles at a time, and the Judge treats each small conflict in turn. Like a board game or classic “dungeon crawl,” the party works its way through the adventure step by step.

For example: To represent the exploration of an abandoned space station, the Judge spends an afternoon drawing a map of the station on graph paper. Each group of Tiles represents one room or area in the station, and the physical layout of the Tiles replicates the layout of the station. Players walk through the space station triggering traps and encountering hurdles and enemies.

The Judge provides clues and a meaningful storyline to help the players make their choices regarding which route to take, and the group has a great time navigating the narrative/map together.

A Board Game layout might look something like this. Each collection of Tiles represents one room in the dungeon or castle, and players can move through the structure as they choose.



MINIATURE PLAY

While the default mode in **FANTAJI** features Tiles placed on the table in front of everyone, those who love miniatures and terrain need not fear. If your group wants to keep miniatures as the focus, you just need to share the information on the Tiles in a different way. And that’s easy.

Keep universal Conditions and Themes on display off the table maybe by writing them on a dry-erase board. Treat the Obstacle Tiles like the “power cards” or “stat blocks” of your miniatures. Plenty of miniature games use printed cards to keep track of the abilities and hit points of the minis anyway.

LOCAL CONDITIONS

You can create a full set of premade Conditions that come into effect whenever certain spatial conditions are met by the minis on the table. Unlike proper Conditions, these local Conditions affect only those Characters appropriately positioned.

For example: Minis whose bases are touching are caught in a “Grapple” Condition; when near a large piece of terrain, a mini projects a “Behind Cover” Condition; when farther than 24” from a target, small guns suffer an “Out of Range” Condition; etc.

See a later **FANTAJI REALMS** publication for a full “mod” that handles “Miniature Play” more extensively. The modular rules include alternate options for a [1] that lands in a Check, ways to calculate movement, how to handle equipment, retaining Abstract Obstacles, and other ways to incorporate pieces of terrain into the mechanics.

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

VERSATILE OBSTACLES

The Stuff, Your Gear, Tools & Weapons, Supplies, Everything Ready At Hand

The common usages of Obstacle Tiles are rather straightforward, but never feel limited to common ideas. There are many nifty ways to use Obstacles creatively that foster novel, exciting gameplay.

In some ways, this is the most important section of the entire corebook. In the following few pages, the full power and versatility of the **FANTAJI SYSTEM** are demonstrated. It's crazy versatile!

SOME TRICKS

The following tactics are for Judges who want to make the most of the **FANTAJI** engine. Keep in mind that none of the tricks below change or expand on the rules of the game at all. Rather, the following are creative ways to implement the default rules, ways a new Judge might not see at first. Read each carefully to understand the breadth of the system.

DIFFICULT STUNTS

The most basic trick in the game highlights the blurred line between Checks and Challenges.

For example: Examine the Obstacle below. It is essentially a Check that requires two Successes to "pass." Invite players to roll small Challenges against a single Trait—and thus single die—used in defense.

HOPPING THE WALL: A high wall stands between you and your goal. **Traits:** Fortified. [2].

Check out the sidebar on the opposite page for a smart way to save time and paper on small, spontaneous Obstacles like these. This is a great way to manage non-combat Scenes or casual role-playing between important encounters.

FACEDOWN TILES

Players may not always know precisely what dangers lie ahead. But knowing that something lies ahead can build drama and suspense. Laying out

a few facedown Obstacles sets the players' minds into action. Consider these potential hazards, and let the players work to be as careful as possible avoiding the unknown dangers.

For example: Dieter's group of players is passing through a wooded area out of combat. To spice up the otherwise boring travel narrative, Dieter introduces two facedown Obstacle Tiles without a word. The players exchange glances and begin taking Checks carefully as they progress through the woods. The lazy scene becomes immediately more dramatic as Dieter adds some potential danger.

Perhaps a group of clever players will predict the Obstacles before they are encountered and have time to prepare for the imminent conflict.

For example: A very realistic suspense sets in as Dieter's players speculate what might be afoot. "Wait," yells Andrew, "I bet at least one of those Tiles are the guards from that town stalking us." Andrew and Allyson choose to setup in an attack stance and build Drama, rolling small Checks in turn. Lance roles a Check to pull a fallen log across the path, creating a "Log in the Trail" Condition that may or may not prove useful. After giving them a few turns each, Dieter flips the Tile over, the guards indeed. The players had time to prepare a defense for what would have otherwise been an ambush.

Perhaps the group makes decisions that manage to resolve or avoid a facedown Obstacle before they even know what it is. In that case, simply remove the Tile from the table. They may never know what dangers they could have faced had they been less careful.

For example: After easily dealing with the guards, Dieter's party goes on alert for the rest of the trek through the forest. They set a "Group on Guard" Condition in place and slow their movement in exchange for some assurance of safety. The group reaches their destination without any other difficulties, and Dieter removes the unseen BLACK PANTHER Obstacle from the table without showing

the players. He reckons that the beast would never have attacked a party of vigilant fighters, which means the Condition entirely prevented the fight.

DRAMA TRIGGERS

A **Trigger** is any special rule that generates Drama for an Obstacle Tile whenever some predefined action or narrative event occurs. Most Triggers are designed to benefit from player mistakes or negligence, but larger happenings and circumstances could be tied to Triggers as well.

*For example: Heidi's **GAMMA CENTAURI** group is trying to cross a fast-moving river near the remnants of an old bridge. Unbeknownst to them, a **TERRIBLE MONSTER** rests beneath the surface of the water.*

*Heidi adds a Trigger to the facedown **MONSTER** that gives it the power to build Drama whenever players are noisy. Any actions that are loud or cause vibrations in the ground will add a Drama Token to the Tile. When the Tile reaches 6DT it will flip over, and the **MONSTER** will attack the party!*

Drama Triggers may be combined with Overpowers to construct uniquely challenging Obstacles.

GROUPS & ENTIRE ARMIES

Frequently players will encounter not just one or two significant foes but an entire army of enemies. Maybe a swarm of hungry insects, a flock of terrible birds called by an eccentric crone, or a band of hostile thugs. Creating an Obstacle Tile that represents a collection of bodies is easy.

The Traits of such an Obstacle will likely reflect corporate characteristics rather than any feature of the individual members within it. For instance, a **BAND OF BRIGANDS** may have a **Mob Mentality** Trait that reflects the unity of the band more than any one of its members individually. Or, a horde of insects could have a **Blotting Out the Sun** Trait that reflects the thickness of the swarm as a whole.

Resistance blocks can represent the overall abstract Health of the collective, or each block could represent a single concrete individual within the group. A group with 1[2] / 5[1] could include five small-time thugs and a single, more powerful commander. It is up to the Judge entirely.

SAVING TILES & TIME WITH SIGN LANGUAGE

Finger signals are an expedient way to communicate the relative difficulty or danger of an optional Obstacle without the need to write out a full Tile. The Judge can use a recurring Theme or a spontaneous Trait to make an easy roll.

*For example: During an open Scene, the group is attempting to barter for better equipment in a small village. Rather than take the time to write out a Tile for **GETTING THE BEST DEAL POSSIBLE**, Wamae holds up two fingers together, representing a single [2] of Resistance. He plays to a **Stubborn** as a **Fool** Trait in defense. If players cannot beat the shopkeeper's roll by two Successes, they will not gain any discount on the trade.*



Or: When Emily wants to search an Andhuran airship for a stowaway, Wamae holds up three fingers spread evenly apart. He will play to recurring Themes in defense and count down on his fingers as Emily "damages" the Obstacle by searching.

OBJECTIVES AS OBSTACLES

Keep in mind that every Obstacle is not only a problem but an opportunity. Judges should communicate to their players that their own objectives can be written as Obstacles as well. These objective Tiles will represent the energy, difficulty, and effort it takes for the hero to accomplish her personal objectives. Pretty much any goal can be made into a Tile and overcome.

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

For example: Alandra finds an ancient tome in the study of a dead wizard and wants to translate it. Wamae constructs a small Obstacle Tile that Allyson can roll against between Scenes.

TRANSLATE THE BOOK: Cryptography Lesson, Deluminated Manuscript. **Cracking the Code:** The [3] represents recognizing the language and must be dealt first. [3] / 4[1].

The Resistance of an object can mean anything, with each Wound representing one particular chore or task within the larger goal. When this is the case, it is best to let the Judge dictate how damage is dealt and which Blocks cancel out first.

Or: Erick wants to open an airlock in the space shuttle to help his crew get away from the powerful soldiers boarding his ship. Heidi generates an Obstacle Tile that will trigger a “cut scene” and remove all Drama from Tiles in play if the airlock blows.

POPPING THE AIRLOCK: Iron Clad, Triple Sealed.

Releasing Pressure: When this Tile is defeated, every unanchored combatant in the room loses all Drama waiting for the automatic safety to engage. 3[2].

MASTERING FAMILIAR OBSTACLES

As characters master their familiar enemies, the adaptive Judge can conflate or expand enemies into larger or smaller Tiles. This represents the growing experience of the heroes and cuts down on grind, all without letting the narrative suffer.

For example: The first time Heidi’s players encounter a squadron of Shabuya airships, she creates three separate Tiles to represent the small fleet.

SHABUYA STINGERS: Small, one-pilot fighter crafts.

Traits: Floats Like A Falcon, Stings Like a Bee.

Powers: Grief, Burst. 3[1]. Begins with 3DT.

SHABUYA ESCORT: A heavily armed battleship.

Traits: Iron Clad, Enterprising Starship. **Powers:** Bond, Sentry. [3] / [2]. Begins with 3DT.

SHABUYA MANAGEMENT MODULE: A craft of officers that leads the fleet. **Traits:** Middle Management, Synergy!! (2◇). **Powers:** Haste, Clarity. 2[2]. Begins with 3DT.

Later in the campaign, when the players are more powerful and moving more quickly through the galaxy, Heidi replaces the three-Tile squadron with a single Tile. This represents the same exact number of ships and bodies in the narrative, but the stats are written differently to make for less complicated, quicker Scenes on the table.

SHABUYA ATTACK FLEET: Three STINGERS, a battleship, and a MANAGEMENT MODULE in a small FLEET. **Traits:** Floats Like a Falcon, Iron Clad, Synergy!! (2◇). **Powers:** Dynamo, Burst, Clarity. 1[3] / 1[2] / 3[1]. Begins with 3DT.

SCALING THE EXPERIENCE

Every Obstacle can be broken up into several other Tiles, a veritable fractal of possible Obstacle Tiles.

For example: Wamae’s **MÁZAKI** party are assaulting a castle, and the Judge wants to make the scattering of the GUARDS an easy task. He offers his players:

STORMING THE CASTLE: This Tile represents all the hassles and heavy lifting that goes into securing the small fort. **Traits:** Stone-Walling, It Would Take a Miracle. 8[1]. Begins with 4DT.

CASTLE GUARDS: Eyes in the Dark. **Power:** Sentry. 5[1]. Begins with 3DT.

However, as soon as the players see the Tiles, they voice their disappointment. Lance moans, “Man, we were hoping for a huge assault. Can we make it more intense and intricate? Isn’t it filled with soldiers we have to cut down?!” Wamae grins, happy to meet the needs of his players. He takes a moment creating new Tiles to cover several phases of the assault:

CASTLE GARDEN: The grounds of the fortress are lush and spacious. **Traits:** Tiptoe Through the Tulips, Eyes in The Dark. **Trigger:** If the players attempt any Checks or Challenges that make noise, give DT+ to one WATCHMEN Tile. Each player must score 2[1] to sneak through the GARDEN. n[1].

CASTLE WATCHMEN (X3 FACEDOWN): *Eyes in The Dark, Oathbound Defender.* **Powers:** Blade, Sentry. The Tile begins facedown and is revealed when it reaches 3DT from noise Triggers on other Tiles. 3[1]. Revealed with 3DT.

GREAT HALL: *Eyes in The Dark, Moving Pictures.* The players must navigate the large chambers of the Hall in stages. Each character must score 3[1] to move on. n[1]. Begins with 4DT.

LIVING ARMOR (X2 TILES): *Metal Monstrosity, Unbeating Heart.* **Power:** Dynamo, Blade. Every Challenge and defense rolled by the LIVING ARMOR is loud enough to add DT+ on a WATCHMEN Tile. 1[2]. Begins with 2DT on Host and Blade Asset both.



CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD: *Eyes in The Dark, Keeper of Oaths, Lord of the Treasury.* **Powers:** Blade, Sentry, Clarity. When the CAPTAIN enters the encounter, reveal any remaining WATCHMEN. 1[2] / 3[1]. Begins with 2DT on Host and Blade Asset.

OVERARCHING OBSTACLES

Judges can set some Obstacles aside as ever-present, ubiquitous Obstacles. These overarching Obstacles represent thoroughgoing problems, institutions, circumstances, or movements that can be typical or Abstract in nature. Such Tiles may or may not take turns, but they do make rolls when needed. In some cases, overarching Obstacles can be the most important Tiles in a campaign.

For example: Wamae knows he wants to focus on renewed Andhuran aggression in mining Flight Jade for his new **MÁZAKI** campaign (see page 170). He creates an overarching Obstacle to represent the situation:

This Tile is always present throughout the campaign. Players roll against the Tile directly when attempting actions such as blowing up slaver forts, destroying trade routes, and freeing prisoners. If the **INFRASTRUCTURE** is destroyed, the trafficking of Emishi people will stop for a while, changing the nature of the campaign.

SLAVE TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE: This Tile represents all of the concrete structures, relationships, and public sentiments that make the forced exploitation of the Emishi people possible on the Mázaki continent. **Traits:** *The Roots of Evil* (2◇). **Social Institution:** Any Drama generated by this Tile immediately summons **INDIGNANT BIGOT** (see Quick Spirit). 2[3] / 3[2] / 4[1].

INDIGNANT BIGOT: *Blind Prejudice.* [1].

Taken together, these Obstacles create a web of conflict that intersects every moment in the campaign. The **INFRASTRUCTURE** Tile will not take turns or Challenge players, but it will roll in defense when players attempt to change the society they inhabit. Wamae could keep the Tile hidden or visible. Either way works.

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

As an overarching Obstacle, the **INFRASTRUCTURE** Tile rolls as needed whenever players attempt actions that target the concrete but distended network of materials and relationships that make possible the enslavement of Emishi villagers.

For example: When Emily wants to trash a slaver outpost, Wamae rolls with the **INFRASTRUCTURE** in defense instead of creating a new Tile just for the outpost. Since Emily's motivation concerns the **INFRASTRUCTURE** from the beginning, it is a good fit.

Emily: *I want to send a message by wrecking this outpost before we leave. I smash the machines inside, spread oil all over, and as I strut away I toss a match back over my shoulder at the puddle.*

She plays to her Slip Sliding Away and Never Leaves on The Light Traits, as well as three Themes. With 2DT, she rolls seven dice.

Wamae: *The machines are hardy and half-buried in tamper-proof shells, but you do a rough job on them.*

He plays to the Tile's only Trait and one Theme. The **INFRASTRUCTURE** will never gain Drama, because any DT generated immediately spawn **INDIGNANT BIGOTS**.

Emily scores [3] on the **INFRASTRUCTURE**, and Wamae decides to cross out [2] and [1] to represent the ruined supplies and the time repairs will demand. Wrecking one outpost would not do enough damage to the overall **INFRASTRUCTURE** to warrant a [3] Block.

When the Obstacle is completely defeated, Wamae explains that the party has successfully disrupted operations for the indefinite future. A major victory for the players, and a turning point in the campaign.

Overarching Obstacles can be typical or Abstract, active or passive, invincible or easy. Load them up with Triggers, Powers, and special rules. Craft them however you want players to interact with the problems or institutions the Tiles represent.

REBEL ARMY: More More More!, Wayward Sons.

Raising Hell: The heroes are building an **ARMY** of dispossessed farmers and soldiers. Roll a Check @5 each time the heroes come upon potential fighters. A Success grants them a Follower Tile.

IRE OF THE ELDERS: This Tile keeps track of how much the **ELDER** spirits fume against the heroes.

Traits: *Age Before Beauty, Spirits in The Material World.* **Powers:** Elemental, Phantasm, Block, Haste, Provoke. Whenever the heroes defeat a spirit in battle, this Tile gains DT+. Invincible.

QUADRANT HIGHWAYMEN: Space travel is dangerous, and every trip could attract the attention of space pirates. **Traits:** *Sword and Pistol By My Side, All Across The Universe Divide.*

Powers: Aim, Flurry. This Tile appears each time the party travels in space. It immediately flees after taking any Block of damage. When it is eventually defeated, award three *Wide Open Spaces* Themes to the party. [3] / 2[2] / 8[1]. Begins at 3DT at each appearance.

ABSTRACT OPTIONS

Abstract Obstacles are well suited for tricky situations and environmental dangers. Worth noting, all of the previous tricks, options, and examples in this section can apply to Abstract Obstacles.

COUNTDOWN TIMERS

Abstract Obstacles can act as simple timers by using a Drama Trigger. The Tile can activate an event when it reaches any preset Drama limit.

For example: When Chang wants to represent the coming sunrise during a key Scene in his **WANING MOON** campaign, he makes a timer:

DAWN: *Hold Onto The Night.* **Time:** The Tile gains DT+ at the start of each Round. At 10DT, sunrise occurs. No natural Conditions can affect the Tile.

A timer can trigger any number of events, tracking time, distance, populations, or raw intensity.

APPROACHING CAVALRY: *Riders on the Storm.* **We**

Ride: The Tile gains DT+ for each Scene the heroes spend without explicitly moving forward. At 7DT, the riders catch up with the party.

MILITIA RESOURCES: *Swelling Treasuries.* **Equipping:** The Tile makes Checks @5 to build Drama. When it reaches 6DT, all enemies gain Heavy Power.

SETTING WOUNDS

When fashioning a beast as an Obstacle, follow this simple process to decide on the right number of Wounds:

⚙ **Mortal Wounds:** [3]

Only the most formidable foes need a Mortal Wound, when no amount of smaller attacks could ever kill the beast. And only in the rarest instance would a beast have more than one, when impaling or decapitating or igniting the beast alone is not enough.

⚙ **Flesh Wounds:** [2]

Consider the physical size of the enemy. Strong humans have one or two Flesh Wounds. Larger beasts have more, and smaller beasts fewer.

⚙ **Stress Wounds:** [1]

Consider the vigor, energy, and gusto of the enemy. How tough are they?

Examples: Villager 2[1], Armed Soldier [2] / 2[1], Rhinoceros 3[2] / 4[1], Griffon [3] / 3[2] / 4[1], Dragon 2[3] / 4[2] / 6[1]

TWO WAYS TO DEFEAT

Some Obstacles could function as both typical and Abstract. In such cases, the Judge leaves it up to the players to decide what strategy to use to best overcome the Tile.

For example: If an ANGRY MOB is encountered, its Drama might represent the inherent hostility of the group. If the anger is soothed, the MOB becomes just another group of villagers. In this case, reducing the Tile's Drama to zero may be a more heroic solution than killing the otherwise innocuous villagers.

ANGRY MOB: Rabble Rousers, Crazy and Confused. **Powers:** Torch (see Clarity), Pitchforked (see Spines). 4[1]. Begins at 4DT.

Likewise, if an entire army is demoralized, robbed of resources, or rendered unable to attack, it would then be effectively neutralized without bloodshed.

Or: The MÁZAKI party come across a FIELD LION near the road. The animal is hostile but holds no specific ire against the heroes. The party could slay the beast by dealing damage or calm it enough to flee by reducing the Tile's Drama.

FIELD LION: Six Savage Limbs, Top of The Food Chain.

Powers: Instinct, Pounce (For 2DT the LION can remove up to 4 dice from target's defense roll), Roar (Roll @5 to sap 1DT from all targets). [3] / [2] / 4[1]. Begins at 4DT.

In this way, any concrete Obstacle could have an Abstract dimension implied: Kill the beast or scare it away. Some Judges may decide to include this Abstract "scatter" possibility on all non-human or potentially neutral enemies by default. After all, most animals would rather flee than fight.

OVERLAPPING OBSTACLES

Maybe two Obstacles are in effect mutually exclusive. To overcome one would negate the necessity of handling the other. Players could Challenge either or both as the situation unfolds, and when either Tile is defeated the singular problem is resolved.

For example: The heroes must face a GRAKANOTH after they awaken the monster from its slumber deep in a natural cavern. Slaying the beast would be all but impossible, and the players must come up with another plan. By overcoming the CAVE IN THE CEILING Tile, they in effect bury the GRAKANOTH alive. Players defend themselves from the monster while Challenging the CAVE Tile with explosives... and wits.

GRAKANOTH: Unimaginable Horror (2◇), Unspeakable Depravity (2◇), Unquenchable Wrath (2◇). **Powers:** Snare, Clarity, Charged, Mind Control, Flurry. 2[3] / 4[2] / 8[1]. Begins at 5DT.

CAVE IN THE CEILING: Quaking Caverns. **Power:** Unstable Stalactites (Whenever the Tile sustains damage, DT- to everyone). 3[2].

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

VERSATILE THEMES

Underscoring Emotional Flavor, Adding Rewards for Optional Obstacles, Heavy-Handed Judging

Themes have enormous influence over the quality and energy of your game, and a skilled Judge will be able to use Themes creatively to lead play that is fresh and engaging.

Instead of keeping a stack of Theme Tiles, a player may opt to write a list of the Themes she wins on the back of her Character Tile. This does save paper and make it easier to reuse Tiles during play.

VITALLY IMPORTANT

While not immediately obvious, Themes are the single most powerful way to impact how any particular Scene “feels” for the players because they directly inspire every action on every turn.

For example: Including a “Better Off Dead” Theme in a Scene will inspire characters to be reckless and gutsy on every single turn, casting a somber and resigned tone on the battle.

Or: Swapping the “Better off Dead” for a vastly different “Everything’s Turning Up Roses” Theme will inspire entirely different approaches to the same Obstacles and Conditions. The whole encounter will play out differently with one Theme swap.

As we have learned over years of convention play, changing the Themes of a Scene can make a larger impact on the overall experience of the encounter than changing the Obstacles. Really.

AS META-GAME CONCERNS

If (and only if!) it suits your group, the Judge can use Themes to create meta-game rewards and punishments. When that is the case, the behavior of the player counts as much as those of the character.

For example: Ryan adds a “Deadly Serious” Theme to his encounter and lets the players know that

they will be held accountable to it as well as their characters. Any goofing around, table-talk, or idle chatter will withhold from the player an extra die.

Or: Heidi includes an “On The Edge of The Knife” Theme in a climactic battle, letting her players know that every single word they say counts. No taking back, no table talk, no frivolity, no “wait, I didn’t mean it.” This is it. Don’t get scared now.

MANAGING THEMES

A good way to reward players for going above and beyond during a Scene is to attach special Themes to any optional or exceptionally heroic Obstacles. When the Obstacle is defeated, the new Theme appears in the Scene.

For example: For the seafaring quest from page 82, Dieter decides to up the importance of the Scene by attaching a “Slithery When Wet” Theme to the first defeated SERPENT. If the party slays a SERPENT, the new Theme immediately appears on the table.

Or: In Wamae’s MÁZAKI game (from pages 37, 41, 45, and 47), Neal eventually earned the “Bold Heroics” Theme that became available only after the LOCALS IN DANGER! Obstacle was defeated.

At the end of the Scene, reward the new Theme as usual. Though likely so, the player who originally uncovered the Theme does not necessarily win it.

WITHHOLDING THEMES

Judges can also decide that no character sufficiently embodied a Theme, awarding it to no one. To add insult to injury maybe a recurring villain earns a Theme now and then, growing more powerful as the adventure progresses.

For other creative ways to use Themes later in your campaign, see the genre-neutral mod describing six types of **Boons** on page 156.

VERSATILE CONDITIONS

All Those Secrets, Special Matters of Fact, Manners & Expectations, Universal Truths

Conditions are at the same time the most fluid and the most technical Tiles in play on the table. Their openness comes with a very technical corollary: Conditions must be very precise and sharp to function smoothly. Getting the wording right is crucial, and your players will eventually learn how to write a Condition that is realistic and consistent as much as it is tricky and engaging.

While already pivotal in any combat, there are a few tricks you can use to make Conditions even more useful and treacherous in play.

The present section builds on earlier discussions that covered in turn what a Condition is (page 25) and how Conditions work in combat (page 42).

TRUMPS

In rare cases, a new Condition can act as a durable or momentary “skirt” or “surf” of another Condition already on the table. When this happens, Tripping the initial Condition will not have an effect on those protected by the new Tile. We call one Condition that works to negate another a **Trump**.

For example: When a WAILING BANSHEE high in a castle tower establishes an “Ear-Piercing Scream” Condition on the battlefield below, adventurers have little chance of using [1] to eliminate it. However, an assaulting hero can establish her own “Plugged Ears” Condition that now negates the penalty of the first, not by removing the scream but by setting up a new state of affairs to make the scream irrelevant.

Or: When fighting a GROUP OF BANDITS, Xinjin sets a “Back Against The Wall” Condition to keep himself from being surrounded. Later in the fight, Dieter spends [1] to Force a “Bandits Swarming All Over” Condition. He says, “The acrobatic bandits jump and flip around, trading places and spinning you all around.” Lance and Allyson each hand Dieter a

Drama Token, but Andrew resists: “Hey, with my back to the wall, could their flipping and swirling really spin me? I’m grounded and fixed on the edge of the fray.” Dieter totally agrees. Xinjin’s Condition has momentarily Trumped the other.

Had Dieter Forced the Condition by saying “The bandits crawl and swarm over you all, trying to take all of you down to the ground,” then Xinjin would have suffered as well. Every word and idea counts.

Keep in mind that the Trump does not eliminate or affect the initial Condition at all. One matter of fact simply makes another fact contextually irrelevant or moot; it does not change or deny the first.

For example: When exploring a dark dungeon, the players Trump a “Constant Darkness” Condition with a “Lit Torch” Condition. For several hours, everyone forgets about the Tiles, since they seem to cancel one another out. But when one hero runs far from the group to retrieve a lost knapsack from a previous room, the Judge smacks him with a few turns of Drama loss. The darkness is still in effect outside the reach of the torch.

Judges need to ensure that Trump Conditions do not get out of hand. Each and every Condition Tile must still represent a concrete matter of fact or state of affairs. Spending [1] to Eliminate a pesky Condition is always the best way to overcome it.

For example: Two archers with the Aim Power set up “Line of Sight” Conditions on Alandra in Dieter’s BLOODSBANE campaign. During a Challenge, Allyson attempts to use [1] to establish an “Alandra Behind Cover” Condition that will Trump both lines of sight. Dieter does not allow the new Condition, reasoning that Alandra’s concrete movements would not be creating a new “state of affairs” that rightly takes precedence over the focus of the archers. Her character is moving to get out of sight, which looks more like an attempt to eliminate a Condition than add a new element to the story. Allyson can of course use the [1] to dodge behind a pillar and remove one of the archer Conditions, but only one.

HOW TO RUN A SCENE

If the Judge ever finds herself stuck about which Condition Trumps which, always give the nod to the narrative explanation that suits the Themes best.

TRAPS

Because Conditions are designed to sap Drama from Tiles, a character with no Tokens is entirely unaffected by the Conditions on the table.

In many cases this is alright, and even appreciated, because it allows characters with no Drama the freedom to make bold moves to get back on their feet. At other times, the Judge may want certain Conditions to maintain their danger even after characters lose Drama. This is what Traps are for.

Traps are Conditions that have a hidden penalty up their sleeve: When someone with no Drama Tokens suffers the Condition, an undesirable side-effect or additional penalty results.

HIDDEN CONDITIONS

Conditions always represent concrete realities, yes, but that does not guarantee that they are known or visible to everyone. In most cases, players can suffer from Conditions that are hidden, remote, or secret.

For: Chang writes up a “Spiked Wall” Condition for a dangerous, underground battle against a LICH. The Tile states that anyone suffering the Condition without Drama suffers [1] instead. Ouch!

Traps can come in all shapes and sizes. Any Condition that inflicts a nasty penalty for those without Drama counts. Judges can be as creative as they like to animate their environments and spice up encounters.

For example: Taking the “Spike Wall” one step further, Chang later writes an “Electrode Vaporizer” into an encounter. The Tile states that anyone suffering the Condition without DT suffers her smallest remaining Wound, regardless of size. This could deal 1[2] or even 1[3] to an unlucky target!

Or: When his MÁZAKI party is fighting in an Andhuran floating city, Wamae sets a “Floating in the Clouds” Condition that at first seems difficult to Force or Trip. Who would jump off a floating island? However, Wamae explains that whenever a player with zero Drama suffers the Condition, she is said to fall off the edge of the floating platform. It will be a long way down, and hopefully a friend can respond quickly enough to make some kind of save.



OBSTACLE ABILITIES

A Condition can be tied to an Obstacle, having its source in some Power or special ability of the Tile. In such cases, the Condition might not be able to be eliminated by a simple [1].

For example: Heidi gives a SHABUYA SENTINEL ANDROID an Overpower that creates a Condition. Whenever the SENTINEL reaches 4DT, a “Force Field” Condition is put on the table. Heidi explains (or waits for her players to find out) that the field will zap anyone who approaches too near. Because this is a special kind of Condition, destroying the ANDROID or reducing its Drama are the only ways to remove the effect.

Or: Dieter creates a foul-smelling OGRE in his campaign, a brute so fetid that it emits a hideous stench at all times. Consequently, the OGRE TILE is always accompanied by a “Revolting Odor” Condition that pervades any area where the beast is present. Any player taking her turn within scent of the beast will suffer a loss of Drama.

Maybe the players spend an entire evening questing after some legendary herb that can dispel the Ogre’s stench. Or, maybe Andrew spends a turn making his own Condition to “Cover Xinjin’s face in a scented kerchief.” At Dieter’s discretion, this could durably Trump the stench Condition for Xinjin.

LITTLE MYSTERIES

When a Condition is tied to an unknown or hidden Obstacle, the Judge will need to provide narrative clues as to the Condition’s origin whenever players Trip the Tile. The constant loss of Drama will incentivize players to get to the bottom of things.

For example: A terrible curse emanating from a remote ALTAR spreads discord in a forest village. Whenever the players give the smallest offense to a local, they suffer the “Altar’s Curse” Condition. Both the Condition and Obstacle Tiles are initially hidden from the players, and with each Trip the Judge describes how “the villagers become irrationally upset, as though under some compulsion.”

The players must first piece together the nature of the curse and then discover its origin before even starting on a quest to locate and destroy the ALTAR.

INTERPERSONAL FACTS

Establishing interesting personal relationships and social facts in a campaign can make negotiations and investigations much easier to manage. Known and unknown alike, such Conditions become useful for groups undertaking intrigue and politics.

For example: When the party meets a hostile stranger, Xinjin shakes his pouch of coins as if to say “Hey, let’s reconsider this.” Andrew creates a “We May Have Something You Want” Condition. This is a basic fact that exists between the two sides. It can be leveraged in a variety of ways beyond money. Every time the players Force this Condition, they reduce the hostility of the stranger.

Also any “dirt” the players dig up on an NPC can act as a Condition and be used as a negotiating chip.

For example: Unknown to anyone but himself, the bigot mayor is the father of the young witch at the edge of the village. If the players find out, they can make an easy roll to establish a “Mayor is Witch’s Father” Condition and threaten him with it later.

SOCIAL NORMS & EXPECTATIONS

A common complaint we hear about other role-playing games is that they have no mechanical way of discouraging players from being too brutish and obvious. Role-playing will always have a creative, theatrical side that cannot be reduced to mechanics, but can’t there be a way to have both? In **FANTAJI**, you can represent societal norms, manners, and even expectations (whether known or unknown) as Conditions.

For example: In the Andhuran Court it is considered very rude to speak to a higher ranking noble without being spoken to. Wamae does not write the Tile out, since players would have no way to eliminate it, and instead has the state of affairs written in his notes. If the players ever Trip the Condition, he will tax them a Drama Token. Eventually they learn the norm.

Or: When the party is investigating a town that is being ravaged by werewolves from within, Dieter creates a “Touchy Subjects” Condition to keep the players from barging in and making accusations. The situation requires a delicacy that this Tile monitors.

TROUBLESHOOTING SCENES

Managing New Information, Keeping the Flow, Handling Issues, Getting Into the Mindset

A Judge gladly wears the burden of designing Obstacles and managing the action of every Scene. But sometimes things go wrong, or maybe it is just taking a little while for you to get the feel of **FANTAJI**. The following are bits of expert advice to help new Judges keep things moving and find the groove that suits their players.

INITIAL DRAMA

Starting Obstacles with the right amount of Drama can make or break a Scene. As a general rule, when aiming to increase the difficulty of a Scene, it is smarter to add more starting Drama to the enemies than to increase their Resistance or Powers. Giving bosses a hefty handful of Drama Tokens builds a natural turning point into the fight: Players spend turns creating and Forcing Conditions to even the playing field, and only then move in for the kill.

Offering players initial “Reaction Shots” is a smart way Judges can manage how much Drama is in play on both sides. See page 31 for ideas.

Deciding when heroes can carry Drama over from one Scene to the next is another key choice for Judges. See page 46 for a discussion.

INTERVENTIONS & CHANGING UP

Having a fallback intervention or “Cut Scene” up your sleeve can help interrupt grindy, dull combat. However, cut scenes can change things up dramatically and should not be used without careful planning and a few dropped hints to the party. Cut scenes can have any number of effects:

Reduce Drama to Zero

When something climactic occurs in the middle of the battle, a cut scene may force all players and enemies to reset their Drama at zero.

More “Reaction Shots”

The Judge may initiate a cut scene that gives players a chance to gain some much needed Drama. While Judges are not encouraged to bail their players out on a regular basis, this strategy can be successful when attached to a specific trigger ahead of time.

For example: The Judge decides that whenever a player suffers a [3] without immediately dying, everyone else can make a Check reacting to the Mortal Wound. This little convention can act to balance a fight that finds the players in dire straits.

New Conditions

A cut scene can eliminate or introduce Conditions to the Scene, marking some major shift in the battleground or situation.

New Themes

Certain actions or discoveries may add new Themes to a Scene immediately.

For example: When players figure out halfway through a dull fight that the man they are fighting is actually an undead champion, the Judge uses this revelation as a chance to swap out Themes. She defends the intervention by bringing in Themes related to the undead and fears of unholy beings.

Replacing Obstacle Tiles

Maybe the monster switches from one mode to another, with the change being pivotal enough to demand another Tile entirely.

For example: When the players deal the final [2] to a CLAY GOLEM, the Judge intervenes by exchanging the powerful GOLEM Tile with three smaller Tiles that represent CLAY GLOBS. The Judge explains that the remaining [3] from the GOLEM split into the 2[2] of the GLOBS. This will redirect a hitherto dull fight.

Of course, the game will suffer if players feel as though their Judge were forcing a cut scene to make up for a poorly planned monster or to undo their own hard work.

TOO MANY CLASHES

We have seen some convention games result in Clash after Clash, raising the Drama of enemies to unmanageable heights. This is almost always a result of Judges and/or players tackling the Obstacles with a “d20” mindset. If an enemy has an intimidating stack of Drama, the very last thing

players should do is continue to Challenge it. Create Conditions, change strategies, or deploy Status Effects to sap the Drama Tokens before rushing in to attack. If you are the Judge, remind new players how to reduce the Drama of a powerful Obstacle.

ENDING SCENES EARLY

Judges can set specific victory or loss conditions for a Scene. Maybe the Scene is destined to end early when a certain narrative event or mechanical state is triggered.

*For example: In a **WANING MOON** Scene, Chang has four Obstacles that represent four Fey enemies of the heroes, but if the leader is killed, the other three will attempt to flee. The players do not know this ahead of time, but Chang drops hints.*

Or: Heidi decides that throughout her campaign, each Scene will have a Drama limit of ten Tokens. If any Obstacle gains 10 DT, the Scene will automatically end in favor of the enemies. This could result in a “captured” party, a party forced to flee, or a catastrophe of some sort. This limit amounts to a campaign-wide “kill switch” that her players need to be careful of in every Scene.

SMALLER, QUICKER SCENES

If you find that your Scenes regularly drag on, try changing up the way you design them. Combine Obstacles into fewer Tiles, give players chances to begin Scenes with more Drama, and/or begin creatures with certain mitigating Status Effects already in place. Short, concise Scenes allow for more dramatic role-playing and let the rare, longer Scene stand out as more important by contrast.

For example: Chang notices that his battles always last over an hour and take up too much time in the night. The next time the players engage a group of enemies, Chang designs a single Tile to represent the baddies. The Scene is still fun but takes much less time to complete, allowing the narrative to progress.

Or: Heidi has some great Tiles designed for various kinds of starships in her campaign Deck, but some of them are too powerful for her players. She decides to create a “Depleted” Status Effect (mirroring “Numb”) that she can affix to ships that are low on resources and strained from long voyages.

CHANGING THE FOCUS

If you are having a hard time designing Scenes that focus on more than combat, try asking yourself what moments can be just as exciting as combat.

For example: When approaching a powerful monster in its lair, the most obvious Tile to make central is the monster itself. But maybe there is more drama in finding the beast than fighting it. What if the lair had a Tile that was trickier to overcome than the eventual monster? With the monster’s Tile facedown on the table, Dieter begins the Scene with a less expected Obstacle for his players:

THE LAIR OF THE BEAST: It will take the players a bit of cunning and no small amount of guts to get to the central den of the mountain lair. **Traits:** Like Rats in a Maze (2◇), Surrounded by Stone. **Dark Den:** This Tile entails the vermin of the den as well as the halls, pests capable of dealing Flesh Wounds. Also, anytime the Tile deals damage, add another starting DT to the BEAST. 4[2].

Making a specific narrative objective or an Abstract Obstacle the center of a Scene that also involves a major villain can be a good way to show players conflict in a more nuanced way, precluding violence as the default response to every Scene.

For example: In his espionage adventure, Ryan designs a Scene about disarming a bomb hidden high in a skyscraper, and he builds a unique Tile for this moment to capture just the right kind of drama he imagines for the Scene.

DISARM ME A BOMB: The bomb is a large machine composed of several computers and contraptions. It takes up one entire floor of the building in what looks otherwise like a construction or renovation site. **Traits:** At Any Moment... (2◇). **Big Boom:** The Tile deals Stress Wounds as normal, but the first Mortal Wound dealt to anyone will trigger the explosion and damage all characters in the building at once. 12[1]. Begins at 7DT.

Though a major villain arrives to stop the heroes, fighting him is not the party’s goal. As soon as the DISARM ME A BOMB Obstacle is overcome, the Scene

will end in either success or defeat whatever the status of the villain's health.

Getting a little creative, Ryan decides to remove one Theme from play every Round to represent the consequence of dallying rather than include a basic COUNTDOWN TIMER Obstacle. While haste is an issue, the bomb is not on a timer and will only go off when a [3] is dealt as a result of player tampering.

In a colorful and realistic world, villains may not be absolutely evil beings that need to be destroyed to save the universe. Interesting villains might be simply complex individuals who happen to have interests at odds with those of the heroes.

For example: Chang includes a mysterious NPC in his campaign, The Vermilion Coachman, but opts out of designing a Character Tile for the villain at all. Instead, Chang adds a "The Coachman Cometh" Condition to any Scene where the villain is present. He is a functioning part of the narrative and even takes non-mechanical actions during the Judge's Round, but rolls no dice and has no stats. Whenever players attempt actions that go against the motives of the Coachman, they Trip the Condition. He is considered powerful enough to hinder them a little at every turn and be unassailable directly. The Coachman exists almost like a force of nature.

ALTERNATIVE TAKES

Not every problem or issue the players encounter need be expressed as an Obstacle Tile. A single phenomenon could be expressed as an Obstacle, a Condition, a Theme, or even an entire Scene.

For example: A massive storm could be represented by an "It Was A Dark And Stormy Night" Theme, fitting albeit a bit literal. Alternatively (or additionally), the storm might warrant "Heavy Rains" and "Low Visibility" Conditions.

Moreover, even when written as an Obstacle, a phenomenon could be expressed in a number of ways, and none is necessarily more right than another. Each way of constructing an Obstacle produces different subjective dramatic elements and alters the objective consequences of a group's choices. Different Tiles for the same "thing."

For example: When the narrative calls for a prince tied to an altar in preparation for a dark ritual, Dieter has at least three options for how to represent the situation in Tiles on the table. Any one of these would work depending on the needs of the story and the importance of the moment in the overarching narrative.

⚙️ Option 1

Dieter could make a Condition establishing that the "Prince is Tied to The Altar" easily enough. It would only take [1] to eliminate as a Check or in a Challenge.

⚙️ Option 2

If Dieter wanted to make the bound prince a more serious problem, he could turn the situation into an Obstacle. This requires that the players Challenge the Tile directly to free the prince. By building in a Spite Power, he gives an otherwise passive Obstacle the chance to harm the heroes.

⚙️ Option 3

If Dieter felt that freeing the prince needed to be the central focus of the Scene, he could use four Tiles to represent the magical forces at work on the altar. These could come alongside some cultists or monsters depending on the context.

Dieter creates a PRINCE IN MAGIC PRISON Tile as the central Obstacle for the Scene. When this Tile is defeated, the prince is free. However, the other Tiles act as Assets that will make it hard for the players to accomplish their rescue.

The CRYSTAL GUARDIAN is an Asset that acts as a Dynamo and has its own Sentry Power. It will generate Drama for the MAGIC PRISON, representing the arcane barriers that cover the altar.

The CRYSTAL FOCUS and CRYSTAL SOURCE Tiles are Assets that also render the MAGIC PRISON almost impenetrable. Players will need to take out the Tiles one at a time to expose the MAGIC PRISON for attack.

When Asset Tiles have Powers listed, the first Power will represent the kind of Asset they are. This does not mean that they have Assets of their own.

Option 1

PRINCE TIED TO ALTAR

Option 2

FREE THE PRINCE

- ◆ PUSHING ROPE
- ◆ BOUND AND GAGGED

Powers: SPITE (SETS SNARE)

☐ ☐ ☐

Option 3

PRINCE IN PRISON

- ◆ PUSHING ROPE
- ◆ BOUND AND GAGGED

Assets: GUARDIAN, FOCUS, SOURCE

☐ ☐

CRYSTAL GUARDIAN

- ◆ POWER OVERWHELMING
- ◆ CRYSTAL CLEAR

Powers: DYNAMO, SENTRY

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

CRYSTAL FOCUS

- ◆ CRYSTAL CLEAR

Powers: DYNAMO, SAPPER

☐ ☐ ☐

CRYSTAL SOURCE

- ◆ POWER OVERWHELMING

Powers: DYNAMO, SENTRY

☐ ☐ ☐



CHAPTER 5: RUNNING A CAMPAIGN

FANTAJI can take much less preparation time than other role-playing games because it has fewer moving parts that need to be calculated or aligned. However, the best Judges will take as much as necessary to create interesting, dynamic Obstacles for players.

SUMMARY

Getting Your New Campaign Off the Ground, Building a Deck, Bosses, Rewards

Running a campaign in **FANTAJI** takes much of the same work as it would in any other tabletop game. This chapter will cover the most fundamental tasks and questions of designing a campaign followed by a few tips for following through.

The key pieces of advice in the proceeding pages center on balancing preparation with spontaneity. **FANTAJI** can be a quick and by-the-seat-of-your-pants game, but your game will always benefit from careful planning and deliberate design.

We begin with deciding on the overall story arc of the campaign. This does not mean deciding on the plot ahead of time so much as coming up with key climaxes and then learning how to let a plot emerge from the players' own decisions.

The best way to prepare is by making a campaign Deck. Coming up with dozens of Tiles ahead of time makes for a solid repository of enemies and artifacts that can fit into the narrative as needed.

Bosses and major baddies can take special planning, and the third section in the chapter covers those. You will learn how to use Assets and unique Powers instead of Health to buff your foes.

The final section of the chapter covers how to design artifacts and distribute treasure for your players. Growing as a hero will involve more than just gaining new abilities by earning Themes. Building an arsenal of powerful equipment and followers is a major part of becoming an effective and more accomplished hero.

JUDGING

CONDITION

LOOSE ROCKS OVERHEAD

*(THIS CONDITION WORKS AS A "TRAP"
AND WILL DEAL [1] WHEN TRIPPED)*

DESIGNING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Getting the Ideas Down, Planning Ahead, Structure, The Plot, Major Conflicts, Milestones

Wrapping your head around **FANTAJI** might take a moment, but it will be forever rewarding. We promise. But the unique dynamics of the game call for an approach to campaign design that might not be the default mode of most “d20” games.

This section will highlight some initial tips and basic things to consider, while the rest of the chapter handles step-by-step instructions to building your own compelling adventure.

STEAL ARCS

It is always okay to steal adventure arcs from your favorite works of fiction. Shakespeare did it. Homer did it. George Lucas did it. Sometimes using a familiar narrative arc is a great way to start the campaign. Because **FANTAJI** is entirely character-driven, the story will come alive in its own way no matter how you start things. In other words, even if you try to steal a plotline, you will end up breaking new ground anyway.

THREE-ACT STRUCTURE

The most common structure for telling a heroic tale of adventure and development in the modern West is the “Three Act” arc. Many films, from action to romantic comedy, follow this basic structure. It is not always the best way to organize a narrative, but it does provide a classic framework.

⚙️ First Act

The heroes or victims suffer some tragedy or loss early in the narrative and must work to find a solution. Eventually, they do find a solution and set about righting the wrongs that were done.

The bridge between the First and Second acts is typically a montage of success and progress.

⚙️ Second Act

Skip ahead a while, and it looks like the heroes are well on their way to success. Everything is going according to plan, and the initial problem is easily dealt with. However, just when everything seems even better than expected, tragedy strikes again.

In most cases, this tragedy is a complication or surprise related to the first. Maybe the initial solution was unsustainable. Maybe the new magic fix runs out of steam. Maybe the assumed culprit was only a henchman of a greater evil. Whatever the case, tragedy strikes again, and things are even worse than they were before. All seems lost.

The bridge between the Second and Third acts is typically a montage of compounding failures and the eventual resignation to defeat.

⚙️ Third Act

Skip ahead some more, and the heroes have given up hope. The second defeat was too much to handle and nothing seems to be working. Often, the heroes will quit the quest or mission entirely.

The Third act revolves around soul-searching and questioning, wherein the characters realize that the central conflict could never have been resolved by a quick fix. Suddenly or gradually, a new solution is discovered. It is a long-shot, and it will take change or sacrifice on behalf of the heroes; but it is the only way! This is when the heroes grow and develop as individuals from the inside out.

The Third act may build to a montage of renewed training and preparation towards this new solution.

⚙️ Climax

Eventually, the heroes confront the greater evil and come about triumphant. It is typically the very changes they undertook that win them the victory.

RECURRING THEMES

Just as players can spend hours coming up with the two starting Traits for their heroes, the Judge can spend days thinking up a couple central Themes for a new campaign. Two or three recurring Themes will add a consistent tone or mood to the campaign. These need not be present in every single Scene, but they come up again and again when things get serious to underline the personality of the campaign as a whole.

There are hundreds of articles, books, and websites dedicated to equipping new game-masters. Many of those tips and strategies will work with **FANTAJI**. Stand on the high shoulders of giants!

Sometimes the best recurring Themes begin as spontaneous additions during play that become central because they were player favorites.

For example: In Wamae's MÁZAKI game (see pages 37, 41, and 45), the Theme Hot Sun, Cold Blood interested his players during the fight with the TERRASAUR. Wamae reused it a few times as the heroes explored the desert, and soon it became part of the story. It came to represent the major villain of the campaign and his heartlessness, the oppressive heat of the desert, and the poverty of the Andhuran miners juxtaposed to the wealth of their nobles. He hadn't planned for it to become so central, but good Judges let things develop organically in play.

REVERSE ENGINEERING

Perhaps the single best way we have found to create memorable campaigns in **FANTAJI** is to first envision a central conflict that can be resolved by winning a series of key victories, and then to stage each key moment around an impossible Scene that will take long hours of adventuring and ingenuity to undermine piece by piece before encountering.

⚙️ Central Conflict & Key Moments

After determining the central conflict on which your epic campaign will hang, brainstorm the key victories that need to be won to assure a heroic resolution. In other words, what steps need to be accomplished to resolve the central conflict? Settle on a list of three or more such victories.

For example: Wamae envisions a powerful animal spirit as the major antagonist of his campaign. The spirit plagues a large region of the Mázaki mainland, ruining crops and poisoning waters; and the central conflict covers quieting the ghost. Wamae then lists three key victories to be won along the way: A "dungeon crawl" inside a floating tomb, a hostile

negotiation with exiled shaman over land use, and then a final battle with the spirit itself in a dead field.

Or: Heidi imagines a galaxy-changing narrative centering on the Shabuya Corporation working to establish a new space station in a little-known star system. She plans four climactic moments that need to occur to resolve the conflict: Retrieving a holy relic for an unknown client, a battle with Shabuya scout ships to learn of the larger plans, confronting their mystery client and choosing sides, and finally a battle against either side of Shabuya forces.

⚙️ Key Moments as Minor Climaxes

Consider each key victory/moment on your list a climax in its own right, the dramatic end of one act or chapter within the greater narrative. Maybe you imagine each chapter as one film in an epic trilogy or one season of an epic television series.

Now design a complex Scene to represent each climax. Create Familiars, Assets, and other support Tiles to build an assemblage of connected Tiles with reinforcing Powers and abilities. Make each climax absolutely impossible to overcome directly.

For example: The heroes require the Omphalos Horn, which was lost a generation ago deep within a floating island. Wamae designs his "dungeon crawl" as a single Scene, impossible to attempt unprepared:

HAUNTED HALLS: *The Walls Have Fears.* **Ghosts:**

The very walls of the tomb are deadly. Each time a hero with 2DT or more gains another Drama Token, one GHOST Tile appears.

GHOST: Attracted to any commotion, these wraiths love draining the essence of the living.

Traits: *A Thirst For Life, Curiosity Killed This Cat.*

Powers: Drain (see Grief). [1]. Begins with 1DT.

TRAPS: *Just a Little Prick.* **Prickly:** Every native Condition deals [1] and DT— when suffered.

GOBLIN TINKERERS: Small creatures from the Andhuran home continent, unknown in Mázaki.

Traits: *Like Tunnel Rats in a Maze, Fixing to Fix Up (2◇).* **Powers:** Grief, Haste, Tinker (see Heal, works only on the AUTOMATON). Immune to TRAPS. [2] / 3[1]. Begins at 3DT.

Check out the section “Staging Key Moments” on page 114 and the extended example at the end of this chapter for expert advice on designing complex Scenes that can work as minor climaxes.

JADED GOBLINS: TINKERERS who have fed on the jade at the island’s core and now glow. **Traits:** *Jaded, Harbingers of the Dead Lights, Like Tunnel Rats in a Maze*. **Powers:** Grief, Haste. [2] / 5[1]. Begins at 3DT.

AUTOMATON KEEPER: The guardian of the tomb, now rusted and worn. **Traits:** *Ghost in The Machine, Heart of Stone, Heavy Metal*. **Powers:** Stomp (see Aim), Dual Wield, Pacify, Beam (see Curse, sets Daze). 4[2] / 4[1]. Begins at 4DT.

CHAINED GIANT: Captured 15 years ago and imprisoned deep in the floating tomb. **Traits:** *Who Wakes The Sleeping Giant, Buried Alive and Kicking* (2◇). **Fearsome:** Roll 3 Assets and combine their powers on the GIANT Tile. Immune to TRAPS. [3] / 3[2] / 2[1]. Begins at 4DT.

Each key moment will often introduce a revelation or twist, force the party to a fork in the road, and/or call upon the heroes to reconsider their aims.

For example: Heidi’s second key moment ends with her players realizing that the client who hired them is the Shabuya heir who has the insane plan of using a holy relic to open a new wormhole in space. They must choose to escape with him or turn against him.

⚙️ Rising Action for Each Climax

If the minor climax you design is intimidating enough, your players will have no choice but to go about finding ways of negating the Assets, removing the Familiars, and somehow sabotaging the support Tiles that constitute the Scene.

This means the bulk of any campaign is spent adventuring through smaller Scenes of rising action centered on neutralizing one element or another of a minor climax. Each part of the journey can entail as many layers as you feel it deserves.

For example: After a single ill-advised visit to the tomb, Wamae’s players make it a priority to negate the HAUNTED HALLS Tile before going back. Villagers tell the heroes of a gem that they could wear to keep from startling the HALLS. The party spends four Scenes searching for the gem and two more finding a jeweler who can split it into three shards and fashion each into amulets. It takes all night for the players to role-play this side quest.

Or: Heidi’s third key moment entails confronting the Shabuya heir. The Scene is a sprawling table of Tiles that represent persons and conflicts all over the galaxy. Players need to first discover corporate Conditions and then leverage them in various places to cut away the heir’s Assets in turn, before finally getting close enough to him to ask the questions.

BACKGROUND NARRATIVES

Consider having two or three background conflicts that intersect the central narrative. Having only a single struggle to resolve limits the possibilities for spontaneous overlaps and ideas.

If you struggle with inventing lively background conflicts that flesh out the central arc, consider bringing in a troublesome issue related to each major dynamic prevalent in the world. See “Social Dynamics” on page 134 for a discussion.

For example: One of the pervading social dynamics of the GAMMA CENTAURI setting is the Shabuya Corporation’s falling from grace with the Tassak Empire (see page 192). Heidi begins the campaign with one player recovering “hot” data about a group of Shabuya executives planning a coup. The party’s central adventure will be complicated by the party being hunted enemies of the powerful Corporation.

If you are using a custom setting, building conflicts directly into the world is one of the best ways to make that world feel more alive and complex.

For example: Is there a civil war brewing where the heroes need to travel? Maybe the heroes have to end up choosing a side. Maybe the inn they hope to use is under siege or already destroyed. The war could inspire a recurring Theme and some recurring tragedies for the group.

Or: Maybe a new drug is sweeping across the under-city in your cyberpunk setting. Is one of the characters hooked? One of the important NPCs? Maybe the central conflict of infiltrating a police precinct to steal evidence is made doubly complicated when the runners end up stealing several kilos of the new drug instead. Now they are wanted by more than the police! What do you do with the drugs, and how do you get the real evidence before it's transported?

Or: Maybe a new supervillain is forming a guild among the baddies in your city. How does the in-fighting and politics of the villains affect the heroes? What if the supervillain holds auditions that cause several dangerous crimes to occur simultaneously? What will the city look like if this guild materializes? Do the heroes want to intervene? Organized crime can be much trickier to deal with than random evil.

INCORPORATING MILESTONES

It is a good idea to keep the Characters' Milestones in mind when designing the major Scenes of your campaign. What characters or villains need to be included to allow the heroes to reach their Milestones? Who needs to save an orphanage?

For example: After Neal earns his Provoke Power by drawing the curse of the witch, the next big moment of his hero's journey can be decided. Neal likes creating open Milestones that Wamae can get creative with so he decides on taking a new Trait with a "Discovers His Arch-Rival" Milestone. Neal doesn't care who it ends up being. Maybe Wamae can have a rival show up among the shaman.

Or: In Dieter's **BLOODSBANE** campaign, he has to keep Brostar's Milestones in mind when designing the next step in the campaign. After Lance earns his new Trait by confronting the Baron/Queen, he must decide on a new Milestone for his hero.

Lance rolls on the Power Charts and creates a "Makes a Pact With an Ice Djinn" Milestone tied to the resulting Snare Power, imagining the new Asset Tile would represent a Djinn servant. Now it is up to Wamae to figure out how to pull a Djinn into the story.

Milestones are often open enough to have several possible outcomes. Use that to your advantage and go with the flow. Meeting players' expectations is key to keeping them engaged and interested, but meeting those expectations with a "twist" is always best.

For example: Lance has no idea what his pact will entail, and Wamae eventually plans on giving Brostar an artifact within which the Djinn resides. Brostar will gain the power of the Asset so long as he abides the religious alignment the Djinn offers, i.e. the pact.



BUILDING A CAMPAIGN DECK

Designing a World, Creating the Populace, Locations, Artifacts and Treasure, All in One Place

Even if your group is not using Shuffle Play, you can benefit greatly from having a dedicated Deck for the campaign (see page 89). A Deck will save the Judge valuable preparation time by providing at a moment's notice well-designed, relevant enemies and important events, and players will enjoy the resulting sense of objectivity and consistency, which can make an adventure feel more solid than following the momentary whims of the Judge.

You do not need to shuffle at random. Your Deck is a collection of Tiles suited specifically for your setting and the new adventure so dig through when needed.

BRAINSTORMING

Building a Deck can be a solid first step in designing your next campaign. As you brainstorm ideas for enemies, monsters, and conflicts, just keep all the Tiles you produce in one place. Even if they end up not featuring centrally in the campaign, you have good Tiles on hand in case something comes up.

For example: Ryan knew he wanted to run a contemporary espionage campaign. Before he had the central narrative set in stone, he began making Tiles of whatever sprang to mind. It was the open-ended process of creating Tiles that got him in the right frame of mind to design the new adventure.

*Or: Chang fills out 40 Tiles with random fey creatures before he begins the **WANING MOON** campaign. He designs Tiles for generic werewolves, incubi, brownies, goblins, red caps, mer-people, pixies, sprites, wendigos, and twelve kinds of vampire servants. The time he spends coming up with innate Powers for each race of fey makes for a more populated world when the game starts.*

When you are at school or the office and an idea comes to mind, jot it down and add it to your Deck as soon as you get home. You never know when you might need another fresh enemy.

OBSTACLES

Most likely your Deck will be primarily composed of Obstacle Tiles. Designing the Traits and Powers of multiple Obstacles at once will let Judges balance their campaigns and create consistency. A good Deck functions as bestiary, rulebook, and idea generator all in one.

ENEMIES

You can include all the recurring baddies, basic foot soldiers, popular grunts, and common denizens in your Deck. Reuse the Tiles as often as you like.

For example: In Ryan's modern superhuman spy setting, he plans on The Agency being the omnipresent baddies. He creates several Tiles for basic Agency operatives of different types. Though all of them share a One Mind Out of Many Trait, they otherwise feature various Powers and Traits. Ryan also designs a few specific superhumans that work as muscle for the Agency for when he needs bigger thugs, giving them three Powers and three Traits each.

ASSETS & ARTIFACTS

Use Assets to represent the powerful weapons and equipment heroes collect from fallen opponents, the magical artifacts they find hidden in halls of treasure, and all of the mounts, vehicles, or followers you expect they will attract.

For example: Ryan designs some powerful Assets for his Deck, balancing out various pieces of Agency weaponry ahead of time. He devises a system for organizing the Assets into "classes" so players can determine the relative strength and importance of Agency operatives based on the level of equipment they carry. He reuses the Tiles frequently.

For more ideas on how to create versatile Asset Tiles that incorporate elements of the campaign setting into the mechanics, see page 118 and 139.

Or: Chang creates a generic **MONSTROUS FORM** Asset Tile that can be used to augment any other enemy or character in the game with a Trait worth two dice and two mighty Powers:

MONSTROUS FORM: Whatever Tile has this Asset is now a wild, monstrous version of its former self. **Trait:** Hulking Brute (2◇). **Powers:** Heavy, Big (see Dual Wield). The Asset stays equipped until both Tiles, Host and Asset, reach zero DT.

ABSTRACT OBSTACLES

Make sure to include Abstract Obstacles as well, small puzzles and problems that are likely to arise during a campaign. You might even have Abstract Obstacles that are central to the narrative.

For example: Heidi includes a **BROKEN MACHINE** Obstacle that can be used again and again for any contraption, vehicle, or weapon that needs repair.

Or: Ryan designs a **CONVINCE THE CORRUPT MINISTER** Tile that he knows will be needed at some point in the campaign, when the players eventually confront the deadbeat with what they've found.

CONVINCE THE CORRUPT MINISTER: Whatever accusations the players bring against the MINISTER, they will see his fear and rightly know he is not guilty of the major crime. Now they must convince him to reveal the man pulling the strings. **Traits:** Better The Devil You Do..., Last Nerves. **Flighty:** The Tile will roll Challenges against the players, yelling in fear. If he ever wins a roll by [2] or more, the MINISTER will leap out the window and end his life. Begins with 6DT.

The Tile is a complex Obstacle that accomplishes a few things. Most importantly, it both directs the conversation of the Scene and offers an objective way to measure how the party fares in negotiations. Hopefully they uncovered a few Conditions that affect the MINISTER earlier in the narrative to help them winnow away the Tile's Drama.

LOCATIONS

Judges do not need to create Tiles to represent "the settings" of Scenes in **FANTAJI**. The best way to handle the idea of specific locations or

environments is by making a small list outside the Deck where each location is tied to a collection of pre-existing Themes, Conditions, or Obstacles.

For example: The abandoned temple out in the Riversmark countryside in Dieter's **BLOODSBANE** setting does not need its own Tile, but Dieter notes that any Scene taking place in the temple will include "Unnatural Darkness" and "Cluttered Environs" Conditions and a Last Place For Sanctuary Theme. These Tiles are already in the Deck and could be used for other locations as well.

FORGING YOUR WORLD

Saving up all of the spontaneous, repeated, and mundane Tiles of a campaign into a Deck will result in a stack of Tiles that represents the ever-growing world of your game. Over several months of gaming, this "World Deck" will become a valuable repository of the common denizens and everyday entities of your setting, Tiles useful outside any particular campaign.

For example: Dieter included eccentric fruit vendors in every village, town, and city the players visited during their campaign. While this humor lay outside the explicit mood of the **BLOODSBANE** setting, the vendor has become a certain part of that world for Dieter's group. Any other adventures or campaigns set in the same world will have such characters:

ANGRY FRUIT VENDOR: He began as a stock character and grew into a subgenre of the merchant class. **Traits:** One Bad Apple Spoils the Bunch, Fruit to Kill. **Powers:** Bananarang (see Flurry), Grief. 6[1]. Begins at 4DT.

Or: Ryan designs several interactions between the police of his world and the party of heroes. As his Deck of used Tiles grows, he realizes that he has fleshed out much of the police force and its particular style. Ryan saves the Tiles for later campaigns, considering them part of the world as a whole.

Or: When Lowell takes over as Judge in his group that includes Greg and Ryan, he retains the police Tiles as elements of the world. While he has no interest in The Agency (Ryan's particular cadre of villains), he uses other Tiles from the previous campaign in his.

STAGING KEY MOMENTS

Big Bads, Major Enemies, Assets and Powers, Setting Things up Earlier, Conditions

This section covers how to design a gnarly minor climax for your campaign arc, one of those key moments that changes the direction of the quest or takes the story one step closer to resolution. The following takes for granted that a key moment will be planned ahead of time as a Scene too difficult to approach without preparation. Much of the everyday adventuring of your party, then, will revolve around investigating and weakening these climactic encounters.

CONSTRUCTING A BOSS

We use the term “Boss” to refer to those special enemy Tiles that are buffed and supported by several other Tiles throughout a campaign. We believe the term helps to make discussion concrete by utilizing a popular analog in video games, but a “Boss” in **FANTAJI** could just as easily be an Abstract Obstacle or complicated puzzle instead of a fearsome monster or enemy.

There are no special rules or systems for creating vitally important enemies that differ from the standard Obstacle rules. But we know that some baddies matter more than others, some need to be more powerful and more scary, some are closer to the Judge’s heart. Here is how you design a Boss.

PRIOR EVENTS

How players handle crucial Obstacles early in the Campaign can have consequences down the road. One of the best ways to make a climactic Scene exciting for players is by letting them see how earlier decisions and performances have amplified, attenuated, or otherwise altered the Powers and capabilities of the boss.

STARTING DRAMA

We have said it before and will say it again, starting an Obstacle with an intimidating amount of initial Drama is a great way to add instant danger.

For example: The GREEN OGRE is a fearsome Boss, and Dieter will set its initial Drama based on how well players overcome certain Obstacles throughout the

campaign. The Judge will add one Drama Token to the OGRE for every Flesh Wound dealt by the MINION GOBLIN Tiles throughout the campaign. Dieter will announce this reasoning when he places the stack of Tokens on the GREEN OGRE Tile at the climactic battle.

Or: Chang uses a separate ubiquitous Obstacle Tile, THE LAW OF THE ELVES, to set the initial Drama of the FLAXEN ELF KING Boss Tile:

THE LAW OF THE ELVES: This Tile measures how the community of elves morally judge the heroes at any given moment. **Traits:** Mysterious Ways. **Morality:** Use this Tile as a remote Asset (see below) for every non-combat elven Tile throughout the campaign. Also, the FLAXEN ELF KING will always start with Drama equal to the current Drama on this Tile.

POWERS & ABILITIES

You can also let results from previous encounters determine some of the Boss’s Powers and abilities.

For example: In Wamae’s MÁZAKI campaign, the players encounter a LIVING STATUE that can be defeated directly or indirectly (see “Two Ways to Defeat” on page 97). If the players defeat the magic STATUE typically, it is considered destroyed, and the later WOLF HANGAMI Boss will be enraged, gaining a Curse Power that sets the Numb Status Effect. If the STATUE is neutralized by sapping its Drama in the earlier fight, the WOLF HANGAMI will have no such Curse Power in the final battle.

Or: Early in his WANING MOON campaign, Chang gives the players several vampire enemies over the course of a few nights. If the group of players does not directly investigate the vampire plague and instead merely accepts the cadre of blood-suckers as day-to-day life on the Hellgate, the FLAXEN ELF KING will have an Undead Asset when encountered.

UNDEAD ASSET: The host is a vampire. **Traits:** The World is a Vampire, Sent to Drain, Secret Destroyer. **Powers:** Undead (Fuse [1]s into [2]s and [3]s), Addiction. No way to disarm.



On the other hand, if the group recognizes that there may be something behind the large number of vampires and makes it a point to investigate, they will inadvertently keep the villain from being turned.

FAMILIARS

Most Obstacles present during the climax can be considered Familiars of the Boss.

For example: Adding other Tiles to the fight with the FLAXEN ELF KING would make the battle much more difficult. The players may or may not find opportunities to overcome such subordinate enemies before attacking the Boss.

MATING PAIR OF GULVERINES: *Thirsty for Blood, Pack Fighters.* **Powers:** Sentry, Gnashing Teeth (When fighting the GULVERINES, players without explicit armor, cover, or a shield will suffer [1] on Clash). 2[2]. Begins at 3DT.

There is nothing official that makes one Tile the Familiar of another for the Judge. However, a crude Familiar-Host relationship can be implied by prescribing a set pattern of behavior between central and subordinate Tiles.

For example: Dieter defines a pattern of behavior for his GOBLIN MINIONS when they are in the presence of the GREEN OGRE BOSS. Whenever the GOBLINS begin a turn with 4DT, they will spend their action healing the OGRE as much as possible. If the OGRE does not need healing, the GOBLINS will attack the players or cast their Ability, whether Slow, Haste, or Pacify.

Or: Heidi sets up her SENTINEL DRONE ships to always apply their SENTRY Power on the Boss Tile. Even when it would be more advantageous for the SENTINELS to protect one another, they are programmed to guard the Boss. She creates this weakness not to help the players but to realistically role-play a team of enemies that likely do not share a single mind.

ASSEMBLAGE OF ASSETS

The cunning Judge can construct a very powerful Boss by attaching a collection of Assets to the Tile. Assets offer additional Powers and Traits to the host Tile, often forcing heroes to Challenge and negate those Assets before facing the Boss alone.

For example: Chang creates his final ELF KING to be a menacing villain regardless of whether he becomes a vampire or keeps his GULVERINE Familiars. Even the

RUNNING A CAMPAIGN

natural form of the Boss has two powerful Assets at his disposal. Even if it proves impossible, smart players would at least seek out a way to potentially negate such items before confronting the KING:

GNOMISH BLADE: A fine sword made in a Northern European forge two centuries ago. **Trait:** The Smallest Slice. **Asset:** The host can increase 1[2] to 1[3] in combat (OP3). [2].

LADY ELIEL'S RING: Rare Regal Radiance. **Asset:** Dynamo, Phaser (sets Stun). [3].

PHASES OF BATTLE

A Boss may have a handful of powerful Assets that serve to separate the battle into phases. Heroes will need to defeat the multiple special features or abilities of the Boss in turn, each stage of the encounter a struggle to overcome one situational disadvantage or another.

For example: The WYVERN in Wamae's **MÁZAKI** campaign has Asset Tiles that represent its ability to fly, its breath weapon, and its hostile protection of the tower. There is probably no way to negate them ahead of time:

FLIGHT: *The Sky is the Limit.* **Asset:** The WYVERN cannot take Mortal or Stress Wounds until this Tile is defeated. [2]. Begins with 2DT.

BREATH WEAPON: The WYVERN can expel a boiling, sticky liquid from a sac near its throat. **Traits:** *Shoots From the Gut, Sizzling Strands of Spit.* **Powers:** Burst, Flurry. **Throat Sac:** To defeat the Tile, players must strike at the glowing sac in the center of the WYVERN's throat. This sac can roll Checks to increase its Drama. [2].

WYVERN PROTECTING THE TOWER: Consider the WYVERN circling or clinging to the structure constantly. **Traits:** *Homeland Security, Eyes on The Prize.* **Obsession:** The WYVERN will not allow anyone to get near—let alone ascend—the tower while this Tile is in place. The Tile is damaged by players luring or scaring the WYVERN away from the tower. 4[1]. Begins with 4DT.

These Assets may be tackled in any order, the players deciding which is most pressing at any given moment. Keep in mind that the WYVERN host Tile will have all of these Traits and Powers at its disposal while the Assets are in place.

GREEN OGRE

After slaughtering an entire village, an OGRE will spend the next several months ingesting the bodies in turn, about one per week. This OGRE finds the meat tastier the longer it rots.

- ◆ ROTTEN MANEATER
- ◆◆ OAKENFLESH

GIGANTIC: The OGRE can attack two targets with the same roll

BARREL-FISTED: Can add [+1] to any size Wound it deals for 2DT

SWALLOWS WHOLE: Can create a "Swallowing Whole" Condition on any human-sized target. Triggering deals the target's smallest Wound

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REMOTE ASSETS

The Boss may have subordinate Tiles that are still in play but outside the reach of the heroes during the battle. Such Assets can be doubly dangerous.

For example: Heidi stages a key moment wherein her space pirates confront a powerful businessman. She gives the SHABUYA HEIR three remote MINION Tiles to represent his executive officers across the galactic corporation. They each grant the HEIR one Trait and one Power even from the other side of the galaxy.

Or: Ryan designs a CRIME BOSS who takes advantage of a BROAD INFLUENCE Asset (see Heirloom) that is tied to the criminal leader's relationship with local politicians. The BROAD INFLUENCE Tile includes a Long Arm of the Lawless Trait that the CRIME BOSS has access to during combat. Players cannot disarm the BROAD INFLUENCE Asset while in combat with the CRIME BOSS because the current situation does not present any way to Challenge that Tile directly.

OTHER OBSTACLES

Overarching and ubiquitous Obstacles can have important affects on climactic Scenes. Unique circumstances may come into play that do not function as Assets or Familiars exactly but still protect or otherwise support the central Tiles.

For example: Maybe the location is a major factor in the battle. Environmental Obstacles that last through several Scenes can be powerful tools:

OGRE CAVE: Foul Fissures. The Cracks: Any [2] done by this Tile can disarm any Asset of any strength.

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS: The forest is filled with spindly vines sporting small, carnivorous flowers. **Traits:** Every Rose Has its Thorns. **Intertwining Vines:** The patch of vines will attack humans and healthy animals. It also creates the "Hungry Vines" Condition that deals [1] when suffered. Any damage dealt by chopping or cutting adds that amount to the Tile as vines regrow. 4[1].

You have already seen several other examples of overarching Obstacles, many that would work well in key moments. Check page 95 for reminders.

USING CONDITIONS

Dangerous Conditions can be tied to complex situations within the Boss Battle. Some of these will not be eliminated in the usual way.

For example: Wamae designs a "Circling Wyvern" Condition that stays in effect as long as both the FLIGHT and WYVERN PROTECTING THE TOWER Tiles are still in play. This will sap Drama from any player taking actions in the open, outside a form of cover.

HIDDEN CONDITIONS

Including secret or optional Conditions throughout the narrative is a sly way of customizing Boss Battles. The Judge offers players the opportunity to uncover and/or negate particular aspects of the Boss along the road to the final fight. If players miss offered opportunities, then they have in a way brought the danger on themselves.

For example: If the players discover that the GREEN OGRE is afraid of fire through research and role-playing earlier in the campaign, include an "Afraid of Fire" Condition in the final fight. If they do not uncover this truth, the OGRE may or may not react negatively to fire in the final battle.

NON-COMBAT CLIMAXES

While we focus on "Bosses" in the preceding examples, the versatility of **FANTAJI** allows any Obstacle to work as a Boss Tile at the center of a key Scene.

For example: Heidi plans a few major climaxes in her GAMMA CENTAURI campaign that center on non-combat Obstacles. She can buff these up with just as many Assets and supporting Tiles as any "Boss."

OUTRUNNING SHIPS: Every Ship But Your Four Fastest. **Fleet Fleet:** Any [1] scored while rolling against this Tile has no effect. 3[2].

CONFRONTING HEIR: The players must drag the facts from the Shabuya heir. **Traits:** Vault of Secrets, Man of Bronze. **Powers:** Any defensive damage dealt by this Tile cannot be healed until the end of the campaign. Each block the Tile suffers will earn one "yes" or "no" answer. 8[1].

TREASURE & WEALTH

Distributing Equipment, Awarding Treasure and Wealth, Magic Relics, Artifacts

Whatever the pure motives of your players are, there are times when everything boils down to fortune and glory. With **FANTAJI** being such a locally defined and universal system, we cannot provide a singular economy or mode of exchange. This section will address a few ways the Judge can use wealth and powerful artifacts to reward players. For more on fashioning custom economies and realistic human ecologies, see pages 134–141.

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Each campaign setting could have any number of functioning economies, each based on a discrete culture featured in the world. Just like different societies in the real world practice different forms of trade and different subsistence strategies, a fictional world can include several modes of living.

EQUIPMENT

One of the best ways to see players advance within the campaign setting is by making available more powerful and effective items. There are a few ways to control when a powerful piece of equipment becomes available to your heroes:

Buy It

You can make some equipment very expensive. Special ammunition or quality goods can require in-game money that is hard to come by. Characters will need to save resources to afford the good stuff even if it is readily for sale in several locales.

Find It

Some equipment is rare or invaluable and must be discovered to be gained. Heroes will need to discover treasure caches or infiltrate the vaults of the rich and famous to get such equipment.

Earn It

Oftentimes, technologically specific or advanced equipment is only available to certain cultures and certain members of that culture with enough authority. To receive this equipment your players will have to invest in particular cultures and chains of command.

STATUS EFFECTS

The most desired pieces of equipment will be those that deal the **Status Effects** your gamers need to defeat powerful enemies. Status Effects are some of **FANTAJI'S** most important elements of strategy.

For example: Whether they buy it, find it, or earn it, Chang's party must procure items that can land the Stagger Status Effect to stymie the acceleration of a rogue PIXIE, which can otherwise build 4DT per turn.

ASSETS AS EQUIPMENT

Rewarding characters with unique and colorful Assets now and then is a good way to keep the game interesting and please the treasure-hunters in your group. While awarded Assets require a Tile of their own, they are technically “equipment” and not “Powers,” and so they do require a Slot to carry. Such Assets make excellent bonuses and temporary buffs.

For example: A FINE SWORD will offer the hero an additional On the Edge of a Knife Trait. The Judge decides when the SWORD is found if it will take [2], 2[1], or [1] to disarm, whatever is appropriate to the campaign and the situation.

Or: A HEAVY CANNON Asset offers the shooter an Aim Power, a Firepower Trait, and has a [1] to disarm.

To distinguish these Assets from those that come from Powers, it is a good idea to make equipped Assets markedly temporary. When the artifact is “Jammed,” “Disarmed,” or “Knocked Out” once, the player will lose it forever.

Or: Xinjin saves the life of a young warrior, and the boy dedicates himself to the warlock as a retainer. Instead of functioning as a Familiar, the warrior is truly an extension of the warlock himself, an agent who disavows his own free will to protect his master. Such a dedicated servant would work well as a MINION Asset Tile. The warrior grants Xinjin a Fresh Outlook Trait, and the 2[1] Resistance on the Tile represents the Health of the lad. When the Asset

is attacked directly and eventually suffers 2[1], the boy gives up his own life for his master.

Although similar on the surface, because the BODYGUARD is not tied to the Minion Power, he cannot be healed and brought back indefinitely.

Or: Your hero slays a dragon and retrieves a MAGIC SWORD from the pile of gold. Such an artifact would best be tied to a Power earned from a “Dragon Slaying” Milestone, a historic weapon that will be disarmed and “healed” again and again throughout the life of the hero.

But granting the hero a MAGIC SWORD Asset as a temporary reward is possible too. The hero keeps the sword until it suffers [2] and then loses it forever. The Judge can narrate the weapon being stripped away, broken, or lost in the din of combat.

REWARDING HEROES

There are several ways to reward the mighty heroes in your campaign with flashy and powerful titles and campaign-specific privilege. The most engaged players will always be on the look-out for ways that their heroes may take root in the world of the campaign, generating lasting social ties and participating in cultural hierarchies.

TRACKING VESTED WEALTH

Whether as a single Tile for the entire party or as individual Tiles for the various members, VESTED WEALTH functions as a Familiar that can be leveraged to make large purchases by rolling against small stunts designed by the Judge.

For example: A VESTED WEALTH Tile can be used to buy things such as cars and houses that individual characters would not be able to afford otherwise:

VESTED WEALTH: Rags to Riches. **Major Purchases:** If the roll succeeds, the item is purchased without consequence. If the roll fails, the item is purchased but this Tile suffers whatever damage. 4[1].

HONORS & APPOINTMENTS

Beyond the economic power of collected wealth, your players may hunger for honors or privileges for their heroes within the world of the game.

Such honors function exactly as Assets and most often grant a new Trait to the host Tile(s). The honor or appointment will last until the narrative dictates otherwise or an overarching Obstacle of some kind Challenges and defeats the Asset.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE: Your heroes become popular members of court life. **Trait:** High and Mighty. 2[1].

DOMINION MODE

Granting your heroes complex territories or fiefs to maintain might scratch their itch for both fortune and glory. The Tile would be constructed as an overarching Obstacle (see page 95) that players tend and nurture.

For example: Over time, Brostar becomes the Emir of a small Eljuk territory. Dieter awards him a new DOMINION Tile that Brostar can develop over time:

ELJUK EMIRATE: The heroes control a large territory within the troubled kingdom of Eljuk. **Trait:** Home on the Range. **Run of the Mill:** Each Health block represents a town [2] or oasis [1] in the territory. Themes can be spent by Lance and the players to “upgrade” the Tile as though it were a Character. [2] / 3[1].

Dieter can introduce new overarching Obstacles to pester, drain, or wither the nascent Dominion Tile:

WINTER IS COMING: Biting winds and falling snow bring damage to your unprepared domain. **Trait:** Freezing in the Blood, All Hail Winter. **Seasons:** Players can Challenge this Tile by fixing and preparing structures. WINTER will Challenge the DUKEDOM at every chance. [2]. Begins at 6DT.

SWARM OF LOCUSTS: The plague comes in droves, destroying your crops. **Traits:** Hopping From Grass to Grass, Insecting Without Directing. **Powers:** Graze (see Aim), Summon more LOCUSTS (see Quick Spirits). [1]. Begins at 2DT.

When using Familiars and/or Assets to represent wealth and territory, keep things concrete. Treat the Tile as a network of material, physical things.

THE WARLOCK & THE DJINN

Building a Campaign, Leading & Following Your Players, Key Moments & Creativity

The following text is a lengthy and lively example of one party working through an original chapter designed by their Judge. It takes place in Dieter's light-hearted version of the **BLOODSBANE** setting:

MAJOR CLIMAXES

Dieter is designing a campaign for the **BLOODSBANE** setting. Choosing a predefined campaign world cuts down on some of the creative work, but developing the overall story arc is still up to the Judge alone. Combining elements from his favorite films with a few ideas he has been saving up for several months, Dieter settles on a "Three Act" structure that may take the group several weeks of gaming to complete.

CENTRAL CONFLICT

Dieter decides to make the central conflict of his campaign the party's quest to rescue a prince of Aliphar. They will be hired by his father in the prologue and quickly set about saving the lad.

KEY VICTORIES

Dieter arranges three key victories as escalating battles that bring the heroes closer to solving the mystery of a missing prince and his maiden guards.

☉ First Act: Elemental Warlock

The first act of the campaign will cover the heroes' encounter with the king of Aliphar and their quest to rescue a kidnapped prince. Dieter imagines the key victory will require defeating a "Boss Battle" with a very powerful elemental wizard in a stronghold.

The big reveal is that the **WARLOCK** was kidnapping not the prince but the maidens. He has no idea where the prince is. The maidens disclose that the prince was running away. They did not speak up earlier because they knew they would not have been rescued if the Sultan knew the truth.

☉ Second Act: Ocean Voyage

The second act will see the heroes on an ocean voyage, hot on the trail of the runaway prince. Dieter imagines an adventure Sinbad himself would be envious of, a grand voyage over the sea in search of a remote island to find the prince. There will be seven great trials along the journey.

This is a small campaign we designed for this example. Borrowing Tiles from premade Decks, it took only an hour of preparation time to support the first 15+ hours of gaming. We designed the **WARLOCK** battle, and then the rest of the first act wrote itself as we played.

The twist at the end of the act will be that one of the crew members on the ship was the stowaway prince. The prince could not find the island himself, so he let the heroes do the work getting him there.

☉ Third Act: Island Djinn

The final act covers what happens on the island. The prince will do all he can to win over the heroes and gain their aid searching for a wealthy djinn. He promises them riches and swears he will go home after they find the treasure. He wants to prove himself a worthy man to his father the Sultan.

The climax is a battle with the powerful djinn, the **GUARDIAN OF THE LAMP**. And as it turns out, the **GUARDIAN** was actually protecting the lamp from the "true djinn" who once possessed it, a djinn so diabolical he was exiled from the island forever.

☉ Resolution

Here Dieter leaves it open whether this diabolical mystery djinn is the prince, the Sultan, or some stranger who would warrant a whole new quest.

CAMPAIGN DECK

With relatively polished ideas of what each key victory will include, Dieter still has an entire world to populate and animate. He tries to think of what other creatures, characters, and contraptions the heroes will encounter as they travel the Eastern Kingdoms.

Over the course of several days, and using the section of this book dedicated to the **BLOODSBANE** setting for inspiration, Dieter constructs a stack of index cards that includes 60 Obstacles. The process of brainstorming Obstacles gives Dieter even more ideas about where the campaign might go.

He also does the difficult work of creating 15 engaging Themes at once, setting a strong foundation for the overall mood of the adventure.

THE COURSE OF ACT I

Dieter takes an hour designing the assemblage of Tiles that represent the forces of the ELEMENTAL WARLOCK, knowing it will take a week of player ingenuity to undermine. However, his foolhardy players accept the quest of the sultan and march straight to the WARLOCK's castle, ready for a fight.

FIRST ATTEMPT

When the heroes march on the castle, Dieter reveals the assemblage of Tiles reluctantly. It will be hard for the players to survive unless they turn around fast.

Themes: *Beware of Darkness, Have Fun Storming The Castle, The Art of Dying*

OBSTACLES: CHAMPION FIRE WARLOCK, (5X) GIANT GRACKLE, (2X) MAIDEN DYNAMO (both Facedown)



Because the players charge in unprepared and without an ounce of stealth, Dieter begins the WARLOCK and his birds with 3DT each (they are experienced defenders of their home after all). The GRACKLES have Haste, and there are enough of them to use the Power continuously to increase the Drama of their allies at a dangerous rate. The Quake and Aim Powers are icing on the cake.

And the facedown Tiles keep adding Drama to the WARLOCK as well, meaning that even without the GRACKLES around the wizard would be a hard foe.

The assailants are immediately overwhelmed by defenders with too much Drama, and the heroes are quickly sent packing.

WHAT NEXT?

The Judge designed one battle and a handful of Obstacles ahead of time. The actual plot, the course of the narrative, is up to the players and their choices. They must do as much fieldwork as they can to find a way to weaken the WARLOCK.

⚙ The Grackles

Dieter has two ideas for how the players might negate the powerful Haste dynamic of the GIANT GRACKLES. First, the heroes could learn that the birds are underfed and so venture to find the special grain used to train such GRACKLES in their homeland. This would grant the players a piece of equipment that could be deployed with [1] to create a "Ground Covered in Grain" Condition. When Forced it would hit all the birds at once! Using [1] to sap DT from five Tiles at a time would be a great way to regulate the combat. The role-

Remember, these Scenes are entirely contingent on the whims and ideas of the players; this act could have gone in *any* direction

playing choices of the players lead to a fun journey that makes possible a killer Condition otherwise impossible to create from scratch.

Second, the heroes could sneak into the roost of the GRACKLES one night and attempt to kill them as they sleep far from the WARLOCK. However many they kill in the raid would be missing when they relaunch their attack.

⚙️ **Facedown Dynamos**

Dieter expects the players will investigate nearby villages to find out that the WARLOCK is known for kidnapping magically gifted young children and keeping them as batteries. He leaves it open how the group might undermine or rescue the MAIDENS.

Of course, the players will come up with their own ideas, and Dieter needs to remain open to guiding their actions without dictating key choices. If the Obstacles are designed well, the rest will flow.

SCENE LIST

Here is an exhaustive list of the Scenes as they were played by the party in the first act of the campaign. It could have gone any number of ways, as Dieter had only the initial assail designed when the campaign began:

SESSION I

Dieter narrates as each hero is arrested by the sultan's guards and brought before him. He gives a passionate speech about his missing son and offers the party riches to retrieve the prince. As the players ask questions, they learn details about the prince traveling with his maiden companions on a busy road and being abducted by an infamous wizard who has finally found the limit of the sultan's tolerance.

⚙️ **Scene: First Assail**

The Scene (see previous page) ends after about an hour of combat with the injured heroes running away. They deal some large Wounds to a few of the GRACKLE Tiles but barely escape with their lives.

⚙️ **Open Role-Playing**

The injured players now want to locate a healer, and stop into the closest village. Dieter lays out

two Themes to provide a mood for the open role-playing, and invites the players to interact with the villagers who live at the base of the mountain.

Themes: *Band on The Run, The Art of Dying*

Dieter lets the players know that they can each make two or three Checks in the village. The group has some fun role-playing conversations, and players make their Checks to gain specific details.

Lance asks for a healer, and Dieter declares that passing a Check @5 will give the party access to someone who can heal Flesh Wounds (if the party generates enough Drama during the open play).

Andrew fails two Checks looking for information on the hidden power sources the WARLOCK employs.

When Dieter feels that the role-playing is winding down and that the players have made their best choices, he interrupts: An explosion booms, the smoke visible high up on a dark side of the wizard's mountain.

He did not expect the players to jump confidently ahead again, but soon Dieter is fielding Checks requesting climbing equipment. The heroes also discover that the crash came from the roost. As the heroes set their minds to hiking up the mountain, Dieter lets them cash in some Drama to heal a handful of Stress Wounds and awards the two Themes, closing out the episode in the village.

⚙️ **Scene: Roost Raid**

The next morning, the players travel up the back side of the wizard's mountain to reach the location of the explosion.

Dieter asks for some climbing Checks from the players, secretly using the results to determine the initial Drama of the nearing enemies. After a few moments, the party finds themselves at the roost of the GRACKLES.

Themes: *Into The Lion's Den, Fox in The Hen House, Fiddle About*

Conditions: Treacherous Cliffs (Trap), Echoing Chamber

OBSTACLES: (2X) GIANT GRACKLE

The real-life players who inspired this fictional gaming group are quite brilliant, and we tease them here only because we love them

The heroes slay one of the GRACKLES before the other escapes and caws an alarm. Dieter awards the Themes to the appropriate players, who ask to retain their Drama for whatever happens on the way down the mountain.

⚙️ Open Role-Playing

Before fleeing, Allyson rolls a Check to investigate the roost, looking for any curious elements. She uncovers empty grain sacks decorated with an unfamiliar symbol, and Dieter reveals the Condition “Starving Grackles” for her success. It appears their grain is gone for some reason, the storage shelves noticeably empty.

Dieter’s original idea of using grain to create a “Grain Covering Ground” Condition has changed to match the players’ understanding of the situation.

On their way down the mountain Andrew tries for another Check to spot if there might, by chance, be a trail of grain visible. Dieter sets the Difficulty, and Andrew passes the roll. Dieter narrates how Xinjin catches sight of a trail of seeds heading down the same trail the heroes are taking. Someone must have come this way recently with the stolen grain!

⚙️ Scene: Careful Investigation

The heroes can heal a bit with the Drama they generated during both the raid and the escape. They decide to note the direction of the seed trail, but they want to gather some information in the village before heading out on another journey.

It takes a few moments for Dieter to create an Obstacle that fits precisely what the players hope to gain: They want to find more grain. Dieter must take into account what information is available in the village and consider how the players can get it.

Themes: *If Not For You, My Sweet Lord, Needles in Haystacks*

FINDING INFORMATION: The heroes want to ascertain the origin of the grain so they can go find more of it. **Trait:** *Cracking The Code*.

Memories: Players must pick the brains of the villagers for information, asking just the right questions to trigger some key detail. The [1] represents a vague direction towards the origin, while [2] gains them a solid map. [2] / [1].

INVESTIGATIONS & OPEN ROLE-PLAYING

A good way to handle investigations, intrigue, mysteries, and politics is to carry out qualitative, open-ended role-playing before any Obstacles are written on the table. When a player gets onto the right trail or makes a clever move, call for a Check. The rolling will never take the place of smart role-playing, and dice cannot settle an investigation *instead* of player ingenuity.

Let the players build Drama and create or uncover Conditions with the small Checks. However, as soon as a Check fails, the open-ended conversation comes to an end. Let the Judge create an Obstacle based on how far the players have already come and what exactly they are now aiming for.

Now roll Challenges against the Obstacle to gain tangible rewards and intelligence. When the Obstacle wins a Challenge, the source is out of information. A new strategy (maybe a new Scene) is needed to obtain any further leverage or clues.

The players deal [2] before losing the next Challenge, which is really all they needed. They now have a map that will take them easily to the origin of the grain, a small community far south.

If the players had scored only [1], Dieter would have added two difficult travel encounters to the journey for the grain. If they had scored nothing, they may have went back to the mountain after Xinjin’s trail or given up on the grain clue entirely.

It is the end of the night, and Dieter awards the final set of Themes. After five hours of gaming, Allyson has gained three Themes, Lance two, and Andrew three as well. All of the heroes have an injury or two, but none of them is scared yet.

Take your time: It sometimes takes a moment to come up with just the right Obstacle to represent what the players mean

SESSION II

The players are excited to take a journey, and Dieter has prepared a few fun hurdles for their quest to retrieve the special grain.

Scene: Travel to The Grain Village

Dieter gives the players a solid encounter along the road that at first seems random. Thieves attack!

Themes: *The Long and Winding Road, Highwaymen to Hell, Hit and Run*

Conditions: Narrow Road, Dense Forests

OBSTACLES: THIEF SCOUT, VETERAN THIEF, THE WAGON TIPPED OVER, KEEPING INTENTIONS HIDDEN

The players take minimal damage, but they fail to halt KEEPING INTENTIONS HIDDEN from reaching 5DT and alerting the thieves to the party's intention. This failure is what causes the encounter to occur in the next Scene.

Scene: Thieves Raid The Village

The players enter the village that sells grain to the WARLOCK only to find that the village and several

of its recent grain shipments have all been hit by thieves. As it turns out, the battle on the road was part of the story. Suddenly, the village is attacked!

Themes: *All Things Must Pass, Highwaymen to Hell*

Conditions: Vulnerable Innocents

OBSTACLES: THIEF VETERAN, TROLL SLAVE, SAVE THE LAST OF THE GRAIN, STOP THE KIDNAPPING

The heroes slay the enemies and overcome both Abstract Obstacles, their first big victory of the campaign. They end up with three sacks of grain, which means they can Force the "Starving Grackles" Condition three times in the final battle. Dieter awards the Themes and initiates some much needed "down time" for the party.

Open Role-Playing Evolves Into Scene

While role-playing in the village, Andrew imagines having large feathered shields that would act as confusing camouflage for the GRACKLES. He describes bright shields or costumes they could wear like a peacock displaying his feathers, with pseudo-eyes and confusing colors. Done right, these could act as a Trump to the "Line of Sight"

RAVENOUS FIELD LION

Field lions are fearsome predators of the golden prairies in the warmest regions of the Nopo Continent. Six-legged and sharp-toothed, the great cats prey on a variety of large herbivores. Many strains of Field Lions are also tinged with the magic, the result of making dens in fissures that lead into jade deposits deep in the ground.

SIX SAVAGE LIMBS
TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN

Instinct: Any time the Lion is going to suffer DT- (from any cause), roll against a Difficulty of 5 to save

Pounce: The Lion can expend 2DT before an Attack to remove 4 dice from the target's defense pool for that roll only

Roar (Move): Roll at a Difficulty of 8 to sap 1DT from all targets



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Conditions set by the GRACKLES' Aim Power. Dieter loves the idea, though he will not make it make it easy to accomplish. It seems a small Scene has grown up around the open role-playing:

Themes: *Necessity is The Mother of Invention*

CAPTURE POOKA BIRD: *Heads in The Clouds, Bustles in Your Hedgerow.* **Powers:** Grief. [2] / 4[1]. Begins with 4DT.

FASHION THE SHIELDS: The village will help stitch the shields according to player designs. **Trait:** *A Stitch in Time, Run of The Mill.* **Costumes:** Each player must defeat the Obstacle in a single Challenge to fashion the suit. [2].

The players must defeat the first Obstacle before tackling the second, of course. As it goes, only Andrew fashions a shield sturdy and distracting enough to work in combat. The feather-shield will take up an equipment Slot on Xinjin's Tile.

⚙ **Scene: Careful Investigation**

Before the heroes head back to the base of the WARLOCK's mountain, Dieter hints at the nature of the facedown Dynamo Assets. The players spend a while forging just the right Obstacle to help them get to the root of the hidden Tiles:

Theme: *Rooting Out Evil*

UNCOVERING ORIGINS: The party can ask questions and role-play openly, hoping for Dieter to call for Checks when they stumble upon the right trail.

Trait: *Testing Batteries.* [2]

SOURCE OF MAGIC: Again, the players investigate in the village and inquire with the shaman about any natural magics that might be related to that of the young girls. **Trait:** *Public Secret.* 2[2].

The players learn that the WARLOCK has taken several young maidens from this village because of their magical abilities. Lance suggests that the prince's entourage of maidens might have a role in all of this. Dieter invents a new detail on the spot, explaining that the prince's companions were also originally from this village, taken by the sultan at an early age for their abilities (no sense making the sides too black and white).

Lance does an excellent job convincing the shaman to divulge their secrets, and the party also finds out

that there is a nearby shrine that may be able to counteract the natural magics of the young girls.

⚙ **Scene: Travel to Shrine**

The next morning, after cashing in enough Drama to heal almost completely, the party sets out for this ancient shrine. Of course, on the way, danger arises!

Themes: *THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD, HIT AND RUN, HUMAN VS. NATURE*

Condition: Dense Forest

FIELD LION: (see illustration on opposite page)

The group ends the night's session just as they come upon the ancient shrine, a small stone shack tucked under untold human generations' worth of vegetation. Dieter hands out the ten Themes from the night: Andrew now has seven, Allyson six, and Lance five.

SESSION III

A week later, the group meets back up at Dieter's place to continue the saga of the first act. The following four scenes comprise seven hours of gaming.

⚙ **Scene: Careful Investigation**

After arriving at the shrine, the party decides to be a little careful about entering. It becomes clear that the shack houses the entrance to a tunnel that leads into long forgotten catacombs.

UNDERSTANDING THE SHRINE: The party seeks to translate inscribed hieroglyphs inside the shrine.

Trait: *Dead Languages.* 2[3].

Allyson deals the first [3] to translate some of the hieroglyphs, learning the narrative of the magic flute and the spirit guardian. The group fails to deal the second [3] before losing a Challenge, and so Dieter cancels the investigation. This means the party does not uncover the map.

⚙ **Scene: Travel to The Flute**

Upon deciphering the narrative on the walls of the stone structure, the party is ready to delve into the tunnels. Xinjin carries camping gear in a Slot on his Character Tile, and Dieter allows this enough to grant them only a small torch.

Having a solid Campaign Deck on hand makes creating small skirmishes and battles on the fly much easier

Themes: *Into The Darkness, Rooting Out Evil, Something Noisy This Way Comes*

Conditions: Dim Lighting, Narrow Tunnels, Echoing Voices

OBSTACLES: TUNNEL GOBLINS, SHADOW WRAITHS, FALSE REGRET, IMPOSSIBLE TWISTS

The IMPOSSIBLE TWISTS Tile was only present because the party failed to uncover the map in the shrine above.

This acts as an in-game hardship by sapping Drama from the group before they encounter the “boss” of the tunnels, and doubles as a meta-game hardship by taking up real-life time from the main adventure (though still offering a fun moment for all). Eventually, the party makes it to the central chamber of the flute and the spirit guardian.

⚙️ **Scene: The Cave of The Spirit**

In the central chamber of the tunnels, a grand battle erupts between the party and the GUARDIAN OF THE FLUTE.

Themes: *Rooting Out Evil, In The Darkness Bind It, In The Belly of The Earth, Those Who Live by The Sword...*

Conditions: Dim Light, Low Ceilings

GUARDIAN OF THE FLUTE: The quasi-physical spirit seems to fill the room as a gas while also taking the form of a snake-headed humanoid. **Traits:** *The God in The Bowl, Without a Hiss, An Element of Evil.* **Powers:** Acid (see Burst), Curse (sets Burn), Cause Regret (see Grief). [3] / 2[2] / 6[1]. Begins with 4DT.

FLUTE: The GUARDIAN wields the FLUTE as an Asset that can roll a Check @3 to cancel all enemy Assets until the end of the following Round.

The party defeats the GUARDIAN and finds the FLUTE Asset, a Tile capable of cancelling the WARLOCK’S Dynamo Assets!

⚙️ **Scene: Searching For The Lion**

After retrieving the FLUTE Asset and defeating the GUARDIAN, the players take an uneventful trip back to the grain village. They role-play for a while talking to the villagers and solving a few local mysteries about the true cause of the magical maidens being born in the small settlement.

Andrew has one final idea for thwarting those Grackles: He figure they could capture and deploy a natural predator of the birds, a lion or a larger bird of prey. Dieter is unsure how this would turn out, but he likes the initiative.

Themes: *Taming The Beast, Human vs. Nature*

FIELD LION: (see illustration on previous page)

Dieter decides to start the LION with 6DT. If the players reduce the Drama to zero, they can then attempt the next Obstacle.

LION TAMING: Only because the LION was once a trained mount for local Goblins is it readily tamed. **Traits:** *Breaking Bad.* **Powers:** Spite, Heavy. [3] / 3[1]. Begins at 3DT.

The party succeeds in overcoming the first Obstacle (only because the LION had been injured in the previous battle), but the second proves too deadly. After Xinjin suffers a Mortal Wound, the group gives up on taming the king of the jungle.

SESSION IV

The final night of gaming consists of two dangerous Scenes that conclude the first act. After a moment’s calculation, the group decides that this assault of the fortress is occurring two weeks after the initial assault.

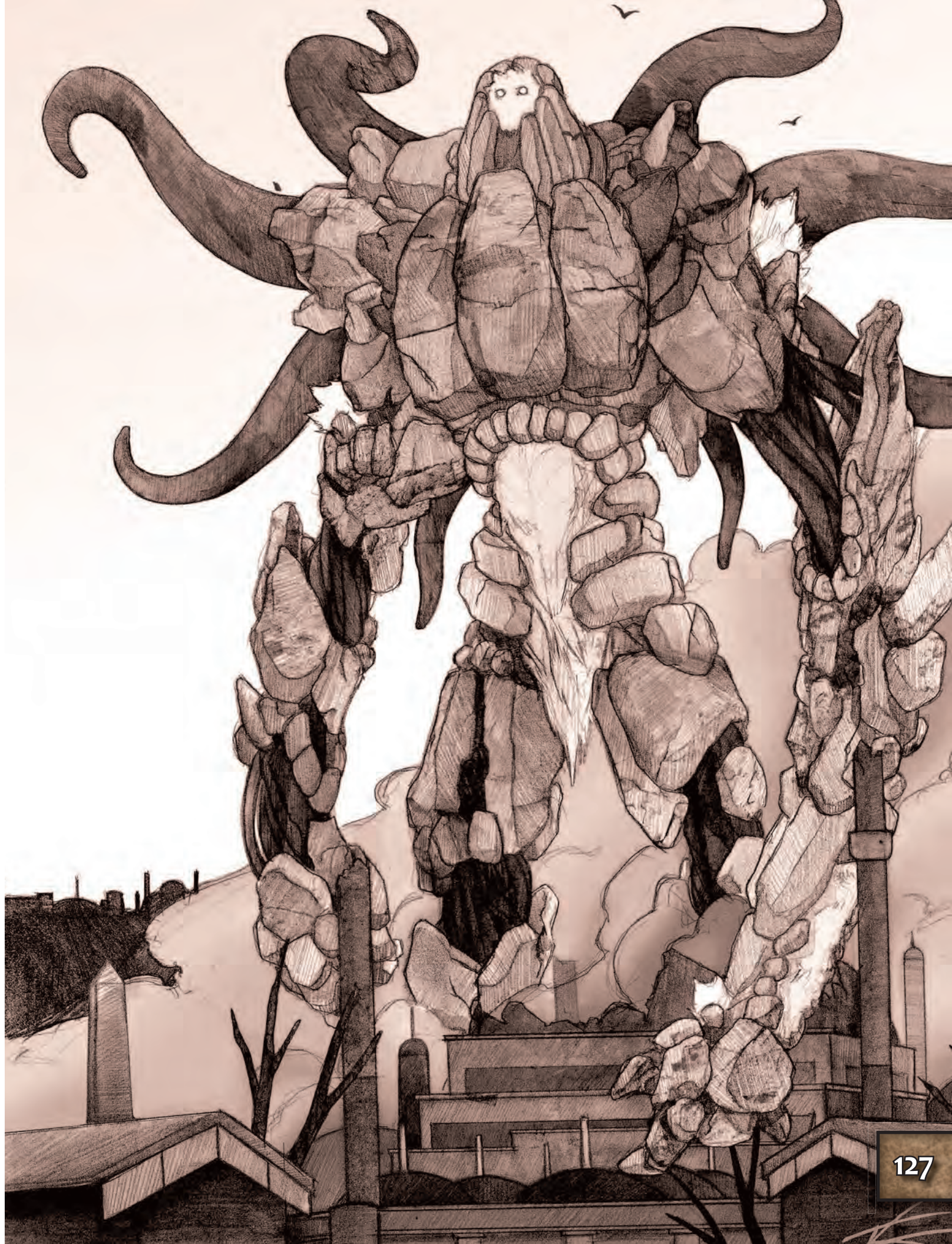
⚙️ **Scene: Storm the Fortress**

Dieter puts together a band of dirty mercenaries who fight alongside the GRACKLES and the WARLOCK at the entrance to the fortress. When the WARLOCK suffers a [3], he automatically exits the fight.

⚙️ **Scene: The Showdown**

The party breaks through the defenses and chases down the WARLOCK to his own chamber after a few small Obstacles.

When the WARLOCK is down to his final block of Health, he forfeits all his Drama to throw himself at the party’s mercy. If they parlay, the heroes will realize that the prince is not in the fortress. The WARLOCK attacked the prince’s caravan only for the magically gifted MAIDENS, who have only a vague idea where the prince was running to. The heroes can do what they want to the WARLOCK and MAIDENS, and take as much time as needed before heading out to track the prince.





CHAPTER 6: GAME CREATION

FANTAJI is a universal role-playing system, which means the same mechanics can work in a variety of genres and settings. You can play **FANTAJI** in any world you like, so draw inspiration from your favorite fictional worlds or create a universe of your own.

SUMMARY

Building Your World & Your Game, New Ways to Play, New Heroes to Role-Play

Designing a new campaign setting is a heavy task with unlimited rewards. The following chapter of the book will run you through the necessary steps and help jump-start your creative engines.

We begin with a discussion of genre and suggestions for how to elicit information about expectations from your group. The genre of your game involves not only the details of the setting, but also the style of play you hope to invoke.

Jumping into your favorite worlds from film and fiction can be a good place to start when expanding on the four fantasy settings present in this book.

Whether creating a setting from scratch or attempting to replicate your favorite work of

fiction, fill out the Game Design Worksheet to track your decisions. This will help you develop a focal point for the new campaign and a record of the central concerns. It also acts as a quick and easy way to compare various settings at a glance. We use variations of the Game Design Worksheet when we introduce new settings to test groups.

The latter half of the chapter works through all the elements of a fictional world, from politics and power to aesthetic motifs and food. You will be coached at inventing institutions, social dynamics, major players, and popular fauna.

The end of the chapter covers questions about who the heroes are, what purposes they have, and how they fit into the world of the campaign.

PLASMA RIFLE

- ◆ *THIS GUN'S FOR HIRE*
- ◆ *CAN'T START A FIRE WITHOUT A SPARK*

*ASSET: THIS ASSET TILE ACTS AS A PHASER (SETS BURN)
AND ALSO GRANTS ITS HOST BURST AND SLOW*



⚙️ GENRE & CONCEPT

Setting & Style, Inspirations From Fiction, The Broadest Strokes

You can play **FANTAJI** in any world. The same mechanics can be used to represent combat and conflict in a variety of environments and universes.

GENRE

The genre of your game will cover the details of setting and the feel of play. Think of the genre question as two-fold: Setting and Style.

⚙️ Setting

The concrete half of your game's genre is the setting. What kind of world is your game set in? In what era? The setting covers the details of the geography, history, politics, social institutions, and cultures of the game world.

For example: A Western would be set in the south and southwest regions of the United States in the years following the events of the American Civil War. Heroes could be intrepid explorers who travel the territories looking for riches, tycoons who hope to build empires, rugged ranch hands and gunslingers looking to make a name for themselves, or maybe oddball inventors from the East Coast who stab westward with get-rich-quick schemes.

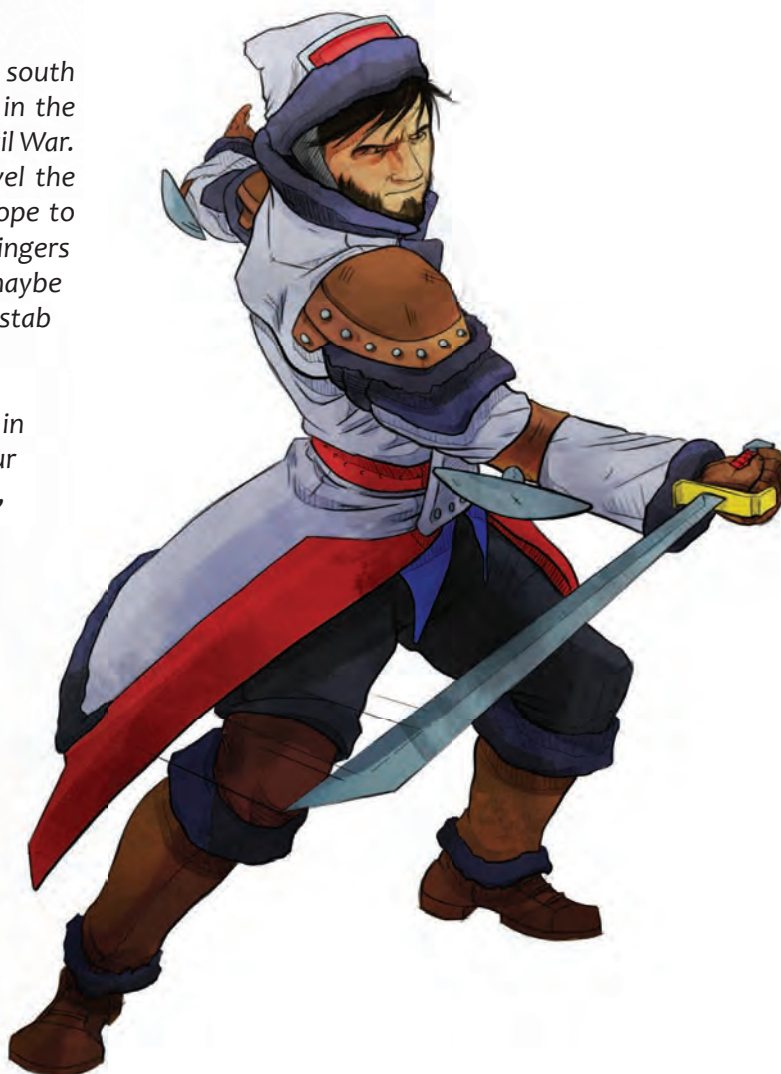
Or: Maybe your superhero game takes place in a bustling metropolis in the near future. Your world is a slightly dystopic version of England, with technologies unknown to our own day and age. The world is an altered version of our own where the Soviet Bloc never crumbled. Communism has spread across the entire European continent, with the British Isles as a bastion of democracy. The United States is only one superpower among several as China, India, Japan, Russia, England, and a recently revolutionary Argentina all play major roles in international politics.

⚙️ Style

After deciding on the in-game details of your game's setting, you need to consider the style you are going

for. The genre of the game includes not just the physical and social environments but also the look, feel, aesthetic, and mood. Spend some good time thinking through the overall personality of the game. The way you approach the setting is just as important as the details within it.

For example: A Western that takes a light-hearted look at the American West would be rowdy, adventurous, and explosive. But a more critical, serious approach would focus instead on the tribulations of Reconstruction, the racial tensions between Anglos and First Nation peoples, and the rise of state-sponsored monopoly capitalism in the



form of railroads, telecommunications, and public utilities. These two different styles would lead to drastically different games that could not be said to fit the same genre.

Or: The superhero setting already has a cynical bent built into the environment, but even such a world could be played in different ways. The style could be sleazy and jaded, emphasizing the corruption and decadence of the setting. Or, the game could focus on secrecy, underground heroes on the European continent itself, freedom fighters always at risk.

USE YOUR FAVORITES

Some of you likely bought **FANTAJI** with your own setting already in mind. Some favorite television series or movie universe has you looking for a way to jump into a new world, and you reckoned **FANTAJI** was the best portal available. Well, smart choice! The following chapters will not disappoint.

Even if you are using a pre-existing world for your game, you still need to spend some time deciding how your favorite elements and features will function mechanically in the game. While you will learn specifics on tailoring different mechanics in the next chapter on page 143, the following sections of this chapter can still be useful.

Does the world you are looking at have magic in it? Does the magic drain your life when you cast a spell or use a power? Cause ripples or side effects? Leave a lasting mark on the world?

For example: Maybe each magical power takes the form of an Asset Tile. Or, maybe each family of magic is an Asset, and each spell a Power on the Tile. Or again, maybe every Power your character rolls in the game considered magical in nature.

Or: Maybe the bionic implants and components you augment your body with begin to sap your essence or humanity. Do heroes in this world have to monitor their implants? Do components rust?

Start thinking about how the features of this pre-existing world work exactly. It's up to you to fit the world into the mechanics **FANTAJI** offers. But, fear not, you'll have lots of help here.

BRAINSTORM WITH GROUP

The best way to devise a campaign setting that everyone likes is to sit down with the friends that will become your players. Share your favorite movies and books. Figure out common interests and decide on a setting and style that you would all enjoy for the weeks to come.

ASK SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

To get on the same page, try asking everyone some broad questions that bring each player's favorite elements out. Discuss the following:

- ✿ Your favorite dramatic gaming moment
- ✿ Your favorite dramatic moment of film
- ✿ The best action scene of any RPG
- ✿ What makes a good hero
- ✿ What makes a good villain
- ✿ What every good story needs
- ✿ Do you want intrigue and politics?
- ✿ Do you want action to set the pace?
- ✿ Will the heroes build kingdoms and states?
- ✿ The best plot twists and revelations
- ✿ How RPGs are different from video games
- ✿ How much theatrics and acting are best
- ✿ Can the game master roll behind a screen?
- ✿ Are humans the only playable species?
- ✿ How much time to spend on the day-to-day
- ✿ Can heroes die? How hard will it be?
- ✿ Will some monsters be too hard to defeat?
- ✿ How much meta-gaming is too much?

THE WORKSHEET

Making a Record of Your World, Organizing Ideas, Cornerstones & Foundations

We provide you with a Game Worksheet that acts as a log of your game creation process. The Worksheet sums up the campaign setting along with any specific rules or mechanical mods that the game includes.

Of course you can design a world however you like. Consider the Worksheet a bare-bones template that helps you ask and answer the basic questions needed to describe any new world. Of course you can always create more details and features too.

There are hundreds of books and websites out there to help you design a world. This chapter covers concerns specific to creating a campaign setting for **FANTAJI**.

FILL IN THE GENRE

After the initial conversation with your group about what kind of world you want to create for your **FANTAJI** game, label the genre on the worksheet.

WORLD DESCRIPTION

Several of the lines on the Worksheet sum up noteworthy features of your campaign setting.

THREE STRUCTURES

Choose three political or cultural institutions that give character to your world and establish a status quo. These should serve as a scaffolding for the myriad stories that will take place in your world.

THREE SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Create three prevalent circumstances or trends that are challenging the status quo set by your structures. These add needed tension to the world.

UNIQUE MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY

Create the unique powers or tools that those with privilege have developed to solve their problems. Who uses them against whom in the world?

OTHER CONCERNS

Alongside the Worksheet, take time to write out or merely brainstorm the following in your notes:

Ubiquitous Obstacles

Are there any overarching, ever-present threats that are always in effect behind the scenes? If reasonable, consider writing up the political structures or social dynamics as Obstacle Tiles.

Adventure Hooks

Make sure you have enough details, rabbit holes, and loose ends to outfit your world with sufficient texture for players to explore and inhabit it.

Geography & Important Locations

Create and list the important locations and points of interest in your world. Draw a map! Help the players feel secure in knowing where they are and let them become familiar with the environment.

Key Non-Player Characters

Take care to invent and record all of the key NPCs that arise in your campaign. Decide how your NPCs relate to one another and consider how progress in the narrative changes those relationships. Player actions are more fulfilling when they visibly influence the ways allies and enemies relate.

POSSIBLE MODS

Our Game Worksheet includes a checklist of mods that you may choose to include. Check the box next to any mod to alert your players to the customizations you are including in the campaign.

RECURRING THEMES

The Worksheet also includes a space to keep track of recurring Themes. When you design your world, creating a few Themes that will turn up again and again will establish a mood more clearly than the setting or story can alone. A list of recurring Themes is the best way to set a consistent tone for the game, becoming a “playlist” or “soundtrack” for the campaign as a whole.

FANTAJI

Campaign Title:

Genre:

Description:

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

UNIQUE MAGIC, TECHNOLOGY, ARTS

POTENTIAL MODS

- ☐ MOD 01: MILESTONE ARCS
- ☐ MOD 02: POWER CLASHING [REG][CLAS.]
- ☐ MOD 03: BOONS [RIS.]
- ☐ MOD 04: SPELLBOOK ASSETS
- ☐ MOD 05: TREASURE GENERATOR
- ☐ MOD 06: ELEMENTAL MAGICS
- ☐ MOD 07: MARTIAL ARTS
- ☐ MOD 08: DODGE
- ☐ MOD 09: ESSENCE METER
- ☐ MOD 10: MEGA DAMAGE
- ☐ MOD 11: SKILL SYSTEM

RECURRING THEMES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

STORY HOOKS & RABBIT HOLES

Other versions of the Game Worksheet available from the Anthropos Games website allow you to track additional features of your world and record overarching Obstacles that represent pressing social dynamics and entrenched institutions.

YOUR LIVING WORLD

Careful Human Ecologies, Politics & Power, From Culture to Hegemony

Beyond coming up with the short answers needed to complete the Game Worksheet, a good Judge will flesh out what each answer looks like in a complex, living world. The delight as well as the devil can be in the details.

For the sakes of both simplicity and complexity, everything in this section will come in groups of three. Having just one city or one nation would be boring, and having two cities or two nations would result in cliché Manichaean oppositions. But three of anything is the simplest way to open up an entire world of possibility.

POLITICS & POWER

The most important element needed in any campaign setting is a realistic human ecology. What kinds of social and political institutions are in place that govern individual expression and behavior? Whether you are creating your own world or drawing from a fictional universe, you must carefully answer that question with as much detail as possible.

CURRENT INSTITUTIONS

These are the central institutions that the culture of your game world contests with. Think of an institution as a material infrastructure that entails a particular understanding of what constitutes a normal and natural lifestyle. And you want three of them!

For example: To represent a traditional model of the European Middle Ages, the Judge could settle on three institutions that incorporate most of the varying kingdoms and cultures of the period: The Catholic Church, Feudal Economy, and Monarchy.

Catholic Church

Truth about the role of the Church in Medieval lives is not hard to come by, but it does not always

feature in Hollywood adaptations. In any case, the presence of Catholicism in the daily life of a serf was most definitely “from the cradle to the grave.”

The Church offered a cosmology for the universe, an order of society, a moral code to live by, and a human arbiter of God’s will on earth. An understanding of souls, demons, angels, magic, and mercy provided a view of what behaviors and responsibilities were normal and natural for an individual based on their age, gender, and status with the Church.

Feudal Economy

Another feature of the Middle Ages that attracts much perversion in Hollywood, feudalism provided an economic and moral place for every individual—except the growing merchant class, of course. The production of food and raw materials busied the countryside manor estates, while the small urban centers hosted trade and consolidated authority.

Complemented by a patronage system that supported learning and the arts, the feudal economy could incorporate all forms of labor. Like an extended family, males owed services to their betters up a long chain from slave to king, and all privileges and responsibilities followed along this pyramid structure.

Monarchy

Anyone who owed personal service to no one else was a king, but the institution of the monarchy also existed somewhat independently from the economic system. Royal blood, marriages, kinship charts, closeness to God and the Church, noble privilege, etc.—all these concerns existed outside any simply economic realm.

The European monarchies organized government around the role of law. Behavior was pretty much left alone outside broad strokes of legal penalty.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

The next step in texturing your campaign world is devising at least three social dynamics, trends,

or movements that resist the current institutions or are in the process of changing them somehow. Societies are always in flux, always growing in response to the actions and affects of individuals.

For example: Continuing to fashion a European Medieval setting, we could characterize three social dynamics present in the Middle Ages.

⚙️ Scholasticism

Near the end of the 12th century, institutions of learning started to take shape semi-autonomously from the Church. We might use this broad social movement to encompass several related trends: The pursuit of academic knowledge, the introduction of science from the Middle East and Muslim Spain, and new forms of living such as monasticism and urbanization.

⚙️ Encroaching World

Related to the first dynamic, the world outside was invading in several ways. Vikings moving south and west, riders from the Eurasian Steppe pushing Germanic tribes onward, the Crusades establishing contact between Europe and the Near East, and trade routes connecting lands as far off as China.

⚙️ Plague

Several material changes throughout the centuries made possible the spread of plague and disease. Urbanization and the introduction of new peoples dramatically changed how people lived and put new pressures on the human bodies involved.

INFLUENTIAL FIGURES

While most individuals have limited sway over the course of history, leaders can influence large groups of people who then change history together. When designing your campaign, imagine three specific roles or positions that have a great amount of power and influence over the masses. If you want a personal touch, add the names and personalities of the individuals holding those roles.

HISTORY

Without history, your world will have no lore, myths, or social trajectory. Creating a rich and detailed history is often one of the most fulfilling parts of designing a campaign setting.

PREVIOUS PEOPLES

Keep in mind that no civilization springs up from nowhere nor inhabits a land without previous occupants. When writing the history of your campaign setting, list at least three previous peoples who have effects on the current world. These might be ancestor cultures or conquered civilizations, but in either case they add context.

The key is to create “others” or “outsiders” who do not represent current, playable cultures in the campaign world. You want the campaign setting to have an outside or other—what it is *not*—that helps define what it is.

WARS & CONSEQUENCES

When inventing the previous peoples, you will most likely need to create the crucial moments of flux that led to their demise and marked the advent of the current world order. Here you design the wars, plagues, natural disasters, and assimilations that occurred between one culture and another. You will need to design at least three such conflicts.

*For example: In his **Waning Moon** setting, Chang describes how the Dreaming came about after a civil war among the Fey. He creates a complex web of political maneuvering that built up to the conflict and how things transpired. While this war happened over one hundred years ago, the details Chang creates will have ripples that result in texture and plot hooks in the current setting.*

Or: If your campaign setting is a relatively recognizable version of the modern world, it will require little creative work. Simply include actual world history in your setting.

GEOGRAPHY

Decide on the basic geography of your world, whether that encompasses one sprawling metropolis of districts and parks or an entire continent of kingdoms and territories. Add as much topographical detail as you like, but even just a brief sketch of directions and relationships in space can be enough. Playing in a sandbox can be fun, but having a general map to help organize what lies where will almost always prove invaluable.

CRASHING BUILDING

The building shakes from the foundations. It feels as though everything is about to come crashing down...

◆ Moments from Ruin

CRUMBLING: Each turn, the Obstacle rolls a Move @3 to crumble further for DT+

SHAKING (OP2): The Obstacle creates a "Shaking Walls" Condition that disrupts any detailed, careful, or deliberate task

Quaking (OP4): At 4DT, the building is losing bits of concrete and mortar. Once per round, each character must roll @5 or suffer [2]

Dropping (OP6): At 6DT, the building collapses, dealing [6] to anyone caught nearby



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CLIMATE & TOPOGRAPHY

If you have a map in place, you can mark the forests, hills, mountains, lakes, and marshes now. Decide on a rhythm of the seasons to establish basic natural patterns. This will help the Judge settle on weather conditions and provide realistic changes in the environments as heroes travel.

For example: Wamae builds four seasons into his **MÁZAKI** setting and establishes a rainy season that bridges spring and summer. After marking important topographical regions on the map, he also decides on patterns to determine the frequency of dust storms beneath the Roaming Mountains, the harvest months in various regions, when certain rivers dry up, and which areas receive snow in winter.

NATIONS, AREAS, & DISTRICTS

Separate the map into areas that share certain features or inhabitants. These can be political or demographic areas, whatever best suits your setting. Having different regions in play will provide a feeling of diversity and heterogeneity to your world.

If your setting is a single, sprawling metropolis, you could divide the city into districts. Mark out where the commercial centers are, where the wealthy live, and/or where parks are located. Point out government buildings, hotels, restaurants, or anything your players will find useful.

For example: The **BLOODSBANE** setting has three major kingdoms and certain principalities of the Covenant, and the **MÁZAKI** setting includes three civilizations on the brink of war.

MAJOR CITIES OR SETTLEMENTS

Moving down the list, you can add major cities and other settlements onto the map. Of course we recommend having at least three metropolises in play. Most maps end up with dozens more such settlements.

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

Do not be afraid to load up your world with plenty of points of interest that may not be cities or settlements. Add major battlefields, caverns, historical monuments, resource mines, bridges, abandoned ruins, and oracles.

For example: Heidi omits individual planets from most of her map but marks those features necessary to the campaign: The major Shabuya-run wormhole, three Tassak space stations, and the only known asteroid belt dense enough to impede travel.

Or: Chang maps out the entire township of Norwich, Maine, adding his own elements to the setting material at the back of this corebook. He designs the basic layout of the streets and adds major points of interest: A lighthouse, an old sawmill, an abandoned church, the houses of key figures, the Academy buildings, and potential locations of the Hellgate.

Or: Dieter marks the location of the Heavenview Tower ruins on his map of the Three Kingdoms. While nobody lives in the area, the ruins are an important part of navigating the wastelands and tracing the old river bed from city to city.

EVERYDAY LIFE

While political institutions and distant wars can seem beyond the scope of day-to-day life, institutions cannot exist without material, tangible infrastructures that impact daily living; and wars leave physical marks on a landscape along with historical scars that cannot hide from common populations.

Beyond the bigger moments, getting a handle on everyday life is key to providing a consistent world for the players. Villages, cities, and planets can vary as much as you like, but players should be able to tell what differences are part of the setting itself.

ECONOMICS

The economic system of a society has an impact on the cultural life of that society that cannot be overestimated. When designing a world, be sure to fashion a realistic economic system. The structures of capitalism in the global North are so pervasive that even imagining other ways of life becomes hard; even the best examples of fantasy and science-fiction literature from the United States contain mostly capitalist societies hardly hidden by loin-cloths and space-suits.

Try to explain how people gain currency, how currency is invested, and where currency is spent.

FOOD & SUBSISTENCE

In addition to large-scale economic infrastructures, make sure you have a solid grasp on how the people in your campaign setting obtain food, clothing, and shelter. Do most homes have individual farms? Do people shop in super-markets? Is food replicated out of thin air in special technological devices?

Having a handle on how biological needs are met for the masses in your campaign world allows you to communicate real drama and change to your players. Once they become accustomed to the traditions and habits of the world, you can hint at wealth, style, poverty, disease, and even the season of the year with simple turns of phrase.

For example: Dieter spends a good deal of time describing how impoverished survivors grow food and protect their farms from roving bands and hungry nobles. He makes food one of the central concerns of all NPCs the party encounters. By having the details in place ahead of time, Dieter is able to role-play consistently from the beginning of the campaign.

Weeks later, when the players encounter a village eating watermelons, strawberries, fresh meats, and seasoned stews; the heroes know something is up. Where is all the food coming from? The delight is in the details.

ART & RELIGIOUS LIFE

The human response to its environment takes several forms. When designing and populating your world, think of how different cultures and groups respond to their experience of nature and the divine. Aesthetic values and ontological beliefs have a great impact on daily life, from clothing and music styles to the construction of calendars, holidays, and ritual cycles.

Religious differences are also some of the most fundamental differences among people groups because of the depth of religious ritual and ontology. How humans come to understand the natural world—what beings exist, how they are related, what makes up the soul, what happens after death, who is fit to rule, what gender means—is key to how they understand themselves.

MAGIC & TECHNOLOGY

Supernatural Powers, High Technology, Magic & Mutations, Arcane Machines

First, you must decide the level of technology in your world. Remember, the development of new technologies does not constitute a linear progression from cave paintings to warp drives. Technology is the product of what people desire and how effectively they meet those ends. Next, you decide how magic is present and how—or if—it is different from technology.

Most heroic role-playing games will incorporate special powers or abilities of some kind. If not magic, some supernatural or uncanny ability will typically find its way into your setting.

It is important to remember that magic and technology should not just be in the world but rather active parts of the world. When creating a new setting, you must consider the historical, social, and ideological consequences of magic and technology in your cultures and worlds.

ACCESS TO POWER

Whether your game features the tropes of historical fantasy, science-fiction, contemporary espionage, or anything in between; you will need to consider how everyday folks view and utilize magic and technology.

Your cities may be filled with flying cars, sentient machines, and powerful lasers, but who has access to those things? Does it take money alone, or are there other social structures that allow or prohibit certain technologies for certain people?

If your world contains divine protectors, enchanted weapons, and arcane spellcraft, who can benefit from them? Is magic the fruit of intense study and practice, or is it the natural gift of a chosen few?

Whatever you decide, remember that magic and technology are tools. When you choose who has access to them, you not only decide who can use them but also why they are used, to what ends they have been developed, and which agendas they serve.

TECHNOLOGY VS. MAGIC

A common practice in the fantasy literature of Europe and North America is to set magic and technology in opposition. It is assumed that magic is somehow natural and earthy, while technology is mechanical and lofty. In other literary cultures, those of Japan and Central America for instance, magic and technology are not viewed as opposites.

You can situate the roles of magic and technology however you like, but make sure to explain how they both work. The more details and information in place, the more consistent and alive your world becomes.

*For example: The **MÁZAKI** setting includes a semi-magical substance called Flight Jade that allows for levitation. The stone glows green and functions as an analog of both oil and nuclear power. Those frequently exposed to the stone become “jaded,” poisoned by the magics that once lay deep beneath the earth. It is magic and technology in one.*

WEALTH ATTRACTS WEALTH

However you incorporate magic and technology into your game world, keep in mind that power attracts power. Those with access to capital and political power will likely be those with the best access to both cutting edge technology and powerful magics.

Even if you decide that magic and technology will be arranged as opposites, there will likely be a way that those with political authority can gain access to both modes of power. What upper class or ruling elite would not have access to one form of power when they have so much of another form, ready for exchange?

SHARED DEVELOPMENT

When planning your campaign setting, make sure to think about how magic and technology shape the development of one another. Where magic and technology both exist as tools to solve problems, either tool will often do. In other words, if one

tradition is used to solve a particular problem, then there is no reason to develop the other tradition towards the same end.

For example: The Andhuran peoples of **MÁZAKI** possess all technological knowledge necessary to develop mechanical flight, but because they have already achieved the power through magical flight jade, they have no incentive to develop another solution to an already solved problem.

GRADED ASSETS

Consider setting up a system for classifying or “grading” the common Obstacles in your campaign Deck with Assets. You can organize these classes or grades along any axis: Technologies, magics, nation, age, level of experience, etc. Then use the classifying Assets to adjust recurring Tiles from your Deck on the fly. Such Assets would likely be invincible, seen more as augments than additions.

For example: Heidi constructs a handful of alternate grades of Tassak armament for her **GAMMA CENTAURI** setting. Each Asset turns whatever Tile hosts it into a more specialized kind of soldier or unit:

MELEE GRADE: Add this Asset to any Tile to convert it into a more powerful close-combat unit. **Traits:** No Quarter, A Cut Above. **Powers:** Heavy, Dual Wield, Sentry.

SHOCK GRADE: Use this Asset to convert any Tile into a heavier, assault-focused version of itself.

Traits: Shock & Awe, The Surge. **Powers:** Aim, Dynamo, Charged.

Or: Magic in the **MÁZAKI** setting draws from the circle of seven elements. Wamae can turn any creature into a magical version of itself by adding an elemental Asset. The Asset augments the Host Tile, imbuing it with magical energies related to that particular element. Each element is tied to one particular Status Effect and certain kinds of Powers:

EARTH MAGIC: This Asset imbues its Host with the elemental energy of Earth. The Host’s skin toughens, with a rocky appearance. **Trait:** Hard as Stone. **Powers:** Curse (sets Blind), Quake.

FIRE MAGIC: This Asset imbues its Host with the elemental energy of Fire. The Host runs hot, eyes glowing red and skin orange. **Trait:** Too Hot to Handle. **Powers:** Curse (sets Burn), Flaming (see Spines).

CRYSTAL MAGIC: This Asset imbues its Host with the elemental energy of Crystal. The Host has crystalline protrusions on its skin. **Trait:** Crystal Clear. **Powers:** Curse (sets Daze), Flurry.

METAL MAGIC: This Asset imbues its Host with the elemental energy of Metal. The Host is shiny, with metallic hair, teeth, and nails. **Trait:** Strong as Iron. **Powers:** Curse (sets Stun), Charge.



In a way, augmenting Tiles with graded Assets parallels the “color swap” popular in many role-playing video games: You represent the difficulty or some other quality of a new enemy by rendering it as a modified version of a familiar enemy.

THE CAST OF HEROES

Ontological & Existential Purpose, What Makes Them Powerful, Who Are We?

In almost every case, the heroes of your game will be markedly different from regular folks. This difference could be as superficial as attitude or as deep as DNA. You need to decide how your cast of heroes fits into the world of the campaign setting.

WHO ARE WE?

When designing a campaign world, the Judge will need to consider how the Player-Characters fit into their cultures and societies. Are they just like everybody else aside from a desire to adventure? Are all characters aliens on a new earth? Do they have special powers or share a common ancestor? Think of your favorite myths and stories. How were the heroes in those tales different from everyone else? Was there some special property or power that made them unique?

For example: Everyone's favorite 1990s vampire hunter was a special kind of being known as "the slayer." She had special abilities that came from a

very unique source. The other folks in her group of vampire hunters were just normal kids (for the most part).

Or: Maybe the Player-Characters are all members of an elite organization, their common bond being nothing more than a shared employer.

Are all the heroes touched by the Fey? Descendants of the Greek gods? Do they share a genetic mutation? Were they born at the same special moment when the suns aligned? It is up to you and your setting.

PURPOSE

In addition to ontological concerns and questions of what your heroes are, you need to ask yourself why the heroes exist. What greater purpose, if any, separates the heroes from the masses?

For example: In classic fantasy role-playing games, the Player-Characters adventure for fortune and glory

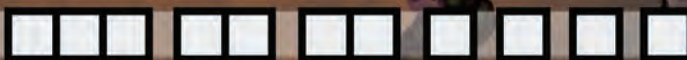
PRINCE HAKKUNEN

An Emishi prince, HAKKUNEN was sent to Iron City as part of a delegation to demand the halt of Guanxi mining operations in the hills near his home village. He carries heirloom blades of the Hori Tribe, which he wields with rash abandon.

- ◆ SOUND AND THE FURIOUS
- ◆ ◆ MEASURE ONCE, CUT TWICE

TWIN BLADES: HAKKUNEN can attack two Obstacles in a single roll, "doubling down" on his damage

HONORARY TITLE: HAKKUNEN begins the campaign with a Trait worth two dice when rolling attack or defense



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alone. The only purpose is a thirst for excitement and reward, and what makes the adventurers different from the masses are their powerful combat abilities.

Or: Superhero settings often differentiate between “heroes” and “villains,” with the heroes committed to defending order and the innocent. Heroes are different from regular people because of their mutant or alien abilities, and their purpose is to champion truth and justice.

Or: In a Gothic Western campaign setting, the Judge may decree that every Player-Character is a slightly undead veteran of some sort. Whether doctor, gunslinger, speculator, or proprietor, the hero was once a soldier in the American Civil War and suffered a strange cosmic phenomenon during one particular battle. Years later, when the veteran suffers what would be a violent death, she does not actually die but awakens as some kind of ghoul. These heroes, empowered by the unholy forces they were exposed to on the battlefield, now live as targets of other undead forces, magnets for the supernatural and strange. Immortal, they roam the West knowing in their hearts that at the end... There can be only one.

Will your Player-Characters have a specific purpose attached to their powers? What motivates them to adventure and seek out danger? Keep in mind that you can always talk with your friends and fellow gamers about what they like, why they play, and whom they want to role-play.

AWARENESS

Once you have the nature of the heroes set in your world, you need to decide how much characters within the campaign world know about these truths.

For example: Do the heroes of classic fantasy role-playing feel any different from the masses? Do they know they have magic abilities most others do not possess?

Or: Are the superheroes a secret, or do they grace the pages of newspapers and magazines all over the world? You will need to decide how they fit into the social systems as well. Do they have corporate sponsors? Does the government hire them as agents

or assassins? Maybe the heroes are all powered by uranium and require wealthy backers to maintain their supply. In a realistic world, superheroes would be targeted by just about every terrorist group out there. Consider how lottery winners are inundated with requests for charity: Would the life of a superhero offer any respite from the masses?

Or: Do the townsfolk and marshals of the Wild West know about these quasi-undead gunslingers who roam the territories fleeing the forces of Hell? Maybe only a secret order of priests are aware of the veterans’ plight. Or maybe only one particular cult or tribe, the ones who caused the cosmic phenomenon, know the truth. Is the mystery of the heroes’ condition a central part of the campaign?

Part of this answer is how much the heroes know or feel, and part is how much the regular population is aware of these special, supernatural adventurers.

HOW WILL IT FIT?

Once you have the what and the why of the heroes matched with the who knows, you can start worrying about how the **FANTAJI** system will handle your creative decisions.

You have to ask yourself whether these special heroes will fit into the default Niche and Power charts. The default engine can handle just about any setting, but you may come up with a little twist or kick that demands some adjustments.

For example: The group devising the superhero setting feels that the default Powers will work just fine as mutant abilities, but they want to rewrite the Niche charts to constitute a kind of “origin story” for each hero.

Or: The Gothic Western setting can utilize the default engine as well, but the Judge wants to include some way of tracking how unholy each hero becomes.

And now you’re thinking all the right things to jump into the next chapters of the book. Be careful, gamer, once you’re this far asea there be dragons!



CHAPTER 7: CUSTOM NICHE & POWERS

Everything works great right out of the box, but the best part of having such a powerful engine under your hood is the opportunity to customize parts of it! **FANTAJI** offers several places where small tweaks can yield big results. Find out what works for you.

SUMMARY

Making Sense of Character Creation, Covering The Process From Start to Finish

When designing a game world yourself, you may need to customize the generic Niche charts provided on page 144. This may involve a simple re-titling of the entries on each chart to fit the genre better, or you may need a quirky overhaul to adequately capture the specific cultures and political structures available in your game.

Likewise, the generic Powers may need some touching up also. Each setting will want its own particular ontology represented in the Powers of the game. Does your game have magic? Technology? Mutants? The feel and flavor of the Powers will reflect the world you are creating.

The following pages are crazy, and you will see the Niche and Power charts bloom under the heavy

rains of possibility. Only proceed after you are familiar with the default rules and default charts from the first half of this book. The system runs smoothly right out of the box so only customize what you need as your campaign demands it.

When you do eventually venture forth into this and later chapters of the book, make sure you adopt one piece at a time. While the true “mods” are not introduced until Chapter 8, the customizing of your **FANTAJI** game begins here.

Take a tour of the following pages before you commit to one idea or another. When you feel you are ready to customize, begin to write out your own charts and seek ideas from your players. Forging a new world takes communication and time.

TANGLING WHIP

◆ ◆ NOTHING LESS THAN A RATS NEST

WHAT A MESS: THE POWERFUL ASSET BEGINS AT 4DT AND SETS THE SNARE, DAZE, AND NUMB STATUS EFFECTS ON ANY HERO IN THE SCENE CURRENTLY AT 0DT

(ABSTRACT)

CUSTOM NICHE

Factions & Parties, Social Organization, Classes & Races

While each of the aspects we include on the universal Niche charts in Chapter 3 could work in any number of genres and campaign settings, feel free to modify or replace an aspect as needed. You can outfit your game with entirely unique charts designed to situate your heroes within specific forms of government, popular social organizations, religious hostilities, or evolutionary chains.

CUSTOM ASPECTS

You may need to modify the charts found on page 58 for style and flavor, tailoring the particular titles to fit your setting. Beyond purely cosmetic alterations, you can add or replace Niche aspects to emphasize important factions and political institutions within your new setting.

*For example: If your group decides to role-play students instead of teachers in the **WANING MOON** setting, you might want to organize them according to a popular classification among the students: Favorite subject.*

*Or: Those playing in the **BLOODSBANE** setting may want to include the hero's particular religious beliefs into her Niche. This means that players cannot avoid taking sides in the ongoing religious unrest of the setting.*

OTHER EFFECTS

Your group may want to give the Niche of each hero more weight than a simple cultural affiliation. One of the best ways to add mechanical or quantitative implications to a Niche is by connecting each aspect to another mechanical component of your Player-Characters.

For example: If your group is hoping to play inside a colorful “high fantasy” campaign setting, you may find the following suggested aspects helpful:

Race

The common species popular in a variety of high-fantasy settings could be used to raise or lower the

cost of attaining certain Powers. These bonuses might seem small, but they produce quite the boost early in a campaign.

For example: Gnomes can gain a new Familiar ability for two fewer Themes than normal. This means that after only a single Scene, a freshman hero could potentially gain an awesome new ally.

Class

A character's Class represents her genre or mode. High fantasy settings often include traditional character Classes based on those of seminal role-playing games from the 1970s and '80s.

The sample Classes on the following page link the hero's Niche to her starting Powers. After setting your hero's Class, you do not need to roll for “types” and will roll for the specific Powers only.

SYNERGY

If you are attaching effects to your heroes' aspects, make sure the results intersect realistically.

For example: In the high fantasy example above, a Gnome-Fighter would start with two Combat Skills but have a penalty to purchasing them later. Does that make sense? We think so! The Gnome specializes in two weapons early in life and has less interest in diversifying her fighting style later.

PARTY COHESION

Keep in mind that your players will be rolling randomly on these charts to create a group of characters that will travel and/or work together as a team. Do your custom Niche aspects represent animosities that are impossible to overcome?

For a way to bring other skills into the Niche aspects, see the **GAMMA CENTAURI** setting on page 192. New charts are designed to suit the needs of a pulp, horror, science-fiction setting.

FAVORITE SUBJECT AT NORWICH ACADEMY

- 1- ART
- 2- MUSIC (BAND, CHOIR)
- 3- HARD SCIENCE (PHYSICS, BIO, CHEM)
- 4- FOREIGN LANGUAGE
- 5- MATH
- 6- HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY
- 7- LITERATURE
- 8- PHYSICAL EDUCATION (GYM, SPORTS)
- 9- CIVICS & GOVERNMENT
- 0- ANTHROPOLOGY

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND SYMPATHIES

- 1- COVENANT LOYAL, HATEFUL OF HOST
- 2- COVENANT LOYAL, TOLERANT OF HOST
- 3- HOST LOYAL, HATEFUL OF COVENANT
- 4- HOST LOYAL, TOLERANT OF COVENANT
- 5- COVENANT FAMILY, UNSURE YOURSELF
- 6- HOST FAMILY, UNSURE YOURSELF
- 7- RECENT CONVERT TO EITHER
- 8- OTHER RELIGION, OPEN-MINDED
- 9- OTHER RELIGION, ZEALOT
- 0- ATHEIST OR LONE HERETIC

TRADITIONAL FANTASY RACES

- 1: HUMAN No bonus or penalty
- 2: ELF -2 Themes per Ability, +2 Themes per Training
- 3: DWARF -2 Themes per Asset, +2 Themes per Ability
- 4: HALFLING -2 Themes per Training, +2 Themes per Familiar
- 5: ORK -2 Themes per Combat Skill, +2 Themes Ability
- 6: HALF-ELF -1 Theme per Ability, +1 Theme per Training
- 7: HALF-DWARF -1 Theme per Asset, +1 Theme per Ability
- 8: HALF-ORK -1 Theme per Combat Skill, +1 Theme per Ability
- 9: GNOME -2 Themes per Familiar, +2 Themes per Combat Skill
- 0: DARK ELF -2 Themes per Ability, +2 Themes per Asset

TRADITIONAL FANTASY CLASSES

- 1: FIGHTER Two Combat Skills
- 2: WIZARD Two Abilities
- 3: ROGUE Two Training Skills
- 4: CLERIC One Training Skill, One Ability
- 5: PALADIN One Combat Skill, One Ability
- 6: BARBARIAN One Asset, One Combat Skill
- 7: MONK One Asset, One Training
- 8: RANGER One Combat Skill, One Familiar
- 9: ENCHANTER One Ability, One Familiar
- 0: SHAMAN One Training Skill, One Familiar

CUSTOM POWERS

Rearranging The Powers, New Abilities, Smaller Charts, More Options

The Powers charts can be tweaked and customized just as the Niche charts from the previous section. Feel free to rename and redefine Powers to better fit your group's style and to suit the needs of your setting. In most cases, each of the default Powers is related to a generic effect that could be said to represent magic, technology, mutant powers, or divine ability; but if you feel those effects are too limiting, let the modifications begin!

OTHER BASIC POWERS

There are a few useful Powers we left off the charts from pages 64–65 that work well for Obstacles or for heroes in other settings. The following ideas demonstrate how you can build your own Power with just a little tweaking, planning, and creativity:

Big

This is basically an alternate name for Dual Wield, giving Obstacles and Player-Characters the ability to Challenge two targets at once. You can use this as a generic and commonplace Power on several kinds of monsters or machines, even those without two weapons.

Trigger

This incredibly versatile Power gives the Obstacle or Player-Character the ability to gain DT+ whenever a particular narrative event occurs.

For example: Dieter creates a Mana Drain Power that gives the Obstacle or Player-Character DT+ at the end of any round in which magic was used.

See page 93 for a longer discussion of how Drama Triggers work in play, and study the mod on page 168 to learn how Dieter uses magic in a very unique way in his **BLOODSBANE** campaign setting.

Bless

This Power is basically the reverse of Curse. Use two Drama Tokens to remove any Status Effect early. We did not include this in the default game because we felt it too easily counter-acted the important strategy of deploying Status Effects.

CHOOSING POWERS

Part of customizing your campaign may entail changing how Powers are determined or earned as much as creating new Powers.

Or: When Chang's players roll their first Power, it sets what kind of Fey they are. He then has them choose a second Power that complements the first.

The previous section also offered a great way to change how Powers are set by customizing your Niche aspects with linked abilities.

SHARING POWERS

Maybe every member of your party shares a common Power that reflects a particular flavor of the setting or the specific origin story of your heroes.

For example: If your party is a band of teenage alien karate frogs, you might have each hero begin with Parry to represent their martial arts training. Several heroes with Parry would steal big Drama from powerful enemies attacking the group.

Sharing Powers with your teammates may sound boring, but the synergy can have staggering affects on your enemies.

REORGANIZING POWERS

You can use the default Power effects as a base and completely overhaul the organization of the charts to better suit the abilities to your campaign.

*For example: The full version of the **MÁZAKI** setting includes ten classifications of Powers, each with five standard Powers and two Master Powers. The Master Powers can be chosen when heroes roll up a Power they already have within a certain class. See the chart opposite for one such class.*

Or: You could arrange the classes of Powers into lists that collect all of the technological Powers on one chart, magic on another, mutations on another, etc.

STIGMAS

1-2. JINX	Any Condition Forced by hero yields 2DT–
3-4. ADDICTION	Self-Inflict 1[2]: Generate 3DT+ (Auto)
5-6. SPECTRAL	Immaterial until 2DT. Can only use [1], immune to matter
7-8. UNCLEAN	When Bloodied: Set Preset Status Effect on all targets
9-0. JADED	Suffer 1[2] or 1[3] on a turn: Deal [1] to opponent

Master Powers

UNDEAD	Fuse all [1] into [2], [3]. Stressed. <i>Undead Trait</i> (2◇)
POSSESSED	When Stressed: Gain two Traits, no longer “ally” of party

GENERIC ASSETS AS POWERS

While the Assets listed on the default charts grant unique Powers to your heroes, a few can be recognized as related to other Powers listed.

For example: Blade has a similar effect as Heavy, though one requires building up an Overpower on an Asset Tile and the other entails a simple DT cost.

Likewise, you can create generic Assets for your campaign setting that act to augment different enemies from situation to situation without needing to design new Powers from scratch:

⚙️ **Titanic**

We use this Asset as a generic feature of ancient evils that lurk in the deep places of the world. This Asset always offers the Trait *Older Than The Gods* and grants the host Tile two Powers: Big, Crush (see Aim). Add this to any other Obstacle to make a titanic version of that beast or enemy.

⚙️ **Sacred Ink**

We developed this generic Asset during the Kickstarter campaign for the game. You may notice a few Tiles available on our website that share the “Painted” modifier: The PAINTED ASSASSIN, PAINTED MINOTAUR, and PAINTED GIANT. While these Tiles already record the benefits of such an Asset, a separate Tile could add the same Powers to any ritually tattooed or painted enemy.

SACRED INK: *Mark of The Holy.* **Asset:** Spite. The Asset is invincible unless an objective is created and then defeated that would counteract it.

For example: Players may create their own Obstacles aimed towards marring any such tattoos or painted symbols:

SCRATCH OUT THE GIANT’S TATTOO: *Moving Target.*
Called Shot: Any [1] Blocks dealt while rolling against this Tile are useless. 2[2].

ADD LEVELS TO POWERS

The default charts include balanced Powers that are even and complementary. Each Power has its own effect and relies on no others to work, but certain Powers can work very well together to engender compounding effects.

If you want individual Powers to grow or improve themselves, you may build levels or stages into your Powers in either of these two ways:

⚙️ **Power Grades**

You can create different levels of the same Power by increasing its effect the more times it is purchased or upgraded. When initially rolling Powers, consider landing on any level of a listed Power to represent the first step.

For example: Whether the starting player rolls 5, 6, or 7 on the “Necromancy & Blood Magic” chart that follows, she will gain the basic Lich power.

If you roll Powers randomly, any later roll that duplicates a Power offers its next level.

For example: Later in the campaign, a player with Lich II rolls a 5 on the “Necromancy & Blood Magic”

chart. This automatically gives the hero Lich III. You would need to roll a 5, 6, or 7 three times to gain the highest form of Lich.

⚙️ Add Levels to Classes

You could also build Powers that are more advanced but not directly related to specific earlier Powers.

For example: In the “Stigma” chart above, the Undead and Possessed Powers can be gained only if a player rolls the same earlier Power twice. For instance, if Anthony already has Unclean and rolls it

a second time, then he can choose between Undead or Possessed to take as his Master Power.

CONTEXTUAL MILESTONES

Creating contextual Powers that address specific plot points in your narrative is a tricky business but has big rewards. When heroes need new skills or abilities to unlock the next step in the story, you might require them to purchase the contextual Power in an upcoming Milestone.

For example: The party of adventurers has suffered time and again when falling prey to a hypnotic siren song far out on the dark seas. It is a tough overarching Obstacle to beat, and the players eventually decide to quest for some kind of immunity.

The Judge lets them know that they can purchase “Resist Siren” as a Power on their next Milestone.

Earning contextual Powers still requires reaching a Milestone. Any Power that is gained outside the standard Milestone arc is considered a “Boon” and therefore a mod. See page 156 for more.

FULLY CUSTOM POWERS

Feel free to create any Powers you want to fit in your **FANTAJI** game. To tell you the truth, we come up with new Powers all the time, though most of these new ideas are tailored to one specific setting or another. You can add whatever you need to the game to make it suit your players’ gaming needs.

For example: You can build an effective new Training or Ability Power that deals damage while healing yourself: *Savagery* lets you heal [1] whenever you deal [2] or [3] to an enemy.

Or: If you want to play with fire, you can introduce the *En Fuego* Power to your game. All the hero needs to do is set a “Hero Nearby Target” Condition. Whenever the Condition is in play, the target suffers a Burn Status Effect. It is like Aim but tighter.

Or: The *Sonic Boom* Conditions riffs off Heavy and Blade. When you set a “Sonic Boom” Condition on the table, you can turn any [2] dealt in combat into a [3]. This does not stack, but it is still a killer ability.



NECROMANCY & BLOOD MAGIC

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. UNDEATH | Self-Inflict 1[2]: On target's death: Summon ALLY |
| 2. UNDEATH II | Self-Inflict 1[3]: On target's death: Summon SPAWN |
| 3. RAISE DEAD | Self-Inflict [1] (Stck): Cast on corpse, raise MINION |
| 4. RAISE DEAD II | Self-Inflict 1[2] (Stck): Cast on corpse, raise FOLLOWER |
| 5. LICH | Gain <i>The ____ Undead</i> Trait (2◇) (fill blank with participle) |
| 6. LICH II | Fuse all [1] into [2], [3]; ignore any remaining [1] |
| 7. LICH III | Roll on "Nature" Chart (page 169), only such items harm |
| 8. DRAIN AURA | Deal 1[2]: Steal Theme. Any foe without Themes -> SPAWN |
| 9. RAISE ARMY | Self-Inflict 1[2]: Raise 1 ghoul per DT (see QUICK SPIRIT) |
| 0. ENGAGE DEAD | 2DT: May ask one "Yes" or "No" question of corpse |

SAMPLE CONTEXTUAL POWERS

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| CALL BAHAMUT | Summon specific celestial being needed for plot arc |
| READ LATIN | Study new language |
| NAVIGATE SHIP | Able to make sailing and navigating Checks |
| TRACK WEREWOLF | Able to make tracking and detection Checks |
| RESIST SIREN | Capable of rolling defense against SIREN songs |
| ASTRAL PROJECT | Can move as immaterial being, only using [1]s on turns |
| ORACLE SIGHT | 4DT: May ask one "Yes" or "No" question of Judge |
| TAME BEAST | Choose single Family of beast to tame and talk with |
| PROGRAMMING | Able to make programming and hacking roles |
| GRAFT ORGAN | Assimilate Asset Tile into Character Tile |

SAMPLE FULLY CUSTOM POWERS

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| SAVAGERY | Deal 1[2] or 1[3]: Heal yourself [1] (Stck) |
| LIVING BLOOD | Suffer 1[2] or 1[3]: Summon QUICK SPIRIT |
| HEROISM | Suffer 1[3]: Grant 2DT+ to all allies |
| EN FUEGO | Anyone caught by "Nearby Hero" Condition suffers Burn |
| ROAR | Check @5: Sap DT- from all enemies |
| WINDWAKER | OP3: Create "Spirals of Wind" Condition around hero |
| SONIC BOOM | When "Sonic Boom" Condition in play, any [2] dealt -> [3] |
| "SKADOOKEN" | Scream this word when attacking to gain DT+ on failure |
| PRINCESS HEAL | Can heal with DT in Scenes at 1DT:[1] ratio |
| 1.5-INCH PUNCH | Deal smallest Wound to opponent on any Challenge win |



CHAPTER 8: NEUTRAL MODS

This is more than customizing your game to reflect the campaign setting. Adding “mods” to your **FANTAJI** game will move your tabletop game beyond the core system. Each mod is like a new moving part in the engine. More fun, but more complexity.

SUMMARY

The First Mods For FANTAJI, Changing Things Up, Expanding Core Rules

FANTAJI is a tight and concise system that has been tried and tested for over two years. The core rules explained in **SECTION I** and the expert strategies that optimize those rules from **SECTIONS II** and **III** make for a totally unique gaming experience that can satisfy veteran role-players without alienating rookies. Beyond the safety of those sections, we offer you an assortment of “mods” that change things up just a bit and stretch **FANTAJI** in new directions.

Each of the mods presented in this chapter could have made it into the default engine, but we felt the purity and simplicity of the default rules would do well standing alone. You have already seen how customizing Niche aspects and Powers can have a dramatic affect on the game, and the following

pages will take that customization up a notch. We cover three basic mods in this chapter, but each campaign setting includes two or three of their own, granting a total of 11 mods in this book.

The Milestone Arc mod lets you build arcs into your character’s personal story. Instead of choosing new, random Milestones at each step along the way, you decide on a set path that draws your hero on an adventurous arc of one kind or another.

Power Clashing and Boons are both small mechanical mods. The former lets you generate Drama more quickly when rolling better than an opponent. The latter lets you redeem Themes for benefits outside the Milestone system. Both are small tweaks that result in large impacts.

CLOCKWORK ASSET

◆ LIKE CLOCKWORK

ASSET: THIS TILE CAN BE USED TO TURN ANY OTHER OBSTACLE INTO A “CLOCKWORK” VERSION OF THAT PARTICULAR BEAST, VILLAIN, OR ITEM (INVINCIBLE)

TICK TOCK: CAN MAKE THREE CHECKS IN A ROUND IF THE OBSTACLE DOES NOT MAKE A CHALLENGE

WOUND UP: SEE FLURRY

MOD 01: PERSONAL MILESTONE ARCS

Predetermined Individual Heroic Trajectories, Unique Sagas, Plot Archetypes

Some players may want a more structured path of advancement for their heroes. In such cases, personal Milestone arcs come in handy. Use this mod to expand the default Milestone rules with these ten popular arcs, each a trope from fiction. Instead of choosing a new Milestone at random after each “upgrade,” your players will roll a specific trajectory from the beginning that guides what comes next in their personal development.

HERO CREATION STEP 5

This mod replaces the fifth step in our default Character Creation process from page 68. Instead of choosing an initial Milestone, you set an arc.

THREE PARTS TO EACH

Your personal arc will unfold in three acts, and the specific tenor of those acts will vary from trope to trope. The default Character Tile has room for each hero to follow two such arcs.

The cost for each reward in your **Personal Milestone Arc** will override those listed on the default Character Tile. Begin at 9 Themes, whatever the reward, and increase by squaring: 9, 16, 25, 36, 49, 64.

Your new Traits may follow the tenor of the specific act and arc, rather than the tone of the Themes as you earned them.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

The personal arcs come in ten basic forms. Roll on the chart during Character Creation to set your initial trajectory, and then after you complete the three Milestones roll your next personal journey.

1. REVENGE SAGA

This personal arc follows a course of bitter hatred and revenge. Your hero will suffer some great loss at her origin and slowly work to seek vengeance.

Power (Combat)

The first narrative Milestone will represent your hero equipping herself for the quest, finding the power necessary to overcome her adversary.

Trait

This Milestone is met when you first confront your adversary, making your existence and your quest for vengeance known to the one who wronged you. The Trait marks how the rival views you now.

Trait

The final Milestone to reach is your ultimate execution of vengeance. This Trait represents the person you become after revenge. What remains?

2. COMING OF AGE

Your hero is young in body, or maybe new to a particular culture. Either way, she must adapt and grow. This personal Milestone arc traces such a process of maturation and adjustment.

Trait

The first Milestone in the process of growth is reached when the hero gains a reputation among the new group. This Trait marks the new identity that is being developed.

Health

The second Milestone finds the hero reaching a setback or breaking a taboo. She gains endurance by bearing the punishment and clearing her name.

Power

The third Milestone of the arc should mark the ultimate acceptance of the hero as a full adult or member of the new culture. The exact Milestone (rite, feat, etc.) can be set by the cultural context.

3. RAGS TO RICHES

A straightforward rise from obscure poverty to the life of fortune and glory.

Health

The first Milestone is life support, when your hero establishes the means to become healthy and safe.

STEP 5: ROLL PERSONAL MILESTONE ARC

ARCHETYPE

NEXT THREE MILESTONE REWARDS

1: REVENGE SAGA	Power (Combat)	Trait	Trait
2: COMING OF AGE	Trait	Health	Power
3: RAGS TO RICHES	Health	Power	Trait
4: ROCK BOTTOM	Power (Familiar)	Health	Trait
5: ROMANCE	Trait	Power (Familiar)	Trait
6: VOYAGE	Power	Power (Asset)	Trait
7: REBIRTH	Power (Ability)	Trait	Power (Combat)
8: FORGE LEGACY	Trait	Trait	Power (Training)
9: RELIC QUEST	Trait	Power (Training)	Power (Asset)
0: DESTINY	Health	Trait	Power (Ability)

⚙️ Power

The next Milestone towards glory is met when the hero solves some famous puzzle or problem and in so doing develops a unique or special power.

⚙️ Trait

The ultimate Milestone is attaining power and wealth, through whatever means. The Trait marks the hero's new position as a paragon in society.

4. ROCK BOTTOM

This trajectory is all too common. Maybe it is the first half of a great rebirth, or maybe the tragic end of a promising beginning.

⚙️ Power (Familiar)

The first Milestone is the fateful choice or mistake that marks a turn downwards toward self-destruction. At that time your hero gains an ally of some sort who becomes a kind of conscience.

⚙️ Health

The next benchmark on the spiral downward occurs when your hero suffers the first major consequence of her choice. It makes her tougher, but foreshadows the eventual self-destruction.

⚙️ Trait

The final Milestone in this personal arc is hitting the bottom. Your hero's reputation or sense of purpose is destroyed. This Trait marks the new identity you embody as a failure.

5. ROMANCE

When your hero enters a Romance path, she meets a suitable lover and sets her heart on establishing some kind of relationship or making a rendezvous.

⚙️ Trait

The first Milestone along the way is recognizing what hurdle, shortcoming, or circumstance is keeping you from your chosen lover. This Trait marks how you are unfit to be joined at this point.

⚙️ Power (Familiar)

The second Milestone marks your hero overcoming that hurdle or circumstance and gaining the ear of a trustworthy companion to advise the next steps.

⚙️ Trait

The final Milestone comes when you successfully woo your lover, whatever the efforts needed to do so. The resulting Trait reflects the new identity formed by the bond between hero and lover.

6. VOYAGE

Your hero is taking an epic journey, seeking new worlds and new civilizations. This personal Milestone arc represents a grand adventure.

⚙️ Power

The first Milestone of your epic voyage is in discovering some new place, idea, or item. The new discovery either introduces or awakens some power in the hero, affirming her voyage's validity.

⚙️ Power (Asset)

The second Milestone of this personal arc comes when the hero decides on or discovers what the end destination will be. It comes alongside the power that will be needed to reach this goal.

⚙️ Trait

Your hero reaches the ultimate Milestone when she arrives at her desired destination. She earns a Trait that marks her new identity as an adventurer.

7. REBIRTH

The personal Milestone arc of Rebirth traces a hero's transformation from one identity to another, typically following a personal crisis.

⚙️ Power (Ability)

The first Milestone marking your journey of Rebirth is the sudden development of an out-of-character new power, an exceptional ability that leads you to question who you are. You realize that you are already moving along some arc that you had not realized before.

⚙️ Trait

The second Milestone of Rebirth is reached when your hero realizes where this path of transformation is headed and accepts it. The Trait marks this newly assumed identity.

⚙️ Power (Combat)

The ultimate Milestone is precisely the moment when the hero realizes that she has already somehow become something new, the transformation having occurred already under the surface, gradually and out of sight. The new understanding begets a new confidence, a power unlike the first and more direct, more mature.

8. FORGE LEGACY

One role of the hero is to create a Legacy that will survive long after the hero is gone. This personal Milestone arc traces the development of such a Legacy.

⚙️ Trait

The first Milestone is deciding what the Legacy will be, whether child, institute, event, or scar. The concomitant Trait marks your initial dedication.

⚙️ Trait

The second Milestone occurs when the hero sees the first major consequence of her efforts, some small victory that foreshadows the success to come. The Trait commemorates this victory.

⚙️ Power (Training)

The third Milestone marks the hero finally birthing the Legacy, giving to the world the gift she has been nurturing for so long. With this bequeathing comes a new power, a kind of maturity or awareness.

9. RELIC QUEST

Your hero discovers something that invites her on a Quest to find a famous artifact.

⚙️ Trait

The first Milestone arrived at in the Quest marks a major setback. A new Trait reflects your hero's redoubled dedication to the Quest.

⚙️ Power (Training)

Your second Milestone comes as a breakthrough. The hero gains some new key or insight, solving a puzzle or problem. The solution imparts a new skill.

⚙️ Power (Asset)

The final Milestone in this arc marks your hero's attainment of the Relic, which then functions as a powerful Asset.

10. DESTINY

Your hero has a specific destiny laid out ahead of her. This Milestone arc traces some kind of prophesied or ordained journey suiting your story.

⚙️ Health

First, your character must undergo a trial to prove that she is indeed this destined hero. The Milestone marks the completion of this trial.

⚙️ Trait

The second Milestone in the Destiny path is the twist, when your hero realizes her role is not what she first thought. The twist will be set in context.

⚙️ Power (Ability)

Your hero must fulfill her destiny to end the arc. Let the Ability come as reward or transformation.

MOD 02: POWER CLASHING

Breaking the Tie, Elevating the Drama, Big Limit Breakers

The basic Clash rules were introduced on page 38, and this mod expands on those default mechanics by amping up the possible effects.

“TRUE” CLASH

To review, a **Clash** occurs whenever the highest resulting numbers in both opposing rolls are the same, i.e. when the players tie. The Clash results in both sides gaining DT+ to reflect the escalating tension with no other narrative effect occurring.

What we call a **True Clash** occurs only when the highest result is a “zero,” or “ten.” The following rules all take place only on True Clashes, when both players roll one or more “zeroes” on their d10.

For example: In the following examples let us assume a bout ends with the following:

Erick’s smuggler rolls: 4, 5, 7, 8, 0, 0, 0

Heidi rolls for a DRONE: 5, 8, 0

This is a Clash because the players tied. It is a “True” Clash because both rolled zero as the highest number. By default, both players get DT+ as usual.

POWER CLASHING

However, the basic Clash does not take into account how many of each tying number is rolled, which means there is no special or additional effect when one person rolls more of that high number than the other person.

And some players felt it was not fair to roll “better” than someone else and not “win” the Challenge. While this was not the majority opinion, it did give rise to our second mod. We determined through testing that it might suit a particular setting for rolling more of the tying high numbers to matter.

POWER CLASHING REGULAR

If you decide to use **Power Clashing Regular** in your game, then each player receives one Drama Token for each of her dice in the pool that turns up zero during a Clash.

For example: In the above situation, rather than both parties gaining DT+ as normal, Erick would gain 3DT for rolling three zeroes in his pool, and Heidi would receive 1DT for rolling only one zero.

There are still no Successes scored, and neither player can deal damage or manipulate Conditions.

POWER CLASHING CLASSICO

However, Power Clashing Regular can result in Drama getting out of control. Your game might be better suited to **Power Clashing Classico**. In this variant, the player who rolls more of the tying number gains the difference in Successes. Technically, the result is still a Clash so any event normally triggered “on Clash” still takes effect.

For example: In the above situation, both players would receive the DT+ as normal, but Erick would also score [2] for his three zeroes besting Heidi’s one.

POWER CLASHING RISERVA

To be sporting, we devised **Power Clashing Riserava**. In this variant, the extra Successes gained in Power Clashing Classico can only be used as single [1]s. This means no dealing Flesh or Mortal Wounds!

For example: According to Power Clashing Riserava, Erick would score the more specific 2[1] in the above situation rather than the broader [2] as in Classico. Both players still receive DT+ as usual for a Clash.

Characters who are “Stressed” will not receive any DT+ upon Clashing, but they may be allowed to utilize the Successes of Classico and Riserava.

The “Martial Arts” mod in the **MÁZAKI** setting is another way you can customize Clashes to introduce new elements and more elaborate strategy to combat. Check out page 180 for the way martial arts might fit improved Clashing into your **FANTAJI** game.

Mod 03: Boons

All Those Themes, Favors and Monumental Powers, The Grace of the Elders, Authority

After your group has been playing for a few weeks and redeeming Themes for new Traits, Powers, and Resistance blocks, you will end up with large spans of time between “levels” of accomplishment. What results is a party of heroes with lots of Themes and little to do with them.

Boons are a great way to keep Themes important and useful even when you are trying to save up 49 or 64 of them at a time. A **Boon** is any narrative or mechanical advantage gained by exchanging Themes outside the default Milestone system. Boons can come in many forms, but each campaign setting will usually feature only one or two.

SEVERAL FORMS

A Boon can function in several ways. Here is a short list of six possible ways to use extra Themes:

FAVORS

Your game may allow players to exchange Themes for special favors or dispensations from powerful Non-Player Characters in the game.

For example: Esther asks a Fey spirit to spare the lives of a group of Norwich Academy students who trespassed on sacred land. Chang explains that an Obstacle Tile alone would not be sufficient effort for the magnanimous favor and decides that 4 Themes need to be forfeit as well as overcoming the Tile.

Or: When Xinjin completes a quest for the sultan of Aliphar he asks for a powerful sword as a reward. Dieter grants the request but requires Andrew to exchange a number of Themes to set how powerful the temporary Asset is. A FANCY BLADE will cost 3 Themes to earn, a REFINED BLADE 9 Themes, and an ELEGANT BLADE 15 Themes.

FANCY BLADE: Well-made and perfectly balanced.
Trait: *On The Razor’s Edge*. [1].

REFINED BLADE: A finely crafted sword of exquisite quality. **Traits:** *On The Razor’s Edge*, *Fleshbane*.
Power: Functions as Blade Asset. 3[1].

While some of these costs will seem high to new players, individual Themes will be less valuable later in the campaign. As Milestone costs naturally rise higher, players will be looking for other, creative ways to use Themes.

ELEGANT BLADE: Forged for the crown prince of Eljuk two generations ago, a flawless sword.
Traits: *Fleshbane*, *Clean Cut*, *Sharp-Dressed Soldier*.
Powers: Functions as Blade Asset, Sentry. [2].

Requiring Themes for artifacts or dominions is a smart way to keep things balanced and objective in an otherwise highly subjective situation. Instead of the Judge capriciously assigning the value of a particular item or plot of land, the players can invest Themes to help settle the decision.

For example: Heidi has her players construct an assemblage of Tiles to represent the party’s space vessel. They can upgrade and augment these Tiles as though a dominion (see page 119). Players pool Themes to purchase new Traits, Powers, and Shields for the vessel Tiles outside their own Milestones.

WILES

Beyond narrative and artifact rewards, your game can use Boons to grant single-use abilities to your heroes. These can amount to “get out of jail free” cards or “aces up your sleeve,” tricks for use when you desperately need the boost.

Wiles are written as a Tile and kept as though an Asset, but they are used only once and cannot be disarmed beforehand.

For example: Wamae gifts Anthony with an artifact that can summon a storm at the cost of 6 Themes:

SUMMON STORM: This Wile can be deployed to deal [3] to any unanchored sailors and creates “Heavy Waves” and “Torrential Rains” Conditions.

SAMPLE CONTEXTUAL POWERS... AS BOONS

BAHAMUT	Summon specific celestial being needed for plot, 10 Themes
READ LATIN	Study new language, Objective Tile, 2 Themes/roll
NAVIGATE SHIP	Able to make sailing and navigating Checks, 12 Themes
TRACK WEREWOLF	Able to make tracking and detection Checks, 16 Themes
RESIST SIREN	Capable of rolling defense against SIREN songs, 8 Themes
ASTRAL PROJECT	Can move as immaterial being, only using [1]s, 30 Themes
ENGAGE DEAD	Ask question of corpse on touch, 10 Themes
TAME BEAST	Choose single Family of beast, Objective Tile, 4 Themes/roll
PROGRAM CONSOLE	Able to make programming and hacking roles, 16 Themes
GRAFT ORGAN	Assimilate Asset Tile into Character Tile, 50 Themes

HEALING

Maybe your campaign allows players to access extra healing by exchanging Themes. This could represent a set amount of passing time or the internal physical toll it takes to visit a healer.

For example: In a high fantasy campaign, the Judge allows players to expend Themes to heal Flesh and Mortal Wounds at the same ratio as Drama Tokens, 4 and 9, respectively. This represents months of rest.

Or: Heidi decides to add extra healing to her campaign with the use of Boons. She decides that receiving “nanotech healing” outside the default rules will cost the Characters in-game currency and tax their bodies, which she represents with a Theme cost. Every act of nanotech healing will cost the hero 5 Themes, whatever amount is healed.

CONTEXTUAL POWERS AS BOONS

You may ask heroes to spend Themes investing in certain parts of the narrative to represent their learning special skills or abilities.

For example: When players are preparing for a long sea voyage, Wamae taxes each of them 12 Themes if they want to be able to make rolls while at sea. If the player opts out of the contextual Power, then that hero will be at the mercy of the waves.

These Powers would come outside the necessary Milestone requirements for a hero’s next level. Whenever your hero redeems Themes outside the default Milestone arcs, you are using the

Boon mod. The chart on this page expands on the Contextual Power chart from page 149 by adding individual Theme costs to incorporate the mod.

DIVINATION & ORACLES

Certain characters in the narrative may be able to offer players answers to particular in-game questions or visions of the future.

For example: A seer can answer one question from the heroes for the cost of 4 Themes each. The Judge can decide if it is a “Yes or No” question or how much detail is offered with an answer.

Or: When visiting an oracle, Garre has a vision. Wamae writes a description of the vision on a piece of paper and hands it to Emily. She has 1 second per Theme exchanged to read over the paper. After she reaches her time limit, Wamae takes the paper back and destroys it. Emily will have to recall the vision from memory just as Garre would.

AURAS

This Boon grants your party the ability to add an earlier, more useful Theme to an ongoing Scene when situations are dire. To create an Aura, forfeit two identical Themes earned earlier in the campaign to introduce one copy of the Tile into the current Scene as an Aura. Auras function as Themes but cannot be won after a Scene ends.

For example: Neal has two Quiet as The Grave Themes earned earlier, and he forfeits both to add one Quiet as The Grave Aura to the Scene.

BLOODSBANE

FANTAJI

Campaign Title: BLOODSBANE

Genre: Dark Historical Fantasy

Description: On a peninsula of desert and crag, three kingdoms are struck by a terrible plague. The world is somber, washed in resignation to death. Heroes are immune to the plague and must contend with monsters, the undead, and weakening law. A Crusade has ended, and soldiers returning to wasted homelands seek respite.

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

The Covenant: The centralized faith that unites the Three Kingdoms

The Spice Roads: A network of trade routes mixing goods and culture

Feudal Monarchy: The economic infrastructure of monarchs and serfs

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Religious Unrest: The Host, a new religious movement, evokes Covenant ire

Dissolution of Crusades: Soldiers returning to ravaged homes turn to crime

Eljuk in Trouble: The Sultan of Eljuk has died by plague, and now what?

UNIQUE MAGIC, TECHNOLOGY, ARTS

Medieval Arms: A familiar 14th century level of war technologies

Spellbooks: Magic comes from ancient, esoteric tomes, each its own language

Monstrous Beasts: Fantastic, horrifying creatures roam the lands

POTENTIAL MODS

- ☐ MOD 01: MILESTONE ARCS
- ☐ MOD 02: POWER CLASHING [REG][CLAS.]
- ☒ MOD 03: BOONS [Ris.]
- ☒ MOD 04: SPELLBOOK ASSETS
- ☒ MOD 05: TREASURE GENERATOR
- ☐ MOD 06: ELEMENTAL MAGICS
- ☐ MOD 07: MARTIAL ARTS
- ☐ MOD 08: DODGE
- ☐ MOD 09: ESSENCE METER
- ☐ MOD 10: MEGA DAMAGE
- ☐ MOD 11: SKILL SYSTEM

RECURRING THEMES

1. *If Not For You*
2. *What is Life*
3. *My Sweet Lord*
4. *All Things Must Pass*
5. *Beware of Darkness*
6. *The Art of Dying*
7. *Behind That Locked Door*

STORY HOOKS & RABBIT HOLES

✦ Heroes escort a refugee congregation across sands to a cathedral sanctuary, but what is this relic they carry? ✦ A bear in the icy West turns hunters into undead ghouls similar to plague victims ✦ A remote sheikh joins the Host and gives up his ancestral title and lands, the heroes caught in the middle of tribal war ✦ Soldiers band together to form warrior tribes and ravage the land ✦ The mythic oasis that holds treasure

BLOODSBANE mixes European with Near- and Middle-Eastern styles, every borrowing carefully considered and respectfully adapted.

The Bloodsbane plague has a ubiquitous presence in this campaign world, existing almost as tangibly as an NPC itself

The world is damned. Not by fire or by famine, but by pestilence and rot. The Great Eastern Kingdoms are slowly succumbing to a vicious plague. Over the last few years, one in three people have died, leaving behind entire cities of corpses, beasts, and ghouls. Wealthy citizens have sealed themselves in palaces and bunkers, hoping to wait out the sickness. The poor have fled to the countryside and spend their days praying for relief. And from the West, crusading soldiers return home in small bands, abandoned by their lords in foreign lands without explanation when the plague began.

PESTILENCE AND PENITENCE

It is a time of uncertainty and fear. The feudal powers that once held sway with iron fists are drawing inward and locking up their doors. Cities are left to rot along with their survivors, and when the royal banners of the sultan do wave above approaching riders, it rarely means aid comes with them. Soldiers travel only to extract resources for the lords who lie tucked up in their bunkers.

The nomadic, pastoral tribes that patrol the countryside look nothing like they did even three summers before. The old ways may remain but in twisted and disparate forms. Unique modes of life and strategies of perseverance have emerged.

The lands are beset by a ravenous plague, the religious are obsessed with their wars, and the easternmost kingdom has been shattered. It may be better said that uncertainty and fear have given way to chaos and horror.

BLOODSBANE PLAGUE

The Bloodsbane plague is a mysterious blight, unlike anything the Kingdoms have seen before. Moving across the Covenant Peninsula for the last three years, the plague could emerge anywhere. It has a comparatively long dormancy period before victims are struck by fever, swollen glands, and strange black spots on the skin. It is then only a day or two before blood begins to seep from orifices, causing death by exsanguination within a week.

But the secondary effect may be worse: Not all die from the disease. And not because they get better—few if any have gotten better. But some

simply continue to exist in a half-alive state as their minds and bodies wither. Families cast their dead into the streets in tears, unable to care for corpses that refuse to fully die. These lifeless undead are often left to wander as senseless beings until someone puts them down by sword or flame.

All of the Player-Characters in the **BLOODSBANE** setting are heroes immune to the plague. It is they who travel the infected lands of the Eastern Kingdoms offering aid and small hope to survivors.

It is not known what force keeps the victims alive, but alchemists and physicians alike are anxious to find out, for the undead spread death in their wakes while refusing to die themselves. It seems they hold the keys to both death and immortality.

A small percentage of the population is immune to the plague, and these elect are in high demand. Some have been shipped off to viziers and priests, who try to divine where their immunity lies. Others are enlisted by sultans and tribal lords to fight the new evils that prowl their lands unchecked.

RETURNING FROM THE CRUSADES

It is not just an opportunist warlord or two who welcome this pox upon the land. Twelve years ago the three sultans of the Covenant Peninsula launched a series of religious wars against a swath of southern and western peoples, marking the latest in a long line of violence and counter-violence between warring nations. Kingdoms to the south and west do not honor the Covenant hierarchies that reign in the east, though as always earthly politics and economic promise are more often the cause of war than religious devotions.

Compared to the desert peninsula of the east, most of the mainland country seems a paradise. The sun shines over temperate and fertile fields, the plague is but a ghost story, and lands are large enough to support the growing populations. But for the last twelve years much of that paradise has seen only war: Pillaged cities, throngs of dead, salted fields, and orphaned children.

BLOODSBANE

But for now the Crusades are over, and Covenant soldiers from all three Kingdoms are finding their ways home, only to find that home is not what it once was. Soldiers, thousands of whom were abandoned by their commanders and supply trains years before, are finally crossing back into the Kingdoms in small bands.

The devastation of plague can rival that of war, and returning soldiers are often left with no families, no lands, and little recourse. Most band together as brigands and fight over the scant resources.

THE THREE KINGDOMS

On the eastern peninsula is a desert that hosts three kingdoms, each embodying the aged remainder of a once powerful empire: Eljuk, Aliphar, and Mivaren. What were two centuries ago violent frontiers between rivals are now unmarked borders among trusted allies.

The Eastern Kingdoms represent the unified, if still culturally diverse, home of the Covenant. The ruler of each kingdom is a sultan who shares in stewardship of Covenant affairs but holds no special religious power. Within the kingdoms travel dozens of autonomous tribal lords, some respected Teachers of the Faith and others mere warlords. The tribal lords and the sultans play different roles in the colorful and cosmopolitan cities of the great Eastern Kingdoms. Struggles over influence and bitter grudges are common, but neither office would ever think of challenging the other directly. Both roles were needed to maintain the beauty and strength of the region before the plague struck, and the same remains true today.

ELJUK

The largest of these lands is Eljuk, whose sultan recently succumbed to the plague. Suffering the loss of a beloved leader at such a dire time, Eljuk's capital city of Odom is in turmoil: The aristocratic titles are losing their value, paper money and credit are all but worthless, and much culture has been lost. Organized clans of thieves are gaining power, mostly miscreants who had been exiled from their tribal bands for some manner of offense or another and came to the city as outsiders. The black market has essentially become the only

market, and even the most noble viziers must deal with the illegal merchants to forestall a complete loss of influence in the city.

There is a new pecking order being established among the merchants of Odom, and Arran The Red is at the very top. The descendant of a Teacher much beloved by the populace, Arran knows life in Odom as well as he does life among the nomadic tribes. A scholar and one-time royal suitor, he took to smuggling and political corruption for the same reasons anyone does: Hubris and power.

Leveraging his unique position within Eljuk's high society, Arran manages to govern several small networks of illegal trade at once, and now orchestrates their affairs in unison to keep the capital city running. While the former sultan's expansive family battles over settling on his successor, it is Arran The Red running the show. But how long a thief will be able to hold onto the reins of a city as dynamic as Odom, no one can say.

Despite the troubles in Odom, Eljuk is not entirely shaken. The inland city of Roc is now the fastest-growing city on the peninsula. One of the earliest cities to fall to the plague—and before the ghouls emerged—Roc was quickly cleared of its dead and scrubbed clean from spire to sidewalk. This gave the city a chance to start from scratch, and leaders in Roc were careful to avoid many of the political and institutional pitfalls that come to ail any city growing slowly over time.

Dhanul Henosh, the emir of Roc, appointed control of the city's nine districts to leaders of various clans on merit and installed social contracts for every position of power. He sends marshals across the desert to maintain order and sweep for evidence of the plague. Roc has become a center of medical research, and many viziers and physicians have relocated within its walls.

And yet, with so much disruption shaking the official administrations of the kingdom, the vast majority of its inhabitants, those who live scattered about the fertile coast and inland oases, still live on the edge of a knife. Broken communications and absent caravans mean life is hard, violence ubiquitous, and prayers tearful.

Your adventurers could work as pathfinders and scouts for local communities seeking food and shelter, heroes from the beginning



ALIPHAR

Vast Aliphar sits at the northernmost part of the peninsula, where dark mountains break out of the sand and reach far into the sea. It is even said that the tops of these mountains collect snow, though one would have to travel more than fifty miles along the dangerous ridges out over the breaking sea to find it. Unlike Eljuk and Mivaren, which are both entirely sandy desert, Aliphar also has relatively large regions of hard soil and crags. In most places the sun will still blister exposed skin in a single hour, but at least parts of the land feel hints of changing seasons as the months pass.

Aliphar is ruled by Sultan Tehmun, a harsh man with several cunning wives and many ambitious sons. Despite his household's perfect recipe for betrayal and fracture, the sultan enjoys a relatively firm handle on domestic affairs. Aliphar is known for its very powerful emirs, and the family of the sultan must remain exceptionally unified to shore up power for the dynasty. Tehmun's wives have even been known to work together to secure power for each other's sons, something unheard of in any

other kingdom. The rival emirs are not unaware of the strange cooperation within Tehmun's house, but none have yet given up trying to pit one wife against the other to weaken the sultan's seat.

Also of considerable fortune is Aliphar's relative success against the plague. While the deserts of the Covenant Peninsula typically act as formidable walls against the spread of infectious disease, the Bloodbane plague has proven tricky with its long dormancy period. In fact, the disease earned its name not from the way the body seems to expel blood during its later phases, but from the plague's patience. It will poison your blood with absolutely no warning, leaving you tainted for up to two weeks before you know.

But Aliphar has been blessed. The insular nature of its city-states, caused by the quarreling emirs, has actually been a boon to the nation. For this reason many of the wealthiest lords and barons of the Three Kingdoms have fled to one Aliphan city or another. Of course, with large migrations comes higher risk of infection, and some cities fear guests.

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The tribal lords spend the least amount of time in Aliphar, and so the people tend to be stuck in their ways and slow to change. It is Aliphar that first rose the banner of the Covenant and carried that banner to war, when Nedhur became the first sultan who converted to the Faith six centuries ago. Today, Teachers of the Law in Aliphar are known for being a little backwards and old-fashioned.

Only Aliphar constructs boats for travel by sea, which makes sense since only Aliphar shares no borders with the mainland. And of Aliphar pirates, one is supreme: Rhea of Rhun. In everyday life most sailors know her as Rhys, for she has been masquerading as a male mercenary and pirate captain for years. The biting climate makes it easy to layer cottons and hide her more womanly features under bright colors that reflect the sun. It is said that his men do give Captain Rhys flack for not being able to grow a beard, but Rhea prides herself on her youthful, boyish appearance. Currently Rhea is leading a boat of hunters down the coast of Mivaren, though what—or who—her quarry might be is anyone's guess.

MIVAREN

On the western edge of the Covenant Peninsula sits Mivaren, the most beautiful city in the known world and the center of the Mivaren kingdom. Sultan Jaimon III reigns in a luxurious palace that has recently been converted into a bunker against the Bloodsbane. It is said 200 of his most loyal cousins and barons live there in splendor, waiting out the gruesome malaise with revelry. Though the truth of the bunker could very well be far darker.

Outside the palace, Mivaren is ruled by a charismatic emir known as Tefu, which means “tooth.” Tefu has a smile that few can resist. With the sultan absent, a great change is taking place in the highest levels of the government. Emir Tefu has privately renounced the Covenant and accepted the teachings of the Host as the one, true religion. Though this is not yet public knowledge, he has slowly been building alliances to make a city-wide move with as little conflict as possible. The security of the Three Kingdoms is at stake, as the Covenant is what finally ended the centuries of war that riddled the region before its rise. Tefu is not without guile or discretion, but viziers are



beginning to talk. *Why is Tefu never visible during prayer calls? Where was Tefu during the fast? Who has seen him reading from the scriptures recently?* They are beginning to conspire against the emir, though he has expected as much by this point.

RELIGIOUS UNREST

The rites and teachings of the Host predate the rise of the Covenant by untold centuries, and while the latter was historically tolerant as far as any record remembers, the recent Crusades have caused much of the general population to think in more prejudice and vitriolic terms. As is often the case, the aggressors are the ones who become less tolerant and understanding, for only through such means could their own violence be justified.

And while this resurgence of intolerance among the Covenant targets a variety of religious and cultural traditions on the mainland, here on the

peninsula none suffer discrimination and hatred as much as members of the Host. Though such hate is pervasive, in the face of a ravaging plague and supported by hundreds of disillusioned crusaders, the Host is becoming increasingly popular again. Rich and poor alike are converting in droves to the old ways, and local Temples swell. Host revivals are becoming common sights at important oases and waypoints across the Three Eastern Kingdoms.

THE COVENANT

There is no central Church or institution that controls the Covenant. While the three sultans exercise certain forms of religious authority now and then, the eyes and the arms of the Faith are spread among its many hundreds of Teachers of The Book. In cities and among the tribal nomads, Teachers lead studies of The Book and share wisdom. The Covenant is at root a markedly egalitarian religion, one that focuses mainly on individual discipline and daily rites more than dogmatic assertions or bold claims. And while Teachers do share interpretations of scripture, their role is more often that of a mentor or father.

Of course, the political agendas of sultans and emirs have a way of piggy-backing on religious sentiment, and even Teachers can become proud. Thus, in several times and places the Faith of the Covenant has been used as an excuse for violence.

For five hundred years, the Faith of the Covenant has been the dominant religion of the peninsula. It united the Three Kingdoms and established relative peace. Science, art, learning, and literacy all exploded, and—unlike in neighboring lands—the densely populated urban areas raised rather than lowered the standard of living. The Covenant is as much a culture and way of life as it is a religion.

THE HOST

The Host does have a central authority, though this authority is not reified as an institution or ruling body. The central authority is the Flame itself, the Eternal Spark that has been burning in one place for over a thousand years. The Host, otherwise known as the Body of The Flame, is made up of those who worship this holy flame as the singular presence of the Divine on earth. All flames are holy, but the Eternal Flame is a being as old as the largest trees

The Eastern Kingdoms are actually ruled by sultans, not kings. We borrow political language from the Middle East not to liken the cultures of **BLOODSBANE** to any real-world nations or histories, but to represent forms of government and modes of power that differ greatly from those of prototypical fantasy worlds. The word “sultan” represents something very different from the word “king” and allows us to invoke a different kind of political network and cultural context.

BLOODSBANE uses the term “sultan” as the supreme political leader of an entire nation, “emir” as a subordinate leader of a city or city-state who is not of the sultan’s family, and “vizier” as a eunuch who acts as a non-religious advisor.

We retain the word “kingdom” for the territory only because “sultanate” might seem one step too marked for some readers and keep them from being able to enjoy the campaign setting as fantasy.

and lakes on earth, the oldest single living being in the world. And this longevity is what makes the Flame so holy, what marks it as especially sacred.

The priests who tend the Eternal Flame do exercise unquestioned authority, but the pressing nature of their duties tending the fires of the Temple leave them little time to exercise it much. Various lesser priests travel the lands, lighting ritual flames in newly built temples and leading folks in revivals.

While the Covenant is a religion of self-discipline and public ritual, the Host is a religion of secret ritual and passionate experience. While the Covenant honors purity and submission, the Host honors malleability and ecstatic experience. Neither religion stands in the way of science or the arts, and neither puts undue stock in orthodoxy or universal truths. Thus many know that it is only recently that animosity has grown up between

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the two faiths. Of course, those who profit from such animosity will always propagate stories of a divinely ordained hatred, fundamental disparities, and the sub-human status of heretics.

The ways and rituals of the Host are heavily polarized. Half of the rites associated with the Body of The Flame are necessarily public: Forms of baptism, chants that induce a mystical trance, and all kinds of ritual sacrifices by flame. The other half are necessarily private: Ecstatic orgies, drug use and ritual intoxication, tattooing or scarring, and other forms of body modification such as piercing.

Some priests believe that the Host should shed their mysterious ways and practice more of the public rituals, capitalizing on the success of the revivals. Others think the opposite, that the superficial experiences of the revivals detract from the deeper, more ecstatic moments that occur behind closed doors. Of the latter group, which has a larger following in recent months, there are many who aim to move the religion underground entirely.

THE ANGELS AMONG US

Ostensibly the most influential Teachers of the Covenant are expending all possible energies to help the plagued lands, performing their prayers and pilgrimages to gain divine respite for the people. But many Teachers are riding the new religious unrest and using the opportunity to seize political power. If such claims after formal power become too widespread, it would mark a major turning point in the lifecycle of the Covenant.

It was amidst this power scramble that someone summoned the first Angel. Celestial Angels are key figures in Covenant scripture, but little had been theorized about them in the past. They were imagined to be unearthly beings of pure joy and song. As it turns out, they are indeed unearthly, but Angels seem to do only one thing: Destroy.

The first Angel appeared six months ago in the desert nearest Odom. Since then two more have arisen. Various Covenant sects and tribal lords claim to be responsible for one or another of them, but little is truly known of their origins. The consensus among the Host is that some power-mad Teacher

of the Covenant, anxious to squelch his rivals and secure a place of privilege, unleashed the first Angel on the world without properly knowing what it is he was doing. The rumor continues almost in jest: He then summoned the second Angel to hunt the first, and when that did not work he summoned the third to hunt the second. As sad as it sounds, the joke may not be too far from the truth.

The three Angels are best described as glorious monstrosities, forces of nature incarnate. They appear as glowing, 40-foot titans and walk the sands in silence, leaving footprints of glass in their wakes. Angels have a roughly humanoid shape, but the surface of their skin appears as molten, living metal. They seem to have faces, but it is as though the human mind cannot perceive them. To gaze upon an Angel too long causes madness.

The first, Gar-Meriel, is still the most frightening to behold. Thousands cheered in joy and thanked Heaven when she first appeared. For six days, Meriel roamed the desert vaporizing in holy flame throngs of ghouls at a time. It seemed Heaven had finally answered the prayers of millions. Soon Gar-Meriel could be seen slaying wild mustangs and flocks of sheep. People again cheered, presuming that the animals were unbeknownst carriers of the plague. Meriel's actions in those days even spawned a cult of animal-slaying that persists around the desert still.

But then, a month after first appearing, Gar-Meriel turned for the first time on travelers. Humans became ash under the fiery boom that is Meriel's voice. What followed were months of seemingly indiscriminate slaughter. Caravans feared to cross the deserts, and teachers wailed and cried out in public. Soldiers seeking redemption for war-time atrocities threw themselves at the fiery sun that is Gar-Meriel, immolating into black dust.

It was about that time when the second Angel appeared, Gar-Ehul. Ehul glows a slightly different hue than Meriel and seems slightly smaller. She followed the same pattern of slaying ghouls and animals before turning on traveling humans. A month later Gar-Unah appeared, the largest of the three. These Angels now roam the desert like sand storms, and an entire industry of guides, trackers,

and chasers who follow and report on the Angels' movements has emerged. While major cities have so far remained untouched, dozens of villages and oases have fallen into ash.

Skeptics fear that the Angels may actually be demonic forces, fiends summoned from Hell to keep enemies of one sect or another under control.

GEOGRAPHY & ECOLOGY

The world of **BLOODSBANE** is composed of a hot, sand-covered peninsula jutting out northeasterly from a cooler, more temperate mainland.

THE COVENANT PENINSULA

The campaign world focuses primarily on the desert peninsula that harbors the Three Eastern Kingdoms of the Covenant. There is much to explore across the burning sands.

☼ Castle Tughal

Nestled in the southernmost point of Eljuk, Castle Tughal is a small haven in a countryside decimated by plague and poverty. While it is far from being a luxurious retreat, a number of refugees have managed to create a somewhat comfortable life within its walls. Long ago abandoned for bigger castles in more prosperous times, Tughal sat untouched for centuries before the plague. It was dumb coincidence that brought six separate clans from all over the desert together behind Tughal's rotting gates. Far from the trade routes of Eljuk commerce, Tughal can be lonely. But it is also safe and growing safer. The clans dwelling there have managed to create a crude but sustainable community that lives off the land and no longer recognizes social hierarchies. Life is never easy in Tughal, but it continues to improve.

☼ The Labyrinth

To be a member of Arran The Red's entourage, one must prove their worth as a thief, a thinker, and a fighter by surviving the Labyrinth that lies within the crags of central Eljuk. Those who manage to survive the ordeal are richly rewarded and often become integral members of Arran's court across the smaller cities or out among the networks of runners and smugglers. It is said the Labyrinth connects to the catacombs of Odom.

☼ Alándin Palace

While Castle Tughal is isolated, Alándin Palace may as well be on another continent. Located on an island several miles off Mivaren's coast, the Palace has long been occupied by an eccentric family of shut-ins. Their few servants leave the manor on provision runs only once a year or so, and news of the plague has only just reached the inhabitants. Those servants who ventured on the most recent provision run came back with much more than seeds for the next harvest...

☼ The Nelashen Convent of The Flame

For families who worship the Host and believe in



BLOODSBANE

the old ways, there is no greater honor than having a daughter be chosen to dwell at the Convent of The Flame. Only women are permitted to enter this sacred place, a large complex of structures and tunnels spread along the mountains.

The Convent sends frequent scouts and priestesses to the three kingdoms to seek out young women with budding powers to increase their numbers. These women are taken to the mountains for a life of perpetual worship, where they spend their days tending the sacred fires, praying to the natural forces, and translating ancient religious texts.

Hundreds of pilgrims journey to the mountain each season to offer prayer requests, but it is said that no outsider has been admitted within the Convent's walls for a hundred years. Most are left to camp at the towering outer gates, giving trinkets and gifts to the priestesses who come and go.



Not surprisingly, all is not certain even in this isolated region of the mountains, and there have been rumors of a possible infiltration by spies from the Church.

MONSTERS & MAGICS

The Peninsula is populated by a wide variety of magical creatures well adjusted to the heat and arid conditions of the land.

⚙️ Djinn

A magical being bound to the human plane as punishment for crimes committed in another realm. The Djinn is a spiteful creature, and no two take the same earthly appearance. Djinn are always bound to a magical artifact and must at all times serve a human lord to manifest physically and serve out the years of their sentence.

DJINN, HAZAD: This DJINN appears as a humanoid jackal and is bound to a small tobacco pipe.

Traits: *Methodical Madness, Smoke and Mirrors, Alone in The Stark.* **Powers:** Burst, Flurry. If HAZAD is defeated, his master can heal [3] immediately. [3] / 3[2].

DJINN, TURHAR: This DJINN appears as an ethereal giant with a soft azure glow and is bound to a golden helmet. **Traits:** *Out of The Blue, A Head Above, Rider on The Storm.* **Powers:** Block, Quake, Ward. If TURHAR is defeated by magic, his master gains a permanent HELMET Asset (Fine Crystal Helmet, page 169). [3] / 3[2].

⚙️ Trolls

Trolls are ancient creatures that evolved along a vector featuring characteristics otherwise found only in reptiles, fungi, and hominids. Along with the dragons, trolls constitute one of the two oldest genealogies in existence. Scholars variously believe trolls to be the product of ancient dragon magic, wardens of the Djinn, or possibly the resilient servants of other magical beings that once inhabited this realm long before human civilizations arose.

Crag Troll: A hardy variety of troll known to eat only the young of a species, favoring goats. They grow up to 600 lbs. **Traits:** *Sticks and Stones, Gathering Moss (2◇).* **Powers:** Memory Wash

(Any [3] dealt can steal 2 Themes instead), Curse, Charge. If a CRAG TROLL is killed by a melee strike, the slayer suffers [3] immediately. 2[3] / 2[2].

BRUSH TROLL: One of the smallest varieties of trolls, growing up to only 100 lbs. Brush Trolls live under shrubs and small trees, only coming above ground when disturbed by unnatural magics. **Traits:** *A Bustle in The Hedgerow, Stumble Weed.* **Powers:** Busy Body (These Trolls are hyperactive when awake and cannot drop below 2DT unless they have less than 3[2] remaining), Mind Control. 4[2].

⚙ Satyrs

The many Satyr tribes of the Peninsula inhabit sparse forests, crags, and vineyards. They are neutral to human politics and may often act as mercenaries and pathfinders. Satyrs are motivated by the most base desires of the flesh; contrary to popular myth gluttony and greed rank higher than lust. Satyrs have humanoid upper-bodies but the pelvis and lower limbs of goats, sheep, deer, or donkeys. The stature and faculties of the Satyr depend on the root animal it shares an affinity with.

GOAT SATYR CHAMPION: Churlish brutes at all times and belligerent when drunk. **Traits:** *In Vino Veritas, Diamond in The Gruff* (2◇). **Powers:** Horns (see Spines), Heavy, Jinx. 2[2] / 4[1].

DEER SATYR BARD: Patient and musical. **Trait:** *Getting in Tune* (2◇). **Powers:** Antlers (see Spines), Reflex, Slow, Pacify. 2[2] / 3[1].

DONKEY SATYR FIGHTER: The heaviest SATYRS, standing almost 5' tall and weighing 200 lbs. **Trait:** *Stubborn as a Mule* (2◇). **Powers:** Spite (sets Numb), Heavy, Curse (sets Daze). 3[2] / 3[1].

MAINLAND FEATURES

Beyond the Covenant Peninsula is a large continent of colorful civilizations, diverse nations, and numerous ethnic groups. However, only the rare location holds any cultural import for inhabitants of the Three Eastern Kingdoms.

⚙ The Wastelands

This barren region separates the Eastern Peninsula from the mainland. The Wastelands have always



been overrun with wild beasts—lions, giant grackles, sand worms, packs of dogs—but lately new breeds of more terrifying monstrosities have emerged: Titanic rhinos with multiple horns, bands of flesh-eating apes, winged dragons with scales like polished mirrors, giants of unknown origin, trolls grumpy from ruined slumber, gryphons hatching by the dozens. The Wastelands are now a place only the bravest few can navigate.

⚙ The Scrying Stones

Located deep within the Wastelands, the Scrying Stones are a holy site for both the Host and the Church, an ancient formation predating either religion, the ultimate pilgrimage destination for those true to either faith. The Scrying Stones are a ring of six massive, rectangular boulders with holes bored by an unknown force in their middles and tops. Only one sage lives at the Stones year-round, the ageless Miranda.

Mod 04: SPELLBOOK ASSETS

The Wizard's Artifact, Super Assets, Journals & Notebooks, Record of Spells

Requiring **Spellbooks** forces wizards and warlocks to seek out and protect material objects as much as their warrior cousins, making magic material.

There is no magic outside what can come from warlock minds interacting with true Spellbooks. Each book is more a journal or notebook for the wizard who records her study and use of practical magic. The wizard who writes the notes will find in them the exact procedures and emphases needed to cast magic on the fly, while a stranger reading the same book would see nothing but shorthand scribbles, unlabeled diagrams, and margin notes that would take a great deal of time to decipher.

SAMPLE SPELLBOOK: The provenance of the book would make a great description. **Trait:** *Some Whimsical Magical Phrasing*. **Powers:** Generate (see below), Spell 1, Spell 2, etc. [2].

THE TOME

The base of the mod is an Asset Tile that represents the book of spells. These can be written in any material and in themselves possess no magic or supernatural power. They are scholarly notes on the wizard's own learning that intertwine with the mind of the wizard when casting, making books a necessary but not sufficient part of all magic use.

ACQUISITION & DESIGN

The book is an Asset and must be purchased as a Milestone Reward before any spells are put in it. The physical quality and design of the book set its spell capacity, number of Traits, and Resistance; which makes the material construction of the book important mechanically.

If the player wants a more fancy Spellbook, the Judge can adjust its cost in Themes accordingly:

For example: Dieter decides to introduce Spellbooks to his campaign, forcing Andrew's wizard Xinjin to create one. Dieter will give Xinjin a book just like the sample above for the cost of any other Asset coming at a Milestone. But he gives Andrew the option to add up to one Trait and/or two [1] for 9 Themes each.

Wizards can upgrade filled or filling books by transcribing all their notes from one to the other.

Spellbooks work best when all **Ability** and **Familiar** Powers are restricted to magic-users with books. Also, swapping the positions of the *Burst* and *Provoke* Powers in such a setting balances well.

TRANSCRIBE OLD TO NEW: Your wizard must take time rewriting her old spells into the new book.

Traits: *Neither Jot Nor Tiddle*. n[2] (where n is number of spells in old book).

DISARMING OR LOSING BOOKS

A wizard's Spellbook can be disarmed just as any other Asset, leaving specialized magic-users as sitting ducks. Keep this in mind when designing heroes, Spellbooks, and Milestones.

Of course, any Judge can reward players with "temporary" Spellbooks as the story demands. These may take the form of scrolls, wands, rings, or anything else that disappears, breaks, or fizzles after it is "disarmed." See page 118 for using temporary Assets as a special kind of equipment.

USING MAGIC

A Spellbook without any spells still functions: A wizard is visibly "doing some magic" whenever she plays to the Trait of the book during a roll. Moreover, even an empty book provides the Generate Power: Once per Player Round, the Asset can roll a Check @5 to perform the effect of a Dynamo, Sapper, or Synchron (only one effect per Round). This Check would be recognizable as "magic" to nearby people whenever it is used.

Otherwise, the Spellbook acts as any other Asset, granting Powers and Traits to the Host Tile.

GAINING SPELLS

Every time the wizard gains a new Familiar or Ability Power, it can be said that she adds a new section to her Spellbook dedicated to studying and exploring that new art. These are earned through Milestones just as any other Power, but are then written on the Asset—not the Character—Tile.

MOD 05: TREASURE GENERATOR

The +1 Fetish!, Creating Good Rewards, Fortune & Glory, Relics, Artifacts

This mod provides role-players with an optional system for forging marvelous artifacts. These may be awarded as permanent Assets that come with reaching Milestones, or as the temporary Assets that mark smaller narrative benefits and take up equipment Slots on the Character Tile.

THE CHARTS

We came up with three charts of modifiers, each determining one aspect of a potentially mythic weapon or artifact in your campaign. Judges can add one, two, or three of these modifiers to augment any mundane artifact with a Quality, Nature, and Style. Things can get pretty powerful.

For example: When Heidi wants to offer Erick a very powerful gun to act as a temporary Asset for an important mission, she decides to roll up a weapon on the Treasure Generator, scoring 4, 7, and 8:

GRAND CRYSTAL EPIC BLASTER: A powerful gun with specialized ammunition. **Trait:** Quartz Motion. **Powers:** Any [2] dealt also sets Daze, Can Challenge multiple targets at once. [2] to destroy.

TAXONOMY

When writing or vocalizing the artifact, read the aspects in order: Quality, Nature, Style. Retain this order even if you use only one or two modifiers.

For example: Wamae gifts Anthony's engineer, Dylla, a special halberd. He does not want to make the weapon too powerful, so Wamae only gives it a Quality and Style. Wamae chooses the aspects:

FANCY SHOCK HALBERD: A well-crafted polearm capable of reaching several foes in a turn. **Trait:** Shock & Awe. **Powers:** Upon elimination of any Condition, deal DT- to all targets. 3[1] to destroy.

ROLL OR SET QUALITY

1: TRUE	[1]
2: FINE	2[1]
3: FANCY	3[1]
4: GRAND	[2]
5: MASTER	[2] / [1]
6: SUPERB	[2] / 2[1]
7: FLAWLESS	[2] / 3[1]
8: EXQUISITE	2[2] + 1 Trait
9: LEGENDARY	2[2] + 2 Traits
0: ULTIMATE	2[2] + 3 Traits

ROLL OR SET NATURE

1: BRONZE	Any [2] Deals Snare
2: IRON	Any [2] Deals +[1]
3: STEEL	Any [2] Deals Stun
4: WATER	Any [2] Deals Numb
5: STONE	Any [2] Deals Blind
6: FIRE	Any [2] Deals Burn
7: CRYSTAL	Any [2] Deals Daze
8: STORM	Any [2] Deals Stagger
9: SPIRIT	Any [2] Deals Stressed
0: VOIDAL	Any [2] Destroys 1 Asset

ROLL OR SET STYLE

1: FRAY	Whenever You Score [2], Manipulate a Condition
2: MILITIA	The Asset Always Starts Scene with at Least 1DT
3: SKIRMISH	Whenever You Score [3], Make an Extra Check This Round
4: BATTLE	Whenever You Score [2], Make an Extra Check This Round
5: ASSAULT	Whenever You Eliminate a Condition, Gain DT+
6: SHOCK	Whenever You Eliminate a Condition, Deal DT- To All Targets
7: WAR	When Fighting More Than One Obstacle, Any [2] Becomes [3]
8: EPIC	Can Attack Many Targets At Once, Counters Do Not Compound
9: TITAN	Each [1] in Combat Deals Damage And Manipulates a Condition
0: NOVA	Any Strike That Kills an Enemy Deals [2] to All Enemies (Stck)

THE LAND OF MÁZAKI

FANTAJÍ

Campaign Title: **THE LAND OF MÁZAKI**

Genre: **Long Ago Anime Fantasy**

Description: A vast continent of fertile plains, fantastic animals, and agrarian villages is being pinched at both sides by colonizers hungry for resources. In the middle of this continent is an exceptional city, within which dozens of cultures thrive. Across the plains, shaman and villagers feel nature groan and respond to these changes.

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

Mázaki City Elders: The traditional government of the burgeoning metropolis

Andhuran Nations: Three encroaching nation-states united by a Church

Guanxi State: A sprawling but rigid bureaucratic nation new to the mainland

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Awakening Nature: Nature groans and monsters are becoming common

Emishi Mobilizing: Villages across the plains seek solidarity apart from Mázaki

Guanxi Colonizing: New colonies change the coastal cultures and climates

UNIQUE MAGIC, TECHNOLOGY, ARTS

Elemental Magic: Seven elements that balance the forces and life of nature

Flight Jade: A magic stone that levitates at room temperature used in industry

Fantastic World: The environment is alive with spirits, gorgeous, lush, wide

POTENTIAL MODS

- ☒ MOD 01: MILESTONE ARCS
- ☐ MOD 02: POWER CLASHING [REG][CLAS.]
- ☐ MOD 03: BOONS [RIS.]
- ☐ MOD 04: SPELLBOOK ASSETS
- ☐ MOD 05: TREASURE GENERATOR
- ☒ MOD 06: ELEMENTAL MAGICS
- ☒ MOD 07: MARTIAL ARTS
- ☐ MOD 08: DODGE
- ☐ MOD 09: ESSENCE METER
- ☐ MOD 10: MEGA DAMAGE
- ☐ MOD 11: SKILL SYSTEM

RECURRING THEMES

1. Tomorrow Never Knows
2. Here, There, Everywhere
3. And Your Bird Can Sing
4. Good Day Sunshine
5. Not For Any Human
6. Nature Wants to Tell You
7. He Said She Said

STORY HOOKS & RABBIT HOLES

✧ Andhurans in Mázaki City investigate catacombs looking for evidence of the original culture, awakening something deep under the city ✧ A Guanxi officer hires the party of heroes to protect a frontier mining town, or caravan, or ambassador ✧ Monster hunting deep in the plains ✧ Emishi villagers seek unification in the face of Mázaki ambivalence to their losses at foreign hands ✧ The mythic ruin that holds treasure

CONTINENT IN CONFLICT

The verdant fields and valleys of the Nopo Continent have sheltered the Emishi people since time immemorial. Long isolated from the world by northwestern mountains and eastern seas, the Emishi people have lived in constant contest with only the souls of their ancestors and the temperamental spirits of nature.

It is now the 9th year of the Tiger, and the Emishi find themselves and their wide lands at the very center of a vast, continental struggle. The Andhuran peoples come from across the mountains of the west, bringing sword and shackle. And the mysterious Guanxi state sails from across the eastern seas, bringing soot and steam.

THE WAR OF WHISPERS

Legends sing of a war between the ancient ancestors of the Guanxi and an Andhuran-like people that took place long ago, north of the Roaming Mountains, before that land was only ice. The outcome of the war remains shrouded in myth, but each of the three civilizations share versions of a strikingly similar tale in their oldest of folklores.

THE PEOPLES

The three civilizations stand poised as the heat grows. Whether on the brink of peace or war, no elder can tell. At least the regular violence that does bubble to the surface has yet to reach a boil.

MÁZAKI CITY

Mázaki (MAH-zah-kee) City is both the cultural and geographic center of the Nopo Continent. A massive city of both natural and carved stone, it juts out from slight rise in a flat, grassy plane.

The metropolis was once a floating city powered by Flight Jade—not wholly unlike the Andhuran nation-fortresses that now come from the west. Local legends hold that centuries ago the hovering city suffered some catastrophe. It appears to have drifted over the plains for decades before suddenly breaking apart and crashing to the ground. The event deposited large chunks of the mountainous city spread over the fields, and a new city grew up around the largest, closest pieces. Whatever

the few survivors called their home has been lost to the ages, but those who lived nearby named it *Mázaki*, the Emishi word for “wonder.”

Whether survivors existed at all is still a mystery, but the peoples who flocked to the growing city came from all over the Continent. Some claim to have followed the city as it traveled the sky. Others prefer more mystical reasoning for their arrival. However it went, the new community welcomed anyone who wished to live, work, and rebuild among the ruins. Quickly the settlement grew into a bustling hub of trade and activity. Today, the population of Mázaki is still much more diverse than the parochial villages that surround it. There are Avashas from the far-away desert; Jarvas from the mountains; Tomi, Undu, and Domahs from deep in the plains; and of course the hardy Emishi. All now call Mázaki home, most unaware that any other way of life existed before the great ruins fell.

Though some of the Emishi villages that surround Mázaki welcome trade with the wealthy city, many remain distrustful of their cosmopolitan cousins. These villages and settlements prefer the ancestral cycles of working the land, tending the herds, and appeasing the spirits. There is much cultural and physical contention in the plains, among those who believe Mázaki to be the capital of all Emishi lands, those who see it only as the home of one powerful Emishi tribe, and those who refuse to consider the sprawling city Emishi at all.

THE FLOATING CITIES

Most older Mazakans still remember the day thirty years ago when news reached their walls about floating fortresses from the west and the terrifying stories of slaving and desolation. Reports described three competing nations that shared a single religion and ethnicity, the Andhurans. These new nations ripped through the highest forests of Nopo and carved massive scars in the land with their floating cities. They burned village after village and herded the survivors into labor camps.

Waves of refugees swarmed Mázaki and begged for assistance. Many in the city wished to unite the Emishi villages and mount an offense, but the elders of the city decreed that no action would be taken until Mázaki itself was threatened by the

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new, pirating rovers. Eventually the three nation-fortresses established areas of dominance in the plains, and the pillaging slowed.

Every few years, one of the floating cities will float to a new location and put down anchors, hovering in place a hundred yards or more above the ground as dirty mines are built and the surrounding area leached of resources. It takes only a handful of years before the region is well tapped, whereupon the city will move again, leaving only a scarred patch of dirt to mark where it had blocked the sun.

The Mazakan elders caused uproar within their own walls and across Nopo when they first sent

emissaries to establish communication and trade with the pillaging and slave-holding Andhurans. However, many in the City were quick to repent when a fleet of decorated airships returned, bearing riches, unknown spices, marvelous arts, and the secrets of Flight Jade. In time a hovering port was built off one of the raised districts of Mázaki City to facilitate trade with roaming ships. Eventually, this large section of town became dominated by Andhuran culture, gaining itself the name “The Andhuran Quarter.”

To those Mazakans who have lost—and are still losing—kin to the ever-hungry slavers among the Andhurans, this adoption of foreign culture is heart-rending, and the City has become a battle ground for new ideologies and nascent oppositional factions. Disorder and discontent is spreading.

⚙ Valentzia

The everyday culture of Valentzia revolves around its ornate and ostentatious aesthetic. Wide plazas of polished sandstone open to the sky, and festivals mark each new moon. Regal castles dot the grassy and fertile island, housing the nobles and their servants. Dwarfing the resources of its cousin nations, Valentzia features over 200 acres of farmable land across its wavy surface. The production and admiration of art, elaborate vestments, and fine cuisine are staples of life enjoyed by those who can afford a home of their own and encouraged even among the poor.

The flag of Valentzia depicts an iconic mink or stoat biting its own tail in a broad white circle, surrounding the realistic image of a cluster of grapes on a beige background. The nation is characterized by the colors crimson, white, beige, and forest green.

⚙ Sharazmuni

The city of Sharazmuni came to the Nopo Plains from the southwest desert, and the culture that separates this nation from its cousins is one heavily influenced by generations spent floating across the hot sands. Sharazmuni is ruled by an extended family that functions as an oligarchy of politically conniving men and their many wives. This family has several wives borrowed from Valentzia in the years since arriving on Nopo.

Most of the floating island is covered by low roofs and colorful canopies, the sprawling markets and districts hidden beneath taut awnings and high-arched ceilings. The small patches of arable land produce hardy vegetables and grasses for livestock, meat being a central part of the Sharazmuni diet.

The symbol of the nation is a golden lion with its forepaw resting triumphantly on a coiled dragon, mostly represented in sculpture. The lion is variously depicted as a natural lion or a winged gryphon, and the dragon is always a limbless serpent, winged or not. Sharazmuni has taken the colors scarlet, gold, yellow, and ochre.

Oerusak

The nation of Oerusak is ruled by a king who operates as a feudal warlord. The city is austere and harsh. Oerusak features castles of dark stone and factories of metal. Most of the wealthy citizens are involved in manufacturing of some kind, and the periphery of the island is dominated by several public and privately owned ports.

Cultural life centers on musical performance and craftsmanship, and Oerusak excels in the production of religious artifacts, musical instruments, housewares, jewelry, and textiles. The flag of Oerusak features a purple canvas stamped by the outline of black eagle clutching two fish in its claws. The city makes heavy use of the colors purple, silver, and black. Jewelry is often colored by turquoise or tanzanite and other semi-precious stones.

THE VEILED STRANGERS

Almost three decades later, just as Mazakans began to take the burgeoning Andhuran presence for granted, news reached the City of another new people, these coming by sea from the east. Reports came of the arrival of a metal monster, a coal-powered sea-vessel in the shape of a snarling dragon filled with armed men wearing ornate masks but otherwise simple, common attire. This was ten years ago now, a moment still mythologized among coastal Emishi villages.

Before the next spring thaw, a people known as the Guanxi had purchased tracts of land from local villages and laid cornerstones for two port cities

and three large mining towns up and down the coast. While violence was not the default result of this new contact, it was by no means rare. While strong in military technologies and techniques, the newcomers were more keen on establishing contracts of trade. The Guanxi merchants and magistrates tell themselves: As is always the case in new economic exchange, a certain amount of force is necessary to ensure one side holds the advantage.

Though these Guanxi did not attempt to keep their presence a secret, it would be one full year before an official delegation from their homeland traveled to Mázaki City. Without warning, a grand procession entered through the northeast-facing Lion's Gate, and a veiled politician who announced himself as the Imperial Ambassador brandished a scroll buckled with complex seals and badges. He offered the document to no particular elder—guessing at the best dressed man he saw in the entourage that approached him—and offered a speech on his own authority.

In grammatically flawless Emishi, the Imperial Ambassador proclaimed that, after 200 years of self-imposed isolation, the Divine Emperor had approved diplomatic and trade relations between the Guanxi colonies and the Mázaki “prefecture.” No contact with the imperial island would be permitted without official contract, but the western colonies were open to all in Nopo who were eager for trade and cultural exchange.

INSTITUTIONS OF POWER

In a single lifetime, three disparate civilizations have come into contact, a clash of culture that has created a tense moment of definitions where violence and peace exist only a hairsbreadth apart.

THE GUANXI STATE

The Guanxi Imperial state has stood for centuries. Under the guidance of reclusive Emperors and obtrusive bureaucrats, it has grown dense, vast, and far-reaching with imperial law requiring some kind of administrative stamp on every aspect of life. Marriages, contracts, taxes, rites of passage, family visits, pregnancies, and even garden layouts are approved and recorded by local administrators.

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This is not to say that the Guanxi government is oppressive, but it is by all means pervasive.

Every individual fits a precise rank in the social hierarchy, which is expressed through an elaborate system of masks and veils. The face is hidden to show both respect for superiors and modesty before inferiors. Only those individuals of equal rank will ever see one another without guise.

Perhaps the most notable property of the imperial government is its stability. In the face of recent dynastic change and sweeping reforms in policy, the vast majority of Imperial citizens noticed—aside from the boom of a war-time economy—only a difference in the name stamped on their copious piles of paperwork. Daily life has gone relatively unchanged for generations, and the recent change in religious rhetoric has been taken in stride with an ease that surprise anyone but the Guanxi.

However, of those few factions affected by the new Imperial regime, the Xan have suffered most. The decadence and ensuing inefficiency of the old dynasty fostered the development of a parallel system of eunuch ministers, the Xan, who acted as traveling officials exercising the joint powers of judge, coroner, tax collector, and census taker. The Xan held jurisdiction in any areas too remote to station permanent imperial bureaus.

For over a hundred years, the Xan and the Imperial Prefects worked hand in hand, but in the name of recent efficiency reforms, the Xan have been all but dismissed. Today, their only remaining institutional power comes in the Xan's authority to issue death certificates, a power that reflects the new regime's religious views. Disenfranchised Xan ministers still retain much local power and influence, and they have all but declared war on the new dynasty.

The colonies are each run on imperial charters by magistrates-cum-merchants seeking to expand their holdings and the powers of their offices. While the colonies are officially as formal as the rest of the Empire, a frontier attitude is common.

ANDHURAN JADE MINING

Andhuran civilization—culturally, technological, and religiously—is built upon the semi-magical

properties of Flight Jade, a caustic stone buried at the heart of each floating island-nation. The Andhuran ancestors built these massive floating cities from mountains rich in the stone by digging out miles of rock. Since the exile of the three Andhuran nations, the islands have become sustainable only by constant motion, a continuous process of leeching off the lands beneath their monstrous floating cities.

Modern Andhuran cities thrum with flying airships and Jade-powered dynamos. Their mastery over shaping and engineering the stone stands without parallel. The recent discovery that the stone's levitation properties can be controlled by contact with carbon has led to the engineering of more nimble airships and smaller floating fortresses, oversized lighter-than-air blades and armaments, and jade-fuelled cannons capable of heinous destruction. However, this explosion of new technologies has only increased demand for other resources, a demand that the Andhurans meet through questionable institutions of slavery and economic exploitation.

Whether the caste system has always been a hallmark of the Kerala, the Andhurans' unifying religious institution, or whether it is a product of their hunger for resources is a subject of debate among Andhuran scholars. However, the fact of the matter remains that Andhuran nobles have few reservations about pressing anyone beneath them into positions among their myriad labor camps. Some laborers are ordered to continue their lives of farming and harvesting lumber on the ground, losing a percentage of their products to the Andhuran overlords. The less fortunate prisoners are forced to mine and refine the caustic forms of Flight Jade either in the bowels of the islands, fortresses, and airships or deep in the mountains that line the north edge of the Nopo Plains.

No new Jade had been discovered by the roaming nations for generations, and so the relative abundance of the mineral in the mountains of the Nopo Continent have led to a resurgence of conflict among Valentzia, Oerusak, and Sharazmuni. An arms race has begun, and their new neighbors—knowingly or not—are now players in this escalating competition for all things Jade.

Flight Jade is a caustic substance, at once beautiful and deadly; while useful technologically, Jade poisons those who touch it

While even moderate exposure to cut Flight Jade is harmless, those exposed to the mining and refining processes inevitably succumb to Jade Sickness. These “Jaded Ones”—hairless, covered in lesions, missing teeth, eyes burning green—are the lowest of the low in the caste system.

It is easy to see the Andhurans as villains by looking up at them from the ground, but from atop their glorious cities in the clouds the view is quite different. The typical Andhuran has no desire to leave her home because the world she knows is a shining paradise devoted to science, literature, engineering, art, and music. In this relatively protected existence, the citizen has neither incentive nor opportunity to imagine her affect on the world below or the unsustainable nature of her hungry culture.

Once it has consumed the local human and natural resources, the Andhuran nation will take up its anchors and move deeper into the plains. This extended cycle of “slash-and-burn” colonialism might even be sustainable in a way, disregarding of course the bodily and cultural damage levelled against the populations encountered, but for one fact: The multiplication of raw Jade mines and the pervasiveness of refineries manifest a tangible blight on local ecologies—human and otherwise—that will likely persist for centuries.

MÁZAKI GOVERNMENT OF ELDERS

Mazakans are citizens of their city, subjects of no ruler or monarch, but guided and administered by the wisdom of an Elder Council. The council consists of the Eighty-Eight Elders, a tradition going back as far as anyone can remember. Whenever a member should retire or pass away, the council holds a caucus and sends an invitation to a chosen member of the community to take up the open seat.

Any decision or decree of the council is made after working toward consensus rather than by holding a vote or poll. When caucuses are held, only the Eighty-Eight must be in accord, but all citizens are welcome to make arguments or presentations among the Elders present to provide perspective and information on an issue. This has led to an open and free community with an understanding

of shared responsibility and a strong community loyalty. While the authority of the council has ebbed and flowed over the years, recent events have led to tensions and factions developing in the ancient administrative chambers of Mázaki City.

Some factions wish to impose sanctions against the “Andhuran Butchers” who continue to exploit villages of the plains. Some worry that the Guanxi have set their sights on the city as a province waiting to be annexed by the Empire.

Without a singular, galvanizing voice or an immediate and blatant danger to the City itself, the Elders have taken only nominal action to address the concerns of citizens and villagers. Some whisper that profit has for the first time bent the wills of those in power.



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SOCIAL DYNAMICS

In the face of thirty years of constant change and unrest, three escalating vectors are acting to influence contemporary ideologies and politics.

GUANXI COLONIZING STRESSES

The advent of the all-encompassing structure at the heart of Guanxi culture has rippled in at least two directions on the Nopo coast.

Firstly, records show that growing waves of Emishi immigrants continue to reach the colony cities and settlements. Villagers of various backgrounds—not a small amount of them refugees from regions under new Andhuran domination—come for advertised jobs in mining, fishing, and manufacturing.

Some Guanxi take this as a sign of the Emperor's divine will, proof that the Emishi will soon enough welcome imperial rule over all the prefecture. Other imperial citizens worry that the colonial governments may find themselves overrun by the “primitive” and “barbaric” heathens.

Of the emigrating Emishi, many see a great dishonor in sacrificing their agrarian heritage even as a seemingly necessary response to their dispossession and the destruction of their home villages. Others, particularly the young, don the veil happily and pledge fealty to this Emperor of the East, The Living God of The Dawn.

In a second direction, ripples are moving among the Guanxi frontiersmen as well. Leaders and citizens alike are beginning to feel their separation from the homeland. The Emperor of the Guanxi is weeks away by boat, and the colonies cannot always afford to wait for paperwork to go through before tending to business, changing policy, or waging war. This has led to local governors exercising administrative autonomy for the first time in their careers. The possibilities and promises of sovereignty are no longer foreign to these fledgling governors. Likewise, local merchants are now enjoying the ease of trading goods outside the bureaucratic constraints of the State. Both changes are leading to new temptations and new stresses on the nascent satellite cultures.

EMISHI CONFEDERATION

Many Emishi are not content to watch their way of life disrupted in the wake of the new strangers. An idea born on the streets of Mázaki has swept many villages across the Continent into fervor: Confederation.

While several unions and coalitions have formed among myriad clusters of villages in response to the advancing Andhurans, three distinct ideologies of confederation vie for dominance on the Plains.

⚙ **Obaji Religious Revival**

A group calling themselves the Tomi is led by the former Elder Obaji, a respected matriarch who renounced the tolerance of Mázaki City and took up the life of a wandering prophet upon the Central Plains. Her family long-considered close to the Gami spirits of Nopo, Obaji calls upon the villages to stand united as one but apart from the City. She promises the protection of the Gami should all the peoples of the Plains come together as a single political confederation under the guidance of the many princes and shaman working in accord. The folk movement attracts Mazakan citizens and restless villagers alike.

⚙ **Privateers Union**

A powerful Emishi prince, Anzo the Fisherman, has recently begun recruiting discontented villagers and refugees as sailors in his roving army of privateers. His own village an early casualty of contact with the Guanxi, Anzo made a long trek around the Plains collecting followers with promises of wealth and life at sea. His organization is sheltered by and in turn supports a league of fishing villages down the Nopo coast. The privateers use various tactics to monitor and attack the new Guanxi shipping lanes being established between the mainland and the Imperial Island. As a matter of principle, incoming ships are left alone, but no outgoing ships are offered mercy: The Emishi demand that no resources be removed from Nopo by the “criminal” Guanxi State. Word of the privateers' efforts have reached even Andhuran ears.

⚙ **The Sons & Sisters of Nopo**

Survivors of the northwestern villages, those hit hardest by the Andhurans, have formed a military

Mázaki City is glorious metropolis built out of the ruins of a floating city that crashed in three large chunks onto the Great Plains

confederation coined The Sons & Sisters of Nopo. This band is by far the most extreme and radical vector of unification on the continent. Despite few actual ties with the City, they claim Mázaki as their rightful capital and swear undying war against the Andhurans. Following their ideological claims, then, the Sons & Sisters fight on two fronts: Against the Andhurans on the one hand and against any and all Emishi unwilling to recognize their authority as the official army of the City and thus all the Emishi people.

The Sons & Sisters can be said to terrorize Emishi villages in their war against the Andhurans. While most villages denounce both the central tenets and the violent methods of the confederation, many feel that it is only a matter of time before something like open war will be necessary.

AWAKENING NATURE

Monsters and magical creatures alike have always populated the several regions of Nopo, but the Emishi have long respected and lived among them as integral parts of the spiritual order.

However, this balance is being disrupted, and the spirits of Nopo seem to be responding to the advances of the new civilizations into the Plains. The Gami grow uneasy and restless at the more disruptive aspects of Andhuran and Guanxi activities that directly impact the spiritual order: Landforms are destroyed, shrines go untended, animal homes are encroached upon, rituals go forgotten, and pollutants poison the waterways.

These changes have unleashed untold numbers of monsters and feral spirits long feared in Emishi legend. Great beasts bent on destruction now roam the roads and forests of Nopo, endowed with great power by awakening Hangami, spirits poisoned by human activity and out of balance with nature, Gami who have lost their minds in the face of ecological erosion.

However, as nature fights to maintain the balance of energies and as the blessings of the Gami fall on fewer shaman and shrine attendants, those blessings grows more



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intense and tangible. Those Emishi who remain loyal to the ancient ways now find themselves imbued with greater command over the wilds, the lesser spirits, and the magics of nature.

GEOGRAPHY & LOCATIONS

The world of the Nopo Continent is alive and dynamic, and the natural environments will often play active roles in the campaign setting. We recommend that every Scene includes some natural or spiritual Obstacle Tile to represent some facet of the living world.

REGIONS OF THE CONTINENT

The natural topography of the Nopo Continent manifests in a handful of recognizable regions.

☼ The Roaming & Rooted Mountains

The Nopo Continent is cut latitudinally by two connected mountain ranges. The first range includes the Rooted Mountains, peaks bound to the earth as one would expect. This range begins in the west and curves up and around the Plains easterly before reaching the Roaming Mountains. This range of peaks is composed of gigantic monoliths rich in Flight Jade that hover above the empty wastes. While their peaks are only slightly shorter than the highest rooted mountains, their bases rest anywhere between 10 and 100 yards above the ground. The space beneath a Roaming Mountain island is filled with tiny shards of floating Jade whipped around by winds coming from the nearby coast.

The Roaming Mountains slowly flow around and among the Rooted Mountains, causing passes to open and close with the changing of the seasons. The temporary pass which allowed the Andhurans to enter the Nopo Plains from the west thirty years ago sealed itself over time.

While a small network of Emishi villages sleeps among the icy mountain passes, most of mountains and their foothills remain uninhabited. One small pass has remained open to the north near the coast, but the unending blizzards and biting winds that blow in through the pass have thus far discouraged any exploration. How this one pass remains despite the Roaming peaks is unknown.

☼ The Central Plains

The majority of Nopo land is covered by the vast plains of varying hue and the soft, rolling hills. It would not surprise any if the whole world were from edge to edge a single, fertile grassland of mild sun and temperate rains. Lazy mountain streams trickle into the plains, becoming the rivers and lakes that support life among the fields. Springs are common, feeding into further streams and rivers. Forests grow, protected by local Gami.

Emishi farms, waypoints, and villages dot the flowing flatlands without much rhyme or reason, many connected by trade networks and seasonal festivals. In fact, it would be difficult to find any patch of land in the plains less than ideal for a new community looking to lay down roots.

☼ The Western Desert

To the west and southwest lies the great Western Desert. A striking contrast to the rich Emishi plains, the Western Desert is a sea of sand drifts and rare oases. It is home to the Avasha people, desert dwellers known for their reptilian mounts. The Avashas are said to have constructed a glorious city of ivory and gold within a vital oasis deep in the sands.

☼ The Southern Marshes & Gnarled Wood

At the southern end of the vast plains lie the marshes and the Gnarled Wood of Emishi legend. This region is considered sacred, often called the “Spirit Wilds” in story and song, an area rarely explored by humans without spiritual protection.

Here, it is said, the Gami roam free in physical form, and the mundane world bleeds into the fantastic. Several rites of passage celebrated by various sects of Emishi shaman and priestesses include braving the misty bogs and thistle-ridden woods to contact or proposition the spirits living there. This place of murky, perpetual dusk is seen by some as the spiritual heart of the Continent.

At the center of the marshes is the Gnarled Wood. Many have attempted to enter the dark forest and chart its mysteries, but not one has ever returned. It is said the Gami have created special protectors who forbid any human from entering.

MÁZAKI CITY ITSELF

Mázaki City grew around the ruins of a floating city that broke apart in the air and came to rest in three large fragments. Two of these fragments landed close together and make up the northwestern and eastern districts of the City; the third and smallest fragment—which seems to have dropped first—has become a travelers’ waypoint and crossroads tavern twenty miles up the North Road.

Archaeological research holds that the original inhabitants of the floating city must have planned for a safe touchdown and so aimed for a suitable location to make their new home. They seem to have found just that, and Mázaki sits atop a slight rise in the great plains where two natural springs—one cold and one hot—birth a strong river flowing southeasterly toward the sea.

Sadly, the city seems to have broken apart and plummeted from at least 300 yards up before this touchdown could be completed, and local legend holds that none survived the final crash. Mázaki City as it exists today has grown up out of these mysterious ruins over the last 200 years. There are several important districts in Mázaki.

⚙ The Two Springs

The largest block of the broken city landed just north of the cold spring, which now pools into a chilly lake just within the western walls of Mázaki. The second block landed atop the hot spring. With great foresight, the new settlers cut smithies and factories powered by steam into the bottom of this block at the City’s southwest corner. In later years, as the heated water cut fissures up through the rock, wealthy Mazakans built baths and spas atop the ruins. There is now much contention between the wealthy spa owners of the Bath District above and the working smiths of the Steam District below over steam rights, infrastructure conditions, and water purity.

⚙ The Temple District

Atop the largest rock fragment, Mazakans have built their temples, shrines, and political houses. Towering over the rest of the city, the rock faces themselves feature ornate, larger-than-life carvings, tunnels, and buildings made by the

original inhabitants. New architecture mixes with old throughout the City, but nowhere as much as the Temple District. The Mazakans use the largest ancient temple as the chambers for the Elder Council, while the smaller palaces and estates are managed as guild halls and shrines for local spirits.

⚙ Market Square

Protected by the towering rock-face of the Temple District, Market Square is a thriving, ground-level district of the city. A large platform was constructed in the shadow of the ruins as a public center, and over a dozen generations myriad market stalls and makeshift public houses have grown around the platform on three sides. Recently, at the back edge of the plaza platform, Flight Jade elevators have been constructed to facilitate the circulation of goods and people between the Temple District and the rest of the city.

⚙ The Bath District

The mesa of the eastern fragment of the original city now houses the luxurious Bath District. Here, grand family and tribal compounds can be found along well-ordered streets, built following the patterns of the original designs. The southern half of the plateau is dominated by the great bathhouses, large private and public spas where steaming water bubbles up from the hot spring below.

Several open-air pools have been set aside for specific public purposes, such as swimming, bathing, and drawing water. As these pools overflow, water rushes into channels that wash waste and filth out from under the streets before coming together and cascading dramatically off the southern edge of the rock in a giant waterfall, which now powers many turbines and mills below.

In the Bath District one can also find the boutique and foreign markets, the finest breweries, and Mázaki’s more upscale brothels. The easternmost section of the Bath District features ports built for the Andhuran merchants of the floating cities. Many exotic goods enter through these ports, and young Mazakans have nicknamed this area the “Pantagoon District” or “Andhuran Quarter” after the new cultural trends that influence daily life as well as policy in this area of the city.

Mod 06: ELEMENTAL MAGIC

The Seven Elements, Magic Grades, Creating Ontologies, Arcana in Order

This mod introduces specific flavors or styles to the magic of your campaign setting. While geared specifically to the cosmology of the Nopo Continent in our **MÁZAKI** setting, the same rubric could be used to make any number of magic systems where schools or families of magic compete with one another.

THE SEVEN ELEMENTS

We devised a cosmology of Seven Elements, each representing one particular aspect of the natural world: Sea, Wood, Metal, Earth, Crystal, Sky, Fire. Together, these elements constitute any and every physical or spectral presence in **MÁZAKI**.

The circle of the elements brings a level of complexity into combat by positioning certain elements as “stronger” and “weaker” than others in a repeating pattern. Each element is stronger than the element immediately clockwise from itself but weaker than the element two positions clockwise from itself.

For example: Wood is stronger than Sea but weaker than Fire. This means the Wood Element is stronger than both Sea and Earth. This follows how the smallest seed absorbs water from the soil and eventually grows to crack through even the toughest rock.

Or: The Crystal Element is stronger than Earth but weaker than Metal. Overall, Crystal is stronger than both Earth and Fire but weaker than both Sky and Metal. This follows how gas and metals are capable of making gems impure and of shaping them, while true crystal absorbs heat without melting and grows out of the minerals and stones of the earth.

THE RULES OF ELEMENTS

In the **MÁZAKI** setting, each hero takes a single element based on her Martial Arts style; there are no heroes who can avoid affiliating with one of the Seven Elements. Animals and magical creatures or spirits may or may not have set elements, but every hero must draw power from one or another of the Seven Elements.

When elemental magic competes against a neutral enemy, no mechanical effect necessarily arises.



However, when two unequal Elements come into contact, the “stronger” Element gains a singular ethereal advantage represented by a swing of Drama. Any Wound dealt steals 1DT for the “stronger” Tile.

For example: If a hero affiliated with the Crystal Element deals 2[1] to an Earth-aligned enemy, she can steal up to 2DT from the opponent.

In the **MÁZAKI** setting, the only way a hero can mask or distance herself from her singular, preset element is by “playing to” a Trait listed on an Asset that is neutral or of another element. Note: This works on both offensive and defensive roles.

ELEMENTS AS ASSETS

When an item or magical creature is affiliated with an element, consider marking this with a preset Asset Tile. See page 139 for a list of four elements; the remaining three are listed here. These Powers can even be used against neutral or “stronger” enemies (as they add to the default elemental effect listed above rather than augment it).

SEA MAGIC: This Asset imbues its Host with the elemental energy of the Sea. The Host may appear as glossy or wet. **Trait:** Water Under the Bridge. **Powers:** Curse (sets Numb), Pacify.

SKY MAGIC: This Asset imbues its Host with the elemental energy of the Sky. The Host hovers slightly and has decreased weight. **Trait:** Lighter Than Air. **Powers:** Curse (sets Stagger), Haste.

WOOD MAGIC: This Asset imbues its Host with the elemental energy of Wood. The Host has woody knobs or leaves growing on its skin. **Trait:** Life Finds a Way. **Powers:** Curse (sets Snare), Retry.

MOD 07: MARTIAL ARTS

Custom Power Clashing, Fist vs. Fist, Styles & Arts, Kung Fu Hustling

Because **MÁZAKI** is influenced by the mythic and mystical scale of the best fantasy anime, we felt that there should be a way to tie the cosmological elements of the setting into an individual's tribal and cultural affiliations even for fighters and those without specifically "magical" abilities. This draws every character into the ebb and flow of the Seven Elements.

Though first grounded in the culture of the Emishi tribes, we then expanded the system to incorporate Guanxi and Andhuran traditions. However, you can use this mod in any number of settings as an alternate to Power Clashing.

EFFECTS OF MARTIAL ARTS

Martial Arts allow heroes to trigger certain abilities whenever their dice result in double or triple "zeroes" (or "tens") in combat, making those dice meaningful even outside the default mechanical effects of the Challenge. Whether you win, lose, or Clash, the Martial Arts style comes into play.

Each Martial Arts style will have one effect tied to any "00" roll and another to any "000" roll. If you roll four "zeroes," you can decide whether this triggers a single "000" effect or your style's "00" result twice!

CREATING YOUR STYLES

Use the following rubric to name your own styles and multiply the families of Martial Arts that exist in your particular setting.

For example: Anthony's chooses Style #6 for his engineer Dylla and names his Martial Art "Soaring Raven Style" to reflect the mechanical and natural sides of his character's personality. Whenever Anthony rolls two "zeroes" in a Challenge that involves his Martial Arts—on defense or offense, regardless of whether he wins or loses—Dylla can perform some technique that offers an ally of his a free Check immediately.

Or: Emily chooses Style #2 and names her Martial Art "Lion Paw Stance" to suit Garre's personality. When Emily rolls three "zeroes," she can manipulate the Drama Tokens between her own Tile and an Asset of hers, or sabotage her enemy by doing the same.

MARTIAL ARTS RUBRIC

1. "[COLOR] [TOOL] FIST"
(You must be SEA or CRYSTAL)
00 - Alter/Rewrite Any Condition
000 - Heal [1]
2. "[ANIMAL] [BODY PART] STANCE"
(You must be SKY or WOOD)
00 - Give Ally DT+
000 - Move up to 2DT between your or an opponent's Tile & Asset
3. "[COLOR] [NATURAL OBJECT] FIST"
(You must be FIRE or EARTH)
00 - Give Ally Check
000 - Deal [1]
4. "[PARTICIPLE] [TOOL] STANCE"
(You must be SKY or METAL)
00 - Move up to 2DT between your or an opponent's Tile & Asset
000 - Enemy must roll Check on next turn
5. "[MATERIAL] [BODY PART] STYLE"
(You must be FIRE or METAL)
00 - Enemy must roll Check on next turn
000 - Deal [1]
6. "[PARTICIPLE] [ANIMAL] STYLE"
(You must be SEA or EARTH)
00 - Give Ally Check
000 - Heal [1]
7. "[MATERIAL] [NATURAL OBJECT] FIST"
(You must be CRYSTAL or WOOD)
00 - Alter/Rewrite Any Condition
000 - Give Ally DT+

WANING MOON

FANTAJI

Campaign Title: WANING MOON

Genre: Modern Urban Pop-Fantasy With Gothic Overtures

Description: In a sleepy New England town, something is just not right. All sorts of spooky mysteries arise and remain unsolved. It turns out the settlement was built in the 18th century on a demonic Hellgate. The demons attracted Fey beings who now swirl around as well (This is pretty much every supernatural television show in one).

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

The Order: A company of special humans who war on spawns of the Hellgate

The Dreaming: A mysterious collective of Fey princes also watching the Gate

Local Government: The various politics of any United States town or city

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Overactive Hellgate: Monsters, demons, undead... All in surprising numbers

Public Witch Hunts: Mundane humans begin to suspect supernatural forces

The Dreaming's Agenda: Much of Norwich now permeated by Fey interests

UNIQUE MAGIC, TECHNOLOGY, ARTS

Hellgate Blood: Half of the supernatural forces are from the demonic Gate

Fey Blood: The other half of magic in **WANING MOON** is Fey in origin

Near Future Technology: Our modern world with a few flashy new tricks

POTENTIAL MODS

- ☐ MOD 01: MILESTONE ARCS
- ☒ MOD 02: POWER CLASHING [REG][CLAS.]
- ☐ MOD 03: BOONS
- ☐ MOD 04: SPELLBOOK ASSETS
- ☐ MOD 05: TREASURE GENERATOR
- ☐ MOD 06: ELEMENTAL MAGICS
- ☐ MOD 07: MARTIAL ARTS
- ☒ MOD 08: DODGE
- ☒ MOD 09: ESSENCE METER
- ☐ MOD 10: MEGA DAMAGE
- ☐ MOD 11: SKILL SYSTEM

RECURRING THEMES

1. *The Blood That Moves The Body*
2. *Crying in The Rain*
3. *Stay on These Roads*
4. *Hunting High and Low*
5. *Take on Me*
6. *Analogue Train of Thought*
7. *Halfway Through The Tour*

STORY HOOKS & RABBIT HOLES

✱ Your players are teachers protecting the campus, or exceptional students causing mischief in town ✱ A local witch has connections to both the Gate and the Dreaming, and your heroes must sway her mind ✱ Vampires amassing to hold some political gathering ✱ Ambitious Fey princes hiring your freelance heroes for various missions and corporate heists ✱ Teaching a math class ✱ Lost occult vaults that hold treasure

Your heroes could be members of the Order or the Dreaming. Or spawns of a Hellgate. Or maybe you're just gifted locals...

The president of the Audio/Visual Club at Norwich Academy has been hypnotizing classmates through the morning announcements

All is not well in Norwich, Maine. There have been too many unexplained phenomena: Mysterious attacks, disappearances, and the occasional demonic possession, just to name a few. The small-town residents are on edge. Of course, the likely (and mostly unknown) reason why all these things have been happening is that Norwich sits on a Hellgate. When vampires, werewolves, succubi and a number of other unsavory creatures begin flooding a sleepy American hamlet, something has to be done to stem the tide and keep the locals safe. Enter the Order: A group of special humans tasked with running Norwich Academy, protecting its students and the town as a whole, and keeping knowledge of the Hellgate's existence as secret as possible. Are you ready to join up?

ANY OLD TOWN?

The smallest of towns can hide the most substantial of secrets, and nowhere is this more evident than Norwich, Maine. Ostensibly Norwich is what a small town should be, an endless parade of church lunches, school fairs, (mostly) civil town meetings and, well, parades. But there is more than typical human darkness lurking beneath the surface of this idyllic little town. Of course there are the alcoholics, the adulterers, the gamblers, and the rest of the characters that fill "small town drama" roles in your average city. But Norwich is far from average; it offers many more secrets to ponder.

To be fair, humans themselves do create a fair amount of chaos in Norwich. Local police have finally started to investigate the strange happenings, knowingly or not interfering with other agendas better equipped to protect the residents. Still, few are ready to admit such a thing as a Hellgate exists. Throw in a mysterious string of pet murders, the housewives' occult reading group, and an A/V club that's brainwashing students, and it's clear that Norwich is something out of the ordinary.

NORWICH ACADEMY

Perhaps the most intriguing place in Norwich is a meticulously groomed mansion that sits in the hills overlooking the town. This is Norwich Academy, a school with a rather unassuming name considering its function as central headquarters of the Order.

FACULTY & STAFF

The ruling force behind the Order and the Academy is Eleanor: No last name, no title, just Eleanor. On her good days Eleanor seems to be in her late 40s, but when all Hell is breaking loose (which it usually is), she resembles more the frazzled crone of fiction. As to be expected, Eleanor runs Norwich Academy with a stern fist, and she has little tolerance for any kind of foolishness (though she has been seen cracking a smile or two over just the right joking rejoinder). Eleanor wears a short, white glove on her right hand at all times, and to be sure no one has ever seen her without it. At all times, both hand and glove rest unflinching on the ornate dagger at Eleanor's side.

Renata Rios, Eleanor's second-in-command, is the foil to the headmistress's stoic nature. A small woman of about 30, she is respected by the Academy's staff and students for her fiery (but positive) energy and administrative acumen. Renata also has a taste for the outdoors, and even though she is the Assistant Headmistress, one is more likely to find her strolling the school grounds than the hallways. Beyond her sharp wits, there is also a certain darker strength in Renata, one that the more psychic of students can sense (and will sometimes shy away from). If Eleanor is the head of the Academy, Renata is the spirit, and appropriately spends most of her free time at Academy events around town.

There are 29 instructors at the Academy, but Samuel Altamont is a student favorite, which is impressive since he teaches the oft-maligned subject of Mathematics. The 29-year-old Mr. Altamont is quick-witted and clever, though his inexperience as a teacher often causes minor slip-ups. Even so, Eleanor seems to have a soft spot for him and treats him like a son and confidant. Perhaps she senses a potential beneath his goofy exterior that will aid the Academy in times of need (or maybe she just enjoys his terrible jokes).

STUDENTS

Norwich has about 800 students, ranging from age 7 to 17. A small number compared to most schools, but quite a handful when it comes to education and protection from minions of the underworld.

WANING MOON



The leader of the pack is Claire Vance: A-student, yearbook editor, prom queen, and literal hellraiser. Ostensibly Claire is a good girl, the sort to willingly volunteer on weekends and take mission trips to Haiti (and what less would a town expect from the police chief's daughter?). But Claire has discovered the Academy's biggest secret, the Hellgate, and with a not uncommon amount of teenage hubris she hopes to harness and control the dark power of the Gate. Using her powers of popularity, Claire has been for some time covertly gathering fellow top-tier students to study and worship the dark powers beyond the veil. And for a pretty blonde with access to confidential city records, gathering cronies has not been a difficult task.

Teachers at the Academy have their suspicions about Claire, which have grown since one of their own was found dead at a suspected entrance of the Hellgate. Lisa Simon was the Order's vampire hunter, a woman who could effortlessly teach Shakespeare by day and stalk bloodthirsty fangsters by night. She was one of the most valued

members of the faculty, and when she was found ripped apart in the woods it affected Norwich on a level that can not be measured. Cut to pieces (some of which were hung from the trees), her body was arranged in a pattern echoing dark rites the faculty had long-hoped forgotten. Local media speculation abounds, but the teachers at Norwich have their suspect. Traces of psychic information suggest Claire had a hand in the killing, but with no evidence and no idea what such a slaying might mean, all they can do is keep an eye on her.

If Claire Vance is bringing damnation to Norwich, Leah Munro might just be its salvation. Even though she's a member of the popular crowd, Leah has managed to keep from selling her soul to the dark side. The late Lisa Simon was her mentor, and messy death devastated Leah. Before the murder, Ms. Simon had revealed the supernatural nature of the Academy to Leah, and the two had initiated training in the arts of vampire hunting. Now under the personal tutelage of Eleanor, Leah continues to study the craft, and hopes to take over Ms. Simon's former position someday.

THE DREAMING

Members of the Order have plenty to deal with besides teaching algebra and dealing with teenage hormones. Beyond concerns with the Hellgate is also the Dreaming: Masters of the Fey world who seem to take a heavy interest in matters of the Gate. While some of the Dreaming's subjects create regular problems in Norwich, the Order is still not sure if they are threat or ally. Whatever its intentions, the Dreaming has been caught several times charming townspeople, bewitching the locals to serve petty purposes here and there.

Composed of Fey creatures from around the world, the Dreaming represents the natural enemy of the Gate. It is said that thousands of years ago it was the Fey who first imprisoned the powers of Hell when human civilizations were still young.

LEADERSHIP

While the Order has control over the Academy, the Dreaming seems to have some authority over a burgeoning population of Fey people taking up residences in Norwich as everyday newcomers.

Ever perplexing to the Order, members of the Dreaming seem to be peaceful, or at the very least neutral, despite their dubious agenda. Their leader (at least from what the Order can tell) is Roan. Like Eleanor, Roan is just Roan, though the similarities end there. A smug, gregarious man, Roan speaks with a dirty British accent, though the words come so musically from his mouth as to sound unnatural. Roan is a bit of a showman, always amicable with Eleanor and other members of the Order, though rarely offering a straight answer. Of course, some believe that the nature of the Fey is such that giving straight answers might be impossible for them, their world always just charmed enough to resist certainty.

While the Dreaming has never directly aided creatures from the Hellgate, neither have they helped stem the tide of violent hellspawn. And so for now, the two secretive groups live side by side in an uneasy and curious peace.

Laeda Toth is Roan's constant companion. Spies from the Order are not sure if she is his adopted daughter, mistress, wife, or something else entirely. Laeda has the darkest and richest of skin and stands a full head taller than Roan even without heels, though one would rarely see her dressed in anything less. Laeda has a vicious tongue, and no one enters conversation with her without expecting a fight. But it is also a loose tongue, and while Roan is notoriously tight-lipped about matters of the Dreaming and the Gate, Laeda is better about communicating with the humans of Norwich.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Norwich is a town older than the nation in which it resides, a history that is evident in almost every feature of the little hamlet.

⚙️ Faulkner Cemetery

Norwich's graveyard is about what you would expect from a well-established town on the East Coast. Located on a bluff overlooking the sea and the small town, the graveyard sports a great many luxurious headstones that have acquired a downward slant over time. Some of the older headstones date back to the 1700s, and locals

often show them off to tourists who come looking for marks of ancestry or family heritage.

In the furthest corner of the graveyard sits a small mausoleum with the name "MAYER" engraved over the entrance. A single alabaster crypt rests in the center, but no first name was given to its occupant. The Mayers must have been a reputable family to have such a landmark, but even the oldest of Norwich's residents do not seem to have a clue as to who they were. Neither do the town records. This anonymity made it rather easy for the local teens to claim the mausoleum as their own, breaking in through the gate and treating it as a morbid sort of clubhouse. Even the crypt now acts as a table for their bongos and cheap beer, and graffiti lines the once-white walls. Nonetheless, no one has yet made a ruckus about the damages.

Though a tourist attraction as well as a teenager hangout, the cemetery has an incredibly dark past even for a graveyard. In the 18th century, a rather isolated witch-hunting craze swept the town. No less than five women were hanged from a giant oak in the middle of the cemetery. As if that were not horrifying enough, nearly a century later the mayor's small daughter was found hanging in the very same tree. There has been little trouble since then, and aside from a few fearful hearts, most residents visit (and party) there with abandon.

⚙️ Hemsworth Library & History Museum

Another (less morbid) attraction in Norwich is its small but impressive history museum, which is attached to the town's local library. Though somewhat sparse (even after centuries, it is hard to fill such a grand and expansive building with artifacts from such a small town), residents have a soft spot in their hearts for the butter churns and ancient pistols that can be found there. And the architecture attracts academic eyes as well, apparently featuring designs and techniques out of place for the area and the time it was built.

The museum's main attraction takes up very little space: A lovely opal ring from Marie Devereaux, wife of the city's first immigrant darling, Jean Devereaux. Or so the history goes. The ring was donated by an anonymous benefactor about a decade ago, and the museum's director was willing

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to suspend any disbelief and put it on immediate display. Marie's or not, the ring is a grand artifact, and catches the eye of every visitor.

While the museum may be a charming attraction, the library holds more numerous keys to the mysterious past of Norwich, Maine. Few go into the library on a regular basis, and even fewer bother to browse deep enough into the stacks to come upon the mysterious wooden door hidden at the back of the building. In fact, this door isn't even kept locked: A generation ago, the librarian lost the only key, and each successor rightly assumes that no one will bother venturing back there anyway. Behind this door is a staircase that descends deep into the catacombs below Norwich, into tunnels that stretch and crisscross into a network of unseen streets. Even those who know of these secret paths dare not explore them.

The only half-known route connects library to graveyard, but finding the exit is often impossible. The passage was used as a travel route and hiding space during the Civil War, when the town librarian, Victoria James, would take in men and women traveling on the Underground Railroad up the coast to Canada. Eventually word of Victoria's hideout reached the sheriff, and a mob of torch-wielding men ascended on the library one night. But when they arrived, she was gone, vanished into the depths of the catacombs. A search of the graveyard proved fruitless, and no one knows if she escaped or was swallowed by the darkness.

More than a handful of people have disappeared into the catacombs over the years: Good men and women who would never run out on their families nor their duties. Sadly, so few remember the catacombs that the truth of their disappearances is hardly suspected.

⚙️ Skelly's Diner on Main Street

Norwich's main hangout hub sits squarely in the middle of Main Street, drawing all kinds of locals. In the mornings you'll find busy commuters popping in for their coffees to go, while retired old men dine on pie for breakfast. Other regulars drift in and out throughout the day: Academy students come in to study and gossip, snacks and lunches for other Main Street proprietors, mothers too

tired to cook dinner grabbing half-made meals out the back door. At night, you'll see the midnight coffee crowd smoking and sharing poetry. Skelly's is a kind of neutral ground, where even the most bitter enemies can sit in adjacent booths without starting a fight.

One of the Diner's most familiar faces is Jack, a flannel-clad old man who never seems to leave his booth. He's there when they open and there when they close; he leaves only for the few hours in between when he retreats to his log cabin in the woods to sleep, or one would assume. Jack is Norwich's resident harmless kook, a man who can spend hours discussing highbrow literature and bring up the opinions of a local tree, shrub, or squirrel he has been talking to as though quoting a friend. Jack is beloved by everyone in town, and he has been known as a solid source of advice when he has his wits about him. And though his talk of trees may occasionally be a bit strange, even the least superstitious of residents will admit that he seems to have an almost psychic connection with nature. It's Jack who can predict when a storm is coming or when there will be a rough winter. Often even the most gifted teachers of the Order will consult him in matters that involve the woods.

⚙️ Surly Merle's

For those who have an interest in something stronger than coffee there's Surly Merle's, the obligatory dive bar (and only bar, really). This is far from the welcoming atmosphere of Skelly's. Here groups cluster off into separate corners where they can be left to their own devices. Bathed in red light and decorated with vinyl booths that haven't been replaced since 1976, it's a place where people go to hide in the shadows (and maybe to pick up one of the hookers that are there more nights than not, vestiges of the logging culture that for a brief time at the turn of the century colored Norwich).

There are fights at Merle's from time to time, both of the redneck and the supernatural varieties, but it's mostly a place where plans are made and secrets exchanged. Merle herself is a decent keeper of secrets and knows most of the people who populate the underbelly of the town. You could never buy a secret off Merle, but you might get one for offering a favor a two.

Surly Merle is the town's only truly neutral person. She holds everybody's secrets behind tight lips, but what of her own?

☼ Terry Park

Norwich's largest park is a less seedy hangout, at least during the day. Sparsely populated with trees (why bother, with a massive forest nearby?), the spacious field attracts children and adults alike. The tennis courts and baseball diamonds are popular spots, but the main attraction is the park's giant white gazebo. Built in the 1800s, the gazebo was meant to host a wedding ceremony that never took place. Lena McCleod was to wed Xander Keats, her childhood sweetheart. Both hailed from the wealthiest families in town, and seemed over the moon about their future together. But on their wedding day Lena never showed, and a dejected Xander shot himself in the gazebo that same night. As it happened, Lena was missing for days. After two weeks of fruitless searches, she emerged from the woods in her tattered wedding gown, wild-eyed and babbling in an unknown language. She never regained her sanity, and was sent to an asylum in San Francisco.

But nowadays the gazebo is a happy place, and most assume that the "doomed lovers" story is just a bit of exaggerated town lore. Students hang out there before and after school, and on the weekends bands often play for the surrounding picnickers. Teens also come to the gazebo at night, but these are not the mischievous characters that vandalize the Mayer mausoleum. Mostly they're just there to talk, smoke the occasional cigarette, and fantasize about life outside of Norwich. There is the occasional speculation about which stain is Xander's splattered blood, but little else morbid.

☼ The Tuberculosis Hospital

Another prominent (though less frequently visited) locale is the abandoned tuberculosis hospital that sits deep in the woods. Even graffiti-happy teenagers rarely make the trek to this spot, which is a good fifteen-mile hike from town through overgrown brush, barely a trail left leading to it. First constructed as a retreat for wealthy women, the tuberculosis outbreak of 1893 made doctors quickly reassess the building's purpose. Thus the luxurious chambers and high-class lounges meant for women who needed respite were turned into sterilized rooms for the ill, and soon little of their elegance remained.

Hundreds died in the center, all of them slow and painful exits. But the distance in place between the hospital and Norwich acted as a somewhat successful quarantine zone, and even the families of patients rarely made the trek. Soon the sickness died out with the hospital's last patient, and efforts were never made to turn it back into a retreat. In fact, no effort was made to turn it into anything, and it soon fell into disrepair. Nowadays its only residents are wild animals, though there is little to prevent the curious from coming in to investigate.

☼ The Schoolhouse

Slightly closer to town is a one-room schoolhouse that serviced the town in its infancy. Sitting on the edge of a pond, the small but sturdy building shows surprisingly little sign of disrepair, despite its age. This is partially due to the fact that the Schoolhouse is a sacred spot for local teens: It is close enough for a quick drive or bike, but far enough from the prying eyes of adults. Some parents even look on the Schoolhouse as a fine Norwich tradition, and conveniently ignore the underage drinking and gambling that goes on there.

Those who assume responsibility for the Schoolhouse actually run a very smooth operation, considering no one over 18 is involved. Unlike the mausoleum, teens aren't permitted to bring whatever they feel like. Instead it's very similar to a bar, where students who have found ways to procure alcohol (and other things) run the show, selling contraband to their classmates. The Schoolhouse is a slightly exclusive place, and only the cooler Norwich students get in, though there are occasional exceptions if a nerd has something to offer those in charge.

There are few problems at the Schoolhouse. Recently there was an unfortunate incident where a student wound up dead in the lake, but evidence was cleaned up efficiently enough that there remained no solid ties to the speakeasy. As far as the law could tell, the student wandered into the woods and drowned. An unhappy accident. Many rightfully believe there is more to the story, but little has been done to pursue further leads, especially since the barkeeps are children of some of the most powerful and wealthy people in town.

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❖ The Snow Shack Ice Cream Parlour

While plenty of places in Norwich have sordid pasts, there are a number of safe havens outside of the Academy, and the Snow Shack Ice Cream Parlour is one. The Snow Shack is (as one would expect) a place that doesn't draw much conflict. Built as a soda fountain and barber shop fusion in the early 1920s, the ice cream parlor is a long-standing attraction that attracts neither death, murders, nor ghosts. The proprietor not only serves the best ice cream in the county, but she is also rumored to have substantial healing abilities (why she didn't go into medicine no one has figured out yet). Much to the delight of children, a sundae from the Snow Shack has been known to cure strep-throat, and a rootbeer float might drive off a mean cold. Even the most superstitious of residents acknowledge that everyone feels better after a trip to the Shack.

SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS

With its rich history (and its Hellgate), there are plenty of supernatural occurrences in Norwich. Some of these are minor, while others can be deadly. There's the occasional possession or two, and sometimes shapeshifters cause mischief. One of the most insidious dangers lies with the town's ghosts. Ghosts roam the hospital, the cemetery, the grounds of the Academy: Every place where ghosts are apt to be. And Norwich ghosts don't just scare you; most of them will suck the very life from your bones. If a ghost passes through an unfortunate mortal, an entire year is taken off his or her life. Yet another reason most of the eerie and abandoned areas of town stay that way. Unless someone has the Sight, a ghost will appear as a glimmer of shine not easily noticed by the average human. Children of Norwich are raised on stories of the consequences of exploring haunted areas, and with good reason.

There are plenty of distinctions that divide the residents of Norwich. As with all towns, class and wealth hold ultimate power, and there's very little to challenge the status quo. But there's another element to Norwich that divides the population in half: The presence of the Sight. The Sight does not seem to be genetic, and the residents who have it seem to have been chosen at random. Those

who do can not only see ghosts, but also have other minor powers. Most of these abilities are unique to each person. One girl may be gifted with telekinesis while her brother can see in the dark. There's no rhyme nor reason to these abilities, but people get jealous nonetheless. Those who hold the most power in town are the ones fortunate enough to be born with money and the Sight, the true aristocrats of Norwich.

Without proper training, those who have the Sight can do little more than parlor tricks with it. This is part of the reason for the Academy, to train those born with the Sight how to hone and develop their powers. Those without any abilities are accepted to the school as well, but their more gifted peers get substantially more attention. This can cause substantial tension between students, and there is a small faction of non-gifted students who have begun to band together to retaliate.

Beyond ghosts and gifted mortals, there is also a group of vampires that live in town. One particularly rainy summer's day they were spotted near the Hellgate, and now they are local fixtures about town having set up camp in a mansion just outside the city limits. As far as anyone knows, there are only five of them. And they always seem to be throwing boisterous, decadent parties that nobody from Norwich ever gets invited to. They have been harmless thus far, but it is curious why such a pack would put down roots in Norwich.

Even some of the simplest oddities in Norwich are the strangest. The ravens, for example. The massive, intelligent birds are everywhere, and you can't walk a block without staring one down. Vastly more intelligent than your average bird, these ravens are often able to pick open windows, backpacks or purses, and sometimes even doors. The birds are not unfriendly per se, but most residents see them as pests. Only a few have tried befriending the ravens in recent years, and occasionally you can see someone walking around with one perched on her shoulder.

Norwich is a curious town on the outside, and a supremely dangerous one to those in the know. It hides many secrets and stories, and plenty of adventures and terrors await its residents.

Mod 08: DODGE

The Modern World's Obsession With Guns, Firearms, From My Cold Dead Hand

Because modern campaign settings include combat more focused on firearms than typical fantasy settings, we are including a mod useful for combat heavily reliant on guns and projectiles.

THE DODGE GAMBLE

Outside melee fighting, dealing counter-attack damage automatically may not realistically fit the circumstances. This mod offers defenders a special option when they are up against firearms or explosives that would naturally require dodging or maintaining distance to avoid.

If the fighter decides to “Dodge” any incoming attack, she must declare so after the attack is called but before either combatant roles dice.

A Dodge has two corollary effects. First, even if the dodging defender wins the bout, she cannot deal any counter-attack damage to the attacker.

However, she may manipulate

Conditions as normal. Second, if the dodging defender loses the bout, she decides how to arrange the incoming damage on her Character Tile. This reverses the default rule that grants winners the power to decide how to deliver damage to enemies.

For example: When Chang's player Omer finds his character, Professor Aciksoz, caught in a fire-fight with several CRIMINAL BIKERS, his best bet is to “dodge” the bullets so he can stay in control of how Aciksoz takes damage.

BIKERS roll: 1, 3, 6, 9, 0, 0
Omer rolls: 6, 7, 8

Omer loses the roll and takes 3[1] (three Stress Wounds) of damage instead of the 1[3] (one Mortal Wound) that Chang would have no doubt dealt if not for the special Dodge rule.

Or: Later in the fight, Aciksoz is still dodging bullets from the BIKERS.

BIKERS roll: 1, 2, 5, 6, 6, 7
Omer rolls: 5, 7, 9

Omer cannot deal any counter-attack damage even though he scores [1] in the bout. This is because his character is “dodging” and trades the ability to deal counter-attacks for the ability to decide where damage goes should he lose.

However, Omer can manipulate Conditions as normal with the Success, even targeting the CRIMINAL BIKERS with his declaration as usual.

DEMANDING A DODGE

You can decide whether certain weapons or equipment will force characters to use a Dodge in defense. Maybe Dodges are not allowed in melee fighting or when distances are short, but required in all ranged combat. Feel free to use this mod as your own campaign setting determines.

For example: Heidi uses this mod in her GAMMA CENTAURI game and decides that all gunfire forces the defender to use Dodge unless she has a gun of her own to return the fire.



MOD 09: ESSENCE METER

Heart, Essence, The Human Spirit, Our Unique Mode of Consciousness

This mod is suited for campaign settings that take special interest in measuring an individual's humanity, morality, sanity, loyalty, or purity. While stylized to match the **WANING MOON** setting, the mod could just as easily fit any number of horror, science-fiction, religious, or espionage genres.

ESSENCE

Whatever is being measured, the mod relies on the notion of a specific "essence" that constitutes the above list of qualities. This essence is typically measurable in the world of the game by one kind of observation or another, and can be affected by certain events that take place in the story.

For example: In a horror game that wants to represent characters struggling with sanity in the face of otherworldly creatures, the Judge might decide that each hero must roll a Check to "save against" trauma for each new horror that is encountered. A failed roll results in a "shift" (see below) toward "chtheria," a mental disorder fictionalized in the setting.

Or: In a typical high fantasy setting, the Judge might utilize an Essence Meter to establish each character's heroism. Undertaking optional quests and overcoming optional Obstacles allow heroes to gain "shifts" (see below) that count for honorable fame and renown in the world of the game.

However, the following presentation of this mod takes for granted the **WANING MOON** setting. For other uses, simply adjust the style accordingly.

HELLGATE

A demonic essence flows from the Hellgate in Norwich, Maine, creating a spiritual miasma that can infect the hearts and minds of humans in a variety of ways. The more demonic the character becomes, the more undead and evil she will be. Use the chart on the following page to track the impact of demonic essence on your hero.

Fey

When influenced or charmed in some way by the Fey creatures that are attracted to the Hellgate, characters will become more enigmatic, inhuman, and attached to the natural world. Use the chart on the following page to track Fey influence.

"Insanity" is a serious and complicated psychological issue that is often handled glibly in role-playing games. If you do want to represent the serious struggle with reality that can come alongside traumatic experiences, we recommend that you fashion a unique kind of mental instability situated in your specific campaign setting, rather than attempt to recreate actual mental illness in some way.

SEVEN MOONS

We add to the standard Character Tile a row of seven moons, each divided into four phases. These represent the current status of any individual's Humanity in **WANING MOON**. At the start of the campaign, every hero is fully human with no other essence marring her spirit.

Your setting need not include two categories of essence rivaling the human.

SHIFTS

Certain forms of damage can be converted into "shifts" that affect the target's Humanity. Whenever a shift is dealt, color in the next appropriate phase per the following rules:

Demon Shift

Using a black marker, fill in the next phase after the last Demon phase, whether empty or red. Demon shifts will erode or cross-out Fey phases, replacing a hero's Fey or human nature with demonic aura.

Fey Shift

Using a red marker, fill in the closest empty (i.e. human) phase, whether it follows a Demon or Fey phase. Fey shifts cannot cancel out Demonic phases, and will only replace human essence.

For example: Gwen's character Tela has the following Humanity Meter after several game nights:



The Essence Meter takes up a significant amount of space so special Character Tiles can be downloaded from our website

HELLGATE DEMON GRADE

Full Moons Marked

Effect

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| (1) TOUCHED | Can sense another's essence to nearest full moon |
| (2) TAINTED | A [3] can "shift" foe instead of dealing damage |
| (3) WICKED | Sin Sight: Can roll Check to learn secret/lie from full human |
| (4) SHAPESHIFTER | A [2] can "shift" foe. Create suitable Tile for new form |
| (5) HELLGATE CITIZEN | Shadow: Self-inflict 1[2] to become "Spectral" (page 147) |
| (6) HELLGATE NOBLE | A [1] can "shift" foe. Add Trait and Power to alternate Tile |
| (7) HELLGATE ROYAL | Gain Dominion (page 119). Add Power to alternate Tile |

FEY PRINCIPALITY GRADE

Full Moons Marked

Effect

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| (1) TOUCHED | Can sense another's essence to nearest full moon |
| (2) AWAKENED | A [3] can "shift" foe instead of dealing damage |
| (3) CHARMED | Glamour: Can roll Check to persuade a fully human mind |
| (4) SHAPESHIFTER | A [2] can "shift" foe. Create suitable Tile for new form |
| (5) FEY CITIZEN | Dreaming: Use [3] to pervert one Trait of a human target |
| (6) FEY NOBILITY | A [1] can "shift" foe. Add Trait and Power to alternate Tile |
| (7) FEY ROYALTY | Gain Dominion (page 119). Add Power to alternate Tile |

When she takes two "shifts" of Fey essence while fighting a hideous NYAD, Gwen fills in the next two empty phases with a red marker, eroding Humanity:



Later, in a fight with a VAMPIRE, Tela suffers a Demonic shift, resulting in the following:



When a player loses Fey essence, she loses any of the powers and abilities gained from the chart. In effect, the Fey aura has fled from the Demonic.

CATEGORIES

As your hero is "shifted" phase by phase, she will cross out the moons on the Character Tile. Every four phases count as one full moon, and each full moon unlocks a new level of powers and abilities available to the corrupted hero.

You will likely include special equipment or Custom Powers into your campaign setting that act as special defenses or remedies against the attacks and events that mar a hero's essence over time.

For example: Because Tela has one full Demonic moon on her Character Tile, she is considered "Touched by the Demonic" and has the powers listed on the chart above. Other characters will be able to sense this Demonic presence through various Custom Powers or corruption of their own.

Or: If a hero has three full Fey moons, they are considered "Charmed" in the game and have the ability to "glamour" or "charm" human minds.

Feel free to embellish and expand on these grades in your own **WANING MOON** game. Future iterations of the setting would no doubt have an entire chapter dealing with the effects of essence.

GAMMA CENTAURI

FANTAJI

Campaign Title: **GAMMA CENTAURI**

Genre: **Space Fantasy, Cyberpunk Dystopia, Space Opera**

Description: A hundred years ago, aliens came into our solar system through a wormhole. It was not death they wanted, but resources; though they had no qualms killing to take them. The aliens manufactured and exported goods humans did not even understand. But now Earth is tapped dry, and humans left to vie for scraps.

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

Tassak Empire: A federation of aliens serving the economic interest of Tassak

Corporation Governments: All governments are extensions of corporations

Rebel League: A small network of rebels resisting economic exploitation

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Shabuya Coup: The most powerful human corporation is caught in turmoil

Tassak Foreclosures: The Empire is calling in debts and escalating violence

Wormhole Blackspawn: New fiends from the wormhole haunt ships, worlds

UNIQUE MAGIC, TECHNOLOGY, ARTS

Alien Technologies: Only Tassak can use the wormhole to reach galactic trade

Blackspawn: Mysterious fiends made of plasma, oily creatures of gas and dust

Pervasive Scarcity: Most humans live in poverty, all wealth going to the Tassak

POTENTIAL MODS

- ☐ MOD 01: MILESTONE ARCS
- ☒ MOD 02: POWER CLASHING **[REC]** **[CLAS.]**
- ☒ MOD 03: BOONS **[RIS.]**
- ☐ MOD 04: SPELLBOOK ASSETS
- ☐ MOD 05: TREASURE GENERATOR
- ☐ MOD 06: ELEMENTAL MAGICS
- ☐ MOD 07: MARTIAL ARTS
- ☐ MOD 08: DODGE
- ☒ MOD 09: ESSENCE METER
- ☒ MOD 10: MEGA DAMAGE
- ☒ MOD 11: SKILL SYSTEM

RECURRING THEMES

1. *Harder Better Faster Stronger*
2. *Something About Us*
3. *Beyond Touch*
4. *Fragments of Time*
5. *Digital Love*
6. *One More Contact*
7. *Aerodynamic High Life*

STORY HOOKS & RABBIT HOLES

✦ Smugglers run knock-off goods from port to port avoiding Tassak officials ✦ Rival sons of the Shabuya Chief hire space pirates for espionage and sabotage missions ✦ Tassak overlords and missionaries seek liaisons and translators from among Earth's poor, favoring the talented ✦ Human rebels seek out alien allies to help them build some kind of independent economy ✦ A mythic moon or station that holds treasure

Humans are the only playable species in **GAMMA CENTAURI**, but what is stopping you from creating alien heroes as needed?

It is 2457 CE, and the solar system has long been colonized by a civilization from the other side of the galaxy. The Tassak came to Earth, spent two generations taking what they wanted, and then mostly left. But their presence is now more economic and infrastructural than military. Earth is entirely dependent on Tassak trade for food, medical supplies, clothing, electronics, and power. From the intergalactic point of view, it was once quite prized but is a now poor, “developing” planet with few prospects.

But while Earth may be in a dire spot, there are still humans with will and heart who are working to take back power and restore their home. Rebel factions are growing throughout the galaxy, and creatures from all races are secretly banding to defeat the Tassak hegemony. Unfortunately, with more and more Blackspace—the mysterious dimension of sub-space that allows Wormhole travel—being opened and escalating accounts of Blackspawn seeping through, the Tassak may soon be only the second-most destructive invaders to strike at our galaxy.

The human race always felt itself skilled at many things: Invention. Exploration. Survival. In previous millennia, maybe mankind did excel at such things, but there has always been one thing above all else we have been known across the galaxy for: Hubris.

When extraterrestrials first made contact with the residents of Earth, we just assumed that we could gain the upper hand. It started with a flash in the sky; an unidentified aircraft landed in central China.

THE TASSAK EMPIRE

The aliens called themselves the Tassak, and ambassadors from their empire arrived meekly on human soil, offering—practically begging for—friendship and allegiance. Unable to vocalize but communicating in rather skilled human writing, they seemed desperate for aid. Humans readily agreed to such an alliance with the unassuming race, and private corporations competed to sign contracts with the aliens for powerful new goods. These first Tassak were no match for humans physically. Small and green-skinned, the tallest of their kind reached only four feet high.

The demure race was quickly welcomed on Earth, and it seemed as though humans had hit the jackpot in securing their first intergalactic contact. The Tassak opened up new worlds to the humans, introducing them to other races and planets within our galaxy and beyond. Trade was soon established with other worlds, and the humans were delighted to have interaction with creatures and cultural products from thousands of other planets. Of course, the Tassak were necessary middle-men in any intergalactic trade.

When it came down to it, humans were naïve. They were proud. They let their guard down, and the Tassak patiently overcame it. Contract after contract, the aliens gained land, mined resources, and removed wealth from the planet. Of course they offered advanced technology in return, but never the most coveted science: Blackspace travel.

And by the time humans realized their error, saw the amount of control the meek little Tassak had over every exchange and cultural good, it was too late. Human cities remained in human hands, but the lands were no longer their own. Soon the Tassak had mining colonies spread all across the world, devouring the land, bringing in hardy alien races to plunge deeper for resources than human bodies could go. The Tassak seemed little interested in the increasingly impoverished urban areas of Earth. Soon most of humanity was living in cramped squalor, while races from other planets mined the vast wilderness.

EARTH CORPORATIONS

Although the Tassak possess technology beyond human means, they were not able to overtake Earth without some assistance. Three human corporations sold the world out, and were in turn allowed to trade within the intergalactic Empire: Shabuya, Mersey, and Himmeltieren. These three companies gladly bought up land and labor from their fellow humans, and sold both to the Tassak in return for larger access to trade. They built mines and factories, and provided resources for the colonizers. Most of humanity despises the “Big Three,” who practically gift-wrapped the planet for Tassak exploitation. But most of humanity is employed by them as well, so there is that.

GAMMA CENTAURI

SHABUYA FALLING FROM GRACE

Recently the Shabuya Corporation has begun to fall out of favor with the Tassaks and their business partners, and the conglomerate is slowly starting to crumble. While some within the Corporation are working to keep intergalactic ties strong, others whisper of a coup on the horizon. Investors want to cut and run. But run to where?

There have been mysterious explosions in the factories, ships that have simply disappeared without a trace, and even Shabuya executives who have died or gone missing in perplexing ways. Any open dissident within the “Big Three” would be quickly snuffed out—a convenient cruise ship accident or random robbery gone wrong—but something different is stirring within the ranks of Shabuya. Rumors fly, and the employees wait.

INTERSTELLAR LIFE

Average citizens of Earth do whatever they can to scrape by and survive, and most work in the enormous factories that take up the majority of space in the cities. Some tend meager farms on what little arable land is left. It is grueling manual labor, but these folk prefer the filth of dirt over the filth of soot. Lung cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the main cities, and though farming is back-breaking work, there is at least fresh air to breathe.

Not all humans are confined to their ruined home planet. Corporate executives and merchants are allowed to travel off Earth—not to mention the smugglers, migrants, and refugees who do so without authorization. For those who do emigrate to other planets and other galaxies, precarity follows possibility. While cheap human labor is in high demand across the reaches of space, most employers will hire humans in droves but at the same time disavow any reliance on such “illegal” bodies to the point of actively persecuting human workers caught without the proper documentation.

HUMAN LEAGUE

Those most intrepid humans have fled the lots given them by the Tassak overlords to create

guerilla camps in the few remaining forests of Earth or on small satellite moons. Various rebel factions are working to unite under a centralized alliance that draws from the disenfranchised of all races and planets, especially now that the Empire has begun to call in debts from under-developed planets.

Of course, the Empire has its ways of keeping an eye on dissidents and political malcontents. The “Eyes of the Empire” are everywhere, an omnipresent network of spies and surveillance technologies designed to track potential insurrectionists and their actions. “The stars have eyes” is a popular warning shared among rebel operations, and there is constant watch for spies.

THE EYES OF THE EMPIRE: An overarching Obstacle that monitors illegal activity and forces rebel heroes to keep plans quiet. **Traits:** *All You See is Mine, Masters of the Universe*. **Powers:** Galactic Vision (whenever a hero fails a Check relevant to something illegal, DT+ for THE EYES), Deploy Spacecrafts (see Ally), Deploy Soldiers (see Quick Spirits). If the Tile is destroyed over the course of a campaign, the group gains one full session “off the radar” before it is replaced. 6[2] / 6[1].

BLACKSPACE TRAVEL

While human vessels may afford travel to nearby planets and galaxies, the Tassak alone have the sophisticated and heavily guarded technology necessary to traverse Blackspace, a kind of intergalactic ether that provides needed shortcuts between distant galaxies. Blackspace makes possible intergalactic trade, but it also holds many dangers such as the horrors that occasionally slip through leaking or torn wormholes.

A variety of creatures collectively known as Blackspawn are said to crawl forth from tears in this dark space to wreak havoc on the galaxy. The most common breed of Blackspawn are the Liches: plasma ghosts that appear as human-shaped oil slicks that seem to swallow both light and matter. Even the Tassak are not immune to the dangers of the Blackspawn, and only a ship with a truly cunning and resourceful crew can survive an encounter with a horde of Blackspawn Liches.

Every thing of strength or beauty that does arise on Earth is quickly plucked up by the Tassak economy, exported to who knows where

BLACKSPAWN LICH: “Oily” humanoid creatures of anti-plasma that absorb light and paralyze spirits.
Traits: *Mind Over Dark Matter*, *Deep Space Grime* (2◇). **Powers:** Slick (see *Dual Wield*), *Summon Doppel*, *Vapid* (see *Clarity*). 2[2] / 2[1].

TRIALS OF THE OTHELLO

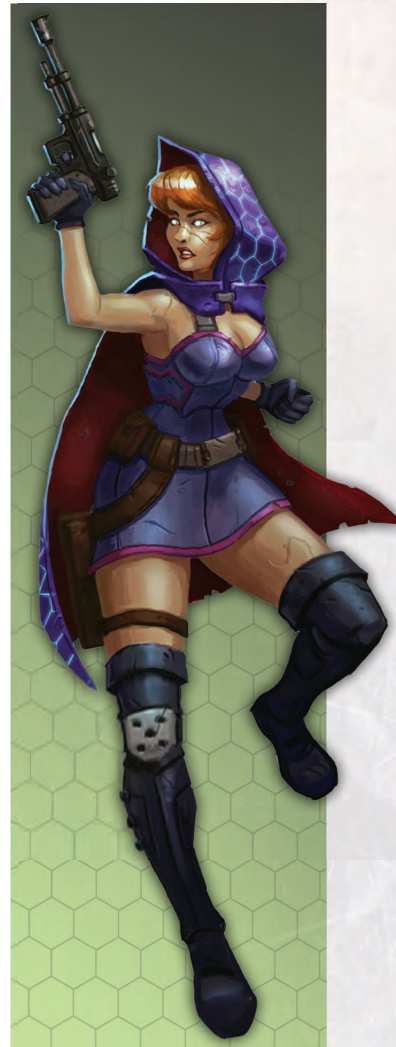
Led by the human Captain Amelia Irving, the Othello is the preferred mode of transportation for those Tassaks who wish to send highly “confidential” items across space. Less than a hundred human-helmed ships have the authority to leave the galaxy, and it is not for their undying loyalty to the Tassak. The crew of the Othello are some of the most talented sailors in the galaxy, trained in an elite military school in everything from cooking to armed combat. Lords of the Tassak underworld only hire the most skilled pilots to take their not-so-legal goods across the galaxy, and the Othello team is top notch.

Captain Irving is a notorious leader and negotiator, known for her icy demeanor and biting wit. Irving takes no sass from anyone and is one of the few non-corporate humans to survive open argument and contest with the Tassak. Ruthlessly efficient and not afraid to fight (and sometimes kill) for her job, Irving is feared and respected by humans and aliens alike.

Amelia is married to Tessa Irving, a woman who is the complete foil to Amelia’s ruthless nature. Tessa is the ship’s doctor, and the most approachable crew member by far. Compassionate and soft-spoken, most guests on the ship gravitate towards Amelia with questions and needs. Even perfectly healthy passengers have been known to spend entire trips in the infirmary just to save themselves from encountering the rest of the crew.

Picasso is the ship’s mechanic, an artist with the monkeywrench. As it happens, he is also the most brawny of the crew, his 7-foot stature often all it takes to intimidate disagreeable characters.

The Othello itself is impressive as far as human technology goes, though the years of wear, tear, and general adventure have made it nothing special to behold. It has eight small bunks for



the crew, enough to currently house everyone on board plus a spare. There are also community chambers, a kitchen, two small dining pods, an observatory, several cargo bays that frequently double as special-use rooms, and a library/study.

The Othello was originally flown by Amelia’s parents, and the current captain spent most of her childhood on board. The Irvings undertook a life of running deliveries during a more comfortable time when humans and the Tassak were apparent equals, often transporting high-end goods and corporate merchandise for the rich and powerful. However, as relations started to deteriorate between the two species, the frontier filled with dangers Amelia’s parents were not trained for. When Amelia was thirteen, Tassak privateers captured the ship, killing every adult and taking her

GAMMA CENTAURI

hostage. Amelia's ransom was paid surprisingly quickly—considering the archaic bureaucracy of the Tassak—by an unknown benefactor who remains mysterious to this day. She was sent to live with her grandparents, and only after several years of legal proceedings did her family come into possession of the Othello once more.

OUT OF TIME

Six years after Amelia regained the ship, she and the Othello were sent on their furthest-reaching mission to date: A journey through Blackspace as part of an epic dispersion of official bloodhounds looking for some missing vessel invaluable to the Tassak political elite (the details remain unclear even now). It was an event to make history—had any official channel ever been notified of the mission, that is—as the Othello marked the first human ship to be provided with the needed technology to travel such a distance. The only Tassak supervision on board was Gyrhi, a high-ranking commander in the Imperial army.

The team journeyed towards a sector of uncharted space to survey some set area or another in the

galaxy-wide search, though the specific directions they carried were sketchy at best. On the fifth day of the mission, the crew used the Tassak drivers to enter Blackspace, but something went wrong: They emerged after what the Othello and those on board recorded as nine minutes, while more than 50 Earth years had passed in the rest of the galaxy.

Now, out of time and without answers, the crew of the Othello have taken up where they left off 50 years ago as smugglers and cowboys of the stars. Gyrhi remains on board, his life with the Tassak erased from record, an unlikely addition to the crew at first but now a trusted and useful ally.

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

Most of **GAMMA CENTAURI** takes place in our galaxy, the only area of the universe most humans possess the technology to travel within.

⚙️ The Shabuya Space Station

The Shabuya Space Station was perhaps the most important locale in the first days of alliance between humans and the Tassak. This space station

CP-18K "FIRESIDE FRIGATE"

The CP-18K is a powerful warship designed by the Himmeltieren Corporation. Only two are in operation currently, each heading one of the Corporation's merchant escort fleets. While ineffective against Tassak technologies, the "Fireside Frigate" is a fearsome carrier ship in human conflict.

LION OF THE STARS FLASH FIGHTERS



Astronova Drive: The CP-18K receives 2 Checks and 1 Challenge per Round. Deploying and retrieving FIGHTERS or PROBES count as a Check. The ship cannot be attacked directly unless it has two or fewer ASSETS.

Plasma Cannons: A wave of plasma can target up to three enemies at once.



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sits at the mouth of a famous wormhole opening into our galaxy, and it is where the Tassak come and go. Once a majestic craft, the space station is merely a shadow of the grand intergalactic hub it once was. The halls and chambers feature once-cutting-edge architecture that now offers a pleasing, almost nostalgic aesthetic. Diplomats and alien royalty no longer convene here; major corporate negotiations no longer make use of the conference spaces; the mall includes only second-tier shopping. Nowadays, Shabuya Station is a hotspot for mercenaries and travelers, a place where less savory deals are made and less legal goods are exchanged. There are places of corporate grandeur to be found in the galaxy, but this has not been one of them for a very long time.

The most popular spot in the space station is the Cafeteria. The biggest room in the building, the Cafeteria is filled with stalls of vendors serving food from across the galaxy. It is here that travelers meet between missions to chat and share a drink, and also to exchange news of the frontier. Secrets are a valuable commodity in the Cafeteria, and anyone looking for information, especially about the government, knows this is the first place to seek out. However, it is best to be careful, for the hub is also rife with spies and even an assassin or two, hired to keep secrets from spilling out.

KEY PLANETS

While untold thousands of other planets exist, few beyond those listed here matter to human interests. These mark the most common allies and adversaries a human crew would face.

The Fringe

The Fringe is a cluster of planets in an adjacent galaxy to ours. If Earth is in bad shape, planets in the Fringe are abysmal. Once used as vacation spots and trading posts, the planets of the Fringe are now the stellar equivalents of ghost towns. Gangs have taken up residence in numerous shadows of these worlds, and there is even one planet—Seljus—that consists solely of brothels run by warring cartels. There is no law in the Fringe, and the Tassak State considers these planets too useless to take much note of them anymore. The only Tassak who venture here are those involved with the underworld.

Perhaps the most popular place within the Fringe is the Galaxy House, located in one of the more unsavory corners of Seljus (and that is saying something). Half-brothel, half-tavern, and all mischief, the Galaxy House is the preferred playground for intergalactic travelers looking to spend dirty money. Madame Mam, the iron fist behind the House, likes to pepper it with the theatrical air of Earth's occult. All her girls are required to learn palmistry and card reading, and some of the most skeptical patrons swear that Mam's predictions always come true.

Mam will even supposedly reveal the locations of hidden treasures throughout the galaxy, though her asking price is steep and often paid in much more than the standard credits or fuel reserves.

One planet in the Fringe is avoided at all costs, and only the least informed travelers fall for the apparent distress signal constantly radiating from below the planet's surface. Planet O-8, or "Oh-eight" as it is called, is located on the outskirts of the Fringe and appears as an oasis of lush forests and ample water supplies. However, those who touch down on the planet tend not to stay long. All visitors to O-8 report experiencing an overwhelming sense of dread from the moment they land. The most mild cases are characterized by anxiety and nausea, which seem to increase when venturing beyond any one of the myriad cave openings visible among the trees of the small planet. More extreme reports tell of visitors committing suicide after suffering debilitating hallucinations. No one is quite sure what (or who) once dwelled on this planet, though the distress call has a human signature. The longest recorded exploration of the planet lasted only two days before the entire crew reportedly committed suicide.

To the best of anyone's knowledge, O-8 is essentially one giant forest. There are bodies of water here and there, but the lands are almost entirely covered in strange crimson pine trees. A few animals have been spotted on the planet, and most resemble creatures found on Earth: cougars, bears, deer. It is uncertain what else may exist here, for no one who has returned from the planet was able to venture more than a mile away from

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their ship without growing ill or being overcome with nameless terror. In recent years, several corporations and planets have tried sending exiles to O-8 for a life of suffering, though no political bodies have yet ratified such cruel and unusual punishment.

⚙️ Pruth

Earth is not the only planet in the latter phases of Tassak domination. Pruth is a world not too different from our own, which was also gradually taken over and mined for resources on a similar timeline. Pruthans are a humanoid race (or perhaps humans are a Pruthoid race), who possess similar technological limitations as their Earthling counterparts. Their skin is a light grey and they have no body hair; aside from such defining characteristics, they very much resemble tall, slender humans.

Maybe surprisingly, humans and Pruthans got along well for a few generations, though once the Tassaks tightening the nooses, relations turned increasingly from cooperation to competition. The poor and disenfranchised have few opportunities to build networks of support when every resource must be fought after and hoarded just to keep individuals alive.

Some humans live on Pruth and vice versa. Most of these outliers left their home planet searching for better economic opportunities, unaware that counterparts were moving in the opposite direction for the same reason. Pruth does house the most successful and thriving rebel forces seeking to oust the Tassak, groups of guerillas who mostly focus on subtle sabotage of Tassak business and fomenting dissent among the masses.

⚙️ Therus

If Pruth is Earth's sibling planet, Therus is its babysitter. Tucked deep in the pockets of the Tassak, Therans serve as the most docile of the Tassak's lap-dogs and the most fierce of their guard-dogs. Most Therans assigned to Earth occupy overseer positions in factories or perform policing duties in the chaotic streets of one metropole or another. It is almost impossible to turn a Theran against the Tassak, and humans speak of them as the "dogs of the Tassak" due to a number of parallels. Therans

are much larger than humans with pinkish skin and four limbs that end in amorphous nubs that can shift to envelope objects almost like a living clay.

The planet Therus itself is a beautiful place, with windswept purple fields and golden mountains. The cities there are austere by most human standards, but the natural environments are truly something to behold, and the richest of Earthlings love taking lavish vacations to the planet. There is little unrest on Therus, though enough of the world is uninhabited that some human groups have considered taking the risk of setting up a major rebel station here, under the dogs' noses.

EARTH

While stripped of most natural resources, there are still the factories of Earth to attract intergalactic attention. Sadly, few places of beauty remain to soften the otherwise harshness of its surface.

⚙️ Tokyo Military Academy

The Academy is an elite school created by the Tassak and run by the Shabuya Corporation. The TMA grooms and trains the most sought after human servants in the Empire. Children and young adults who show potential are shipped in from all over the world, cut off from their families until they graduate at age 18.

Although it is labeled as a military academy, most students at Tokyo are sectioned off into different segments of the school, each of which represents a branch of skills critical to life on Earth (and to the Tassak): War, Industrial Design, Farming, and Intelligence. As soon as a student enters one of these departments, they are not allowed to leave until graduation, nor are they allowed to fraternize with students in other departments.

Recently there have been escalating disruptions among the student body. In a reactionary trend, troublesome individuals have been rounded up and taken away to special camps for weeks at a time, only to return as emotionless, dead-eyed versions of themselves. These Husks, as they are called, still attend classes and complete training exercises, though no Husk retains the faculty of speech or the desire to maintain social relationships. The students and public at large know that the Tassak

Music and film are imported from beyond the Wormhole, but Tassak “art” is filled almost entirely with wicked, inhumane fantasy

are “Husking” the young at an increasing rate, but the trend is treated as a public secret. Protests and demonstrations are common, but the media is reluctant to make a story of them.

⚙️ New London

According to rumor, New London stands atop what was once an uninhabitable marshland in the now-defunct United Kingdom. For reasons unknown, it was here that the Tassak decided to build the first mega-factories of Earth generations ago, and the new settlement drew its name from the once glorious city of London, which had been destroyed entirely in a singular demonstration of power by the Tassak regime.

Today, New London is the most dense urban landscape on the planet. The hub has spread over the waters of the North Sea into what was once the Netherlands, and experts claim the sprawl will soon reach the Scandinavian coast. New architectural technologies have enabled the mega-factories to be built not only outwards, but upwards. As a result, there is no true “ground level” to the crawling districts that grow out and up across the devastated earth and diminished sea.

⚙️ Eden

But while most of New London is a smog-covered nightmare, it is said that the Tenth District is an “Eden” that floats above the soot-filled world below. To those on the lower levels of the city, Eden is no more than an urban legend, the focus of a cruel optimism. However, to the upper-class executives, Eden is a reality. It exists as a playground for those in the highest standing with the Tassak: Corporate figures, mega-factory managers, and the military elite. Here the privileged of Earth live in blissful peace, white picket fences and all. There are parks, luxury restaurants, shopping centers, and endless days of sunshine. The Tassak have made it as comfortable as possible for the residents of New London, and this comfort makes it easy to control their loyalty, especially when residents look upon the filthy lives of those in the lower discs.

⚙️ Wyoming

One of the last factory-free places on Earth, the one-time “united state” of Wyoming is where the majority of farmers live. There is still a substantial

amount of Tassak control and surveillance, but it is not like in the rest of Earth, where “The Eyes” are always watching. There are a few small cities in Wyoming, but most of the population lives spread throughout the state on isolated plots of land. It is a free life, at least compared to those found in the cities. However, this freedom comes with a price, and the Tassak have confiscated much of even the most basic technology from residents. With all that space and not enough surveillance, access to technology would make it too easy for humans to spend time working for themselves instead of the aims of the Empire.

Only a sliver of the population has electricity, and horses are a luxury. Wyoming is a lonely place, even for families, and many of the city dwellers who relocate here cannot handle the quiet space. Some go mad. However, not all residents of Wyoming are isolated from society. Deep in the forests there



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DK3 "TYPHOON MARU"

The Shabuya DK3 is a vicious fighter ship used in dog fights and small skirmishes all along the frontier. Illegal in certain sectors for its lack of pilot-protecting armor, the "TYPHOON MARU" is used primarily by as a mercenary vessel at the whim of Tassak authorities and corporate interests.

MASTER BLASTER EDGE OF THE NIGHT

Maru Drive: The DK3 receives 1 Check and 1 Challenge per Round and can function as an Asset or Familiar depending on the nature of the fleet (see Mount/Pet)

Gadfly Cannons: see *Spines*

Ultra Light: Any Condition created by the DK3 will offer 2DT- when tripped



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exists the Grove, a small city of rebels who live off the land. These rebels have managed to evade Tassak surveillance for years. While their daily lives are rough, they enjoy relative autonomy.

Residents of the Grove live in a commune of hand-built cabins, generate their own electricity, and have a sustainable system of agriculture. Despite the technology ban, over the years the Grove has managed to procure a small arsenal of weapons and electronics, and their stockpile is finally formidable enough to start attacking the Tassak.

⚙️ The Catacombs

The Catacombs are in part a remnant of life before the Tassak. Supposedly the core of the Catacombs were once a major cultural artifact of the city called "Paris." However, in the year 2457, the Catacombs have been expanded into a massive underground network of mazes and caverns across the mainland of Europe where bands of human survivors and rebels hide. No one is sure how large the Catacombs are, but they are big enough to house several nomadic factions and a handful of small cities. The Tassak are seemingly useless underground, unable

to maneuver gracefully or see in dim light, making the Catacombs an ideal space for survival.

After many years of growth and expansion, the passageways have grown beyond the possibility of two-dimensional mapping. Explorers with digital scanners have begun venturing out into the uncharted tunnels to map the areas and take stock of the environment that now sustains them.

A local mystery has arisen: Those adventuring in the Catacombs have stumbled upon tunnels and structures built by neither human nor Tassak. What seem to be machines and rudimentary technologies exist. Who created these mysterious roads and chambers? Another alien race that went unnoticed before dying out? Something from Earth's own dark past?

The darkest of explanations hold that some rift in Blackspace was at some time opened deep in the crust of the Earth. Maybe this rift is how the Tassak first took note of our galaxy. Rumor has it that explorers have started disappearing when mapping these unexplained ruins.

Mod 10: MEGA DAMAGE

Adding Classes or Levels to Damage, Super Technologies, Vehicle Combat

Sometimes you need a way to represent “classes” or “grades” of weaponry that reflect extreme disparities between different kinds of damage.

*For example: In Erik Frankhouse’s **WARPAINT** setting, a monster that is forty feet tall will be able to damage cars and buildings with its fists, causing destruction impossible for humans to attempt. If this same monster strikes at a human target, some new rule needs to handle the massive force of such a blow.*

To capture the various “registers” or “levels” of damage that certain high-powered entities or weaponry can dole out, we created the Mega Damage mod covered here. Keep in mind that these grades could easily reflect superhuman abilities as much as levels of technology.

DAMAGE GRADES

Your particular setting could have any number of classes or grades, and the only rule needed is to explain how an entity of a higher register impacts entities on lower levels and vice versa.

Whether your game will include only three grades, as in Heidi’s **GAMMA CENTAURI** setting, or extrapolate upwards of nine, the following rules are the same. For clarity, we will use the three grades of **GAMMA CENTAURI** in the following examples.

Human Grade

This covers all of the typical weapons and technologies of a modern setting. Guns, lasers, swords, and human bodies all deal Human Grade damage.

Vessel Grade

Large vehicles or explosive devices deal Vessel Grade damage. These include most personal spacecrafts, jets and airplanes, tanks, anti-aircraft rocket launchers, and small thermal detonators.

Nova Grade

Larger spacecrafts and anti-planet weapons strike with Nova Grade force. These include the massive flagship space vessels (those with sleeping decks, hallways, and dozens of crew members) and extremely powerful detonations.

ATTACKING DOWN

When a weapon attacks an entity of a lower grade, any individual block of damage will wipe out all Wounds at that level along with all smaller Wounds as well. It does not matter how many levels down you go; the effect is the same.

For example: Using a Vessel Grade mecha suit, Erick’s smuggler is attacking a typically armed Human Grade soldier. If Erick deals 1[2] in the bout, he will cross off ALL the opponent’s Flesh AND Stress Wounds. The Vessel Grade weaponry cuts through human bodies with ease. If the Obstacle has no Mortal Wounds, then a single [2] would completely destroy it.

ATTACKING UP

When attacking an opponent at a higher grade, your individual attacks will be less effective: Every Wound listed on the stronger Tile requires [3] to deal, and Wounds must be dealt from smallest to largest across the stronger Tile’s Resistance.

For example: When the soldier strikes back at Erick, three Successes must be used to deal a single Stress Wound, and the enemy must deal them all first.

INTERPOLATING GRADES

You may find yourself creating special, unique grades for various forms of equipment or new technologies. When this happens, simply decide between which two levels the new technology resides and treat Challenges and damage accordingly.

For example: Heidi wants to create a Mecha Grade between the Human and Vessel Grades to represent one-pilot fighters used in atmospheric combat. This may last only a single Scene, but she feels it will better represent the classes of vehicles in a low-atmosphere battle.

These special, unique grades will not get in the way of your dominant classes at all.

For example: Any Vessel Grade aircraft will still deal “mega damage” to a Human Grade opponent regardless of how many additional levels are created between them. When you are attacking across grades, it does not matter how many levels you go.



Mod 11: Skill System

Needed Technical Know-How, Learning & Culture, Specific Skills, Science!

Your campaign setting may demand a little more diversity in the abilities of its Characters. There comes a time when you need to know if someone has the know-how to reprogram the console, fly the helicopter, or translate the instruction manual. Handle formal training and learning with skills.

DECIDING ON SKILLS

It is no simple task to devise the list of fixed skills included in your campaign setting. Skills should add flavor and strategy—not simply weight and complexity—to your game.

Making skills technically useful without making them unofficially mandatory is a careful art. Too many role-playing games have a skill or two that every single character needs to pick regardless of concept or build. Why not just include such abilities in the basic rules?

Other games feature skills that are so obscure or specific that the only way a character would actually get a chance to use one is if the Judge intentionally adds just the right challenge or trial. It just so happens that only a hero trained in Vedic Mythology can answer the riddle in this magic door? How convenient!

The charts on the following page offer a solid list of default skills for a futuristic campaign setting. They are arranged in two basic categories:

SOFT SKILLS

A **Soft Skill** represents formal training in an area of performance or know-how that would otherwise be considered a natural or universal ability.

For example: A skill such as Persuasion would be a Soft Skill. Anyone can attempt to persuade somebody else, yet those with formal training are better at it than the average smooth-talker.

Or: Climbing is an action that any fit body is capable of attempting, but there are many moves and tricks that one can learn through practice and study that make one a better climber.

Soft Skills refine your hero's ability to perform something that she would otherwise learn only

Another option may be to let players invent their own skills as they play. Each new hero begins with one Soft and one Hard Skill, and they can negotiate with the Judge to settle on the right scope.

As the campaign progresses, the Judge may prohibit certain actions that she thinks would warrant a Hard Skill, making a list on the side. This fleshes out your game world as you play.

from experience. This formal training functions in the game with reduced Difficulties. Keeping things simple, we suggest that Soft Skills guarantee a Difficulty of 3 on all related Checks.

For example: A character with the Persuade skill will never have to roll higher than 3 to pass a Check. Of course, your own campaign will determine what scope of narrative effects follow from a single roll.

HARD SKILLS

Hard Skills represent kinds of learning that open up new areas of performance entirely. Someone without formal training in the area would not be able to even attempt such an action.

For example: Without the Programming & Hacking skill, a character could not attempt to reprogram the door lock. To make a go at Programming & Hacking at all, your character requires some formal training.

Or: A character without Pick Locks cannot intuit or reason her way through picking a lock. Without formal training, there is no way to attempt the act.

Some skills may seem to go either way. In this case, it works well to fix a Hard Skill that prohibits rolling Checks but allows narrating actions.

For example: If your game includes a Horseback Riding or Horsemanship skill, consider setting it as a Hard Skill. You may allow characters to simply ride a horse without needing the skill, but they would be unable to roll a Check—generating Drama or manipulating a Condition—without formal training.

You will need a suitable Character Tile from the Anthropos Games website to include Hard and Soft Skills in your **FANTAJI** game

Set the Difficulties for Checks that involve Hard Skills as you would any other Check. Maybe you consider how relevant the proposed skill is as a factor when assigning Difficulty as well.

For example: Can a character with Pick Locks attempt to roll against electronic locks? Maybe the skill only tangentially relates, and the Judge sets a higher Difficulty accordingly.

INITIAL SKILLS

If your **FANTAJI** game includes a Skill System mod, you will need an additional Step during Character Creation. We recommend inserting that Step just after the hero has determined her initial Powers. Following the precedents so far, each hero can begin with two skills from the lists. They may be rolled at random or chosen.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

To fit this mod neatly into the default rules, we have found that it often suits the narrative to overlap new skills with Health. Each time the hero purchases a new Health level with her Milestone, include a new skill as well.

Both of these aspects of your character represent personal growth that takes time and practice, and linking skills to Health has come to feel natural in test campaigns that included a Skill System.



1-4 SOFT SKILLS

- 1: PERSUADE
- 2: ATHLETICS
- 3: DESIGN
- 4: PERFORMANCE
- 5: EMPATHY
- 6: STEALTH
- 7: DECEPTION
- 8: MEMORY
- 9: LOGIC
- 0: WRITING

5-7 SCIENCE HARD SKILLS

- 1: PROGRAMMING & HACKING
- 2: ENGINEERING
- 3: PILOT: PERSONAL VESSEL
- 4: PILOT: CREW VESSEL
- 5: MATHEMATICS
- 6: MECHANICS
- 7: BIOLOGY & MEDICINE
- 8: CHEMISTRY & APPLICATIONS
- 9: ASTRONOMY & NAVIGATION
- 0: TWO ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES

8-0 FICTION HARD SKILLS

- 1: PILOT: MECHA FIGHTER
- 2: BLACKSPACE TECHNOLOGIES
- 3: TASSAK LAW
- 4: INTERGALACTIC BUSINESS
- 5: MINING & MACHINING
- 6: WILDERNESS SURVIVAL
- 7: URBAN SURVIVAL
- 8: FRINGE PLANET CULTURES
- 9: PRUTH CULTURES
- 0: THERUS CULTURES

*While these Soft Skills may suit a variety of settings, your own Hard Skill lists would, of course, match your particular game world.

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ABSTRACT OBSTACLE - See *Obstacle, Abstract*

ASPECT - See *Niche*

ASSET - One form of subordinate Tile in **FANTAJI** is the Asset, which works to grant extra Traits and Powers to its Host. Assets do not take turns but exist only to “buff” or “augment” whatever Host Tile controls them. Artifacts, affiliations, and circumstantial advantages make for good Assets.

When the Host Tile rolls a Challenge or defense, the Powers and Traits of *both* Tiles are engaged, and the player uses the Drama of the Host. When an enemy attacks the Asset alone (which can be very smart), the player defends with *only* the Traits, Powers, and Drama of the Asset. See page 63 for more on deploying Assets.

“AT WILL” - A Power that is listed as “At Will” can be used once per Round and typically only during that Tile’s specified team Round. This means that by default a Power marked as “At Will” for the hero cannot be used during the Player-Round *and* the Enemy-Round, but only the former. However, the Block Power, for instance, works only on the Enemy-Round, which follows common sense. See page 61 for more on “At Will” Powers.

ATTACK - **FANTAJI** does not have a specific move or event called an “attack.” Instead, we use the term “Challenge” to represent an action through which one Tile directly confronts and attempts to overcome another. These are not necessarily the same things, however. The in-game narrative may include any number of “attacks” that nevertheless mechanically function as Checks or even Forcing a Condition rather than a true Challenge. The difference is in the mechanical consequences.

“AUTOMATIC” - A Power that is listed as “Automatic” or “Auto” occurs without any rolling but takes up the Tile’s entire turn. See page 61 for more on “Auto” Powers.

BLACK - We use the color black to distinguish Obstacles from other kinds of Tiles on the table. We recommend that you use black for all Obstacles when writing Tiles at home.

This **REFERENCE GLOSSARY** doubles as an **INDEX**. Whether you are searching the text in a PDF or flipping through the printed volume, this **GLOSSARY** can help you locate what you want and answer the quick question or two. Let us know what would make this appendix better at the Anthropos Games website; we live to serve after all.

BLUE - We use the color blue to distinguish Themes from other kinds of Tiles on the table. We recommend that you use blue for all Themes when writing Tiles at home.

BOUT - Any contest between two or more Tiles that is initiated by a Challenge and involves the players rolling pools of dice against one another. This entails more than one player rolling a full pool of dice with Traits, Themes, and Drama.

CAMPAIGN - The ongoing adventure that you and your friends create over the course of gaming together. A campaign might last only a single night, or you could continue the same story over several sessions and spend months with the same Characters exploring the same world.

CAMPAIGN DECK - See *Deck*

CAMPAIGN SETTING - The type of world or environment in which your group of Characters adventure and travel. **FANTAJI** can work in any type of world and any genre, though we include extensive introductions to four campaign settings in this corebook, starting on page 158.

CARD - See *Tile*

CHALLENGE - When a player seeks to engage an Obstacle directly in hopes of damaging or otherwise overcoming it, she makes a Challenge. A Challenge requires the player to declare an action that “plays to” as many Traits and Themes as possible, granting one die per relevant marker. Each Drama Token on the Tile also adds another die to the pool.

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The defender will declare a similar action, making a counter-Challenge according to the same rules. Whoever rolls higher wins, and every die that beats the loser's highest counts as a Success. See the lengthy discussion starting on page 38 for the full process.

CHARACTER - One of the four fundamental Tiles in **FANTAJI**, though basically a specialized or more developed Obstacle. A Character Tile is used to record each hero and major villain in your campaign. In most cases, there is no mechanical distinction between Characters and Obstacles.

CHECK - When a player seeks to engage an Obstacle indirectly or build their own momentum, they make a Check. She declares an action that "plays to" one Trait or Theme and rolls one die against a Difficulty set by the Judge (always 3, 5, or 8). A Success results in either a Drama Effect or Condition Effect.

We use the form "Check@n" to communicate the Difficulty of a given Check in shorthand. See the full discussion starting on page 34 for more.

CLASH - A tie. When the highest number rolled in the attacker's and the defender's pools are the same, the two combatants are said to Clash. By default a Clash results in DT+ for both participants (although "Stressed" Tiles do not gain Drama on Clash). See the blue box on page 38 for an introduction to the basic Clash. The "Power Clashing" mod adds further rules on page 155.

CLASH, TRUE - When two combatants tie on a "natural zero," we call this a True Clash. Certain Powers and effects are triggered only during the exceptional event of Clashing at the highest degree possible. In most cases, it will not matter how many of each "zero" is rolled.

CLIMAX - See *Key Moment*

"COMBO ATTACK" - An unofficial phrase we use to describe a Bout involving more than two combatants. The same rules apply when there are multiple attackers as when there are multiple defenders. See page 39 for a lengthier discussion beginning with the "Multiple Targets" passage.

CONDITION - One of the four fundamental Tiles in **FANTAJI**. A Condition represents a concrete situation, matter of fact, or brute reality. While Traits and Themes are literary and figurative, Conditions are tangible and grounded. Players can use Conditions to hinder their enemies, but the possibility of "painting oneself into a corner" always exists as well.

See page 25 for an introduction to Conditions, page 42 for how they are leveraged in combat, and page 99 for tricky ways Judges can make Conditions a more strategic part of any Scene.

CONDITION, TRIPPING - Whenever a player declares an action that accidentally or inadvertently stumbles over one of the Conditions in play, she is said to "trip" on the Condition. Tripping a Condition results in an immediate DT- before any roll can be made. Checks and Challenges can both trip Conditions, and players should be careful to heed each Tile on the table when declaring actions. Think of Conditions as small "land mines" or "booby traps" spread out across the table waiting to trip up your Character or another Obstacle. Terribly uninspired actions could even trip on multiple Conditions at once. See page 44 for a full introduction to tripping on Conditions.

CONDITION, TRUMP - Sometimes the clever player will create a new Condition that occludes or obviates a Condition already on the table. In this case, we say that the new Condition "Trumps" the previous. Do not let a new Condition replace or negate an earlier Condition unless the new description is clearly accomplishing such a result. For a full discussion of Trumping, see page 99.

CONDITION EFFECT - When a player wins a Check or a Challenge, each Success can be used to have a single Condition Effect. If multiple Successes are scored, multiple Effects can occur. Each [1] can be used to create a new Condition, eliminate a Condition already in play, or Force the Condition.

To "Force" a Condition is to activate that circumstance or leverage it somehow against your opponent. While Conditions are neutral and

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universal, they can still be made to disadvantage one Tile or another through creative Forcing. Forcing a Condition does not “target” any specific Obstacle or Tile, and the person Forcing the Condition must describe precisely how she triggers, activates, or leverages the Tile in the narrative. Forcing a Condition can sap Drama from more than one Tile (inadvertently hitting an ally or even the person who Forced it!).

For example: Tossing oil on a fire to Force the “Raging Bonfire” Condition could end up sapping Drama from anyone near the fire, and such an action could reasonably said to trip up the person tossing the oil as well!

Conditions are introduced on page 25. See the section devoted to Condition Effects on page 42 for more. See page 99 for a more expansive discussion of Conditions.

CUT-SCENE - Role-playing is less fun when players focus too closely on the Tiles and stop living in the world of imagination and limitless possibility. **FANTAJI** suggests that Judges use cut-scenes sparingly when a strategic shift or adjustment in a Scene is needed to shake things up or move things forward.

See page 29 for more on how Judges should feel free to shake up Scenes, page 31 for a quick introduction to cut-scenes, and page 102 for a longer discussion of how and when to use them.

DAMAGE EFFECT - When a Character or Obstacle scores a Success in a Challenge, she can choose to deploy a number of Successes as damage, which results in crossing one or more Wounds off the losing Tile. In most cases, the winning combatant dictates which Wounds are dealt on the opposing Tile. See page 39 for an introduction to the Drama Effects of Challenging.

DECK - Building a Deck of 50+ Tiles at the beginning of a campaign is an invaluable exercise for Judges. Not only does the brainstorming necessary for creating that many Obstacles and Themes open up new ideas for the story, but the process also cuts down on the time needed for future session prep. Most of the Tiles should be Obstacles.

DEFENSE - Whenever a Tile is Challenged by a player, that Tile can roll a defense. Defending in Fantaji amounts to nothing less than a counter-Challenge, and most Powers and special abilities that work on a Tile’s own turn will still be in effect when it defends. Defenders can deal Damage and Condition Effects just like the Challenger.

DIAMOND - See *Star*

DRAMA - **FANTAJI** measures a Tile’s intensity and momentum with Drama Tokens. Importantly, Drama is not a meta-game record of your Character’s “mana” or “action points” at all; Drama is visible in the world of the game to everyone present in the Scene. Most Obstacles can gain Drama by making Checks, but Clashing and built-in Triggers also work. See a longer discussion of what Drama looks like in the game on page 10.

DRAMA EFFECT - When a Character or Obstacle passes a Check, the resulting Success can be used to trigger a “Drama Effect,” which just means the Tile gains a single Drama Token from the pot. We write this as “DT+” in shorthand.

DRAMA TOKENS - We measure the escalating Drama and momentum of Characters and Obstacles with Tokens or counters, written in shorthand as “DT,” stacked on or near the Tile. Ceramic tokens that work to count Drama and optionally mark the nine Status Effects can be purchased from the **ANTHROPOS GAMES** website.

DURABILITY - See *Resistance*

ELIMINATE CONDITION - See *Condition Effect*

EQUIPMENT - See *Gear*

EXPERIENCE - **FANTAJI** measures the growth of Characters and Familiars with Themes that are earned and awarded during Scenes. The number of Themes that any Tile currently possesses could be considered its value in “experience points,” though the qualitative nature of Themes makes their importance broader than a matter of how many of them any Tile might have.

FAMILIAR - A subordinate Tile that functions in most cases as an entirely autonomous actor controlled by a player or serving the best interest of another Host Obstacle. See page 62 for more on deploying Familiars during Scenes.

FORCE CONDITION - See *Condition Effect*

GAMI - The spiritual forces of nature in the **MÁZAKI** campaign setting. These do not have personalities or a sense of self exactly, but they can feel the basic affects of other living beings, such as fear, disgust, shame, joy, etc.

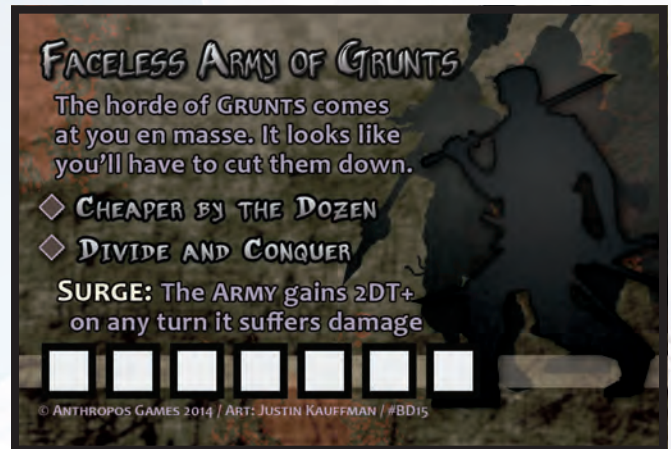
GEAR - The equipment, weapons, and tools each Character carries along during an adventure. **FANTAJI** does not track individual items but “suites” or “ensembles” of items. Starting Characters in **FANTAJI** have 3 Slots for holding their Gear. See page 70 for the full treatment of Gear and pages 168–169 for special kinds of Gear suited to the **BLOODSBANE** campaign setting.

HEALING - The only official way to heal in **FANTAJI** is by “cashing in” Drama at the end of a Scene. Wounds can be healed by the law of squares: 1DT heals [1]; 4DT heal [2]; 9DT heal [3]. If the party does not have enough Drama to heal everyone, those injuries carry over no matter how much time passes in-game before the next Scene. Consider these Wounds meaningful scars or injuries that stick with the hero for a time. See page 46 for a longer discussion of healing Wounds.

HEALTH - See *Resistance*

HANGAMI - A corrupt spirit in the **MÁZAKI** campaign setting that takes shape as the physical manifestation of a Gami’s pain. Uncertainty surrounds whether the monstrous Hangami are symptoms of a natural disorder, a means through which the Gami purge themselves of disorder, or actually the disorder made flesh. This debate is not purely academic because it would greatly influence the best way to address, appease, or attack such Hangami.

“Hoc” - A Familiar that is created *ad hoc* each time it is summoned to suit the current moment.



We mark such Familiars as “Hoc” on the Power chart found on page 65 to distinguish them for those Familiars that are fixed ahead of time. For more on how Familiars take turns and function in **FANTAJI**, see page 62.

JUDGE - The Game-Master or Dungeon-Master of **FANTAJI**. The Judge has very few powers beyond those of any other player. Because the group as a whole will generally determine which markers are “played to,” the authority of the Judge rests in only two places: Setting the Difficulty of Checks and awarding Themes. Once a Scene begins, the Judge is in many ways just another player.

KEY MOMENT - A benchmark Scene for a campaign, typically designed as an extremely difficult encounter that Judges can design ahead of time. Key moments, or key victories, can be complex enough to require a great amount of preparation, investigation, smaller Scenes, and role-playing before tackling directly. In the “Reverse Engineering” passage on page 109, we introduce how key moments can fit into an ongoing campaign. An entire section is dedicated to constructing key moments and “boss battles” starts on page 114.

MARKER - We use this term to refer to both Traits and Themes. Since Traits and Themes function nearly identically during a Check or Challenge, it helps to have a single term that contains them both. In the forthcoming **FANTAJI ESSENTIALS** publication, we use the word “Tone” similarly to mean either type of qualitative marker available in a Scene.

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“MATTER OF FACT” - See *Condition*

MILESTONE - The qualitative benchmark or victory that allows a hero to redeem Themes for a new Trait, Power, or Resistance block. Milestones can work in one of two ways: Either reaching the Milestone “unlocks” the next experience upgrade for the player, allowing them to cash in Themes and earn the new ability; or redeeming the appropriate number of Themes then triggers or “unlocks” the Milestone in the narrative. See page 68 for the full introduction and page 152 for a mod that expands on the default Milestones.

MOD - A modification of the default **FANTAJI** rules that either add new elements into play or dramatically change one or another part of the default mechanics. This corebook contains 11 such mods, three of them neutral and eight tied to the original campaign settings. Forthcoming **FANTAJI REALMS** and **FANTAJI ELEMENTS** publications will include more mods for those players desiring other styles of play and new ways to explore the **FANTAJI UNIVERSAL ROLE-PLAYING GAME**.

n - We use the variable *n* when representing situations in which the same number will occur multiple times in a single description or just to communicate that the exact number filling its place is yet to be determined. The variable will often let the player know the ratio or relationship between certain elements of a Power.

NEUTRAL MOD - See *Mod*

“NEUTRALIZE” - What happens when an Abstract Obstacle is overcome or destroyed. Because Abstract Obstacles do not typically entail enemies or monsters that need “killing,” we refer to their elimination as a process of “neutralizing” the Tile. See page 22 for more on Abstract Obstacles.

Niche - The first step of creating a new Character Tile in **FANTAJI** is rolling up a Niche. The Niche records where your hero fits in the greater society of the campaign setting. In the default rules, your Niche has a personal, social, and political aspect, each detailing how your character is situated along one particular axis of personhood. For more on

the default Niche rules, see page 56. For a section dedicated to customizing your Niche, including a way to recreate the “races” and “classes” of a typical high fantasy role-playing game, see page 144.

OBJECTIVE - When the players come up with a goal or objective for their heroes, the Judge writes this as any other Obstacle on the table. Objectives represent the players taking initiative and deciding on the problems they want to address in an ongoing campaign. Objectives could be Abstract or Overarching, but in any case they function exactly as other Obstacles. See the bottom of page 93 for a discussion on objectives and player-generated Obstacles.

OBSTACLE - One of the four fundamental Tiles in **FANTAJI**. Obstacles are used to represent all of the monsters, baddies, problems, puzzles, and conflicts the players encounter. They are written in a black marker on an index card. Obstacles can be as literal and specific as a broken bridge or angry monster and as intangible and general as an infrastructure of corruption or grumpy attitude.

All Obstacle have Traits just like Characters. A “Typical” Obstacle will have Resistance and take turns during the Enemy-Round. Typical Obstacles are analogous to less developed Characters and can make Checks and Challenges as usual. “Abstract” Obstacles do not have resistance and instead are defeated by reducing their Drama to zero.

See page 21 for the full introduction to Obstacles, page 82 for Obstacles that work outside combat, the section beginning on page 92 for a discussion of how to create truly interesting Obstacles, page 104 for more information on alternatives to simple Obstacles, and page 114 for using groups or assemblages of Obstacles to make a difficult “Boss Battle” or climactic Scene.

OBSTACLE, ABSTRACT - Any Obstacle that is primarily overcome when its Drama is reduced to zero rather than by suffering damage. Abstract Obstacles will often have triggers that cause some preset event or effect when the Tile reaches a certain amount of Drama.

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If the Judge wants to make important Abstract Obstacles optional, such as saving innocent lives or finishing a task quickly, she may tuck a Theme under the Tile as a reward for overcoming the Obstacle.

See page 22 for further information. Another discussion on page 96 covers advanced options for creating Abstract Obstacles.

OBSTACLE, OVERARCHING - These Obstacles exist outside a single, fixed Scene and can persist, follow, or haunt the party of heroes throughout the duration of a campaign. Overarching Obstacles will often represent a larger danger or situation that exists as part of the campaign setting itself. See page 95 for an introduction to Overarching Obstacles; a longer discussion on weaving such Obstacles into campaigns begins on page 114.

OBSTACLE, PASSIVE - An Obstacle that represents a problem or hurdle that does not exhibit full agency and so does not take full turns as other, living creatures would. Passive Obstacles could be any situation or puzzle that follows the laws of physics outside any will or self-awareness. They do not make Challenges, but may make Checks to represent the passing of time or natural escalation of some issue or another.

See how Passive Obstacles might take turns on page 35 and a longer discussion on how to Challenge them on page 40.

OVERARCHING OBSTACLE - See *Obstacle, Overarching*

OVERPOWER - These Powers or special abilities take effect whenever the Tile has a certain amount of Drama in tow. In most cases, the Overpower comes into effect immediately upon See page 61 for more on how Overpowers work. Likewise, when the Tile drops below the threshold, the Power deactivates immediately.

“PLAY TO” - The fundamental mechanic of Fantaji relies on players “playing to” the specific qualitative markers in play, either their own Tile’s Traits or the Themes present in a Scene. A player is said to “play to” a marker when she declares an

action that riffs on, alludes, toys with, or otherwise references and includes the marker. See page 8 for a longer description of “playing to” in **FANTAJI**.

PLAYER-ROUND - The amount of time it takes every player to take a turn for her Character and all relevant subordinate Tiles. Think of the Player-Round as the team’s collective turn, in which each player on that team must take an individual turn.

POWER - A special ability or unique mechanical maneuver available to Characters and Obstacles. Each Power changes up the basic mechanic a little and grants a particular Tile the ability to have some new or additional effect. The names and families of Powers listed in this book are purely suggestions; feel free to create more descriptive names that localize the Power to your campaign setting or the specific Tile.

Each individual Power is not discussed here in the Glossary; see pages 72–76 for a complete description of each Power. To roll up random Powers, see the back of the Judges Screen or turn to page 64.

“PRE” - We use the shorthand “Pre” to mark Familiars that are “preset,” which is to say designed once for all as soon as they are earned. A “preset” Familiar’s Trait, for instance, will not change each time it is summoned.

“REACTION SHOT” - An unofficial term we use to refer to the initial, “freebie” Checks that Judges will often give players at the beginning of a Scene to respond to the narrative and orient themselves to the action. After revealing an exciting set of Tiles on the table, it can be a good idea to offer one or two Checks for each player to let them feel out the environment and take stock. See the blue box on page 31 for an introduction and page 37 for a series of good examples.

REALM - A small but nevertheless unique, imaginative, and robust campaign setting designed specifically for use with the **FANTAJI UNIVERSAL ROLE-PLAYING GAME**. Realms typically include a “mod” or two to customize the engine for the setting and come in sets of six in **FANTAJI REALMS** publications. There are four Realms

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included in this corebook with 12 more set for publication in the near future.

RECURRING THEME - See *Theme, Recurring*

RED - We use the color red to distinguish Conditions from other kinds of Tiles on the table. We recommend that you use red for all Conditions when writing Tiles at home.

REDEEMING THEMES - See *Theme, Redeeming*

RESISTANCE - We measure the toughness of any Obstacle or Character Tile with blocks made up of one, two, or three Successes each. These blocks constitute the Wounds that an enemy must deal to overcome or destroy the Tile.

If a Tile represents a living creature, we might call its Resistance “Health,” whereas non-living creatures have “Durability.” Both terms are synonymous with Resistance. Typically, when an Obstacle or Character suffers all of its Wounds, and thus has no more Resistance, it is considered dead.

However, Familiars and Assets that suffer all of their Resistance *may* be said to die, but just as likely they could be understood to be “fleeing,” “dropped out,” “disarmed,” or “fading away,” depending on the nature of the Tile.

ROUND - FANTAJI uses the term “Round” a little differently than other games. In **FANTAJI**, each team gets a Round to take their turns and work together addressing their enemies. This means that a Round does *not* represent the amount of time it takes every Tile to have a turn. Each team or side has its own Round. Because turns can happen in any order and each defense includes the opportunity for a counter-attack, we count each team’s collective turn as a full Round. See page 30 for a discussion of Rounds.

SCENE - FANTAJI uses the term “Scene” to refer to any encounter or extended moment in the ongoing campaign narrative. The beginning of a Scene is typically marked by new Themes being placed on the table, while the end of a Scene is typically recognized when players “cash out”

leftover Drama Tokens for healing and the Judge awards Themes.

Scenes can represent dramatic moments of political contest, investigations, casual in-game time between larger confrontations, or the more common contained battles.

SETTING - See *Campaign Setting*

SHUFFLE PLAY - You can play **FANTAJI** as a one-off adventure game by shuffling your stacks of Obstacles, Themes, and Conditions and putting out a number of random Tiles on the table. Use your best interpretive judgment to come up with an interesting Scene based on the Tiles that arise and go for it!

Alternatively, you can play through a longer campaign using Shuffle Play. Simply include in a Deck all of the Obstacles that exist in the geographic region in which you have set the campaign. For each new encounter shuffle and lay out a number of Tiles as above, but interpret the Scene as following some moments or days after the previous Scene. It is not until you see what Scene arises that you can fill in the narrative events that took place between the prior Scene and the present moment. Work with the group to ascertain how they have found themselves in this new Scene.

When Obstacles are overcome in a Scene, do not return them to the Deck. As the heroes battle through enemies, they will slowly come to resolve each Obstacle present in the setting, working to “victory,” “peace,” or “fortune and glory,” etc.

If powerful enemies are encountered too early in the campaign, your players will learn to run! Be sure to include several copies of lesser baddies and recurring Themes so things do not amp up too quickly. See pages 89–90 for more.

SKIRT - One of the methods to avoid tripping a Condition. A player is said to “skirt” a Condition when she declares an action that directly mentions or takes account of the Condition. She describes a course of action that reasonably circumvents tripping the Tile, paying it due heed but still

REFERENCE GLOSSARY

avoiding or “skirting around” the circumstance or hurdle in some way. See page 44 for an full introduction and page 45 for a great example of “skirting” in action.

SLOT - See *Gear*

SMOOTH FLOW - This is a variation of play that involves blurring the boundaries between distinct Scenes. There are several ways to play **FANTAJI** with looser or less rigid Scenes. See page 88 for a longer discussion.

SPELLBOOK - A unique Asset for the **BLOODSBANE** campaign setting that we include as a “mod” in Chapter 8. Spellbooks act as necessary material components for magic-users, binding magic to the physical world so magic-users do not avoid the same need for earthly possessions as other Characters.

It is said that a Spellbook is not magical in itself but instead contains an invaluable record of the magic so far used and manipulated by the author. A book features the notes and scribbles of the magic-user, who is constantly refining her understanding of magic, which never seems to work the same way twice. See page 168 for more.

STACKABLE - When a Power can be deployed multiple times in a single instance, we consider it “Stackable.” Stackable Powers often cost Drama Tokens to activate, and players can save up more Drama Tokens than needed to eventually deploy the Power more than once in a single action. See page 61 for more on Stackable Powers.

STAR - An unofficial term we use to refer to the icons printed on a Character or Obstacle Tile that represents how many dice any individual Trait is worth in a Challenge. Because of Powers such as Heirloom, certain Traits can offer extra dice in combat. See the Tiles for the **GREEN GIANT** on page 116 and **PRINCE HAKKUNEN** on page 140 for Traits worth two “Stars,” which is two dice, during a Challenge.

STATUS EFFECT - Sometimes a Challenge can have brutal consequences, and Status Effects mark the various ailments or conditions that affect

a Tile’s performance. Seven of the nine Status Effects are triggered by Powers or equipment and will always last until the end of the Round *following* the Round in which they were inflicted. For example, any Status Effect inflicted during the Player-Round will last until the *end* of the upcoming Enemy-Round. Two of the nine Status Effects reflect ailments caused by a Tile’s current level of injury and will last until enough Wounds are healed.

We will not discuss each of the nine Status Effects in this Glossary; turn to page 77 for complete descriptions. For suggestions on how to tie Status Effects to equipment, see page 70.

“STCK” - See *Stackable*

STUNT - An unofficial term that covers the rare instance when the Judge asks a player to roll a Challenge against a Difficulty instead of against a defending Tile. A Stunt is in some ways an alternative to a Bout or Check and represents another way to deploy a Challenge. The Judge may want to see how many Successes the player can earn without involving an Obstacle Tile directly. The player can then score Successes by beating the Difficulty but does not risk suffering any counter-attack damage.

In most cases, we recommend the Judge roll at least a single die to vie with the player’s Challenge (even if only to represent the amorphous, intangible influence of one Theme or another apart from any Obstacle).

SUCCESS - Any die in a Check that ties or passes the Difficulty scores a Success, which we write as [1] in shorthand. Also, every die that rolls higher than your opponent’s highest die during a Challenge counts as a Success. Checks can result in only one Success, but a Challenge could land two, three, four, or even more in a single bout. Each of these are written in brackets as well: [2], [3], [4], etc.

Successes won in a Check can be used to take a DT+ bonus or manipulate a Condition. Successes scored during a Challenge can be used to deal damage to an opponent’s Tile and/or manipulate Conditions.

REFERENCE GLOSSARY

ROIJO CHIMAERA

The stubborn and spirited ROIJO is a brute of the plains. All CHIMAERA share some blood with the legendary Aurochx, giving them horns or tusks of aurochite, an organic metal stronger than the product of any buried ore or forged alloy.

◆◆ MINDLESS MADNESS

CHARGE: The ROIJO expends 4DT to charge opponents in a cluster. All targets who draw the charge must forfeit 2DT to dodge or suffer [2]

GORE: For 2DT the ROIJO can increase any successful [2] into a [3]

LULLABY: If the ROIJO reaches zero Drama, rolling a Move @5 with a woodwind instrument can soothe the beast to sleep

FANTAJI

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MONSTER

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In most cases, a Success is equivalent to a single Stress Wound, and so we use the same bracketing notation to refer to both.

SURF - One of the methods to avoid tripping a Condition. A player is said to “surf” a Condition when she declares an action that turns the tricky Tile into an advantage and capitalizes on it somehow. If the player takes what was intended as a hurdle and turns it instead into a ramp or springboard, she is “surfing on” the Condition and avoids suffering a Drama penalty. See page 44 for more information.

THEME - One of the four fundamental Tiles in **FANTAJI**. Themes are qualitative markers that function as the Traits of the encounter as a whole. See page 24 for an introduction and page 98 for ideas about being creative with Themes.

THEME, RECURRING - A Theme that is used often over the course of a campaign, underscoring the particular mood and feel not just of an individual Scene but the adventure as a whole. We recommend that each campaign setting or ongoing adventure has several recurring Themes.

THEME, REDEEMING - When players “cash in” or exchange Themes they have won over the course of the adventure for a Milestone upgrade. Players can redeem Themes *after* a Milestone occurs in the narrative or can use the exchange of Themes as a way to *trigger* or *unlock* the Milestone event. See page 68 for a discussion of redeeming Themes in Milestones and the “Boons” mod on page 156 for a section on redeeming Themes outside the typical Milestone system.

TIE - See *Clash*

TILE - Any handwritten index card or printed card that takes the form of a Character, Obstacle, Theme, or Condition. Each Tile represents one aspect of a good story and each has a unique mechanical function in the game. Along with Drama Tokens and “playing to” qualitative markers, the workings of the four fundamental Tile types make up the very foundation of the **FANTAJI UNIVERSAL ROLE-PLAYING GAME**. See page 16 for an introduction to the fundamental Tiles of **FANTAJI**.

TOKEN - See *Drama Token*

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TRAIT - The foundation of the **FANTAJI** engine. A Trait is a qualitative marker that represents not only an aspect or feature of a Character or Obstacle but its entire being. Traits come into play on every single turn, and players would be remiss not to find ways of incorporating their Traits at every opportunity. Traits ensure that each declared action is “in character” and demonstrates real role-playing.

See the lengthy and information discussion of Traits that starts on page 7 for a full introduction. See pages 34 and 38 for how Characters “play to” Traits on a turn. Page 79 features a list of over 150 sample Traits, though players are encouraged to create their own as well.

TRAP - Any Condition that deals damage instead of or in addition to offering a Drama penalty. Traps can come in a variety of forms: Some will deal [1] instead of offering DT- to the target; some will deal [1] and DT- to the victim; some might deal damage only when the target has no Drama left to give. Judges are encouraged to come up with unique and tricky Traps to keep players on their toes. See page 99 for a longer discussion of Traps.

TRIGGER - An unofficial Power or special ability by which an Obstacle gains Drama whenever a certain narrative event occurs. Triggers might be written on Obstacle Tiles to let players know what they are up against, or not. When certain Abstract or Passive Obstacles will not be taking turns, Triggers become the only way they can escalate and gain Drama. Think of Triggers as something akin to reversed Conditions. See page 93 for more on Triggers.

TRIPPING - See *Condition, Tripping*

TRUE CLASH - See *Clash, True*

TRUMP - See *Condition, Trump*

TYPICAL OBSTACLE - See *Obstacle*

WORLD - An official term in **FANTAJI** publications that refers to a fully developed and stand-alone campaign setting, typically one featured in its own

publications or as its own game “powered by” the **FANTAJI** engine. We use “World” to designate a campaign setting that is a good degree more sophisticated and fleshed out than the smaller “Realm.”

WORLD DECK - See *Deck*

WOUND - We measure the Resistance of any Obstacle or Character Tile with Wounds, blocks of Health or Durability that take a preset number of Successes to deal. Each type of Wound can only be eliminated when all of the individual squares are dealt in a single Bout. Wounds represent physical damage for living creatures and the tangible duration of non-living Obstacles.

See page 19 for how Wounds are recorded on a Character Tile and page 67 for a full introduction to Health and Resistance as measured in different types of Wounds (see below). See page 46 for rules about healing Wounds between Scenes.

WOUND, FLESH - A Wound that takes two Successes scored in the same Bout to deal, written as [2]. For living creatures, Flesh Wounds represent real, physical damage. For instance, if a sword has poison on the blade, it would take a Flesh Wound to ensure that the target was actually struck by the weapon and exposed to the poison.

WOUND, MORTAL - A Wound that requires three Successes scored in a single Bout to deal, written as [3]. Mortal Wounds can represent a massive blow in combat or a particularly well-aimed strike. An Amulet Asset hanging around an enemy’s neck, for instance, may have a single Mortal Wound that represents the difficulty of singling out and destroying the artifact in the midst of combat.

WOUND, STRESS - A Wound that requires a single Success scored in a Challenge to deal, written as [1]. Stress Wounds do not always represent physical damage to living creatures; even when a target suffers [1] in a Bout, there is no guarantee that full contact was made. Even passive or intangible Obstacles can deal Stress Wounds to heroes, representing the frustration of dealing with tricky situations.



A UNIVERSAL ROLE-PLAYING GAME

CHARACTER:
PLAYER:

POLITICAL:
SOCIAL:
PERSONAL:

TRAITS

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POWERS

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CHARACTER:
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TRAITS

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POWERS

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