



PSYCHEDELIC METAL RPG

# SEACAT

L u k a R e j e c

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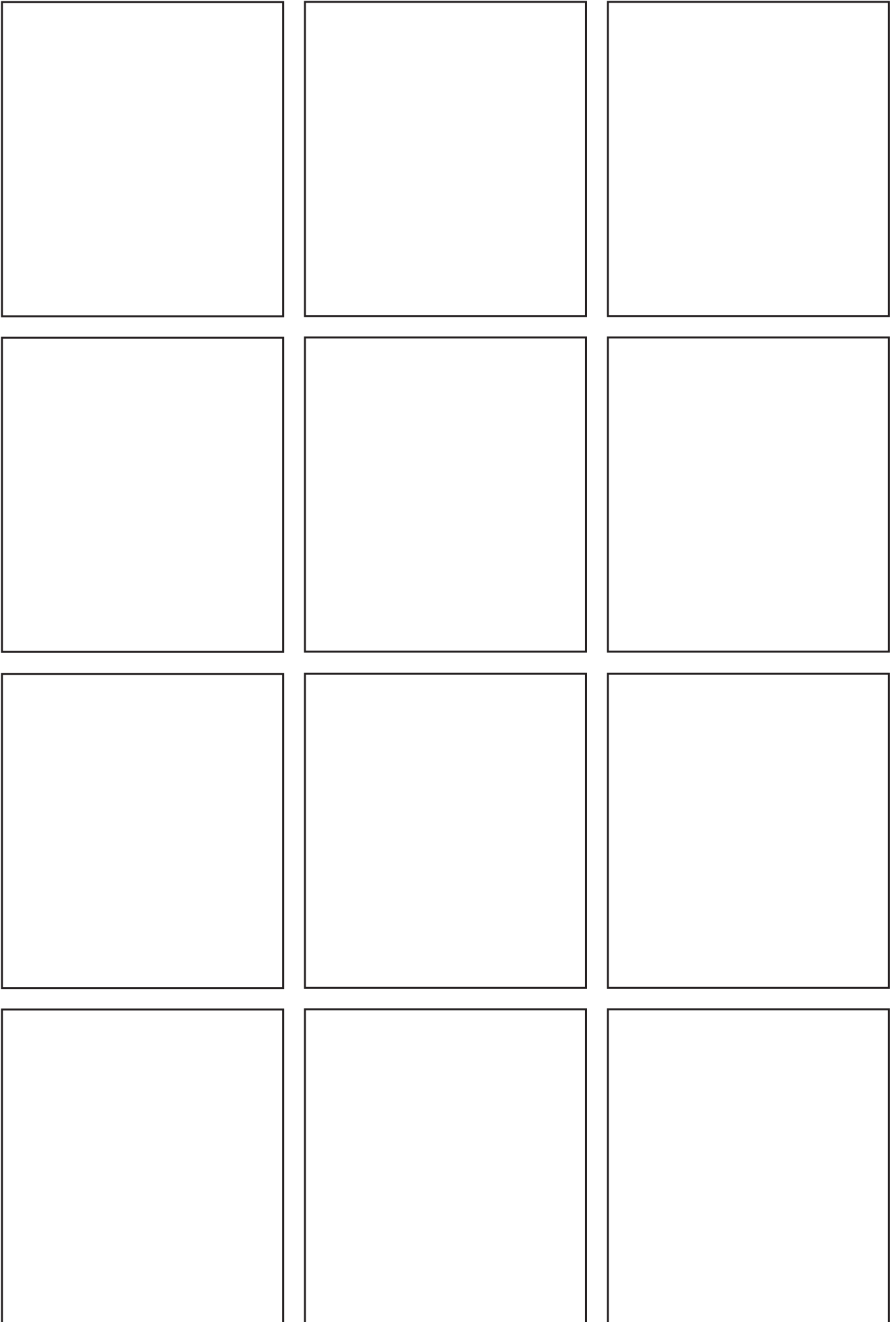
Sincere thanks to all the heroes who made this booklet possible.



P S Y C H E D E L I C M E T A L R P G

# SEACAT

L u k a R e j e c



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# PSYCHEDELIC METAL ROLEPLAYING

# Introduction

A caravan on a strange long trip through the Ultraviolet Grasslands to find the Black City at the end of the world.

Devotees and deserters build a new life under red skies in the heart of the twitching corpse of the greatest city the world had known.

Half-mad fools ascend into the skies on cobbled-together chariots of fire like the shamans of old to wander the voidways of the sky gods.

Heroes end cities and civilizations and worlds through accidents and inattention, and through it all, creation and invention dance on, a couplet unbound by space and time.

What even makes a hero when the tale is told? Not goodness, perhaps. But excess, yes, indeed.

Moebius' mind-bending bande dessinée *Airtight Garage*. Blue Oyster Cult's evocative *Veteran of the Psychic Wars*. The rambling melange that is the *Heavy Metal* movie. The surreal fantasy of Jodorowsky's *Holy Mountain*. The impressionistic brilliance of Miller's *Fury Road*. The semi-coherence of the Strugatskys' *Roadside Picnic* or VanderMeer's *Annihilation*. The neo-baroque pop metal of *Ghost*.

The shifting realities of new wave science fiction. Psychedelic journeys between inner and outer spaces.

All these inspire and inform seacat, *le chat de mer*, the roleplaying game of whimsical and capricious worlds, digressing from a single arc, lurching into branching stories, dancing into an act of creation itself. Seacat is self-consciously modernist; impressionist and expressionist by turns, embracing the theatre-of-the-mind and the infinite special effects budget that brings.

May the seacat bless you all with strange tales to laugh over for many days and many years.

—Luka, 2020, 2021

## This Book

This roleplaying book is divided into two large parts:

- Rules (pXX–pXX)** • How to run characters and games with seacat.
- Characters (pXX–pXX)** • Everything a player needs to create, equip, advance, and retire a unique character in a psychedelic world.

Running head-first into a roleplaying game is rough, so the next two pages summarize the rules as much as possible. There is also an appendix of glossaries, tags, and inspirations.





# Axioms of the Seacat

*"I don't understand this world," said First God.*

—*First God Returns*, a novel, author anonymous.

## Friendly Play

Seacat assumes trust and good faith as a baseline: the players should be friendly with one another. No players should accept cruel, bullying, mocking, or discriminatory behaviour at their tables.

## Players

One player prepares the game session. They're the top cat or TC. Like a bass player, they set the rhythm of play. The other players run stables of characters. They're called runners. When seacat refers to players, it always means all the players: TC and runners.

## Anti-Canon

This book is not canon in a seacat game. No published book is canon. The only canon that exists is that which the players agree to at the table. Some of the skills, traits, and lore presented here conflict with themselves. It is up to each table to resolve these conflicts and create their own unique play worlds.

## Shared World

The players co-create the game world through play. The TC guides play forward and wields a soft veto to maintain a measure of consistency, but all the players contribute to the fantasy world.

## Characters

Runners play multiple characters: heroes, sidekicks, and pets. Heroes have a number of attributes: stats, skills, abilities, levels, defences, hero dice, life totals, magic costs, proficiency scores, and limited inventories for their burdens. Other characters are simplified and less powerful.

## Dialogue

The heart of play is a dialogue between the players. The TC presents situations and challenges, the runners say what their characters do, the cat narrates the outcome. Play moves forward using common sense first, dice second.

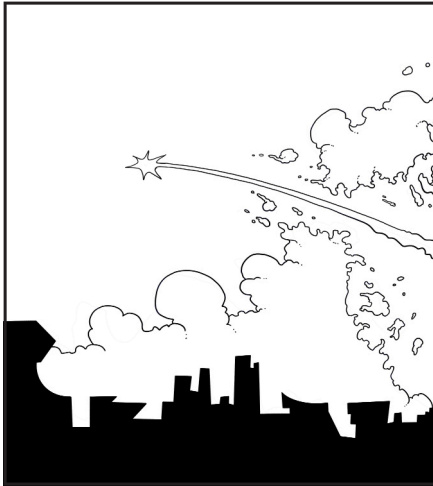
When the outcome is unclear and consequential, the TC calls for die rolls. Every player will probably roll during a session. During conflicts, everybody will almost certainly be rolling. A rule of thumb is that the TC shouldn't roll more often than the runners.

## Rules Second Play

Rules come second. The top cat's goal is to keep play moving, not get every rule right. It is natural to forget some rules in the heat of play. When this happens, they should make a quick judgement or suggest a reasonable die roll. Any mistakes or imbalances can be ironed out or retconned later.

## Conflicts

Conflicts involve physical (*ha*), social (*ba*), and mental (*ka*) struggles between the runners' characters (the party) and antagonists. They are resolved over a series of rounds. Each round, every party rolls initiative to determine turn order. Tied parties act together and resolve effects all at once at the end of their turn. Two combatants can knock one another out of a fight in this way. The consequences of losing a conflict depend on the stakes.



## Group Actions

When a party attempts a task together, only one runner rolls dice for the whole party. Each player has a group action token (*gat*), which they spend to perform group actions. This ensures every player gets a turn rolling for the group.

## Rolling Dice as Oracles

Dice can be every player's best friend when they have to quickly decide or invent something. A player may ask a question like, "What is the extra's quest? What is a sidekick's favourite colour? What is the velocity of a laden humdrumovore?"

In this situation, the TC may ask the player for an oracular die roll, then narrate an answer based on the result. High rolls are usually better.

## Rolling Dice to Overcome Challenges

To succeed a player has to roll over a target number with a twenty-sided die and a sum of their character's relevant modifiers (this is called a test):

### **d20 + sum > target**

The number a die rolls is its natural or naked roll. Rolling a maximum result (a natural 20) is always good, a natural 1 is always bad (and a failure).

The sum is a modifier that may include stats, skills, and other miscellaneous bonuses. Context determines what stat and/or skill is relevant in a particular situation.

Boons or advantages [+] and banes or disadvantages [-] may apply to rolls. A boon means a player rolls an extra die and picks the better result. A bane means rolling an extra die and picking the worse results. Boons and banes sometimes stack.

## Target Difficulties

The TC verbally describes a challenge's difficulty and secretly assigns a target number. Challenges may have binary or multiple possible outcomes. The runners may ask what target number they need to beat, and the top cat should tell them. between 3 (very easy) and 19 (very hard). Example targets:

- 3 (trivial)** • Routine, but risk of catastrophic or hilarious failure.
- 7 (easy)** • Normally no obstacle to a professional.
- 11 (moderate)** • Even professionals risk failure regularly.
- 15 (difficult)** • Smart heroes avoid these kinds of tests or seek to stack advantages in their favor before attempting them.
- 19 (extreme)** • Odds only a desperate professional would attempt.

The targets are low because the game assumes character competence. Players only roll dice when failure carries the risk of notable consequences. Every failure means a loss of character resources.

## Advancement and Changes

Players earn experience points (xp), not characters. Xp are earned through participation, discovery, play, and achievements.

Players choose where to invest their xp: into heroes, sidekicks, pets or equipment. Players can have a stable of characters and diverse fantasy assets. When a character is defeated or training, their player runs another character.

## Hard Limits

The maximum level a hero can ever reach is 9. The greatest sum (stat + skill) they ever add to any d20 roll is +13. The highest target number a hero can ever possess or set is 19—this includes defence. Sidekicks and pets have lower limits. Antagonists and obstacles set by the TC can (rarely) exceed these limits.

# Reading the Hero

*“You can’t evolve a flying pig by throwing pigs off a cliff.”*

—Atu Ahn, Abmortal biosocial engineer first class, Seed of Hope

The hero sheet summarizes a player’s main character—the hero, the protagonist of their game. All other characters: sidekicks, pets, extras, and antagonists, are simplified versions of heroes.

**Name** • A hero’s name. Best added last.

**Hero** • A player may add “pseudo-”, “meta-”, “mini-”, or “anti-” as they wish.

**Type** • A description. Perhaps wizard, thief, or fighter. Best added later.

**Level** • Roughly, a hero’s power. Affects some spells and traits.

**Skills** • Bundles that summarize the hero’s deeds and what they are good at. A hero with a single rank in a skill is considered skilled, while one with two or more ranks is an expert. Every rank of a skill occupies one slot.

**Portrait** • Space for the player to show off their abstract art skills.

**Traits** • How heroes exceed the human norm. Every rank of a trait occupies one slot.

**Pro (proficiency)** • Abstract representation of learned aptitude. Heroes add pro to their roll whenever they do something they are skilled at.

Expert heroes double their pro. Increases randomly with advancement.

**Actions** • How many things a hero can do on their party’s turn.

**Magic cost** • Every hero can cast spells. The cost ranges from 1 to 5 and multiplies a spell’s power to determine its spell price in life. The only attribute where a lower number is better.

**Stats: strength, endurance, agility, charisma, aura, and thought** • The natural aptitudes of a hero. Each ranges from 0 to 5. The average for a prime adult human is 0. The dashes provide space for stats modified by injuries, spells, and other events.

**Defence: ha (physical), ka (mental or spiritual), ba (social)** •

Opponents played by the TC roll over these targets to damage the hero.

**Life** • An abstract representation of narrative viability. Heroes spend life to cast spells, power some special abilities, and when they are hit by opponents. An average extra has 4 or 5 life.

**Hero dice** • These are bonus dice (usually d6) they can roll to modify their rolls or recover life. Hero dice are recovered through play and with every new session.

**Xp and invested experience** • Players earn xp through play and invest them in heroes, sidekicks, pets, and other characters to increase their power. Xp earnings are not completely predictable: players roll dice to figure out how much xp they earn when their characters complete quests or achieve goals. Players can invest up to 99,999 xp in their hero.

**Inventory** • The default hero can carry 10 stone-sized items or burdens without penalties—conveniently about the size of an average human. Players note everything that burdens their hero, not just physical objects. Woes, fears, illness, magic spells, pets, and extras all occupy inventory.

**Cumbersome inventory** • A hero can carry up to 10 more stone-sized items, but when they do, they are encumbered. An encumbered hero suffers a bane (also called a disadvantage and represented with a [-] symbol) to all tests. If all their cumbersome inventory is conveniently stored in a sack or pack, they can put it down carefully (an action) or quickly and carelessly (a free action) to avoid the penalty. Non-physical burdens in the cumbersome inventory are usually harder to drop.

A player’s *gat* token is not mentioned on the hero’s sheet. It is a physical object that belongs to the player, not the hero.

## Limited Space

Each hero’s sheet strictly limits their available personal inventory. This feature forces players to choose carefully what gear their heroes bring to a given conflict or scene.

A player’s hero and other characters may have more objects, property, and even traits, but this will be ‘off-stage’ unless prepared.







# CREATING CHARACTERS



*“Ah. That was one strange machine. Some sort of dome cage. One yuman entered, two yumans left. Both a little different from the original, but convinced they were unchanged. We ended up with fifteen Porter Bobs. The sixteenth called ‘imself Pörter Bøb. Hah.”*

—Robert 32-Chrome, feral polybody subsistence clan.

Players use hero tables to create their characters with polyhedral dice.

**Skills (pXX)** • What a hero is good at. Butcher, banker, soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, investigator, gladiator.

**Traits (pXX)** • Perks, abilities, mutations, divine gifts. A salamander’s fire resistance. Ur-plant light-feeding. Cyber-telekinesis. A parasitic symbiote heart named Bøb.

**Stats (pXX)** • Natural aptitudes. Strength, endurance, agility, charisma, aura, and thought.

**Gear (pXX)** • The hero’s cash and baggage. Woes, fears, illnesses, magic spells, mundane items.

**Magic (pXX)** • The best part of the inventory.

**Sidekicks (pXX)** • Beloved pets and trusted sidekicks.

**Miscellany (pXX—pXX)** • The rest of the sheet. Levels, hero dice, etc.

**Names (pXX)** • Naming the hero.

### Unloved Results

The hero tables do not guarantee an enjoyable character. That is a task for the hero’s player. However, it’s no fun to be saddled with skills or abilities one doesn’t enjoy.

The players should decide at the start if they’re willing to generate two heroes each, then choose the one they prefer. The extra heroes can be kept in reserve, should a hero perish or otherwise leave the game.

It shouldn’t be a problem if a player wants to change one or two results. They can ask each other player to re-roll one result for them. On many tables, they could also simply pick an adjacent result. Still, the other players should laugh off attempts to blatantly increase a hero’s wealth on the inventory tables.

If the dissatisfied player runs out of companions to re-roll their results, they could generate a whole new character. However, if most other players have finished with character generation, waiting for one last hero to be redone from scratch can be a drag.

### Other Characters

Besides their heroes, runners also play simplified secondary characters: pets, sidekicks, extras, and more. While a runner’s control of their hero is nigh absolute, the top cat and other players have a little more of a say in what a secondary character will or won’t do.





# The Hero's Skeleton

*"A hero need not be good, but they must be extraordinary and memorable."*  
—Iktos XLIII, famously forgettable seer poet of L'Isle Parasol

Every player needs a hero.

A hero is a player's protagonist, their lead character. A player runs a hero exclusively and has a veto on what their hero does in play—thus that player is called the runner. A runner can have multiple heroes, pets, and sidekicks. How many of these characters are present for a given session is up to the players.

A ghost shaman possesses wizards and mediums to uncover the secrets of transcendence. A diesel dwarf warrior hunts undead bio-machines created by the wire plague. A feline aristocrat historian recreates the glories of the lost doghead empire. A pengling merchant adventurer builds a magical nanite fountain to turn water into wine. A curious many-bodied void-plumber dives into the wormways to find where the reactivated travel gate leads.

To make their character a player needs a pencil, some polyhedral dice, a copy of the hero sheet (pXX) and ten minutes for the generator. The hero skeletons overleaf providing an overview of how to generate the character.

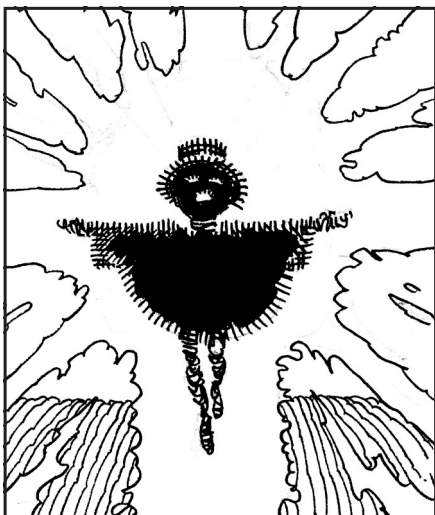
**Pulp hero** • The usual starting hero.

**Starting extra** • A very weak starting hero.

**Epic legend** • A very powerful starting hero.

**Avatar of the Final Form** • The final attributes attainable by most heroes. Presented more for comparison than for starting play.

A player's first hero is usually a pulp hero. Perhaps not renowned, but far more powerful than the common turnip farmer. With an array of strange abilities, skills, and magics, they are a force to be reckoned with. As they progress they perform incredible feats and inscribe themselves into history—if nothing else, as reckless fools endangering common hard-working folks and the foundations of centuries' old ruling institutions.



# Initial Hero Skeletons

*“It’s not an unfair caste society! We built our class hierarchy on meticulously engineered meritocratic aptitudes encoded at the germ-line.”*

—Vorshoy LII.b, Eucrator of Free Habitation 8.

The following four skeletons are shortcuts for building starting heroes of the players’ desired power level. The players can use the advancement tables (pXX) to fine tune their characters.

## Pulp Hero

*A memorable human.*

The standard starting hero. Unique, unforgettable, historic. As glorious in battle as the great horse lords of the Centaur Empire, as powerful as the great avatar wizards who laid waste the oldest world with the heavy metal arrows of the Rain God.

- 3 skills (or ranks)
- 2 traits
- Level 3
- Pro 2
- Actions 2
- Magic cost 2
- 7 points for stats (0 to 4 each)
- 20 life
- 3d6 hero dice
- 999 invested xp (0 left over)
- No burdens
- 4 suitable inventory items
- 300 cash.
- A descriptive hero ‘type’
- The final item: a name

## Special Extra

*A rather common hero.*

Starting play with the extra lets players discover the story of how a nobody becomes a hero. Abilities are few, survival is uncertain, and advancement is slowed by the character’s need to rest.

- 1 skill
- 0 traits or mutations
- Level 0
- Pro 1
- Actions 2
- Magic cost 2
- 5 points for stats (0 to 3 each)
- 5 life
- 0d6 hero dice
- 0xp
- No burdens
- 1 suitable inventory item
- 30 cash
- No hero ‘type’
- Optionally: a name

## Epic Legend

*Quite unforgotten.*

Their achievements will not be forgotten for a thousand years. A legend’s advancement is slowed by high experience costs, but it promises power overwhelming.

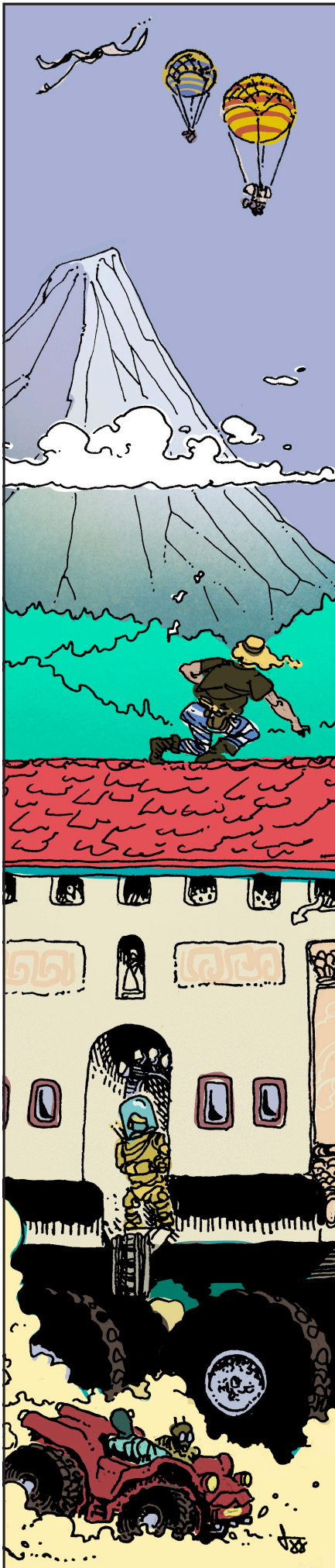
- 6 skills (or ranks)
- 5 traits (or ranks)
- Level 6
- Pro 3
- Actions 2
- Magic cost 2
- 9 points for stats (0 to 5 each)
- 38 life
- 6d6 hero dice
- 9,999 invested xp (0 left over)
- No burdens
- Clothes or armour, a weapon, and 4 suitable inventory items
- 3,000 cash
- A flamboyant hero ‘type’
- The unforgettable item: a name

## Avatar of the Final Form

*Obviously not really human.*

The embodiment of a culture hero, an archetype taken flesh. After reaching the pinnacle of power, the only paths left open are change and decline. There is nowhere further to go.

- 9 skills (or ranks)
- 9 traits (or ranks)
- Level 9
- Pro 4
- Actions 2
- Magic cost 2
- 11 points for stats (0 to 5 each)
- 60 life
- 9d6 hero dice
- 99,999 invested xp (maxed out, 0 left over)
- No burdens
- Clothes or armour, a weapon, and 6 suitable inventory items
- 30,000 cash
- A unique culture hero ‘type’
- A legendary name: optional



# Skills

“What glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!”

— Dr. Frankenstein in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818)

Every hero starts out at least one skill, which summarizes what they have done in their life and what they are good at. Each skill or skill rank occupies one skill slot (e.g three ranks in praxa of the chains occupy three slots).

Skills are broad bundles of learning, practice and experience. This incoherence is purposeful: there is overlap in the daily tasks of an accountant and a plumber, and there is difference. The same holds for other skills. Players use their wits and imagination to figure out how their hero’s skill might reasonably apply in given circumstances. A skill could cover:

**Specialization or expertise** • Axe fighting, welding, pastry-making.

**Jobs, occupations, or professions** • Soldier, spy, tinker, tailor.

**Hobbies** • Gamer, dancer, maker, embroiderer.

**Social status** • Socialite, servant, hobo, homemaker.

Skill ranks may provide additional effects or items.

Skills do not limit what the character can try to do. A skilled hero is good enough to make a living with their know-how (they’re a pro) while an expert is good enough to teach that profession. There are four situations when a hero rolls a test with a skill.

**No relevant skill** • Hero does not add their proficiency (from 1 to 7) to the test and suffers a bane [-] to their roll. An amateur or beginner.

**One rank in a relevant skill** • Hero adds their pro to the d20 roll when they make a test. A skilled professional.

**Two ranks in a relevant skill** • Hero adds double their pro to the d20 roll when they make a test. An expert.

**Three ranks in a relevant skill** • Hero gains [+] to tests. A master.

Every skill has different connotations in different communities. Whether this is a boon or a bane, only context can tell. Skills may require suitable equipment and circumstances. Players can invent new skills to suit their characters.

## Skill Types

Five skill tags loosely categorize the hundred listed skills.

**#adventure** • Skills with practical utility in the struggle of mortal against uncaring natural worlds.

**#background** • Skills that represent the development of a mortal as a part of a functional community.

**#combat** • A combination of psychophysical battle techniques honed over millennia. Also called *praxa* from Ancient Greek for practice.

**#magic** • A difficult or secret compilation of lore, ritual, study and science. Also called *veda* from Slovenian or Sanskrit for knowledge or science.

**#social** • A pan-cultural agglomeration of custom and behavior that cuts across the living and dead cultures of the Vastlands. Also called *sidu* from Old English for custom or habit.



# Inventing a New Skill

*“The uplifted chipmunk is exhibiting unusual behaviours.”*

—Petush Iä, maker father, source code baker.

When players invent new skills they should ask:

1. Does it sound fun to roleplay?
2. Is it something a person could do for a living or as a hobby pursuit? Could it be used to describe a person's status?
3. Can it be described in three sentences?
4. Is the title memorable? Evocative?

If the answers are yes, it's probably a good skill to play with.

For example, 'Sleight of Hand' wouldn't make a very good skill. It describes a very specific task, with very narrow application. 'Street Magician' or 'Party Clown' would be a better, broader and memorable skill. 'Sleight of Hand' could easily be turned into an ability, something like 'Unnatural Sleight of Hand'.

'Melee Combat' sounds a bit dull and mechanical. 'Anointed Gladiator' or 'Infantry Sergeant' make for more vivid characters and better stories.

## Table of Skills [d100]

These hundred starting skills (detailed overleaf) toy with the implied settings of the Vastlands. Players are encouraged to use them as ideas and fuel for creating new skills to fit their worlds in play.

- |                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Agriculturalist Farmer         | 34. Pilot of Vechs             |
| 2. Artist Aesthetic               | 35. Postmodern Soldier         |
| 3. Apparatchik                    | 36. Praxa of the Bows          |
| 4. Archaeologist Freiherr         | 37. Praxa of the Chains        |
| 5. Athlete of Some Renown         | 38. Praxa of the Good Guns     |
| 6. Big Game Tourist               | 39. Praxa of the Energies      |
| 7. Butcher Banker                 | 40. Praxa of the Hammeraxes    |
| 8. Captain in the Auxiliaries     | 41. Praxa of the Knives        |
| 9. Cat Burglar                    | 42. Praxa of the Mortal Shells |
| 10. Chevalier                     | 43. Praxa of the Pistoliers    |
| 11. Circus Acrobat                | 44. Praxa of the Poles         |
| 12. Corpocrat Suitwearer          | 45. Praxa of the Rifles        |
| 13. Dream Voyager                 | 46. Praxa of the Rods          |
| 14. Driver Jill, Jack, or Jo.     | 47. Praxa of the Swords        |
| 15. Explorer of the Vastlands     | 48. Professor in Panhumanities |
| 16. Fisher Pasha                  | 49. Protocollier               |
| 17. Forager of the Future         | 50. Psychic Veteran            |
| 18. Gladiator                     | 51. Revolutionary              |
| 19. Groom to the Superior Species | 52. Rider at Ease              |
| 20. Handyworker                   | 53. Secret Servant             |
| 21. Historian of the Downfall     | 54. Shadow Merchant            |
| 22. Housekeeper of Good Repute    | 55. Shopkeeper                 |
| 23. Hunter of the Late Days       | 56. Sidu of the Bestfolk       |
| 24. Investigator Private          | 57. Sidu of the Iron Fist      |
| 25. Laborer in Reserve            | 58. Sidu of the Leastfolk      |
| 26. Maker Cogsmith                | 59. Sidu of the Legalities     |
| 27. Master Packer                 | 60. Sidu of the Outcaste       |
| 28. Mule Whisperer                | 61. Sidu of the Rhetors        |
| 29. Navigator of Other Worlds     | 62. Sidu of the Sacred Deed    |
| 30. Negotiator of Relations       | 63. Sidu of the Soiltwined     |
| 31. Noble Socialite               | 64. Sidu of the Staunchkeepers |
| 32. Nomad Rustler                 | 65. Sidu of the Unfettered     |
| 33. Outsider Alien                | 66. Sidu of the Uptought       |

## Anatomy of a Skill

### Infantry Sergeant —title

*#adventure —tag.*

*Survived feeding the war god.* —fluff for nuance.

Fought in more wars than they have fingers. Long experience in not dying and keeping others from dying. Setting watches, storming trenches, hiding in bunkers, interpreting orders and handling mobile infantry weapons. —three sentences to outline what the skill entails.

**R1** • Gets a fancy weapon (pXX). —rank effects provide detail or options.

## Quick Roll

**Pulp hero** • Roll thrice.

**Starting extra** • Roll once.

**Epic legend** • Roll six times.

67. Singer of the Lastlands
68. Spelunker
69. Storm Infantry
70. Street Performer
71. Survivor in the Vast
72. Tactician of the Endless War
73. Thespian
74. Timelost Interloper
75. Tinker Toymaker
76. Useless Freeloader
77. Veda of the Abmortal Doctor
78. Veda of the All-Chemist
79. Veda of the Awakened Sphere
80. Veda of the Biomechané
81. Veda of the Cosmic Architects
82. Veda of the Existential Void
83. Veda of the Flying Serpent
84. Veda of the Golemmafexes
85. Veda of the Iron Symphony
86. Veda of the Law Necromantic
87. Veda of the Light Held Fast
88. Veda of the Mother Electric
89. Veda of the Old Technologies
90. Veda of the Plant Kings
91. Veda of the Rightmaker
92. Veda of the Seeming Becoming
93. Veda of the Seven Summons
94. Veda of the Soul Breaker
95. Veda of the Witching Song
96. Veda of the World's Word
97. Vome Technician
98. White Collar Drone
99. Writer of Belles Lettres
100. Zu Error



# The Hundred Skills

## 1. Agriculturalist Farmer

#background

*An autonomous popular people's collective ruled by an autocrat.*

Grows beans. Wakes up early. Tills greenhouses. Works long hours. Pays onerous taxes. Understands magic legumes. Joins the levies. Avoids attention very, very well. Wields farm implements and light long arms. Also farms other valuable food stuffs [d12]:

1. Squashes
2. Breadfruit
3. Tart mangoes
4. Saucy tangerines
5. Giant peaches
6. Turnips
7. Hybrid oats
8. Uplifted monoculturalrice
9. Mushrooms of power
10. Industrial grade pumpkins
11. Land coral
12. Kelp

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 2. Artist Aesthetic

#background

*The unmanifest idea is worthless.*

Creates treasures out of aether, dreams, and labor. Paints, sculpts, draws, dances and sings. Wields a brush and chisel, sells trinkets as avant-garde art to hungry social climbers. Known for [d8]:

1. Bas relief etchings
2. Croquis and caricatures
3. Hyperrealist plastics
4. Microlithic landscape design
5. Mixed media cave paintings
6. Neon jungle sculptures
7. Performance welding
8. Surrealist canvases

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table)

### 3. Apparatchik

**#background**

*The highly trained bureaucrat reproduces the bureaucracy.*

Project manager navigating byzantine institutions and accessing secret locations. Passes the buck and avoids blame. Organizes time sheets and sets key performance indicators. Uses office supplies as weapons. Familiar with [d6]:

1. Cultured affairs
2. Foreign entanglements
3. History adaptation
4. Internal change direction
5. Language adjustment
6. Ministerial truth management
7. Political economic corrections
8. Social sanitation

R1 • Gets ba ITEM (table)

### 4. Archaeologist Freiherr

**#adventure**

*Behold, the golden idol!*

Discovers lost artifacts. Climbs, jumps and dodges boulders. Detects traps and hidden doors. Whips a small gun and cracks a neural whip.

R1 • Gets ITEM (table)

### 5. Athlete of Some Renown

**#adventure**

*Run, rabbit, run.*

Found fame as a [d10]:

1. Ball hitter or kicker
2. Discus thrower
3. Dressage rider
4. Fancy dancer
5. Obstacle jumper
6. Distance runner
7. Pro wrestler
8. Rock climber
9. Swimmer
10. Wave surfer

Runs the extra mile, stretches reserves further, goes faster. Does a biathlon, a triathlon, a polythlon. Signs an autograph. Waves a bottle of fizz-wine.

R1 • Gets ITEM (table)

### 6. Big Game Tourist

**#adventure**

*It's a fair chase, honest.*

Shoots big guns and rides a large burden beast or armored golem. Blithely orders servants around and overlooks the lower classes. Chomps cigars, swills firewater, and talks turkey. Seeks [d8]:

1. Asbestos phoenix
2. Black squid
3. Green roc
4. Iron rhino
5. Purple grandworm
6. Swordtoothed bear
7. White whale
8. Yellow earthdragon

R1 • Gets ITEM (table)

### 7. Butcher Banker

**#background**

*Blood and money. Both must flow.*

Lends money and practices usury. Nobs with fine folk, promotes charities and intimidates with wealth. Crunches numbers and collects arts or antiquities. Secretly [d6]:

1. Breeds doves
2. Collects pet rocks
3. Composes sonnets
4. Grows tiny trees
5. Plays the sad mandolin
6. Practices memorization

R1 • Gets ITEM (table)

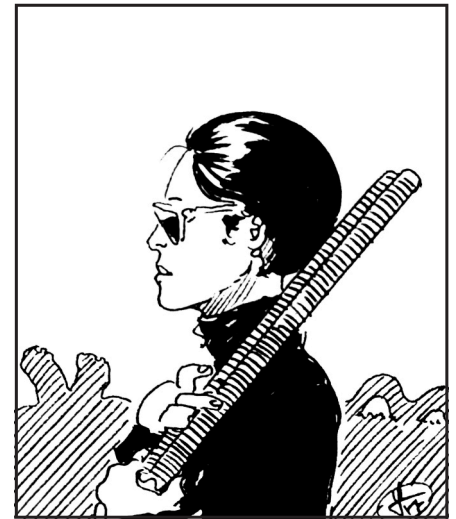
### 8. Captain in the Auxiliaries

**#adventure**

*Lead that cannon fodder.*

Leads the forces of civilization to victories over monsters of madness and chaos by navigating the military bureaucracy. Understand boots, morale and logistics. Wields standard issue weapons and equipment.

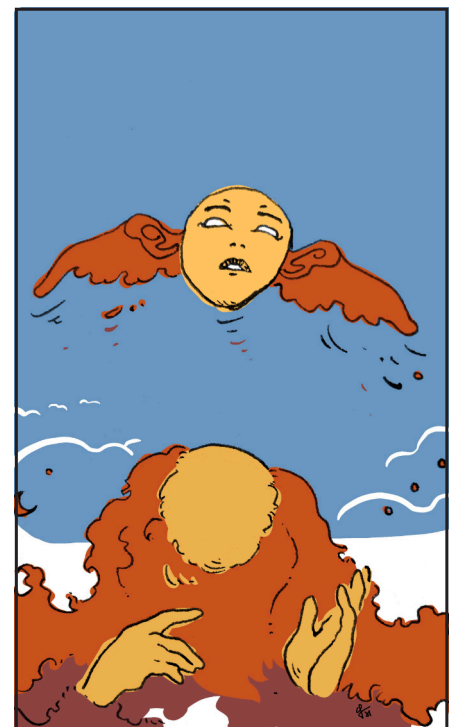
R1 • Gets ITEM (table).



*The big game tourist cared not ...*



*... if a butcher banker funded her ...*



*... for a dream voyager guided her.*

## 9. Cat Burglar

[#adventure](#)

*Door, window, wall. Same thing.*

Breaks into and out of places. Disarms locks and traps and extrasensory wards. Moves very quietly. Appraises treasures. Stylish, suave, elegant. Loves [d6]:

1. Berets
2. Calling cards
3. Cats
4. Masks
5. Puzzles
6. Stripes

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table)

## 10. Chevalier

[#background](#)

*A beacon of chivalry.*

Suitors swoon and adversaries gnash their teeth. Masters etiquette and romantic literature. Wields lance, sword, and noble pin blaster from steed-seat. Rules subhuman peons with the iron fist of justice and extracts taxes without fault or fail. Titled [d6]:

1. Dooch
2. En Ginny
3. Hazda or Gasda
4. May or Siz
5. Laud or Lae or Leit
6. Wlada

**R1** • Gets VEHICLE (table).

## 11. Circus Acrobat

[#adventure](#)

*Make no bones about it.*

Squeezes into small places. Puts on circus shows. Gets out of restraints. Gets into and out of armor very quickly. Shows an amazing knowledge of pressure points. Evades enemies with surprising grace. Daydreams through dreary day jobs.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 12. Corpocrat Suitwearer

[#background](#)

*The business.*

Helps run corporations, banks, and self-help associations. Lubricates the world. Signs forms and documents. Toadies up to superiors. Shakes up recalcitrants, sidesteps legislations and regulations, changes facts on the ground, breaks knees. Wields concealed weapons, broken bottles, and pistols. Their specialization [d8]:

1. Asset enhancement
2. Efficient downsizing
3. Fallout management
4. Human resources
5. Mergers and acquisitions
6. Political lobbying
7. Public opinion management
8. Risk reprogramming

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 13. Dream Voyager

[#adventure](#)

*If the vizier dies while they dream, who is at fault?*

Travels in dreams. Talks to spirits and chairs. Converses with other dreamers. Visits the moon and other far places. Trades in secrets, fears, and desires. Handles psychedelics like a virtuoso.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 14. Driver Jill, Jack or Jo

[#adventure](#)

*Speed in the sign of yellow.*

Handles land vehicles, manoeuvres past obstacles at speed. Repairs and keeps travel machines running. Packs surprisingly well. Masters details like rally racing, drifting, stunts, and crashing safely.

**R1** • Gets VEHICLE (table).

## 15. Explorer of the Vastlands

#adventure

*Over seven rivers and seven hills.*

Organizes expeditions into the unknown and survives in the wild. Navigates by rumors and landmarks, hacks through jungles and sails deserts. Negotiates with other cultures and writes popular travel literature. Wields rifles and machetes. A passable [d8]:

1. Epic announcer
2. Experimental chef
3. Lomographer
4. Nonfiction writer
5. Phonogram recorder
6. Rally golem rider
7. Water colorist

R1 • Gets ITEM (table).

## 16. Fisher Pasha

#background

*Gentle and atmospheric.*

Had a claim, but it is lost [d6]:

1. City become free.
2. County gone corporate.
3. Floating mountain stolen.
4. Freehold overrun.
5. Kingdom turned republic.
6. Resort island gambled away.

Understands rivers and lakes and shores. Knows fish, boats and hooks, lines and poles, nets, yarns, and courtly mores. Handles a harpoon and basic navigation.

R1 • Gets ITEM (table).

## 17. Forager of the Future

#adventure

*Food wriggles everywhere!*

Finds berries, nuts, mushrooms, grubs, leftovers, and cooling pies. Traps rabbits, tickles trouts, scrapes lichens, starts fires. Keep dry and warm in wilds and ruin lands, sewer zones and streets.

R1 • Gets ITEM (table).

## 18. Gladiator

#adventure

*Blood soothes the decadent fools.*

Thrives in arenas, puts on shows. Impresses crowds and intimidates opponents. Masters showy weapons and circus mainstays like folded chairs. Trades in dirty tricks too. Styles as a [d6]:

1. Aquatic monarch.
2. Caped animal crusader.
3. Creepy clown trickster.
4. Golden hero of the crowds.
5. Raging bull warrior.
6. Thundering storm lord.

R1 • Gets ITEM (table).

## 19. Groom to the Superior Species

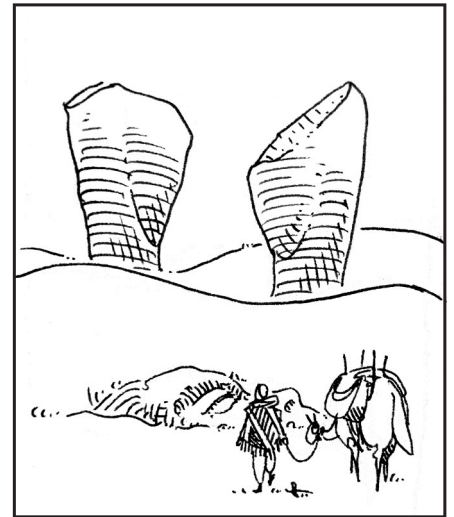
#adventure

*All for the love of master.*

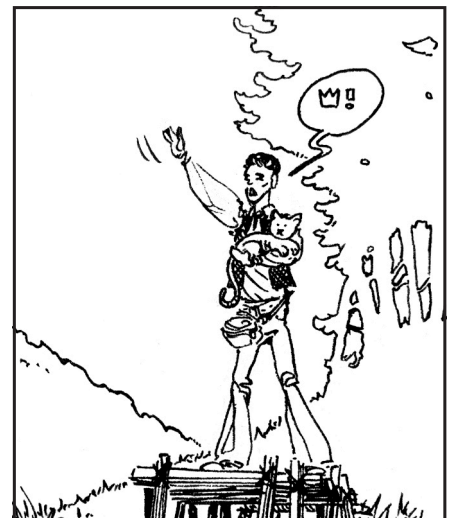
Comprehends the superiority of the masters and understands their empathic emanations. Makes the masters happy and receives their love and affections. Grooms, brushes, styles, curls, trims, cuts, perms, and pampers. Follows and sometimes make fashion. Master may be a:

1. Telepathic cat
2. Sapientized dog
3. Cosmic gerbil
4. Higher-dimensional white mouse
5. Noösphere-linked snake
6. Quantum ant colony
7. Three-eyed grey parrot
8. Chronoclastic potted plant
9. Awakened galliform dinosaur
10. Hypnotic toad
11. Pharaoh fish
12. Talking horse

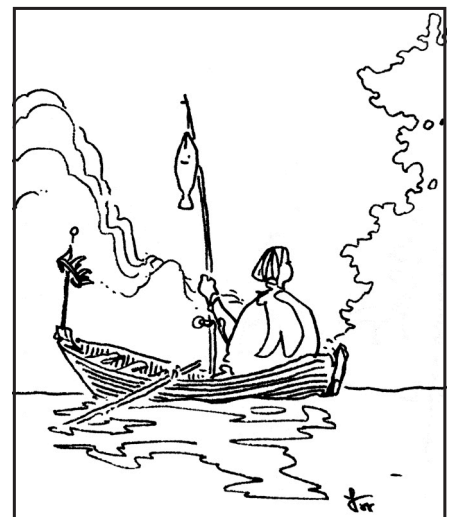
R1 • Gets PET (table). The groom treats the pet as their master. The player may also reverse roles, turning the animal into a full character and treating them as the lead hero.



*The explorer spoke of a bygone ruin..*



*The groom shared the message.*



*The fisher pasha listened.*

## 20. Handyworker

#background

*The trades. Unsurprisingly useful.*

Hero is a skilled [d8]:

1. Boilermaker
2. Bricklayer
3. Carpenter
4. Gardener
5. Gasfitter
6. Ka-ba-wright
7. Plumber
8. Welder

Builds, fits, maintains, and repairs the complicated machinery that makes modern life bearable. Navigates labyrinths, pipes, ducts, and portals. Sports distinctive facial decorations and overalls. Joins trade guilds. Saves princelings. Wields tools, wrenches and orbs.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 21. Historian of the Downfall

#adventure

*The war. The war never changes.*

Safeguards the history of the ancient dead places and radiation wastelands. Uses ancient war machines. Learns the old rituals of technology. Assassinate dangerous sages and politicians. Preserves humanity from itself. Builds remote fortified abbeys full of traps. Treasures books. Wields oldtech weapons, knives, spears and pistols. Practices the lost martial art of gun-boxing.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 22. Housekeeper of Good Repute

#background

*My home is my castrum.*

Keeps the core socioeconomic unit running. Runs household. Manages accounts. Maintains schedules, supplies and logistics. Packs and prepares. Settles disputes. Collects rents. Pays allowances. Provides first aid and preventative medical care. Wields rolling pins, pans, and more.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 23. Hunter of the Late Days

#adventure

*It doesn't know it's already food.*

Thinks like animals and hunts them. Tracks them, sets traps, and hides in ambush. Skins them, prepares furs, and the rest. Uses hunting weapons. Humans are animals. Keen on [d8]:

1. Arctotheres
2. Chalicotheres
3. Dinornithiforms
4. Dryopithecines
5. Megalodontoceti
6. Merychips
7. Novamoths
8. Re-smilodons

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 24. Investigator Private

#adventure

*Elementary, my dear sidekick.*

Gathers clues and pieces together answers. Discreetly interrogates people. Folds origami unicorns or other monsters. Uses small, easily concealed weapons. Breaks safes, locks, and bureaucratic police protocols. They present as a [d8]:

1. Bounty hunter
2. Doctor of uncertain field
3. Eccentric opium user
4. Fiction writer
5. Golem decommissioner
6. Nosy priest
7. Retired country landlord
8. Undercover operative

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).



## 25. Laborer in Reserve

### #background

Nothing to lose but their chains.

Survives in latter-day urban environments. Forages for food and work. Builds shelters, maintains infrastructure, cleans palaces, grooms bodies. Forges bonds away from the gaze of the corpocrats and aristocrats. Wields hammers, sickles, fists and improvised guns. Treasures paper titles such as [d12]:

1. Food delivery professional
2. Community sanitation tech
3. Streetbuilder corps member
4. Rubble picker battalion
5. Urbancore gardener
6. Houselaborer
7. Machine polisher
8. Senior janitor
9. Biological watch unit
10. Conspicuous servitor
11. Day-and-night laborer
12. Power delivery specialist

**R1** • Gets DEBT (table).

## 26. Maker Cogsmith

### #background

*Did you try plugging it in?*

Understands machines and listens to their woes. Cares for them, lubricates them, and fixes them. Even brings them back from the grave. Makes and unmakes mechanics. Wields a mean blow torch and throws a sharp spanner. Fond of [d6]:

1. Automata
2. Clocks
3. Difference engines
4. Golem abacuses
5. Locks
6. Waterwheels

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 27. Master Packer

### #adventure

*No magic bag, just a system.*

Packs gear and cargo and supplies very effectively. Doesn't bruise fruit or break eggs. Finds space for the caravan pet. Warehousing and logistics experience.

**R1** • Gains one bonus inventory slot.

**R2** • Gains another slot.

**R3** • Two more slots. Continues with fibonacci sequence at higher ranks.

## 28. Mule Whisperer

### #adventure

*It's not talking to animals per se.*

Literally talks to animals. Gets pack animals to get along. Has animal friends and keeps them happy. Finds water and food, treats injured animals, encourages recalcitrant steeds, calms panicked beasts. Animals might include [d12]:

1. Biomanced burdenbeasts
2. Hairy unicorns
3. Hardy horses
4. Meta-elephants
5. Impressive quadrodonts
6. Lowing biocycles
7. Plumed runbirds
8. Gore yaks
9. Secondary donkeys
10. Struthiform dinosaurs
11. Lope possums
12. Carnal fastfoots

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 29. Navigator of Other Worlds

### #adventure

*When the seven signs align.*

Masters maps and telescopes and cartography. Avoids getting lost and tracks down lost treasures and new discoveries. Charts course by stars, winds, waypoints and worms. Folds the gateways and bends space.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

### 30. Negotiator of Relations

*#background*

*They think they got the better deal.*

Reads people and listens to them. Figures out what they want, and how to get it for them. Generates win-win outcomes while meeting key jargon milestones. Does a bit of discrete espionage. Handles organizations and bureaucracies. Hates corruption, approves of lobbying. Was an [d8]:

1. Ambassador
2. Commissar
3. Emissary
4. Secretary
5. Spiritual interpreter
6. Sociotherapist
7. Translator
8. Used golem salesperson

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

### 31. Noble Socialite

*#background*

*The life of the party.*

Gets invited to all the parties. Dresses to impress. Knows who's who. Is mentioned in the who's who. Substitutes contacts and gossip for actual work or ability. Wields a tiny dog and a small wand. Known as a [d6]:

1. Beauty of our times
2. Ditzzy fool
3. Lounge lizard
4. Raucous party animal
5. Smooth operator
6. Wondrous wit

**R1** • Gets CONNECTION (table).

### 32. Nomad Rustler

*#adventure*

*Go, go, guerrilla.*

Irregular tactics and guerrilla combat. Snipes, ambushes and shoots on the run. Rides like lightning, wears large hats, finds water holes. Steals cattle. Hides tracks, plays tricks. Excellent endurance when running away.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

### 33. Outsider Alien

*#adventure*

*Not normal here.*

Possesses strange foreign skills out of place in civilized society. Speaks alien languages. Looks strange and out of place. Survives in ducts and sewers and ruins. Hides in plain sight. Applies cosmetics and prosthetics. Uses improvised tools.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table) and a COSMETIC MUTATION (table).

### 34. Pilot of Vechs

*#adventure*

*This might be an unfair fight.*

Becomes one with their mobile golem armor. Understands vechs and their void-energy needs. Speak the machine language of flashing lights and wins their loyalty. Understands war machine academy politics. Fond of [d6]:

1. Biovechs
2. Hovers
3. Levitators
4. Rollers
5. Walkers
6. Wheelers

**R1** • Gets VEHICLE (table).

### 35. Postmodern Soldier

*#adventure*

*Once there were many like them.*

Polishes the rituals, skills and badges of the warriors from before those wasted years when the Vüstlands swallowed the Free Imperial Republics. Wields pistols and rifles, grenades and knives. Drives half-brainless machines. Endures mind-numbing drill. Salutes the half-forgotten [d6]:

1. Black pocket monolith
2. Imperial mask
3. Rusted star
4. Solar banner
5. Unbroken serpent
6. Withered heart

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

### 36. Praxa of the Bows

#combat

*Shoot an arrow, split a tree.*

Embraces the neoprimitive. Skirmishes with the best. Looses storms and sharpshoots alike. Makes and breaks bows and arrows. Keeps fighting trim.

**R1** • Critical damage increased one step.

**R2** • [+] to close attacks.

**R3** • Attacks twice per action.

### 37. Praxa of the Chains

#combat

*Against the army of the dead.*

Wields flails, chains, saws and chainsaws in the savior style from the Last Zombie Necrocide. Also puts on a great show of being a lumberjill or lumberjack.

**R1** • Gains #reach.

**R2** • Critical range increased one step.

**R3** • Critical range increased one more step and decapitates undead on critical.

### 38. Praxa of the Good Guns

#combat

*The big gun is good big time.*

Uses and maintains really big ranged weapons, like cannons, catapults, and null walkers. Repairs simple machines. Pretty good at ballistics too.

**R1** • Reloads faster.

**R2** • [+] on long-range fire.

**R3** • All damage dice explode.

### 39. Praxa of the Energies

#combat

*An elite order of laser monks?*

Uses and maintains ancient energy weapons in the field. Masters wands, lasers, and death orbs. Peruses holy manuals and recites operation mantras.

**R1** • Energy weapon minimum settings double as tools for cutting and burning. Can choose to deal minimum damage.

**R2** • Adjusts settings for [+] vs. force and energy defenses.

**R3** • Full power modulation. Chooses damage dice results instead of rolling.

### 40. Praxa of the Hammeraxes

#combat

*Has buttered scones for tea.*

Chops down trees. Hammers down nails. Upholds the dictats of the dwarven worker-aristocracy. Slays with axes, hammers, axe-hammers, dagger-axes, mattocks, ice axes, and more. Plays traditional percussion instruments.

**R1** • Critical multiplier increased one step.

**R2** • Damage dice increased one step.

**R3** • Critical multiplier increased one more step.

### 41. Praxa of the Knives

#combat

*The shark has such teeth, dear.*

Chops open coconuts and cuts paths through jungle. Hides and throws and twirls knives. Guts a fish, slits a throat, spreads some butter.

**R1** • Knife damage dice explode.

**R2** • Knife attacks ignore armor.

**R3** • Knives deal double damage.

## 42. Praxa of the Mortal Shells

#combat

*They made champions to win the eternal war.*

Understands battle and struggle at a cellular level. Utilizes body and environment as weapons. Redesigned to endure stress, hardship and fatigue. Meditates upon falling flowers. Dances through battles.

**R1** • Unarmed attacks deal d6 damage. Improvised weapon damage dice increase 1 step.

**R2** • Unarmed attacks deal d8. Improvised dice increase 1 more step.

**R3** • Unarmed d12. Improvised 1 more step.

## 43. Praxa of the Pistoliers

#combat

*Archaemagic cloaks and wands with pistol grips.*

Wields fantascientific pistols and magitechnic wands like a gun baron of the now-defunct Powder Feudalism. Draws fast and shoots tricks, duels and dices, drinks fire water and sleeps light as a feather.

**R1** • Reloads as a free action.

**R2** • [+] to attacks against nearby targets.

**R3** • Attacks twice per action.

## 44. Praxa of the Poles

#combat

*Poke with the pointy end, please.*

Wields polearms in formation or alone. Unleashes fire and brimstone with the staves of elder power. Fights with spear and shield like a hero of the old days.

**R1** • Ha and ka defenses increased by 2.

**R2** • Critical multiplier increased one step.

**R3** • [+] to tricks, trips, pushes, and other maneuvers.

## 45. Praxa of the Rifles

#combat

*The longest arm.*

Repairs, maintains and uses long wands, guns, rifles and shotguns. Snipes from a distance and clears rooms with a prayer and a sprayer. Full-auto hunting.

**R1** • [+] to attacks when sniping.

**R2** • Reloads as a free action.

**R3** • Critical range increased one step.

## 46. Praxa of the Rods

#combat

*Spare the rod, spoil the fight.*

Whirls rods, maces, clubs and sticks in combat. Uses the spell-rods of the battle wizards of old and crushes bones with nuclearlithic uranium-head maces.

**R1** • Critical damage multiplier increased one step.

**R2** • Damage dice increased one step.

**R3** • Ignores armor.

## 47. Praxa of the Swords

#combat

*Double stake or split, the ace of spades.*

Twirls and polishes a sword, pokes and chops and pommel bashes. Parade marches and dead man's hand card games. Makes a mean musketeer (just don't ask them to shoot).

**R1** • Critical range increased one step.

**R2** • Damage dice increased one step.

**R3** • Critical range increased one more step.

#### 48. Professor in Panhumanities

[#background](#)

*Practical applications coming soon.*

Expounds theories and histories. Navigates cloisters and libraries. Fights academic battles and browbeats foolish opponents. Memorizes one narrow field of lore. Popular fields include [d12]:

1. Art rehistorian
2. Constructivist linguist
3. Evolved theologian
4. Historian of the long long ago
5. Lamarckian bioethicist
6. Metascientific philosopher
7. Neogeographer
8. Parapolitical economist
9. Postconceptual metatherapist
10. Psychosocial engineer
11. Ruinland semiotician
12. Theoretical anthropologist

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

#### 49. Protocollier

[#background](#)

*Once we mined coal, now we make protocol.*

Holds coffee ceremonies and builds sacrificial wicker humans. Determines modes of address and titles, paints heraldries and writes genealogies. Adjudicates seating, including shotgun seats. Wields pick and shovel. Focused on [d6]:

1. Alcohol practices
2. Cigarette rituals
3. Coffee ceremonies
4. Pastry formalities
5. Tripe rites
6. Water pipe liturgies

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

#### 50. Psychic Veteran

[#adventure](#)

*A fire of unknown origin took their friends away.*

Uses psychic and oldtech weapons. Maintains archaic and golem armors. Closes the mind to incomprehensible alien intruders. Staves off boredom. Survives and recognizes strange nootropics developed by long lost corporate kingdoms.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

#### 51. Revolutionary

[#adventure](#)

*Change is always coming.*

Organizes the disaffected and downtrodden. Writes tracts and gives impassioned speeches. Steals from the rich and powerful. Robs banks and blow up treasure caravans. Accumulates wealth and power. Wields explosives, pistols, pens, and knives.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

#### 52. Rider at Ease

[#adventure](#)

*This steed is Fleetfoot the Ninth.*

Rides animals and riding machines. Wields light ranged weapons and lances. Takes care keeping steeds happy and working nicely. Explores societal issues. Attracts attention of locals.

**R1** • Gets VEHICLE (table).

#### 53. Secret Servant

[#adventure](#)

*From chaos, with love.*

Goes undercover. Hunts moles. Seduces informants. Plugs leaks. Leaks kompromat. Navigates complex organizations and files reports in triplicate. Uses pistols, umbrellas, poisons, and strange ancient artefacts. Gets left out in the cold sooner or later.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).



## 54. Shadow Merchant

#adventure

*Somebody would have sold the Hand of God sooner or later.*

Buys cheap and sells dear. Assesses, refurbishes, and trades. Makes useful contacts in places low and high. Hires guards and fires guns. Sells [d6]:

1. Drugs
2. Off-license biomedicals
3. Golems
4. Guns
5. Illegal spells
6. Smuggled essentials

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 55. Shopkeeper

#background

*Now this is a party.*

Buys cheap and sells dear. Pillars the community and pillories interlopers. Upholds the letter of the law and the spirit of the purse. Wields coins and decorative town swords.

Specialized in [d8]:

1. Desirable vehicles
2. Exotic fruits
3. Glittering jewelries
4. Luxuriant furs
5. Overwrought timepieces
6. Red shoes
7. Smelly perfumes
8. Voluptuous silks

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 56. Sidu of the Bestfolk

#social

*Some folk are simply better.*

Apes the rituals and customs of the ancient source-modified neoaristocracies. Masters the ingratiating arts of the courts imperial and corporate. Perches precariously on social ladders.

**R1** • [+] to social attacks in noble contexts.

**R2** • Doubles ba defense from ornate attire.

**R3** • When reduced to 0 life by social attacks, may immediately pay 1 physical stat point to regain 1d6 + level life.

## 57. Sidu of the Iron Fist

#social

*The army settles in the soul.*

Understands the military mindset. Comprehends the discipline and subordination required by the colony organism. Grasps the paradoxical catch-22 nature of bureaucratic systems.

**R1** • Takes half damage from social attacks in military contexts.

**R2** • [+] to social attacks in military contexts.

**R3** • Ba defense from ornate military attire doubled.

## 58. Sidu of the Leastfolk

#social

*The last must be first.*

Survives the harshest mistreatments. Toils in the shadows. Builds networks, contacts, and underground railways. Marks the injustices against them.

**R1** • [+] to social attacks in proletarian contexts.

**R2** • Takes half damage from non-legal and non-monetary social attacks.

**R3** • Reduces social damage by 1 for every nearby ally (minimum of 1).

## 59. Sidu of the Legalities

#social

*The word made order from chaos.*

Masters the logical traditions of cause and effect. Peruses the tomes of precedent. Invokes the wisdom of the long-dead. Appeals to the letter of the law.

**R1** • [+] to social attacks in legal contexts.

**R2** • Ba defense increased by pro.

**R3** • [+] to damage with legal attacks.

## 60. Sidu of the Outcaste

#social

*Freedom and misery.*

Travels outside the circles and customs of society. Sees the paradoxes of social life. Parts the veils of propriety. Survives without shame.

**R1** • Whenever the outcaste takes social damage, they immediately gain a boon.

**R2** • [+] to social attacks in outcast contexts.

**R3** • All social attacks against the outcaste deal double ba damage. Social attacks cannot reduce the outcaste to 0 life.

## 61. Sidu of the Rhetors

#social

*Words soothe the savage beast.*

Teaches and uses the art of oratory. Divines the hidden structures of languages and uses them to nuanced effect. Skewers opponents with glittering wit and honed logic.

**R1** • Basic social attacks deal d6 damage.

**R2** • Critical range increased one step.

**R3** • Critical multiplier increased one step.

## 62. Sidu of the Sacred Deed

#social

*As above so below.*

Grasps the social need for sacrifices and scape goats. Comprehends the value of meaning and purpose. Soothes ruffled souls and uplifts broken dreams.

**R1** • [+] to attacks in religious contexts.

**R2** • Ba defense from religious attire doubled.

**R3** • Deals double damage with all religious social attacks.

## 63. Sidu of the Soiltwined

#social

*True tradition tills the terroir.*

Grasps the cycles of soil and season. Works the soil and the rhythms of the lifegrowers. Understands the old ways that the cityborn have forgotten.

**R1** • [+] to social attacks in rural contexts.

**R2** • Takes half damage from social attacks in rural contexts. Takes minimum damage from social attacks while standing on their own soil.

**R3** • When reduced to 0 life by social attacks, may immediately pay 1 mental stat point to regain 1d6 + level life.

## 64. Sidu of the Staunchkeepers

#social

*Debt is the mother of coin.*

Upholds the dictats of the sacred economy. Creates and accumulates wealth. Battles with bribes and corruption. Resists disorder.

**R1** • [+] to social attacks in mercantile contexts.

**R2** • [+] to ba damage in mercantile contexts.

**R3** • Doubles ba defense from wealth.

## 65. Sidu of the Unfettered

#social

*Beyond good and evil.*

Resides outside the moralities of the mass of humanities. Trucks in higher realities and baser instincts. Trades in the dreams of a pure platonic world. Escapes into the fortress of their mind. Hides in the wilderness of their soul.

**R1** • [-] to all social attacks. Takes half damage from all social attacks.

**R2** • [-] to all social damage. Can spend a stat point to reduce incoming social damage to 1.

**R3** • [+] to all magical damage.

## 66. Sidu of the Uptought

#social

*Knowledge is the one true currency.*

Cultivates an air of easy grace and elite education. Understands the seventeen unironic classics. Comprehends the arc of history. Fears that their brilliance is not appreciated.

**R1** • [+] to social attacks in academic contexts.

**R2** • [+] to all ba damage dealt and received.

**R3** • Critical multiplier for all ba damage dealt increased one step.

## 67. Singer of the Lastlands

#adventure

*The Old-World will never die.*

Regales with [d6]:

1. Choreographed pop pieces.
2. Epic lays of lost lands.
3. Heroic songs of desperation.
4. Operatic masterpieces.
5. Polyphonic eerie chants.
6. Salty shanties.

Navigates the mythic wilderness of forgotten times by the landmarks of ancient days. Soothes wild beasts and rouses rage in the breasts of humans. Tells good stories with satisfying endings.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 68. Spelunker

#adventure

*Heaven is down. Always down.*

Ventures into deep places. Climbs, rappels, dives. Camps. Forages. Marks and maps. Crawls and squeezes. Survives in the dark, ageless places where the eyes of the builders see not.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 69. Storm Infantry

#background

*Break on through to the other side.*

Masters heavy weapons, armors, and shields. Fights in formation, resists charges, and endures long periods of boredom or armor. Storms enemy lines and fortifications. Keeps camps and cook fires.

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 70. Street Performer

#background

*Joy of the many, coin of the few.*

Brings joy to children. Performs magic tricks and sleight of hand. Uses cold reading and cunning to dupe marks. Wields hidden daggers and pistol-wands. Variants [d6]:

1. Illusionist
2. Puppeteer
3. Jongleur
4. Vome charmer
5. Fortune teller
6. Ventriloquist

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 71. Survivor in the Vast

#adventure

*Slept in the belly of a dead bear.*

Survives and thrives in the endless Vast. Fishes, hunts, tracks, hides and moves quiet as the long-stripe cat. Shoots from horse and autowagon like a child of the wild. Particularly familiar with the [d8]:

1. Cosmic-riven highlands
2. Endless moon forest
3. Deserts of the sun
4. Frozen starry seas
5. Horizon ruinlands
6. Thin-air plateau
7. Ultraviolet steppe
8. Thousand swimming isles

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 72. Tactician of the Endless War

#adventure

*There is an art to war.*

Finds strategic advantages for war or business. Paints grand canvases with the blood of lesser mortals. Narrates new chapters in the endless cycles of history. Repeats past mistakes and avoids censure. Spins defeats into victories. Day to day they do [d8]:

1. Accounting
2. Carpets
3. Corporate consulting
4. Games of strategy
5. Military consulting
6. Real estate
7. Sports
8. Underworld cleanups

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 73. Thespian

#background

*The gods were merely actors.*

Puts on plays and swaps out faces. Changes personalities and wardrobes. Moves hearts and souls with word and gesture. Gets invited to the belle soirées. Survives on fame alone, no food required, honest. Variants [d12]:

1. Character Actor
2. Chosen One
3. Clown
4. Comedian
5. Dramatist
6. Farceur
7. Leading Person
8. Media Star
9. Monologuer
10. Mummer
11. Politician
12. Tragedian

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 74. Timelost Interloper

#adventure

*A flint blade for a laser sword.*

Possesses skills out of place in the modern world. Builds slave golems called computers. Spouts gibberish about quantum physics. Flies rockets and experimental one-way time machines. Knaps stone tools and starts fires with sticks. Terrified of simple magic. Comes from [d6]:

1. A broken star
2. A distant future
3. A glorious past
4. A lost planet
5. A parallel world
6. A warlike era

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).



### 75. Tinker Toymaker

#background

*Toys are people too.*

Carves and sculpts fine toys, balanced dice, and detailed mechanical automata. Uses delicate tools. Repairs and beautifies golems and machine humans. Cheats at dice with languid elegance. Operates remote weapons. Fondest of [d6]:

1. Ceramic dolls
2. Gilded games
3. Little vechs
4. Plush toys
5. Tin golems
6. Wicker soldiers

R1 • Gets ITEM (table).

### 76. Useless Freeloader

#background

*It gets around.*

Invites themselves to all the parties. Dresses to blend in. Knows who's who. Gets free food and board. Butters up the insecure and soothes the ruffled. Wields a smooth tongue and a lack of shame. Known to be [d6]:

1. A layabout
2. Lackadaisical
3. Languid
4. Lazy
5. Lethargic
6. Terminally hip

R1 • Gets ITEM (table).

### 77. Veda of the Abmortal Doctor

#magic

*Doctor what?*

Fixes damaged humans, diagnoses injuries and diseases. Uses medical equipment, scalpels and knives. Recognizes poisons and potions, even curses and charms. Runs very well.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table)

### 78. Veda of the All-Chemist

#magic

*It's supposed to explode.*

Understands chemical processes and matter modification equipment. Makes explosives, cook drugs. Transmutes refuse into treasures (like excreta into gunpowder).

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 79. Veda of the Awakened Sphere

#magic

*The noosphere is hungry.*

Studies and adapts natural systems. Reads leaves and listens to churning microbes. Hears the voices of the wind. Smells the songs of the ocean. Uses biological equipment and handles hunting weapons.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 80. Veda of the Biomechané

#magic

*Skin-deep poems carved in flesh.*

Plays the living spirit of flesh and bough. Dams injuries and diseases, modifies biological processes, sculpts angels and monsters. Wields knives and saws, needles and probes. Unofficially dabbles in mad science body horror.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 81. Veda of the Cosmic Architects

#magic

*It's not a secret club.*

Builds buildings. Shapes stones. Understands dungeons. Forms mystery cults. Treads the boundary between life and death. Plays with magic gates. Wields hammers and chisels.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 82. Veda of the Existential Void

#magic

*Where imagination fails the void dwells.*

Journeys the hidden paths. Braves the madness and fast decay. Dreams of stars and hopes, mistakes undone, futures rewritten, promises remade.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 83. Veda of the Flying Serpent

#magic

*Prayers to the feathery one.*

Mixes poisons, potions, and medicines. Entreaties the tiny machines that swim in all living things. Harvests herbs that heal and those that ill. Wields knives, pestles, and mortars.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 84. Veda of the Golemmafexes

#magic

*Roboticist to the initiated.*

Heals and maintains ancient autonomous machines. Follows preserved manuals of ritual assembly to copy platonic golems. Communicates with machines via the ancient art of coding. Uses integrated energy weapons and void screwdrivers.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 85. Veda of the Iron Symphony

#magic

*The spheres are ringing.*

Uses music to unite and divide, to share and preserve. Makes a band and tours the Vastlands. Ignores ingested poisons and shatters objects with instrumentals alone. Wrecks inns and hotels, leaves heartbreak behind. Casts the spells of the vibrating spheres.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 86. Veda of the Law Necromantic

#magic

*Life and death are legal matters.*

Talks to the dead and interprets their wishes. Mediates between living and dead. Consults the wisdom of past ages. Brings things back from the long sleep where they dreamless lay. Impeccable taste in candles, perfumes, skulls and gowns.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 87. Veda of the Light Held Fast

#magic

*It would work if you just believed.*

Uses placebos and nocebos to change the world. Stores and retrieves information with living crystals. Focus and refract magics through oldtech gems. Creates plays of light and shadow. Wields crystal wands.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

### 88. Veda of the Mother Electric

#magic

*Creation hums the song Electric.*

Practices the old rites of electric equipment maintenance and repair. Uses heavy energy weapons and ka batteries. Casts spells with blueprint scrolls.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

**89. Veda of the Old Technologies**

#magic

*It's how they did things Long Ago.*

Understands the fantascience of Oldtech. Activates or deactivates nearly anything. Reverse-engineers how to use ancient technomagical artifacts. Jury rigs a feeble emulation of the glories of the Long Ago.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

**90. Veda of the Plant Kings**

#magic

*Just because the trees talk, doesn't mean they're crazy.*

Talks to plants and hears what they have to say. Encourages verdant growth and opulent fruition. Promotes mobility and advancement for the plant kingdom. Harvests strange fruits. Wields sickles, axes, clubs and blunts.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

**91. Veda of the Rightmaker**

#magic

*Soothe the savage mob.*

Feels society and community in their bones. Sacrifices the few for the many. Understands the exigencies of survival transcend morality. Judges with stern impartiality. Wields great swords and ornate guns.

R1 • Gets ITEM (table).

**92. Veda of the Seeming Becoming**

#magic

*They're magic beans.*

Researches who wants what and how much they're willing to pay. Makes rough guesses and drives data. Writes adventuring campaigns. Handles public relations. Wields confusion and obfuscation.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

**93. Veda of the Seven Summons**

#magic

*It wants to serve us. Trust me.*

Finds the multitudes inhabiting the realms beyond the aether veils and in this dark material reality binds them. Bends, breaks, and entralls daimons. Makes them give up their secrets. Pretends to their trust and loyalty.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

**94. Veda of the Soul Breaker**

#magic

*Did I dream I was a human, or was I a human dreaming I was a spark of infinity?*

Reads people's intentions and desires. Intuits strength of character and weakness of desire. Twists plans and dreams. Subvert the ka and steals the body with the terrifying spells of the ultras.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

**95. Veda of the Witching Song**

#magic

*Ears for the all-song.*

Listens to the world around them, the folk big and small, and hears what they say. Mixes herbs and opens the spirit eye to protect against daemons and slanders. Heals with words and attentions. Works in possibilities and glances.

R1 • Gets SPELL (table).

**96. Veda of the World's Word**

#magic

*The will of the world is written in the wind and the seed.*

Reads the omens of wind and sky and water and grass. Divines the desires of the gods and their immutable laws. Adjusts those laws to help others and themselves. Deities and belief systems might include [d12]:

1. Hedonic flesh-firstism
2. Opiate stasis
3. Mystery objectivism
4. Pan-noöspherical gratitude
5. Builder beatification
6. Sociotheism
7. Cogflower growth gospel

8. Ur-rationalism
9. Ancestral apotheosis
10. Pre-singularity nostalgia
11. Rainbow panoply polytheism
12. Machine idolatry

**R1** • Gets SPELL (table).

## 97. Vome Technician

*#adventure*

*Once these machines were our servants.*

Studies and repairs vomes. Adapts and uses vomish implants. Manages their side-effects. Takes control of vome drones and independent units. Uses vometech. Discretely [d6]:

1. Accepts vomish directives
2. Collects vome trophies
3. Enjoys vomewave art
4. Hunts synthetics
5. Modifies themself
6. Spreads vomeware

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 98. White Collar Drone

*#background*

*Just killing time.*

Dresses appropriately and understands the etiquettes of modern life. Speaks three languages. Has a suitable degree and years of experience. Understands jargon. Masters arcane communication and management rituals. Clandestinely takes care of personal affairs despite the watchful eyes of jaded bosses. Creates ornate project documentation that nobody will ever read. Dreams of a better life. Secretly [d6]:

1. Writes erotic poetry
2. Builds tiny model towns
3. Plays make-believe games
4. Dresses up in costumes
5. Joined a motor-golem gang
6. Summons small daemons

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 99. Writer of Belles Lettres

*#background*

*Calligraphy and purple prose.*

Makes a living as a scribe using the three traditional scripts. Writes stories, fictions, and forgeries. Inscribes ritual code scrolls with fluid ease. Wields a pen sharper than a sword. Cuts with tongue, drowns with ink. Genres include [d6]:

1. Belle epoque novel
2. Postconstructivist poetry
3. Oldtech fiction
4. Generative stories
5. Epistolary tales
6. Subtextual plays

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).

## 100. Zu Error

*#error*

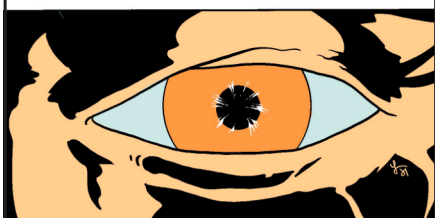
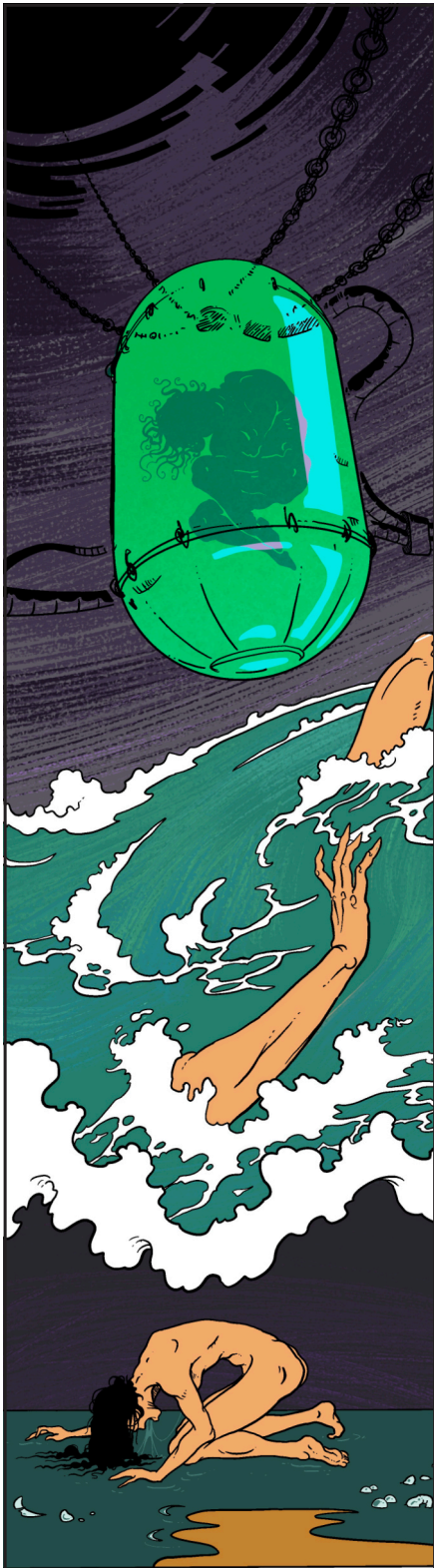
*Error. Reality. Reboot.*

Memory conflict. Reality cascades and reforms. Veils within veils. Wormholes in the mind. This body is created from dreams and destinies and corroded code. Resonates with alien artefacts. Feels at home with the non-euclidean. Grasps the fundamental illusion of existence. Denies the knowledge with [d6]:

1. Hard clerical labour
2. Bare-knuckle fighting
3. Competitive drinking
4. Maniacal fantastic scribbling
5. Rigid traditionalism
6. Revolutionary action

**R1** • Gets ITEM (table).





# Traits

*“Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine, my joints more supple.”*

— The Creature in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818)

Traits are thematically both narrower and weirder than skills. A catch-all category for things ordinary could never do no matter how much they studied or practiced. Luck, mutation, strange magics, and alien gods might bestow abilities. They change how a hero interacts with the rules and don’t require tests, sacrifices, ammunition or other equipment. They are neither good nor ill, just (often) dangerous and strange. Common types include:

- Direct augmentations** • Increased stats, the ability to go without food.
- Situational modifiers** • Increased damage when cornered, a boon to tests with cold iron items.
- Special resources** • Additional memory inventory for spells or a summonable extra.
- Special effects & actions** • Visible auras, unarmed attacks that restore life.

When a hero rolls or chooses the same ability multiple times they gain ranks. Ranks may provide additional effects or items. Each trait or trait rank occupies one trait slot (e.g three ranks in bravely runs away occupy three slots).

## Trait Tags

Tags loosely categorize traits. Additional tags are possible.

- #biomachine** • Artificial traits for created organisms.
- #brains** • Thoughtful application of superior intellectual capabilities for the furtherance of personally acceptable outcomes.
- #fantascience** • Magic and science by another name.
- #fortune** • Luck and the manipulation of the underlying fabric of probability. Also money.
- #power** • The will to strength. The unyielding oak. The crushing boulder. The alacrity of the born warrior.

# Inventing a New Trait

*"It's a flying pig! With a flame thrower!"*

—last message from Ulurartu, porphyry city of a hundred trades.

When players invent a new ability, they should ask:

1. Does it have a one-line poetic description and memorable title?
2. Can its effect be described in one or two sentences?
3. Is it completely overpowered?
4. Does it make the game boring for heroes without the same ability?

If the answers are yes and yes, no and no, it's probably a good ability.

For example, 'Detector of Evil' isn't the best. It makes a hero the ultimate arbiter of morality, removing choices from the other players. Something like 'Desire Detective' could be more interesting. 'Gill Implants' is a bit basic, but fine. A water-breathing hero expands the group's reach, but can lead to solo adventures. If the top cat is comfortable assigning extras to the other players, this can become more interesting. 'Biomechanical Intestinal Upgrades' is kind of cool. Maybe it lets the hero digest any organic matter. This reduces their dependence on food supplies, but makes for mildly humorous situations ("Hansel eats what? Again?").

## Table of Traits [d100]

These hundred starting traits (detailed overleaf) give some idea of what traits could be. Players, especially TCs, are encouraged to invent novel traits to suit events and encounters in play.

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Aesthetic Creation        | 35. Inspiring Hero             |
| 2. Artiforganism             | 36. Insufferably Cute          |
| 3. Aural Corona              | 37. Lazarus Soldier            |
| 4. Beneficiary of Choice     | 38. Lifewind Inhalation        |
| 5. Bloodclad                 | 39. Luminous                   |
| 6. Bloody Nimble             | 40. Machine Whisperer          |
| 7. Body Magic                | 41. Master Blaster             |
| 8. Bravely Runs Away         | 42. Memory Palace              |
| 9. Break the Weak            | 43. Meticulous Ritualist       |
| 10. Channeling Hands         | 44. More Than Human            |
| 11. Chromatic Avatar         | 45. Motorbreath                |
| 12. Citoyen Formidable       | 46. Natural Born Comrade       |
| 13. Combat Monster           | 47. Neural Machine Symbiote    |
| 14. Critical Master          | 48. Noblesse Obliged           |
| 15. Death Hunger             | 49. Omniactivation             |
| 16. Devastator               | 50. Overlooked by the Gods     |
| 17. Disembodied              | 51. Panmolecular Sensorium     |
| 18. Dosemaster               | 52. Perfectly Balanced         |
| 19. Echolocator              | 53. Pheromone Panoply          |
| 20. Electromagic Hacker      | 54. Polybody Unity             |
| 21. Empty Shell              | 55. Porcelain Skin             |
| 22. Eternal Champion         | 56. Protector of Innocents     |
| 23. Expert Sidekicks         | 57. Psion Scion                |
| 24. Fleshsong Audiophile     | 58. Qanat of Power             |
| 25. Fluid Anatomy            | 59. Querulous Kvetch           |
| 26. Fool's Luck              | 60. Radiant Panoptics          |
| 27. Friend of the Elements   | 61. Rauber Baron               |
| 28. Gastrointestinal Upgrade | 62. Renowned Racer             |
| 29. Gifted                   | 63. Rubberskin                 |
| 30. Glittering Incorruptible | 64. Secured Flesh              |
| 31. Gravitas                 | 65. Self-Improvement Protocols |
| 32. Hacked Shorttimer        | 66. Sparklefingers             |
| 33. Honor Bound              | 67. Spiritbreaker              |
| 34. Improved                 | 68. Spell Detonator            |

## Anatomy of a Trait

### Death Hunger—colourful title

*#demon—so the character becomes demonic? Alright.*

*They had become a death cult, a blood demon awakened—poetic description gives a thematic idea of how it manifests in play. It tantalizes with world-building ideas and gives hooks for roleplay.*

**R1** • Hero gains a mark for each opponent taken out in a physical conflict. Each mark gives a cumulative +1 to attacks until the conflict ends—a bit fiddly, but players who want a combat monster would relish it.

**R2** • Also gains a cumulative +1 damage for every mark—builds on the first rank, improving it.

## Quick Roll

**Pulp hero** • Roll twice.  
**Starting extra** • Roll not.  
**Epic legend** • Roll five-fold.

69. Stargazer
70. Symbiotic Friend
71. Symbolic Receiver
72. True Warrior
73. True Wizard
74. Unblinking
75. Uncanny Confidence
76. Undying Parasite Heart
77. Uplifted Exemplar
78. Vacuum Hardened
79. Vibrant Soul
80. Void of Memories
81. Vome Optic Enhancement
82. War Mind
83. Wizardkiller
84. Words Like Daggers
85. Zootic Masterform

# The Hundred Traits

## 1. Aesthetic Creation

#biomachine

*Made in Beautiful.*

Hero chooses a cosmetic mutation (pXX).

## 2. Artiforganism

#biomachine

*The unborn. The made.*

**R1** • Hero is not actually alive. They do not need to eat, breathe, drink, or sleep. They gain energy from the sun or from magical batteries.

**R2** • Hero can replicate themselves given a few weeks and security backups.

## 3. Aural Corona

#fantascience

*Flaring off the elemental excess.*

Hero is surrounded by [d8]:

1. Light
2. Fire
3. Sky
4. Water
5. Green
6. Metal
7. Radiation
8. Void

**R1** • Hero crackles with an overcharged aura. They take half damage from their element.

**R2** • Hero can spend 1 life to flare their aura to an adjacent creature, either sharing their resistance or transferring all the damage they avoided.

**R3** • Hero takes minimum damage from their element.

## 4. Beneficiary of Choice

#fortune

*Some give, they receive.*

Hero's mysterious sponsors say they represent the [d8]:

1. Archaic Independence Front
2. Council Metropolitan
3. De Werker Aristocracie
4. God Factory
5. Nu-Vome Consortium
6. Solar Gateway Initiative
7. Wine Vampire Endowment
8. Zu Kompleks Deity™

**R1** • Hero gains 1 charisma (maximum +6). Once per week, they can receive a mysterious package, no larger than a small coffin, containing a non-magical machine or item of their choice.

**R2** • Hero gains 1 ba defence. Once per day, hero receives guidance via a deep implant. Either [+] on their next test or a true answer (the player may simply narrate something they "know", subject to the referee's soft veto).

**R3** • When a hero would die, they instead find themselves awake and unable to move in a strange cocoon, with shadowy shapes talking about "preparing the backup". Next thing they know, they're back in their bed missing some memories (hero permanently loses 1 skill).

## 5. Bloodclad

#power

*Action hero style.*

**R1** • When below half life, hero only takes half physical damage. They're tougher covered in their own shiny blood!

**R2** • Below half life, hero can shrug off one physical attack each round.

## 6. Bloody Nimble

#power

*Speed overwhelming.*

**R1** • Once per turn hero can spend 1 life to gain one additional action. This boost is not an action.

**R2** • Hero can choose to spend 3 life to gain two additional actions instead.

## 7. Body Magic

#fantascience

*There is no mind but flesh.*

**R1** • Hero can choose to use their strength or endurance stat when casting spells or making magical tests.

**R2** • Additionally, can add strength or endurance to dice rolled when casting spells or during ka conflicts.

**R3** • Increase strength or endurance by 1. May use their

strength or endurance stat for ka defences.

## 8. Bravely Runs Away

#fortune

*Can't touch this.*

**R1** • Opponents suffer [-] when hero is retreating. Any sacrifices to avoid encounters are worth twice as much.

**R2** • [+] to all tests while being chased. Ally morale does not suffer when hero retreats.

**R3** • Cowardly reputation. [+] to surprise attacks and against fear effects. Takes half damage from social attacks.

## 9. Break the Weak

#power

*Cut them down like wheat.*

**R1** • When hero physically strikes an opponent of lower level than themselves, the opponent is out of the fight (and probably dead).

**R2** • When the hero knocks an opponent out of the fight, they get a free attack against a nearby enemy.

## 10. Channeling Hands

#fantascience

*Be the conduit.*

Hero conducts the element of [d8]:

1. Light
2. Fire
3. Sky
4. Water
5. Green
6. Metal
7. Radiation
8. Void

**R1** • Hero's bare hands can flare with the element. They can't throw it, but they can affect matter. Also, their unarmed attacks deal elemental damage damage.

**R2** • Elemental conduit grows. Unarmed elemental damage increases two steps (e.g. 1d3 to 1d6).

**R3** • Conduit grows. Damage increases two more steps (e.g. 1d6 to 1d12).

## 11. Chromatic Avatar

#fantascience

*There is power in this hue.*

Hero is chosen by the colour [d6]:

1. Purple
2. Blue
3. Green
4. Yellow
5. Orange
6. Red

**R1** • The hero is vividly coloured. They have [+] to tests against targets of their own hue, for the little differences are the worst differences.

**R2** • They are resistant to damage from objects of their own hue and gain [+] to effects with tools of their own hue.

**R3** • With one hand they can drain other hues from objects, with the other they can impart their own hue to objects. This is about as fast and effective as regular hand painting, so changing the colour of a large object will take quite a while.

## 12. Citoyen Formidable

#fortune

*The city makes the citizen.*

**R1** • The natural city-slicker. Hero gains [+] to social interactions, travel, and navigation in cities.

**R2** • Social and physical attacks against the streetwise hero suffer [-] in cities.

**R3** • Hero deals damage with [+] in cities. The environment is full of improvised weapons.

## 13. Combat Monster

#power

*Fight alone. Fight dirty.*

**R1** • When the hero fights alone, they have [+] to attacks and tests to trip, trick, or otherwise hinder their enemy. But they never benefit from flanking or other help in combat.

**R2** • When the hero fights alone, their opponents never gain [+] from flanking or surrounding them.

## 14. Critical Master

#power

*Knows where it hurts.*

**R1** • Hero's critical hit multiplier is now equal to their proficiency

or x3, whichever is higher.

**R2** • Critical hit multiplier is now equal to level, proficiency or x4, whichever is higher (maximum x6).

## 15. Death Hunger

#power

*Death awakens the blood demon.*

**R1** • Player tracks enemies taken out by the hero in a battle scene. Each enemy taken out grants a cumulative +1 to attacks until the end of the scene.

**R2** • Hero also gains cumulative +1 to damage for every enemy taken out.

## 16. Devastator

#power

*Damage is everything.*

**R1** • Hero's attacks always deal extra damage equal to their proficiency or +3, whichever is higher.

**R2** • Extra damage is now equal to their level, proficiency or +4, whichever is higher.

## 17. Disembodied

#fantascience

*Has no eyes to weep.*

**R1** • The hero is a disembodied spirit-personality (ka-ba). They are immune to physical attacks, but their direct interaction with the physical world is also limited. They cannot exert a force more substantial than a gentle breeze or a slight temperature differential by themselves. However, they can manifest in a stone-sized physical form, perhaps a potted plant or a rat. They can use this physical form to move or even "talk" by directly vibrating its atoms. This costs 1 life per hour or so.

**R2** • Their direct force is as strong as a stiff breeze or a moderate temperature difference. They can manifest within a pig-sized object, perhaps a chest or a skeleton. This manifestation costs 2 life per hour or so.

**R3** • They can create a strong gust of wind or a sharp temperature difference. They can also manifest within a boulder-sized object, perhaps a house or dinosaur. This manifestation costs 4 life per

hour or so.

Note: Manifesting in a sentient form usually causes a more-or-less violent aura contest for control between the hero and the form.

## 18. Dosemaster

#brains

*Measured in all things.*

**R1** • Hero knows their doses. They don't roll dice when healing with meds and potions or when applying poisons. Instead, they treat the maximum result as the number of charges. E.g., a med that normally restores 1d8 life always restores 8 life in the dosemaster's capable hands.

**R2** • Hero rolls an additional matching die, increasing the charges they can nurse out of a med dose.

## 19. Echolocator

#biomachine

*Voices paint pictures.*

**R1** • Hero can use echolocation. Gains 1 agility.

**R2** • Hero can dimly see around corners and through closed doors using echolocation and vibrations. Gains 1 agility.

## 20. Electromagic Hacker

#fantascience

*Talk long enough into the machine, and it will talk back.*

**R1** • Hero can hack adjacent oldtech creatures and equipment. In combat, hacking is one action, each command is another action.

**R2** • [+] to hacking tests if touching target.

**R3** • Hero can give target one free command per turn.

## 21. Empty Shell

#biomachine

*No hell or heaven awaits.*

**R1** • Hero has no soul or ka. All curse spells always fail against them. They are resistant against all mind-affecting attacks. They can never be restored to life if they die.

**R2** • Hero can absorb a soul leaving its dying body, gaining 1 Aura until the next session. This



destroys the absorbed soul. While they have an absorbed soul, they appear normal and not like a soulless husk.

## 22. Eternal Champion

#fortune

*Carrying the torch of purpose beyond the gates of time and hate.*

**R1** • Hero bonds with an eternal weapon (an L3 sidekick), sometimes as its master, sometimes as its slave. They apply their proficiency to tests with their eternal weapon, even if they don't have a relevant skill. Further, the hero's life increases by 1 point for each of their levels (current and future). Also, they can use their eternal weapon's life for spell-casting. But their magic cost is increased by 1.

**R2** • When wielding the eternal weapon, all defences are increased by their proficiency. E.g., a hero with pro +2 increases every defence from 10 to 12.

**R3** • When wielding the eternal weapon, all the hero's critical hit damage multipliers are increased by their proficiency. E.g., pro +4 increases a multiplier from x2 to x6. This applies to all attacks, not just with the weapon.

This ability is not compatible with abilities that decrease a hero's magic cost.

## 23. Expert Sidekicks

#brains

*Friends are the best.*

**R1** • A number of sidekicks equal to the hero's proficiency can be experts. This means they add the hero's proficiency to their sum when testing something they're good at.

**R2** • The number of possible expert sidekicks increases to the hero's level or proficiency or 4, whichever is highest.

## 24. Fleshsong Audiophile

#fantascience

*Codes of creation singing in the flesh of the mortal and the damned.*

**R1** • Hero is creepily well acquainted with biology; [+] to all biological research tests. When

they touch flesh, it sings and tells them what it has experienced. After a few minutes of physical contact, they can ask or answer one question about a living creature's medical history and condition.

**R2** • [+] to all biological tests, including biomancer spells. Flesh songs answer questions about medical histories of dead organisms.

## 25. Fluid Anatomy

#biomachine

*They have organs they shouldn't have in places they shouldn't be.*

**R1** • Hero's insides rearrange and rebuild to keep them going despite dreadful trauma. Hero can spend 1 stat point to turn a critical hit into a normal hit.

**R2** • Can spend 1 stat point to regain life equal to hero's level.

**R3** • Can remove 1 burden per session.

## 26. Fool's Luck

#fortune

*They don't know their luck.*

**R1** • Hero rerolls every natural 1.

**R2** • Hero gains [+] to tests when they have no relevant skill.

**R3** • Everytime they roll a natural 1, they gain a [+] to their next roll.

## 27. Friend of the Element

#fantascience

*Accept the love of the source.*

Hero is beloved of [d8]:

1. Light
2. Fire
3. Sky
4. Water
5. Green
6. Metal
7. Radiation
8. Void

**R1** • Hero gains [+] to all elemental attacks.

**R2** • Hero now has [+] to all element-related die-rolls, including damage.

**R3** • Hero always deals double damage with element.

## 28. Gastrointestinal Upgrade

#biomachine

*Everything should be fuel.*

**R1** • Hero's gut is a marvel of technomagic. They are immune to food poisoning and gain [+] vs. all other ingested toxins. Also, they can digest anything organic, from wood to bone to petroleum.

**R2** • Hero has a matter converter installed in their body and can derive sustenance from inorganic material.

### 29. Gifted

#fortune

*They have that special touch.*

**R1** • Hero's pro increases by 1.

**R2** • Increases by 1 more.

### 30. Glittering Incorruptible

#fortune

*The body is a temple of purity.*

**R1** • Hero's source code has been enhanced by chance or ancient germline intervention. The hero cannot suffer mutations through corruption. Instead, they take a point of harm. The ill hero requires a week's rest to recover.

**R2** • Hero's source code actively resists all diseases and toxins. Hero can choose to lose 1 stat point to avoid all other effects of a disease or poison.

**R3** • Hero can not be reduced to 0 life through social attacks. They are simply too golden.

### 31. Gravitas

#fortune

*The presence abides.*

**R1** • Hero's mere presence is an argument. They can choose to use their aura or endurance stat when making social tests.

**R2** • Additionally, can add aura or endurance to dice rolled during social conflicts.

**R3** • Increase aura or endurance by 1. May use their aura or endurance stat for ba defences.

### 32. Hacked Shorttimer

#power

*We were better for a while.*

**R1** • Hero comes from stock crudely optimized for improved short term performance. They gain 1 strength, endurance, or

agility. Sadly, their bio-cobbled body imposes [-] against diseases, venoms, or toxins.

**R2** • The optimization went further than was wise. Hero gains 1 more strength, endurance, or agility. Their physical stat maximum is increased to 6. Alas, they suffer [+] damage from one type of attack: physical, social, or mental.

**R3** • Flawed divinity. Hero gains 1 more strength, endurance, or agility, and 1 charisma. Their physical stat maximum is increased to 7. Hero suffers [-] against one kind of elemental assault.

### 33. Honour Bound

#fortune

*Where courts dare not tread, honour is the law.*

**R1** • Hero possesses an aura of honour, granting [+] to social tests in nomadic and clan-based societies.

**R2** • Powerful mana protects the hero from dishonorable opponents (i.e. city-dwellers or hunter-gatherers). Their social attacks against the hero have [-].

**R3** • Tribal aura. Hero takes half damage from all social attacks in the wild lands.

### 34. Improved

#biomachine

*A fantascience product.*

Hero chooses a beneficial mutation (pXX).

### 35. Inspiring Hero

#brains

*For great glory!*

The intangible quality of a leader has a quantity all of its own.

**R1** • A number of sidekicks equal to the hero's proficiency fights with unmatched ferocity. They add the hero's proficiency score to all their attacks and tests during battle scenes.

**R2** • The number of possible inspired sidekicks increases to the hero's level or proficiency or 4, whichever is highest.

### 36. Insufferably Cute

#fortune

*Just the cutest.*

**R1** • A winsome face. [+] to social interactions, but all interactions take twice as long as everyone fusses over the hero.

**R2** • Small and cuddly. [-] to all direct attacks against the hero, but the hero's inventory is permanently reduced by 3.

### 37. Lazarus Soldier

#power

*Didn't let them grind ya down.*

**R1** • The first time the hero is reduced to 0 life in a session they immediately regain 6+level life.

**R2** • When the hero would be permanently removed from play, the player can return them into play in the next scene. The hero gains a permanent scar or burden occupying one inventory slot and loses a rank of Lazarus Soldier.

**R3** • After the hero dies, they return to life on the next full moon or another significant astrological event. This creates a probabilistic dysfunction and unleashes an undead plague.

### 38. Lifewind Inhalation

#power

*Deep breaths, action hero, deep breaths.*

Absorb the vital principles of sky and green through superior patterns of consciousness.

**R1** • Hero recovers twice as much life when spending a hero die to recover life.

**R2** • Thrice as much life. Additionally, spending a hero die to recover life grants one boon.

**R3** • Four times. Additionally, spending a hero die to recover life makes them glow bright as a torch for a few hours.

### 39. Luminous

#fantascience

*Let the light shine out.*

**R1** • The hero's insides are aglow. They can release it from their mouth or eyes with the radiance of a powerful torch.

**R2** • Hero gains [+] to ka attacks and magic tests in brightly illuminated spaces.

**R3** • They sparkle like diamonds and are resistant to physical damage in bright light.

### 40. Machine Whisperer

#brains

*Soothe the savage robot.*

**R1** • Talking machines naturally like the hero. [+] to social tests with machines.

**R2** • Complex machines always try to help the hero. Complicated locks try to unlock themselves when whispered to, audio-visual orbs try to fix themselves when banged vigorously.

### 41. Master Blaster

#power

*Only Blaster leave!*

**R1** • Hero rolls all exploding damage dice (e.g. 1d6\*) with [+].

**R2** • [+] to all explosive tests, including attacks and spells. Hero feels the energy trapped in matter yearning to be free like a phoenix.

**R3** • Oops. Blaster blew up. Time for a new hero.

### 42. Memory Palace

#brains

*A prison of dreams traps the unwary.*

A true wizard's mind is a scary old palace, full of dark holes where magical parasites hide.

**R1** • The hero squirrels away extra spell burdens in their mind as magic memories. The memory palace has a number of magic rooms equal to their level. This is a bonus inventory just for carrying spells.

**R2** • Hero also gains memory points equal to their level. These are used to cast memorized spells as if they were life points.

**R3** • Hero's memory point total from this ability is doubled.

Players should fancifully describe their hero's memory palace. The more fanciful, the better.

### 43. Meticulous Ritualist

#fantascience

*Accurate ritual records must be kept for meaningful summoning!*

**R1** • Hero gains [+] to tests when casting all spells taking over a dozen minutes to cast.

**R2** • Hero also rolls effects of their ritual spells with [+].

**R3** • Hero reduces price of all ritual spells they cast by 2 (minimum of 1).

#### 44. More Than Human

#fantascience

*The cosmos gazing at itself.*

**R1** • An awareness of common consciousness grants the hero [+] to communicating with synthetics, golems, and void creatures.

**R2** • The hero is incredibly versatile, adapting to alien dimensions, higher colours, strange gravities, and non-euclidean spaces within a few minutes. This negates environmental penalties, though the hero may still dies from exposure, lack of air, etc.

**R3** • Tapping the cosmic mind, the hero gains [+] to all social and mental interactions with alien sentiences. Additionally, the hero can willingly abandon their mortal shell and become a ka-ba spirit. This is a one-way trip. Afterwards, humans count as alien sentiences for the hero.

#### 45. Motorbreath

#brains

*Give me that which I desire.*

**R1** • Hear the roar. [+] when using machines with engines.

**R2** • Eat the dust. Gains an extra action when using a machine with an engine.

**R3** • Break on through. [+] to damage and initiative with machines with engines. Critical range increased one step in vehicular combat.

#### 46. Natural Born Comrade

#fortune

*Icon of the hunter scavengers.*

**R1** • Hero gains [+] to social tests among their equals. Whenever they give away most of their wealth in social conflict and keep an equal or smaller proportion for themselves, all their attacks are twice as effective.

**R2** • Wealthier opponents have [-]

to social and physical attacks against the hero. Hero deals double social and physical damage to wealthier opponents.

**R3** • Hero suffers no penalties from opulent wealth in the eyes of the poor since they are only safeguarding the wealth for the common folk.

#### 47. Neural Machine Symbiote

#biomachine

*Silver ships slip through my veins.*

Tiny silver animalcules flow through the hero's bloodstream, glittering golden wires thread their neural networks.

**R1** • Hero can pilot golems and other thinking machines hands-free. The symbiote accelerates their mind (hero gains 1 thought).

**R2** • The symbiote accelerate all reflexes (hero gains 1 agility) and lets the hero talk with machines and other neurally enhanced humans at great distances.

#### 48. Noblesse Obliged

#fortune

*Better folks are bred, not made.*

**R1** • Hero owns a country estate and a fancy title. Social attacks can never remove the hero from play. Hero gains an additional hurt state, "attending to personal matters in the countryside." This hurt state immediately removes the hero from play for the session. Still, it prevents further injury, as they are ensconced in their "cottage".

**R2** • Lucky death of a relative brings finances to match the title. Hero gains [+] whenever money would be an issue. Because money, or at least credit, is not an issue.

**R3** • Friends in high places. Once per session, the hero can call on a favour to get out of a pickle or rum do. Hero gains [+] in all courts of law and public opinion.

#### 49. Omniactivation

#fortune

*The red button will be pushed.*

**R1** • Hero ignores all restrictions on all fantascientific devices. Doors recognize them, sentient bombs talk to them. Does the

hero understand what they do?  
Unlikely.

**R2** • Once per session, the hero can touch a dead fantascientific machine or artifact and it sparks to life, giving off one last gasp of utility. A dead autowagon rolls forward a last few meters. A visual calculator's last output glows dimly on its cathode sphere for a few minutes. An electronic lock reactivates and bolts a door.

## 50. Overlooked by the Gods

[#fortune](#)

*Omniscience is a lie.*

**R1** • All holy or sacred tests rolled against the hero suffer [-].

**R2** • All curses and blessings have minimal effect against the hero. Hero gains 1 aura.

**R3** • Hero gains [+] to all attacks and direct tests against the extra-normal 'gods' and their 'divine' servitors. They just slide off those creatures' perception fields.

## 51. Panmolecular Sensorium

[#biomachine](#)

*Hear the songs of the oceans. Read stories in wind and stream.*

**R1** • Hero's sensorium is expanded with new cutaneous and olfactory organs that let them read trace molecular remains. Their sense of smell is as acute as a bloodhound's, and they can 'taste' with their fingertips. [+] when tracking, testing food for poison, sampling fuel for impurities, and other similar tests.

**R2** • Hero can literally smell emotions. [+] to discerning intentions, picking up lies, and ferreting out tricks.

## 52. Perfectly Balanced

[#brains](#)

*Suspended between steps.*

**R1** • Hero always balances on any narrow surface or tight rope. Can also perfectly balance objects.

**R2** • Like water, hero never loses their mental or social equilibrium. Resistant to fear, shame, regret, worry, and anxiety.

**R3** • Gains [+] to balance competing claims and pass legal or moral judgements.

## 53. Pheromone Panoply

[#biomachine](#)

*Scent worth a hundred memories.*

Write poetry with biochemistry.

**R1** • The hero has modified biological chemo-factories in their body. These provide communication molecules on demand. [+] to charming or intimidating social attacks. Can scare away or 'blind' creatures like ants and termites that rely primarily on chemical signals for communication.

**R2** • Hero can use their pheromone panoply to communicate with and try to command insects or other creatures that depend on pheromones.

## 54. Polybody Unity

[#brains](#)

*More bodies, more choices.*

**R1** • Hero has an additional body. Their bodies are connected in a real-time glandular psyche-to-psyche network. Neither body has priority, and they have a single mind. The hero can have up to 3 bodies. Adding a body is very expensive. It takes about a week, and requires a surgeon-psychoomp. Each additional body is treated as a secondary character with its own physical stats and action pool. Each body beyond the first in visual range grants 5 life points. Area attacks against polybody characters multiply their damage by the number of bodies present.

**R2** • Hero can have up to 6 bodies. Some of their bodies can be animals.

**R3** • Hero can have up to 9 bodies. Some of their bodies can be synthetics.

If a hero sends off a body on its own, the player decides how much life is assigned. The player can invest xp in a body to increase its stats and life totals.

Heroes may merge with a new body instead of outright stealing their body. In this case, the player rolls a new set of mental stats and uses the set with a higher aura score. The hero gains one bonus skill and replaces a number of



other skills equal to their new thought score.

### 55. Porcelain Skin

#fantascience

*They made people prettier once upon a time.*

**R1** • Hero's uncannily smooth skin is resistant to diseases and scarring. Gains 1 charisma.

**R2** • Hero's luminous skin is resistant to acid, chemicals and fire (half damage). Gains 1 more charisma.

### 56. Protector of Innocents

#fortune

*Despite the gore, a noble cause.*

**R1** • Hero gains [+] to attacks and tests when fighting to protect an unarmed or helpless innocent.

**R2** • Once per turn hero can instantly redirect an attack from a nearby creature to themselves (this is not an action). Hero can redirect additional attacks at the cost of 1 life per attack. Word gets around. Downtrodden communities scrape together resources to help the hero.

**R3** • [-] to all attacks and damage against the hero while defending an innocent.

### 57. Psion Scion

#brains

*A soft blanket for the soul.*

**R1** • Low-level empathic field grants [+] to trickery, lies, and illusions.

**R2** • [+] to direct mental attacks against a single target.

**R3** • Empathetic enlightenment. [+] to assist, console, and otherwise help scared and vulnerable creatures. Resistant to fear and trickery.

### 58. Qanat of Power

#fantascience

*Hidden channels, rushing energies.*

**R1** • The hero casts all spells as though they were 2 level higher.

**R2** • When the hero casts a spell, they channel 1 life point from the void, reducing their spell price.

**R3** • Casts as 4 levels higher.

### 59. Querulous Kvetch

#power

*Complaining is a cure.*

**R1** • Hero gains an additional hurt state, "grumbling quietly." It imposes no penalties.

**R2** • Hero gains one more hurt state, "gripping and groaning." When the hero reaches this state, sneaking becomes difficult [-].

**R3** • Hero gains a third hurt state, "kvetching viciously." When the hero reaches this state, they suffer [-] to social interactions. They also gain [+] to one action.

### 60. Radiant Panoptics

#biomachine

*The inverse of colour blindness.*

*Redline machine microbes swirl in the hero's eyes.*

**R1** • Hero's infraoptic symbiotes detect heat signatures and traces. Gains [+] to survival and investigation tests.

**R2** • Hero can "see" in the absence of visible light using a panoply of electromagnetic sense organs.

**R3** • Hero's senses can probe through several layers of base matter. Gains [+] when searching for hidden objects or trying to figure out if somebody is standing behind the draperies.

### 61. Rauber Baron

#brains

*Money is magic.*

**R1** • Hero is savvy. Hero has [+] to all business-related rolls. Including treasure rolls.

**R2** • Hero is surprisingly well-off. Hero can deal physical damage with social attacks. It's called paid help. Once per session, they acquire an expensive item on "credit".

**R3** • Hero reveals they have a servile butler running a monopolistic corporation on their behalf. Hero can deal mental damage with social attacks. It's called owning a media subsidiary. Once per session, they turn out to own a useful building or asset.

### 62. Renowned Racer

#brains

*The grand velocity trophy proves life has meaning.*

**R1** • [+] to tests during vehicular chases. Fame (and notoriety) also grant the hero [+] in many social interactions.

**R2** • Some of them were death races. [+] when manoeuvring to attack or defend with a vehicle.

**R3** • Gains an extra driving action every turn.

### 63. Rubberskin

#fantascience

*Nemesis of the thunder demons.*

Skin laced with symbiotic insulating caucho-fungoid.

**R1** • The hero is resistant to electromagical and energy attacks (halving all damage).

**R2** • The caucho-fungoid is interwoven with the whole body. Immune to electromagical and energy attacks.

**R3** • No longer fully human but an evolved caucho-fungoid chimera. Electromagical and energy attacks heal the hero. They don't repair broken bones or open wounds. Those still need surgery.

### 64. Secured Flesh

#biomachine

*I am that I am.*

The hero knows how their body works, keeping it strong and stable.

**R1** • [+] to all tests against mutations, dangerous spells, or anything else that might corrupt their body (e.g. disease).

**R2** • Hero takes half damage from toxins, venoms, poisons, and diseases.

### 65. Self-Improvement Protocols

#biomachine

*Machines in the bloodstream do what they will.*

**R1** • The hero is upgraded with photovoltaics, feeding only on light, and a direct machine communication array. However, their biological body degrades due to inevitable errors integrating the ancient biomachines, permanently reducing a stat by 1.

**R2** • The hero's upgrade capacity is increased. They gain 1 biomachine slot per level

(maximum of 5) in addition to their regular inventory. They may choose upgrades from the corruption and mutation tables.

**R3** • Their upgrade capacity is increased to 2 biomachine slots per level (maximum of 11).

Note: Each installed upgrade reduces a stat by 1 to a minimum of 0. If all of a hero's stats are at 0, they need to uninstall an upgrade before getting a new one.

### 66. Sparklefingers

#fantascience

*Conducting the ambient electromagical of the world.*

**R1** • The hero's unarmed attacks can deal 1d4 electric damage instead of 1d3 physical damage. Conducting materials extend attack range.

**R2** • Electric touch increases to 1d6 damage. Hero can spend a few hours to recharge dead batteries.

**R3** • Increases to 1d8 damage. In medical settings hero's touch gives [+] or [-]; restarting stopped hearts, improving muscle tone, reducing viral replication.

### 67. Spiritbreaker

#power

*Make their noses bleed.*

**R1** • When hero spiritually strikes an opponent of lower level than themselves, the opponent is out of the conflict (and probably unconscious).

**R2** • When the hero knocks an opponent out of the conflict, they get a free *ka* attack against a nearby target.

### 68. Spell Detonator

#power

*Things must boom.*

**R1** • Hero's spell damage dice become explosive. E.g., a magic bullet (1d4) becomes 1d4\*.

**R2** • Spell damage dice explode on highest and second-highest rolls.

**R3** • [+] to all spell damage.

### 69. Stargazer

#fortune

*Through madness, enlightenment.*

Gazed upon Mother Star and saw through the Veil of Ignorance cast upon humanity by the Dark Sorcerer at the top of the false heaven. Saw through their whips and chains, and now they are as gossamer.

**R1** • [+] to all tests against magic.  
**R2** • The moon-tide roars within the hero. They deal double damage to magic-corrupted monsters and abominations. And dark wizards.

## 70. Symbiotic Friend

#biomachine

*There's a little more than me.*

The hero has a small, telepathically bonded pet living on or in their flesh. It is a [d8]:

1. chirping monkey-lizard
2. air-breathing fish
3. furry rabbit-snake
4. many-handed cuttlefish
5. rainbow land-crab
6. glistening biomech newt
7. burrowing glass bird
8. iridescent scarab colony

**R1** • The symbiotic friend can perform a single skill with the same bonus as the hero. It occupies no inventory slots.  
**R2** • The friend is an expert, using double the hero's proficiency score.  
**R3** • It is an incarnation of skill. Its sum bonus with that skill is +13.

## 71. Symbolic Receiver

#brains

*That's ... that's not really a thing.*

There are patterns everywhere, and they all emit meaning into the receiver's head. The hero knows what every symbol means, or says they do.

**R1** • Hero can always tell if a symbol is broadly positive or negative. Price of all symbolic spells reduced by 1 (minimum of 1). Symbolic spells include magic circles of protection, magical exploding symbol traps, and the like.  
**R2** • [+] to all tests when casting or nullifying symbolic spells.

## 72. True Warrior

#power

*Beyond reality's gates, only war.*

**R1** • Hero's connection with the essential nature of struggle increases their life by 2 points for each of their levels (current and future). But their magic cost is increased by 1.

**R2** • The hero learns a new weapon skill.

**R3** • Adds proficiency bonus to all physical damage.

This ability is not compatible with abilities that decrease a hero's magic cost.

## 73. True Wizard

#fantascience

*Welcome to the universe.*

**R1** • Hero's magic cost is reduced by 1. But the connection with the void of wizardry reduces hero's life by 2 points for each of their levels (current and future).

**R2** • The hero learns a new magic skill.

**R3** • Hero reduces all spell prices by one (minimum of 1).

Magic cost can never be reduced below 1. This ability is not compatible with abilities that increase a hero's magic cost.

## 74. Unblinking

#biomachine

*An inhuman stare.*

**R1** • The hero never needs to blink. [+] whenever undivided attention is useful. Harder to surprise. Also, they can creep people out.

**R2** • [+] to casting and nullifying horrific spells as hero gazes clearly and directly into the eye of madness.

## 75. Uncanny Confidence

#power

*Reality bends before belief.*

**R1** • Hero adds their pro to all social damage rolls.

**R2** • Hero adds their pro to their social defence.

**R3** • Hero gains [+] to all social damage rolls.

## 76. Undying Parasite Heart

#biomachine

*Have a little piece of their heart.*

**R1** • The hero's heart is a ba-symbiote which stores their memory-patterns. The symbiote is a perfect auto-replicant and cannot die of old age. When the 'heart' is placed in a suitable excavated body cavity, it sprouts tendrils and a crystalline neural web, taking over the host in days. Every time the hero is 'reborn' this way, they lose a mental stat point, coming closer to their final end as a twitching madness of pulsing, tentacled flesh.

**R2** • The monstrous heart is larger and stronger. The hero permanently gains 1 endurance and [+] to long-distance running and other endurance sports.

**R3** • The monstrous heart is even stronger. The hero permanently gains 1 endurance. Every time it takes over a new host, the hero acquires one of the host's skills. If the hero has no available skill slots left, they may use inventory slots to store additional skills in subsidiary neural organs.

## 77. Uplifted Exemplar

#biomachine

*Now they understand.*

The hero was a [d8]:

1. Capybara
2. Chimpanzee
3. Pig
4. Pigmy Rhino
5. Mouse
6. Tortoise
7. Wolf
8. Zebra

**R1** • Now they are a bestial humanoid one-off with super-human aptitudes and opposable thumbs. Hero gains 1 stat point and one heightened sense appropriate to their base animal. The heightened sense grants [+] in relevant situations.

**R2** • The uplift did not stop. It kept working, changing. Hero gains 2 thought. Their thought stat maximum is increased to 7.

**R3** • Hero gains 1 more thought. Maximum increased to 8. Superhuman manual dexterity and astounding brainpower give the hero [+] with improvised equipment, weapons, and world

domination plots.

## 78. Vacuum Hardened

#biomachine

*When did they forget Old World?*

**R1** • Hero can survive a full day in hard vacuum due to significant nano-magical modification. Gains 1 endurance.

**R2** • Survives a full month in hard vacuum. Hero can derive sustenance from radiothermal batteries or other such devices.

**R3** • Survives indefinitely in hard vacuum. Hero can synthesize life-sustaining trace minerals and compounds with their internal artazothis organ.

## 79. Vibrant Soul

#power

*The spirit is faster than the flesh.*

**R1** • A fiery glare, a malevolent eye. The hero can use one of their actions to make a spiritual ka attack before other creatures act, outside the normal initiative order.

**R2** • The hero gains an additional action they can use for spiritual attacks or tests.

**R3** • [+] to initiative tests.

## 80. Void of Memories

#brains

*The spells are eating my mind!*

This wizard's mind is riddled with wormholes to voids where old magics are wont to hide.

**R1** • Hero gains memory points equal to their highest mental stat. These are used to cast memorized spells as if they were life points. Also, hero learns a void spell.

**R2** • Hero's memory points from this trait are doubled.

**R3** • The points are doubled again.

## 81. Vome Optic Enhancement

#biomachine

*Now you see them looking into you.*

**R1** • Technomagical machines swirl in the hero's eyes, whirring and clicking, focusing and demanding. Hero's eyes provide low-light vision, sure, but their

eyes are also ridiculously sharp and come with built-in filters. They can stare into the sun-line safely. The optics provide [+] to all long-distance aimed attacks.

**R2** • The hero's optophotonics can convert the hero's own life force into a ray attack (1d12 damage, long range, #precise, costs 1 life per attack).

**R3** • Optophotonic toolkit upgrade lets the hero use their eye rays as a built in laser toolkit for precision welding, surgery, engraving, etc.

## 82. War Mind

#brains

*All combat is in the spirit.*

**R1** • Hero fights smarter, not harder. They can choose to use their aura or thought stat when making physical tests.

**R2** • Additionally, can add aura or thought to dice rolled during physical conflicts.

**R3** • Increase aura or thought by 1. May use their aura or endurance stat for ha defences.

## 83. Wizardkiller

#power

*Smash.*

**R1** • Hero gains [+] to damage against wizards and magical creatures. Hero's magic cost increased by 1.

**R2** • Hero gains [+] to hit wizards and magical creatures. Hero's magic cost increased by 1 more.

**R3** • Hero deals double damage to wizards and magical creatures. Hero cannot cast spells.

## 84. Words Like Daggers

#brains

*Speak truth to break the spirit.*

**R1** • When hero successfully socially attacks an opponent of lower level than themselves, the opponent is out of the conflict.

**R2** • When the hero knocks an opponent out of the conflict, they get a free social attack against a nearby character.

## 85. Zootic Masterform

#brains

*The pet is the boss.*

To hero appears to be a [d8]:

1. Cat
2. Rat
3. Dog
4. Owl
5. Parrot
6. Snake
7. Toad
8. Spider

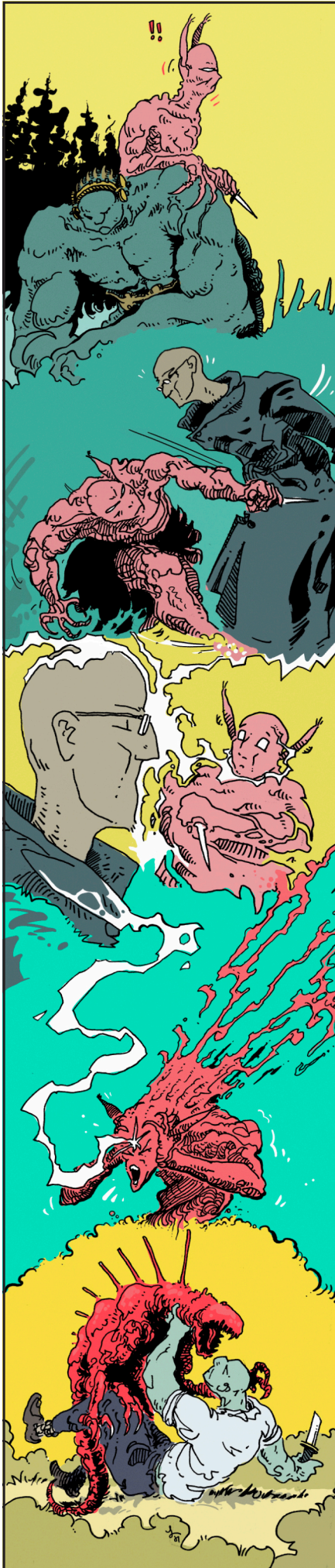
**R1** • Hero's strength and endurance are reduced to 0, their agility and thought increase correspondingly. Their inventory is reduced by 3. Given a few hours, they can empathically enthrall a human or other oversized member of the local dominant culture to care for them and serve them. Their human servant is not a mind-controlled slave, yet still generally acts in the hero's interest. They can have one human servant at a time.

**R2** • Zootelepathy. The animal hero can communicate telepathically with their enthralled servant and make them speak, like a ventriloquist with their dummy. Once per session, the hero can dominate their enthralled servant for a few minutes. After the domination, the servant falls unconscious for a few hours.

**R3** • Mass zootelepathy. The animal hero can simultaneously enthrall a number of humans equal to their level.







# Stats

*"You still don't understand what you're dealing with, do you? Perfect organism. Its structural perfection is matched only by its hostility."*

— Ash, *Alien*, 1979 (written by Dan O'Bannon)

The natural aptitudes of a hero are represented by six stats: strength (str), endurance (end), agility (agi), charisma (cha), aura (aur), and thought (tho). Each stat ranges from 0 to a maximum of 5 points. The average for a prime adult human is 0. Injuries, spells, and other events affect heroes' stats.

## Quick Start

**Pulp hero** • Roll or distribute 7 points among the six stats, with a maximum of 4 in any one stat.

**Starting extra** • Roll [-] or distribute 5 points, maximum of 3.

**Epic legend** • Roll [+] or distribute 9 points, maximum of 5.

## Stat Generator [d100]

Note: results only list stats that are not zero.

1. **Scattered** • All stats 1.
2. **Musclebound** • Strength 5, one stat 1.
3. **Virile** • Endurance 5, one stat 1.
4. **Elastic** • Agility 5, one stat 1.
5. **Hypnotic** • Charisma 5, one stat 1.
6. **Reserved** • Aura 5, one stat 1.
7. **Highbrow** • Thought 5, one stat 1.
8. **Ogrish** • Strength 4, two stats 1.
9. **Lumbering** • Endurance 4, two stats 1.
10. **Frenetic** • Agility 4, two stats 1.
11. **Dainty** • Charisma 4, two stats 1.
12. **Aetherial** • Aura 4, two stats 1.
13. **Focused** • Thought 4, two stats 1.
14. **Strapping** • Strength 2, two stats 2, another 1.
15. **Energetic** • Endurance 2, two stats 2, another 1.
16. **Twitchy** • Agility 2, two stats 2, another 1.
17. **Fetching** • Charisma 2, two stats 2, another 1.
18. **Fierce** • Aura 2, two stats 2, another 1.
19. **Knowing** • Thought 2, two stats 2, another 1.
20. **Brawny** • Strength 2, one stat 2, another three stats 1.
21. **Bulky** • Endurance 2, one stat 2, another three stats 1.
22. **Lissome** • Agility 2, one stat 2, another three stats 1.
23. **Nice** • Charisma 2, one stat 2, another three stats 1.
24. **Inflexible** • Aura 2, one stat 2, another three stats 1.
25. **Crafty** • Thought 2, one stat 2, another three stats 1.
26. **Rugged** • Strength 2, five stats 1.
27. **Stout** • Endurance 2, five stats 1.
28. **Spry** • Agility 2, five stats 1.
29. **Likable** • Charisma 2, five stats 1.
30. **Firm** • Aura 2, five stats 1.
31. **Schooled** • Thought 2, five stats 1.
32. **Doughty** • Strength 3, one stat 3, another 1.
33. **Athletic** • Endurance 3, one stat 3, another 1.
34. **Nimble** • Agility 3, one stat 3, another 1.
35. **Charming** • Charisma 3, one stat 3, another 1.
36. **Resilient** • Aura 3, one stat 3, another 1.
37. **Critical** • Thought 3, one stat 3, another 1.
38. **Big** • Strength 3, two stats 2.
39. **Hardy** • Endurance 3, two stats 2.
40. **Adroit** • Agility 3, two stats 2.

# The Six Stats

41. **Slick** • Charisma 3, two stats 2.
42. **Obstinate** • Aura 3, two stats 2.
43. **Articulate** • Thought 3, two stats 2.
44. **Stalwart** • Strength 3, one stat 2, another two stats 1.
45. **Healthy** • Endurance 3, one stat 2, another two stats 1.
46. **Deft** • Agility 3, one stat 2, another two stats 1.
47. **Glamorous** • Charisma 3, one stat 2, another two stats 1.
48. **Disciplined** • Aura 3, one stat 2, another two stats 1.
49. **Clever** • Thought 3, one stat 2, another two stats 1.
50. **Vigorous** • Strength 3, four stats 1.
51. **Robust** • Endurance 3, four stats 1.
52. **Quick** • Agility 3, four stats 1.
53. **Alluring** • Charisma 3, four stats 1.
54. **Gritty** • Aura 3, four stats 1.
55. **Cultivated** • Thought 3, four stats 1.
56. **Powerful** • Strength 4, one stat 3.
57. **Lusty** • Endurance 4, one stat 3.
58. **Limber** • Agility 4, one stat 3.
59. **Bewitching** • Charisma 4, one stat 3.
60. **Sublime** • Aura 4, one stat 3.
61. **Inventive** • Thought 4, one stat 3.
62. **Muscular** • Strength 4, one stat 2, another 1.
63. **Hale** • Endurance 4, one stat 2, another 1.
64. **Sly** • Agility 4, one stat 2, another 1.
65. **Winning** • Charisma 4, one stat 2, another 1.
66. **Discerning** • Aura 4, one stat 2, another 1.
67. **Perceptive** • Thought 4, one stat 2, another 1.
68. **Tough** • Strength 4, three stats 1.
69. **Abiding** • Endurance 4, three stats 1.
70. **Deft** • Agility 4, three stats 1.
71. **Provocative** • Charisma 4, three stats 1.
72. **Moody** • Aura 4, three stats 1.
73. **Original** • Thought 4, three stats 1.
74. **Mighty** • Strength 5, one stat 2.
75. **Unflagging** • Endurance 5, one stat 2.
76. **Winged** • Agility 5, one stat 2.
77. **Seductive** • Charisma 5, one stat 2.
78. **Oracular** • Aura 5, one stat 2.
79. **Encyclopaedic** • Thought 5, one stat 2.
80. **Steely** • Strength 5, two stats 1.
81. **Vital** • Endurance 5, two stats 1.
82. **Driven** • Agility 5, two stats 1.
83. **Irresistible** • Charisma 5, two stats 1.
84. **Devillish** • Thought 5, two stats 1.
85. **Herculean** • Strength 4, one stat 3, another 1.
86. **Sinewy** • Endurance 4, one stat 3, another 1.
87. **Fleet** • Agility 4, one stat 3, another 1.
88. **Impressive** • Charisma 4, one stat 3, another 1.
89. **Single-minded** • Aura 4, one stat 3, another 1.
90. **Creative** • Thought 4, one stat 3, another 1.
91. **Olympian** • Strength 5, one stat 2, another 1.
92. **Glowing** • Endurance 5, one stat 2, another 1.
93. **Mercurial** • Agility 5, one stat 2, another 1.
94. **Angelic** • Charisma 5, one stat 2, another 1.
95. **Hermetic** • Aura 5, one stat 2, another 1.
96. **Genius** • Thought 5, one stat 2, another 1.
97. **Forceful** • Strength or Charisma 3, two other stats 3.
98. **Resolute** • Endurance or Aura 3, two other stats 3.
99. **Tricky** • Agility or Thought 3, two other stats 3.
100. **Blessed** • All stats 2.

## Strength

*Active physical stat. Lifting bars, bending gates, whacking heads, carrying menhirs, leaping logs across a river.*

## Endurance

*Passive physical stat. How much pain and strain a hero can take. Marathons, bearing the cold, fighting disease, fitness competitions.*

## Agility

*Dynamic physical stat. Applying the body with precision and speed. Dodging death hamsters, throwing void bombs, shimmying on the dance floor.*

## Charisma

*Active mental stat. Carrying arguments by force of personality, changing reality, bending opinions, breaking opposition.*

*The name goes back to classical Greek khárisma, representing divine fortune and favor. The gods and reason hate the uncharismatic, thus charisma also represents luck. When a player asks if their hero can find a war pig, lightning mobile, doom rod, or simply the latest edition of *Burly Barbarians at the newsmonger's*, that's a charisma test.*

## Aura

*Passive mental stat. How much punishment a soul or psyche can take. Correlates with endurance. Showing courage, remaining compassionate despite horrors, resisting peer pressure.*

*Aura is not wisdom. It does not show good judgement or insight. Those are character traits that players decide for their hero, just as they decide the colour of the hero's hair or shoes.*

## Thought

*Dynamic mental stat. Speed of processing and manipulating information. Remembering information, figuring out connections, transforming ideas into reality. The name of the stat is also a reference to the Egyptian god Thoth.*

# Levels

“8000以上だ...!”

—Vegeta Saiyan shouting “It’s over 9000!” [sic] in “The Return of Goku,” *Dragon Ball Z* (1997).

Levels are a measure of metanarrative power. When it comes to heroes, they correspond only loosely to most attributes. They:

1. Determine the effectiveness of some items, magics, and traits.
2. How well the hero can access the narrative matrix underlying the reality of the world. Specifically, casting a spell of a higher power than the hero’s level is dangerous.

For the top cat, levels are a useful abstract short-hand for figuring out characters’ power. A level 0 (L0) character represents little threat to most humans. Level 1 (L1) characters match a baseline healthy, athletic human. Levels 10+ (L10+) are for creatures so powerful compared to ordinary humans that they might as well be extradimensional horrors from beyond time and space.

note: sum is a simplified attribute that combines an average stat and proficiency for extras. Have to add that explanation in the extras section and at the beginning of the book.

Should also split defences.

LEVEL	DEF	LIFE	SUM	NOTES
0	10	4	+2	rat, degenerate quarter-ling, radiation ghost, vome lapin
1	11	8	+3	average human, android, husk,swinedeer, wire ghoul
2	12	12	+4	foot soldier, ur-eagle, vome drone, time-orphan, necro vome
3	12	16	+5	elite rider, fire fetish, majestic elk, heretic ecstatic
4	13	22	+6	vomish irrupter, steppe-wolf, crab-lion, arcane hermit
5	13	29	+7	biomech queen, lunar antibody, polybody swarm, cat count
6	14	38	+8	great hero, porcelain golem, ultra, swarm, black metal auton
7	14	52	+9	vome generator, mirror dragon, void assaulter
8	15	68	+10	spectrum walker, machine bear, nature spirit, memory gazer
9	15	90	+11	legendary hero, moon-breaker, lightning lizard, crystal golem
10	16	120	+12	grand golem, ghost of light, living ship, house mimic
11+	16	155	+13	angel out of time, crawling city, floating fortress, machine folly
17	19	666	+13	demiurge, void crawler, rebuilder, artificial deity

However, the TC should keep in mind that levels are very rough guidelines. They do not define what would be a “proper challenge” or a “balanced encounter”. One combination of heroes, skills, traits, die rolls, and runners’ ideas will make short work of one opponent, only to succumb to another with similar attributes. Communication is critical: as long as the players have similar expectations about a threat, the TC will not go wrong.

# Names

*The same wine tastes better poured from an elegant bottle with the crest of a fine chateau poured into crystal stemware.*

— Umon Calliés, *Simple Truths* (A&D 343/11:11)

...





# Miscellany

*Now our days are done, the winter come.*

— Baron Greencorner, *Last Night of Brezim* (UR 19,940)

The hero is nearly complete. Every starting hero gains a few final attributes.

## Type

This is a flavorful name for the hero's archetype. The player can invent one based on their hero's skills and abilities. If they are using an existing Seacat skin, like the skeleton or the tourist, they can use that instead.

## Level

Every hero starts at **level 3**. Hence their greater mythopoetic power than that granted to the vasty mass of humanity.

## Life

Each hero starts with **20 life**. As with level, this represents how much better they are than the average 5 life extra in the background.

## Pro

Each hero starts with a **proficiency score of 2**. They add this number to their roll whenever they do something they are skilled at.

## Actions

Each hero starts with **2 actions**. This number will change very rarely.

## Magic

Every hero can cast spells. This attribute notes the magic cost a hero has to pay to use magic. Each hero starts with a **magic cost of 2**. The lower a hero's magic cost, the less they pay to cast spells.

## Hero Dice

Every hero starts with **3d6 hero dice**. These are bonus dice they can roll to modify their rolls or recover life. Hero dice are recovered through play and with every new session.

## Invested Experience

Every hero starts with **999 invested xp**. This accounts for their current skills and abilities. The player can invest more xp in the hero through play, to a maximum of 99,999 xp.

# Names

*The same wine tastes better poured from an elegant bottle with the crest of a fine chateau poured into crystal stemware.*

... *Liés, Simple Truths (A&D 343/11:11)*

...





# EQUIPMENT AND MAGICS

# Inventory

*“Wish known. Wish known.”*

—mumbles the word-drained wretch at the sanatorium, warning the next round of heroes to brave the accursed tomb.

The hero’s inventory is a core mechanic of Seacat. Runners have to make hard choices between what they want their heroes to bring along on their adventures and what they can.

It is where the player notes all the things burdening their hero. Not just physical objects; woes, fears, illness, magic spells, pets, and extras all occupy inventory space. If heroes run out of room for traits or skills, they can repurpose the inventory. Crucially, the choice of gear determines a hero’s offensive and defensive capabilities.

Inventory space on the human scale is defined with the following units.

**1 sack = 10 stones = 100 soaps = 2,500 cash**

**Sack (sk)** • All ten slots on a hero sheet. A basic inventory unit. What an average human can carry unencumbered. Doesn’t have to be a literal sack.

**Stone (st)** • One-tenth of a sack. A significant generic item, like a sabre or spear or shield or shovel. About 5–7 kilos. Also, one inventory slot.

**Soap (sp)** • One-hundredth of a sack, a tenth of a stone. A small generic item, like a signal whistle or signet ring or spike. Or a bar of soap.

**Cash (€)** • A standard unit of currency. An average wage slave’s daily earnings. Does not have to be physical coins or bills.

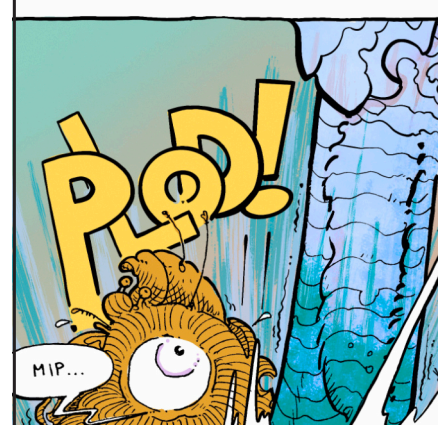
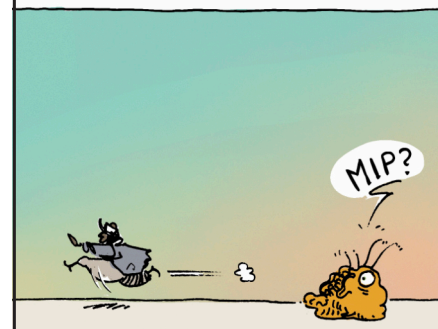
A human can carry two sacks at once, but the second sack is cumbersome. A hero carrying any items in their second sack is encumbered, suffering a bane [-] to every physical test (and likely to many social or mental tests). Items in a hero’s hands are part of their first sack of inventory.

An encumbered hero is at a disadvantage in conflicts. If they’re carrying a large object, like an actual sack, a living backpack, or a pianola, they can put it down carefully (an action) or drop it carelessly (a free action) to get rid of the encumbrance. Of course, an item dropped is an item dropped.

## Stored Equipment and Other Properties

Heroes can own more (much more) property than they are carrying at any given time. They might have a mansion stuffed with ill- and well-gotten booty, sky-cars of ancient make, hidden dimensional fortresses beyond the bridge of rainbows. This is fine, encouraged even.

However, players should record all this treasure separately. Only gear on a hero’s sheet is available during a given conflict. If the hero has entered the tomb of the thief of words and forgotten their magic cap of safe thoughts in the bedroom, that’s just too bad. It’ll stay in the bedroom as the ghost of words pilfers one phrase after another from the hero’s barely protected brain.



# Cash

Cash is an abstraction of a character's disposable wealth. A unit of cash does not have to be a coin. Precisely how much one cash is worth depends on the in-game fiction. By default, players may assume that one cash is equal to the daily income of an average laborer.

## What Cash Buys

CASH	POSSIBLE PURCHASES
-0.1	A common meal or ingredient. Knick knacks. Mass tourist souvenir.
-1	A day's food and lodging for two proletarian baseline humans. A basic tool. An uncommon ingredient. A fancy meal.
-10	A day's food and lodging for two middle-class mildly-enhanced humans. A professional tool. A rare ingredient. A ticket to a fine opera.
-100	A day's food and lodging for two betterfolk aesthetically-augmented humans. A rare or expert tool. Very rare ingredients. A basic vehicle. A hut. A small farm.
-1000	A day's food and lodging for two members of the abmortal neoimperial family. An uncommon vehicle. A small cottage. A middling farm.
-10k	An hour's rock-hitting trip by an imperial exectuive unit. A rare vehicle. A comfortable residence. A large farm or ranch.
-100k	A nearly super-heroic augment. A luxurious residence. An estate.
-1m	Abmortality. A seat on the neoimperial shadow parliament. A modest palace.

## Types of Cash [d20]

Currency can be many things. Though the grand emerald city of Metropolis might use simple round tokens with triangular holes punched through them to physically represent the soul-sworn debts of its inhabitants, other places use stranger things.

1. Luminous land cowries from the Forests of Mist and Stars.
2. Magic-infused scales of the sky dragons.
3. Memory crystals of the lost empire.
4. Stamped round chunks of soft metal.
5. Whorled pearls.
6. Bronze knives.
7. Duraplast tokens from the decayed Casino Kingdoms.
8. Ritual trading bones from the Necromancer Republic.
9. Composite ferroceramic heptagons.
10. Debtwood from the half-elven Deeproader Consortium.
11. Solidified rainbow pucks.
12. Scripture fiches of ductile think-matter.
13. Gently glowing vidy orbs from the Reality Theatre Era.
14. Diorite rings and eyeteeth.
15. Semi-precious rods and wands.
16. Coralline bracelets.
17. Cards of unrusting metallo-plastic.
18. Small tinkling copper bells.
19. Tiny golden barges in acrylic orbs.
20. Polished dreams of better days frozen in pieces of ancient forcefields, turned to hard pins and needles.



# Starting Cash [d100]

Heroes can spend starting cash on additional equipment, beyond what they gain from their skills or traits.

**Pulp hero** • Hero starts with 300 cash (€) or rolls below.

**Starting extra** • Starts with €30 or rolls and divides result by 10..

**Epic legend** • Starts with €3,000 or rolls and multiplies result by 10.

1. Bruises. Stitches. A debt of €99k.
2. A wheel of cheese. No cash.
3. A flower pot. €1 in pennies.
4. Lockbreaker card. €3 in scrip.
5. Lint. Fluff. €5 in fancy coin.
6. €7 in dead currency. Piece of gum.
7. A new face. €20 in unmarked bills.
8. Elegant pen. Forged signature. €11.
9. Wreath of cowries worth €81.
10. Thick sock with €250 in change.
11. 111 wadd'd €1 notes. Rubber band.
12. Three €20 bracelets.
13. €300 cash and debt of €13k.
14. A tin box. €13 in foreign coins.
15. Cheap trinkets. €17 tatty bills.
16. Plaz sachet. €19 in dirty change.
17. Moldy wallet with €21.
18. Moth-eaten purse with €23.
19. Cut crystals worth €29.
20. €100 bundle of crisp notes.
21. €55 in grimy ancient coin.
22. 11 bracelets worth €222.
23. Napkin bundle. Crusts. €23.
24. Handkerchief. Comb. €40.
25. Box of mints. €50 in change.
26. Zebra hide bursa. €60 in currency.
27. An IOU. €75 in discrete tips.
28. Ancient bottle. €99 tucked inside.
29. Dogskin moneybag. €101.
30. Kid gloves. €180 in gold rings.
31. Synthsilk stockings. Wad of €125.
32. Pocketbook. Spectacles. €144.
33. Tourist crotch-wallet. €333.
34. Elegant lizard. €134.
35. €150 in enamelled scales.
36. Acrylic orbs worth €72.
37. Whorled pearl chains worth €200.
38. Land cowrie bracelets. €160.
39. Metallo-plaz card. €175 in credit.
40. Three vidy orbs. €240.
41. Discount gloaming puck. €199.
42. Book of meanings. €42 in dice.
43. Coraline hoops worth €260.
44. Chrome casket. €444 in mirrors.
45. Copper knives worth €299.
46. Satin clutch and €165.
47. Basket-weaving bible. €200.
48. Plush shark wallet. €256.
49. Mother-of-pearl case. €280.
50. Trading bones with €300 credit.
51. Soft metal lumps worth €300.
52. Scriptures and €320.
53. Diorite tokens worth €350.
54. Gelatinous finches. €282.
55. Calcified ennui. €555.
56. Fossilized sandwich. €248.
57. Depleted ring of power. €390.
58. Pocket clockwork piece. €360.
59. Nightmare inkstones. €178.
60. Valise of summer wines. €600.
61. Ferroceramic octagons and €470.
62. Rucksack. Wads worth €360.
63. Colourful stone pendants. €616.
64. Eyeteeth on a string. €460.
65. Palladium & ivory calendar. €365.
66. Hellmetal nails. €666.
67. A hundred small earrings. €667.
68. Evening bag. €196 in gemwood.
69. Round moneysticks worth €69.
70. Silver credit scroll of €700.
71. €640 in debtwood tablets.
72. Deadmetal vome skull. €543.
73. Gilded copper bells. €373.
74. Old envelope with €47 in bills.
75. Ebony scabbard. €500 in fiches.
76. €760 in cash and €2k in debts.
77. €777 in glitterjel pretzels.
78. Half-metal chess pieces. €166.
79. Tabloid-wrapped jewel fish. €79.
80. Jet credit disc with €801.
81. Gun holster and €899.
82. Tiny golden barges. €630.
83. Balaclava. Heavy spheres. €483.
84. Epic poems. €284 in rings.
85. Teardrop synth-rubies. €185.
86. Steamdream spice worth €306.
87. €354 in bloody bills. €1k debt.
88. Gate pouch. €888 in old money.
89. Banded drawings. €810 in credit.
90. Torc. Hidden gems worth €900.
91. Neosaur billfold. €990 in notes.
92. Jay needles. €1080.
93. Spectrum pucks. Cred for €1170.
94. €960 in hard cash. €5k hard debt.
95. Platinum dragonscale. €5k.
96. Revolutionary scrip worth €1968.
97. €2k in bullion. €3 solid debt.
98. Timelost div pills worth €2525.
99. €9999 in minimal synth currency.
100. Estates. Discretion. €99k credit.

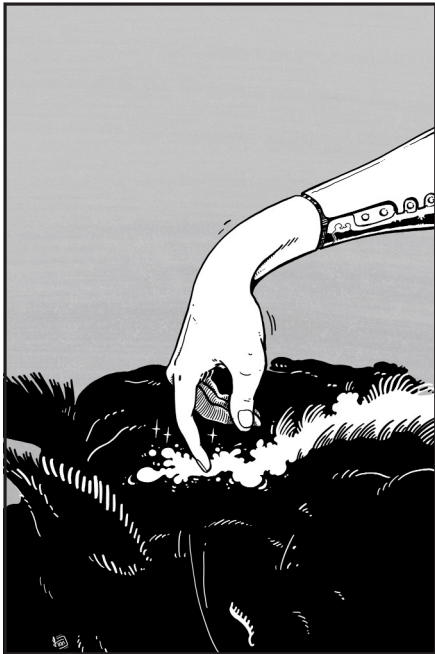
# Starting Cash [d100]

A hero can either **start with 300 cash (€)**, or the player can **roll for their random starting wallet** below. They can spend cash on additional equipment, beyond what they gain from their skills or abilities.

1. Bruises. Stitches. A debt of €99k.
2. A wheel of cheese. No cash.
3. A flower pot. €1 in pennies.
4. Lockbreaker card. €3 in scrip.
5. Lint. Fluff. €5 in fancy coin.
6. €7 in dead currency. Piece of gum.
7. A new face. €20 in unmarked bills.
8. Elegant pen. Forged signature. €11.
9. Wreath of cowries worth €81.
10. Thick sock with €250 in change.
11. 111 wadd'd €1 notes. Rubber band.
12. Three €20 bracelets.
13. €300 cash and debt of €13k.
14. A tin box. €13 in foreign coins.
15. Cheap trinkets. €17 tatty bills.
16. Plaz sachet. €19 in dirty change.
17. Moldy wallet with €21.
18. Moth-eaten purse with €23.
19. Cut crystals worth €29.
20. €100 bundle of crisp notes.
21. €55 in grimy ancient coin.
22. 11 bracelets worth €222.
23. Napkin bundle. Crusts. €23.
24. Handkerchief. Comb. €40.
25. Box of mints. €50 in change.
26. Zebra hide bursa. €60 in currency.
27. An IOU. €75 in discrete tips.
28. Ancient bottle. €99 tucked inside.
29. Dogskin moneybag. €101.
30. Kid gloves. €180 in gold rings.
31. Synthsilk stockings. Wad of €125.
32. Pocketbook. Spectacles. €144.
33. Tourist crotch-wallet. €333.
34. Elegant lizard. €134.
35. €150 in enamelled scales.
36. Acrylic orbs worth €72.
37. Whorled pearl chains worth €200.
38. Land cowrie bracelets. €160.
39. Metallo-plaz card. €175 in credit.
40. Three vidy orbs. €240.
41. Discount gloaming puck. €199.
42. Book of meanings. €42 in dice.
43. Coraline hoops worth €260.
44. Chrome casket. €444 in mirrors.
45. Copper knives worth €299.
46. Satin clutch and €165.
47. Basket-weaving bible. €200.
48. Plush shark wallet. €256.
49. Mother-of-pearl case. €280.
50. Trading bones with €300 credit.
51. Soft metal lumps worth €300.
52. Scriptures and €320.
53. Diorite tokens worth €350.
54. Gelatinous finches. €282.
55. Calcified ennui. €555.
56. Fossilized sandwich. €248.
57. Depleted ring of power. €390.
58. Pocket clockwork piece. €360.
59. Nightmare inkstones. €178.
60. Valise of summer wines. €600.
61. Ferroceramic octagons and €470.
62. Rucksack. Wads worth €360.
63. Colourful stone pendants. €616.
64. Eyeteeth on a string. €460.
65. Palladium & ivory calendar. €365.
66. Hellmetal nails. €666.
67. A hundred small earrings. €667.
68. Evening bag. €196 in gemwood.
69. Round moneysticks worth €69.
70. Silver credit scroll of €700.
71. €640 in debtwood tablets.
72. Deadmetal vome skull. €543.
73. Gilded copper bells. €373.
74. Old envelope with €47 in bills.
75. Ebony scabbard. €500 in fiches.
76. €760 in cash and €2k in debts.
77. €777 in glitterjel pretzels.
78. Half-metal chess pieces. €166.
79. Tabloid-wrapped jewel fish. €79.
80. Jet credit disc with €801.
81. Gun holster and €899.
82. Tiny golden barges. €630.
83. Balaclava. Heavy spheres. €483.
84. Epic poems. €284 in rings.
85. Teardrop synth-rubies. €185.
86. Steamdream spice worth €306.
87. €354 in bloody bills. €1k debt.
88. Gate pouch. €888 in old money.
89. Banded drawings. €810 in credit.
90. Torc. Hidden gems worth €900.
91. Neosaur billfold. €990 in notes.
92. Jay needles. €1080.
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96. Revolutionary scrip worth €1968.
97. €2k in bullion. €3 solid debt.
98. Timelost div pills worth €2525.
99. €9999 in minimal synth currency.
100. Estates. Discretion. €99k credit.

# Gear

The player also gains  on their skills, and



# Magic

“And that is how the leopard got its wings.”

—Anaxrma Voželava, *Just So Wizardry*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

Magic is everywhere in the Given World. It is enchanted. Awash in energies. Alive with Ka. Vibrating with Lei. Gushing with Vir. Threaded with radiations and information spheres and tiny wave-particle machines. Woven into the very structure of the universal simulation of reality.

Or, at the very least, the world is deep and old. Layers upon layers of misinformation and disinformation, reality alteration, and mad distortion coat the globe like the filth of aeons. Wheels and processes churn madly just beneath the skin of the ordinary and everyday. Where does the line between technology and magic and religion lie? The line is a lie.

It is a truth: great powers are waiting to be plucked free by a careless fool styling themselves wizard. But what are they? How do they work? Humans seek patterns. Invent explanations. Time passes. The theories are forgotten, but the practices remain.



Those half-forgotten powers promise so much. Overcome life and death. Ascend to the heavens like the prophets of old. Reawaken the glittering sky cities. Journey beyond the veil of the night into the lands of Everlight and Neverfade.

So many promises. So many fools. So much pain, corruption, mutation, change, and death in their wakes.

## What Are Spells?

Spells are practical recipes, rituals for ripping mundane reality open and changing it to serve the hero. At best, they are naive and flawed. At worst, they are dangerous, garbled mistakes, misused and misunderstood. Practically, they are treated as a kind of gear.

## Casting Spells

Magic rips reality, imposing otherworldly wrongness on the mundane, so spells hurt. Heroes pay the spell price to begin casting a spell.

**Spell Price (in life or stat points) = Magic Cost × Spell Power**

Different heroes may incur different magic costs. For example, an explorer with a magic cost of 2 summons a 3<sup>rd</sup> power *Thornstone Obelisk*. They pay 6 life or any mix of life and stat points. A witch, with a magic cost of 1, casting the same spell pays only 3 life.

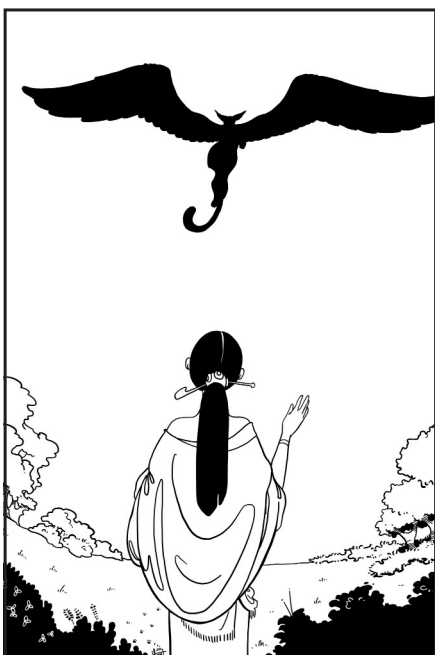
The spell caster’s player narrates the details of the procedure. The hero might cast a spell by reading aloud from a book or dancing to summon a demon. On the other hand, they might just light some dribbly candles in a special order.

## Spell Power

Some spells are more potent than others or can be prepared in more effective (and expensive) ways. Higher power spells have a higher spell price and are more dangerous to cast. A hero can cast any spell of any power, but it is dangerous to cast a higher power spell than the hero’s level.

## Anyone Can Cast Spells

Any hero can try to cast any spell, whether they have a relevant skill or not, so long as they pay the spell price. If they lack a relevant skill, spell casting is more challenging. The spell price is doubled, and all spell die rolls are made with disadvantage [-], including corruption rolls.



## Spell Albums

Shortly before choking to death on a chicken bone at the Pelegrine Festival of Beaux Magics, the abmortal and much revered grand magus Anaxrima Voželava published the famous 6th Final Edition of *Just So Wizardry: Magic for Beginners*. There, she arranged the 79 approved magics and 21 incidental spells into twenty canonical albums corresponding to the 20 official vedas.

Ever since, some have arranged their own spells into albums. Just as many have ignored the whole idea and gone their own merry way. Still, for the laity, spell albums lend magic an illusory sense of order and reason. In Seacat spells are organized in albums for convenience, not because heroes are restricted to that album of spells by their skills.

## Core Spells

Each magic skill (*veda*) has at least one associated core spell that a hero gains automatically if they have a rank in that skill. Some spell albums contain multiple core spells. In that case, a hero must choose one for their free starter.

## Dangerous Magic

All magics with a *#dangerous* tag or higher power than a caster's level are dangerous. When the caster uses such a spell, they must test their relevant magic skill to see if the magic corrupts them. The spell price is the test target.

If the hero lacks a relevant skill, they test with disadvantage [-]. If the hero's level is higher than the spell power of the spell they're casting, they test with advantage [+].

Magic corruption twists the body, abrades the soul, and changes the personality. The mutation tables (pXX) determine how it manifests.

## Special Spell Tags

Some spells are designed with mechanical quirks that change how they function. As players create their own spells, they are encouraged to invent and develop new mechanics of their own. If something doesn't work well in play it can always be changed later.

**#Anchor** • The spell creates a physical anchor, which the caster stores in their inventory to keep the spell active and controlled. Destroying or losing the anchor ends the spell (or worse).

**#Attack** • The spell is cast as an attack action. A caster uses their relevant magical skill to test against their foe's defence and affect them. If a spell targets other attributes than defence, this is usually spelt out.

**#Dangerous** • The spell forces a test to avoid magical corruption every time it is cast. Applying this tag to more spells is an easy way for the players to restrict certain kinds of magic within a setting.

**#Focus** • The spell requires focus to stay active. A caster must spend an action every turn, or the spell ends. A caster can always pay double the spell price to imbue the spell with their vital essence, keeping it active without focus. This is usually dangerous and requires a test against magical corruption.

**#Imbue** • The caster keeps an imbued spell active so long as they reserve the vital essence (life or stat) spent casting the spell. Reserved essence reduces the caster's maximum life or stat and cannot be recovered until the spell ends.

**#Item** • When a caster creates a magic item, they use the spell to lock their existential force (life or stat) within a physical object. Locked force reduces the caster's maximum life or stat and can only be recovered when the magic item is disenchanting or destroyed. This is similar to the imbue tag, except a hero cannot end the spell at will—they have to disenchant the item. Simple examples of magic items are magic swords, rings, and wands.

**#Regular** • A spell that uses only the standard magic rules.

## Anatomy of a Spell

### Melistoma's Dispossession

*#daimon #dialogue (tags)*

*Out, damned blight! Out, I say!*

The wizard cloaks themselves in the blue and green pigments that daimons fear and daubs their fingers with catfish fat. They then approach a daimon's victim, waving four magic incense sticks, one for earth, one for sky, one for wind, one for green. (casting description)

**P2** • The wizard draws a possessing daimon into dialogue to convince them to end their possession. (power 2 effect)

**P4** • The wizard adds a second of their mental stats (aura or thought) to their test to impose their will on the daimon and force them to leave their victim's body. (power 4 effect)

**P6** • The wizard also adds their third mental stat to their test.

**P8** • The wizard now also adds a physical stat to their test. Wrestling with daimons, baby.

*The spell title is like a song title. It's trying to be catchy and metaphoric, not a dry encyclopaedia entry.*

*The tags categorize the spell according to its mechanical quirks.*

*The casting description sets up the spell: what the hero does, how they prepare, and how long it takes.*

*The power and effect describe how the spell works based on how much life the hero pours into it.*



## Acquiring New Spells

Heroes gain new spells by exploring strange artefacts, as treasure, or as payment for their work. Some simple spells might also be available for purchase from the right purveyor of intergalactic planetary other-dimensional ... erm ... their eccentric wizard corner store. Casting a new spell without studying it first is always dangerous.

Learning how to use a new spell somewhat safely requires a week's study. After that time, when the hero casts the spell for the first time, they make a moderate thought test.

If they fail, they misunderstood how the spell works, and it is now dangerous for them. The hero then immediately makes a second test to see if the spell's first trial casting has corrupted them. If the spell was already tagged as dangerous before the hero tried to learn it, they would suffer disadvantage [-] on their corruption test.

## Spells Go in the Inventory

Each spell a hero can cast goes in their inventory. This is the spell burden and is usually equal to 1 stone.

Most spells are not just recipes and bundles of words a hero carries in their head. They are a burden that weighs them down. This might be ritual equipment and manuals, warding charms and protective clothes, ancient tools and body paints. Maybe even creepy skulls and newt juice. Perhaps just the weight of malign knowledge or the pain of an ontogenic nanite injection.

The burden isn't used up during casting. It can be stored elsewhere, but a hero can't cast a spell that is not in their inventory. Some rare tomes are valuable solely because they let a hero carry multiple spells in a single inventory slot.

## Casting Parameters

Casting any spell may involve multiple parameters. Individual spells and powers specify as much as possible, but magic, by its nature, creates edge cases in play. Players will have to interpret results that make sense to them, with the top cat sometimes exercising their power of arbitration.

**Casting Time** • Unless otherwise specified, a caster takes one action to cast a spell. Characters usually cannot cast spells with casting times longer than a round (however long it is) in the heat of conflict.

**Ending A Spell** • Casters can end most spells without an action. Disenchanting a magic item always requires at least one action.

**Spell Durations** • Spells are instantaneous in effect unless otherwise specified. Most durations are specified in real-world units of time or rounds. Some spells last until a condition is met (e.g. until the next sunrise, until the door is opened). When a spell's duration runs out it fades away with a mildly hallucinatory dissonance.

**Spell Ranges** • Spell ranges and areas of effect may be phrased in the abstract, using zones of action (here, near, there), or real-world units. Spells with a range of self, zero, or nil can only affect the caster. Those described as having a melee, touch, or adjacent range can only affect targets the caster can or could reach with a limb.

## Targets

A spell affects all creatures and objects in its area of effect unless otherwise specified. When a caster targets an unwilling creature, they must succeed at a relevant test for the spell to take effect. In conflicts, this is usually a test against the target's appropriate defence. As with any attack, if a target is bound or restrained, no test is required, e.g., a vampire bound in silver or a xenophorm [sic] safely embedded in an artificial chest.

## Adjudicating Spells

When the TC is unsure how many targets a spell strikes or how far its effects reach, they should use dice as oracles. For example, with a fireball they might declare, "it strikes the baker's dozen of goblins. Roll 2d8 to determine how many are within its blast radius."

If the targets were tightly packed, the number might double. If keeping their distance from one another, the number affected might be rolled with [-]. If the targets were tiny, a fireball might engulf more of them, while a storm of daggers would injure fewer. If they were huge, the effects might be reversed.

It's usually better to find a quick answer with dice than to spend time calculating a precise answer. Consistency is good, but playtime is more precious.

## Hacking Spells

When a hero doesn't have a relevant veda skill but has another skill that could potentially (with some creativity) also be used to cast a spell, they can hack the spell. This involves spending 2d4 weeks of game time tinkering with the spell, then a hard thought test to successfully adapt the spell to their skillset. A relevant trait, like fool's luck, may apply.

D20	SPELL HACKING TEST
1	Hero fails miserably and will never succeed. Gains 1 mutation.
2-3	Hero fails laughably, cannot try again. Test against corruption.
4-7	Hero fails. Easy test against corruption.
8-11	Failure and trivial test against corruption.
12-15	Partial failure. [+] to next spell hacking test.
16+	Success! Hero has hacked the spell and adapted it to work with their existing fantascientific skills! Player describes and names their novel spell variant.

When a hero successfully hacks a spell, their runner narrates how it works and how they have modified it. Every other player then suggests a quirk of the hacked spell. The hero's player chooses the best quirk (using popular acclaim as a guide) and writes down the new, modified spell.

The player may name the hacked spell after their hero.

## Inventing a New Spell

*“He gains his powers from afar, and built a gateway to the stars.”*

—Arjen Anthony Lucassen’s Star One, *The Eye of Ra*, Space Metal (2002)

When inventing new spells, players should consider:

1. Is it an idea that creates fun solutions and novel situations?
2. Is it something that isn’t a universal ‘I win’ button?
3. Can it be described in three sentences?
4. Does it have a memorable name?

If the answers are yes, then it might be a good spell. Worth trying, anyhow.

To develop ideas, players can use a book or movie or song title for the initial creative jolt, then mix it with another piece to reinterpret what kind of spell the titles could produce.

For example, take an album title like *Nonadaptation* and a song title like *Enter Sandman*. The second title suggests the elements of silicon and sand. Inorganic things. Perhaps something like the spell below.

### **Enter Sand Cloud**

*#elemental #focus #nature*

The wizard rocks back and forth for several seconds. They then decohere into a silicate sand cloud held together by strange forces.

**P3** • The wizard ignores severe heat and cold and survive without oxygen while in cloud form. They still get thirsty, tired, and hungry as usual.

This is a cute spell because it lets the hero bypass the normal commonsense rules of being an organic creature. Instead, they function as a floating cloud of sand. On the other hand, there is a significant drawback: the hero has to focus, spending an action each round to keep the spell active. The spell is also quite expensive, costing most heroes 6 life. Enough to think twice about overusing it.

## Setting Spell Power For New Spells

Spell power determines at what level a hero can cast a spell safely and how much vitality (life and stats) it costs to cast. Most heroes won't exceed level 9, and their combined life and stats will not exceed 70 points. This makes it easy to adjust how accessible a spell is, considering the standard magic cost of 2.

**Power 0 (P0)** • This spell requires no sacrifice. It's equivalent to an ordinary action, like running or firing a pistol. A spell with a power of 0 can be used at will by any hero. Players should keep such spells specialized.

**Power 1 (P1)** • A 3rd level hero could use this spell about 13 times before running out of life and stats. It can be a little bit more valuable than mundane equipment or actions.

**Power 3 (P3)** • A 3rd level hero could use this spell just 4 times before running out of life and stats. This is not an ability they will use often. It can be significantly more potent than mundane actions and allow interesting local changes to reality's fundamental rules.

**Power 7 (P7)** • A 3rd level hero could reliably use this spell once, and even a 9th level hero might only pull it off five times. A spell this powerful could automatically disable enemies or make visible and (semi-)permanent changes to reality.

**Power 11** • A 3rd level hero could cast this spell once at great cost and risk. It would be dangerous even for a 9th level caster. Such a spell might be the stuff of fairytales: decades of slumber, exploding mountains, small iron stars falling from the sky, drastic reality changes.

**Power 21** • A spell likely to corrupt any mortal. The power to rewrite histories and transforms aeons.

**Power 42** • A spell the mightiest half-god magus might cast once, giving their lives in the process.

## Adjusting Spells

With descriptions that aim for natural language and poetry over technical precision, groups will invariably end up with spells that are mechanically too powerful or useful, reducing the creativity of roleplay and the utility of other characters. When that happens, the players should discuss what to do together. There are many options short of banning the spell:

1. Make the spell dangerous.
2. Increase the spell's power rating.
3. Adjust the spell's efficacy: reduce its damage, range, or number of targets.
4. Add an additional cost or drawback to the spell.

The in-game narrative rationale for this kind of change is simple. Spells are a half-understood mish-mash of fantascience requiring rare components, half-understood rituals, and goldilocks conditions to activate. Just like in the story of Jekyll & Hyde, the wizard discovers that something has changed, and the experimental spell is no longer as effective. Or, perhaps, its destructive properties only became apparent after a period of careless use. Just recall how radioactivity was prescribed as a cure-all in the early 20th century.





# PLAYING THE GAME



*“Tacta alea est.”*

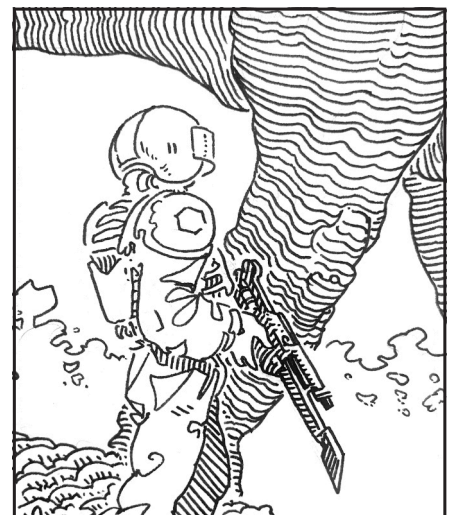
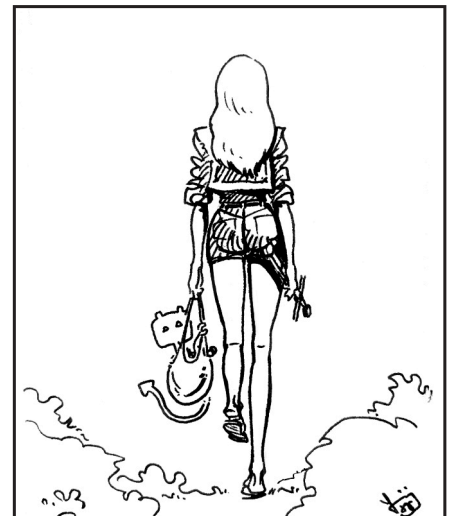
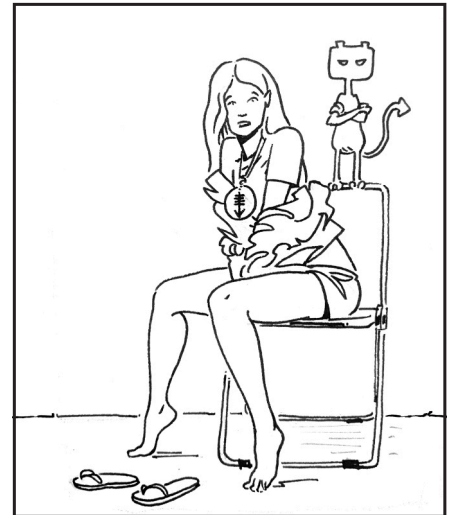
—JC according to Suetonius

A hero from another time awakens in their nanomagical sarcophagus. Researchers marooned on a mountain struggle to win the trust of the local yeti-analogues. Savages en route to a battle-world run amok on a void ship. Godlike lings on their ring-habitat argue about which of the local flora and fauna would make the best uplift candidates. A sentient motorcycle possesses their rider like a puppet of flesh and bone. A crowd of bystanders looks on, perplexed.

Players run these characters. The runner players handle the protagonists: the heroes, their pets, sidekicks and other attendants. The top cat player handles the antagonists: the villains, minions, creatures, and bystanders.

This chapter covers the following:

- Test** • How a character struggles against the world.
- Contest** • Competition between characters against the world.
- Conflict** • Characters fighting other characters.
- Damage** • Characters getting hurt.
- Defeat** • Characters losing.
- Recovery** • Characters getting well again.
- Experience (xp)** • The metacurrency players earn.
- Advancement** • How characters and game objects become more powerful.
- Inventory** • What a hero brings along on adventure.
- Gameplay** • Examples.



# The Test

*“The character against the world.”*

—Venerable Mede, *Brews Against the Terror of Knowing*

The top cat presents a situation. The runner says what their hero does. The top cat narrates the outcome.

Playing the game involves only dialogue until an uncertain and consequential situation arises. Then the TC calls for die rolls to test what happens.

Heroes roll  $d20 + \text{stat} + \text{skill}$  over target.

Extras roll  $d20 + \text{sum}$  over target.

A player rolls a 20-sided die and adds the sum of their hero's relevant stat and skill to beat a target between 3 and 19 set by the top cat. The sum of stat and skill can never exceed 13. Context determines what stat and/or skill is relevant in a particular situation.

Extras (including pets and sidekicks) are simplified characters that have a single sum score they use when they know what they are doing, instead of different stats and skills. This sum can also never exceed 13.

The top cat uses the amount by which the test result exceeds or misses the target to narrate the quality of the success or failure.

## Special Numbers

Four natural numbers rolled on a d20 have special effects during tests:

- 1** • Fumble. The test is an automatic failure with an additional drastic, catastrophic, or humorous consequence determined by the top cat.
- 7** • Silver lining. Whether the test succeeds or fails, there is an unexpected positive side effect determined by the TC.
- 13** • Luck runs out. Whether the test succeeds or fails, the character runs out of a resource (such as ammunition) or suffers an unexpected negative side effect determined by the TC.
- 20** • Critical. The test is an automatic success with an additional exceptional consequence determined by the TC.

Note: runners can and should also suggest additional consequences, but the final determination rests with the TC.

## Edge Roll

When a character's  $d20 + \text{sum}$  precisely equals the target, their runner or the top cat can suggest a sacrifice that will allow success at a cost. For example:

- A warrior takes a blow or breaks their weapon as they push through an enemy's shield wall.
- An ambassador gives away a personal item to get into an exclusive club.
- A magus of the seventh circle sets themselves on fire or summons a weaker ominous daemon (L3, chilling) rather than suffering corruption.
- A burglar destroys their tools or triggers an alarm as they disable a lock.

## Permanent Consequences

No test can be repeated in the same way. A pilot who successfully landed an airship on the Island of Gales will always successfully land there unless something changes: sabotage to their airship, a different make of airship, an unprecedented electrical storm, or new defensive flak towers. Likewise, a climber who failed to climb the 7a Pipe of Dreams will always fail unless something changes: more training, new equipment, a guide, or taking the time to carve steps into the pristine rock face.

# Stats

Heroes have six stats: strength (str), endurance (end), agility (agi), charisma (cha), aura (aur), and thought (tho). The stats range from 0 (worst) to 5 (best) and represent their natural aptitudes.

# Skills

Skills describe what a hero is good at, they do not limit what the character can try to do. A skilled hero is good enough to make a living with their know-how (they're a pro) while an expert is good enough to teach that profession. Players can invent new skills to suit their characters.

Proficiency (pro) ranges from 1 (poor) to 7 (unbelievable) and represents how good the hero is at their skills.

There are three situations when a hero rolls a test with a skill.

**No relevant skill** • Hero does not add their proficiency to the test and suffers a bane [-] to their roll. An amateur or beginner.

**One rank in a relevant skill** • Hero adds their proficiency to the d20 roll when they make a test. A skilled professional.

**Two ranks in a relevant skill** • Hero adds double their proficiency to the d20 roll when they make a test. An expert.

**Three ranks in a relevant skill** • Hero gains [+] to tests. A master.

# Targets

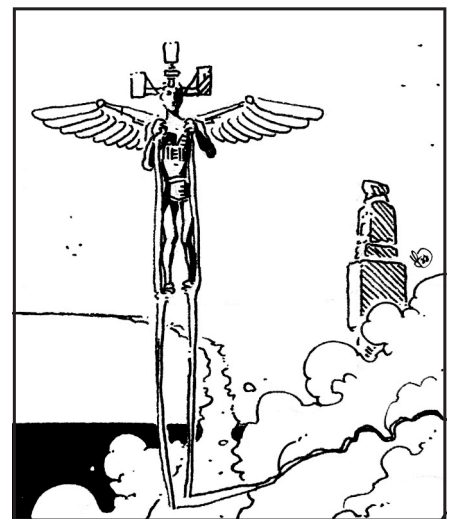
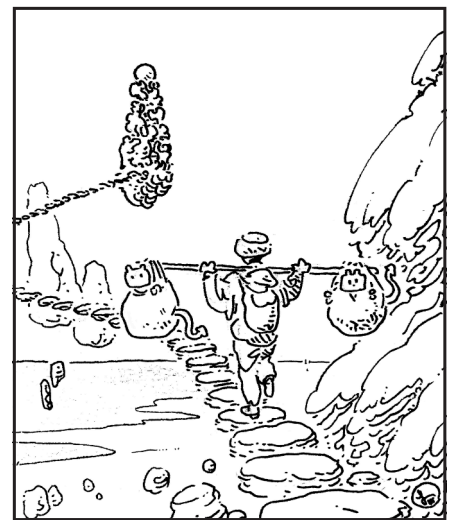
How hard is it to leap over a burning fence? While carrying a large bucket of gasoline? Without spilling any of it? While blindfolded?

The top cat uses their judgement to assign a target number between 3 (very easy) and 19 (very hard), then **describes** the probability. Leaping over a burning fence might be routine, with a target of 7. Doing it while carrying a bucket is moderately hard, (target 11). But doing it without spilling anything? Rather difficult (target 15). More so while blindfolded (target 19).

If a test's target is not otherwise specified, players should assume it is a common test with a target of 11.

## Example Targets

TARGET	EXAMPLE
3 minor, frivolous, trivial	A terrified thief tries to start their engine as zombies crawl towards them.
7 easy, elementary, simple	A knight explains feudalism to some peasants with their sword.
11 common, moderate, regular, plain 'test' without any adjectives	A watchmaker attempts to stop a ticking time bomb.
15 difficult, onerous, tough	A duelist rolls under a golem spider to stab their soft(er) belly.
19 dire, extreme, utmost	A surgeon tries to put out a gorgon's eye with a thrown scalpel.



# Dice

Seacat uses a ladder of classic polyhedral dice to determine effects. Special abilities, spells, and other circumstances move dice up and down this ladder.

## Dice Ladder

DICE	AVERAGE	COMMON EFFECT
d1	1	Minimal life or stat damage. Disposable extra's life.
d4	2.5	Weak damage. Level 0 extra's life.
d6	3.5	Civilian weapon or improvised damage. Annoying extra's life.
d8 or d10	4.5 or 5.5	Common military weapon. Up to L5 extra's life / level.
d12	6.5	Big weapon. Big extra's (monster's) life / level.
d20	10.5	Very large / scary weapon, opponent or trap. Can defeat any level 3 hero.
d6 x 5	17.5	Terrifying. Can defeat any level 4 hero.
d8 x 5 or d10 x 5	22.5 or 27.5	Tremendous. Can defeat any level 6 hero.
d6 x 10	35	Extreme. Can defeat any hero.
d10 x 10	55	Overkill.

The d100, generated by using one d10 for the tens and another d10 for the units, stands outside the dice ladder. When tables call for more unusual dice, like d30, d40 or d60, players can simulate them with a d100.

## Boon [+] and Bane [-]

A boon lets a player roll an additional die and use the result they prefer. A bane requires that a player roll an additional die and use the worse result.

Boons and banes may apply to every roll. Boons cancel banes and vice versa.

Multiple boons or banes do not stack. The one exception is when a player spends hero dice to gain additional boons to their roll.

## Exploding\*

Exploding dice are marked with an asterisk. Whenever a player rolls a maximum natural roll with an exploding die, they roll an extra exploding die of that type and add the result. Exploding die rolls are open-ended in theory.

## Consecutive/

Consecutive rolls are used in some tables to create rare results. In a d12 encounter table 12/12 means that when a player rolls a natural 12, they roll again and if the second result is also a natural 12, a special result occurs.

# Tokens

Every player begins with a group action token (or *gat* token). This small, memorable object (e.g. a meeple, polished stone, or cat idol) is used to perform group actions and to create game lore.

## Group Actions

When a group of heroes attempts an action together, the top cat declares a group action test. A participating runner with an available gat token steps up and declares what their hero is going to do, places their gat token in the centre of the table, and rolls the relevant dice. They use their character's abilities and equipment to help (or hinder) the group.

A runner cannot perform a group action while their gat token rests in the centre of the table. When all the runners have spent their tokens, each collects their token from the centre of the table, and the circle of actions resumes.

### Example group actions:

- Encounter and misfortune rolls as a party explores the ghost-scorched pine lands of the Voided Shore.
- Initiative tests as a conflict breaks out between the party and the tavernkeeper's guild over the heroes' attempt to set up a protection racket.
- The party attempts to sneak past a guardian golem.
- ... to convince a priest-king to buy a golden barge.
- ... to climb a sheer cliff on the slopes of the Mother Horn.
- ... to navigate through the tomb-rich Forest of Long Slumbers.
- ... to activate the wormway gate of the Sevenfold Epicentre.



## Creating Game Lore

When the runners encounter something new in the game, the top cat can take an exquisite-corpse improvisational approach to fleshing out the game world.

First, the TC broadly describes a new scene, creature, or object. Then they pass their gat token clockwise to the next player and ask them a question that adds some detail. After the player answers, they pass the TC's gat token along to the third player. The top cat continues asking questions, adding contrast and nuance to the invention. After each runner adds their part, they pass the TC's gat token along.

An example scene the TC could narrate while the heroes are traveling:

"The heroes are welcomed to a camp of steppelanders on a spiritual drinking voyage. The nomads pass their ornate cup of ka-cha around and relate stories in this wastey place under the red stars. One tells of how she hung upon the mother tree for nine days to travel through her mind's eye. Another of how he learned a spell from the stone fish atop the white mountain. Then the cup passes to you. Why do you wander here?" says the TC and passes their gat token to the next player.



### Other lore co-creation ideas:

- Local weather, holidays, cuisine, fashions, arts, and crafts.
- The sentiments, opinions, and deeds of incidental extras.
- Scene dressing, furniture, props, and curios.
- Details of vehicles, buildings, tools, and creatures.
- Titles and themes of songs, books, paintings, sculptures, movies.
- Histories, geographies, faiths, and academic disciplines.
- Flora, fauna, fungi, and other zoa, living and dead.

The players shouldn't worry about recording every bit of lore they create. Not everything will stick, but some will and that's enough to create a unique world for the players at the table. The players, and the TC in particular, are encouraged to take their world wherever it leads.



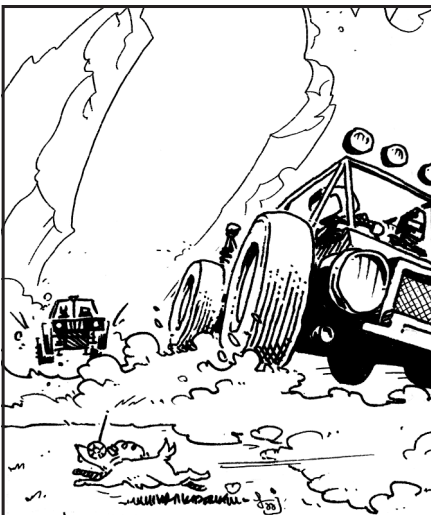




Two malcontents scramble for a gun.



Musicians compete to entrance rats.



Racers tear through Fraxion's Gap.

# The Contest

*"May the better golem win."*

—Lectus Ecce, selectron of Voidport Coalition,  
traditional greeting at the annual politician simulator battles.

A contest occurs when two or more characters compete for the same goal. Every character rolls a test and the highest successful result wins. Ties mean the competition has ended in a draw.

In a contest between groups, one character from each group rolls a group action test.

## Contest examples:

- Athletes at the Radiation Ghost Games heptathlon.
- Lovers compete for the hand of the Weirding Madonna.
- Priests tussle to light pyres and prove their Firebringer loves them more.
- Hunters vie at flying clay piglet shooting.
- Wizards spar with firework dragons at midnight.
- Duellists draw on the count of three.

## Bidding Contest

A character can **take a risk** in order to test first. Each risk taken increases the fumble range by 1 (e.g. from 1 to 1-2).

This starts a bidding contest. Another character has to take more risk to roll first instead. When all the characters have taken more risk or passed, the tests begin. The character who took the most risk rolls their test first, then the character with the second most risk, and so on.

In a bidding contest, the first character to test successfully wins.

Characters who took no risk roll tests last as in an ordinary contest.

# The Conflict

*“Always comes to this,  
shores of Lake Infinity,*

*clutch of blade on blade,  
whispering demons made steel,  
rage from dream to dream.”*

—Iäga, electric witch, *Future Memories of the Eternal Struggle*

When the runners’ characters physically (ha), spiritually (ka) or socially (ba) attack or are attacked by another character or group a conflict starts. Each of these characters or groups is a party to the conflict. There can be two or more parties to a conflict.

The conflict unfolds over a series of rounds. Each round the parties contest initiative. The results of the contest determine the order in which parties take their turns. Every character gets two actions per turn and all members of a party act in any order they like when it is their party’s turn.

Anything can be an action in a conflict. There is no fixed list of actions. Context determines whether an action counts as an attack, defense, or other action.

## Stakes

Every conflict has stakes, which determine what happens in the case of a victory, draw, or defeat for the party(-ies). These are usually implicit in the scene, but the top cat should still sketch them out for the runners to make sure all the players agree on what the conflict is for.

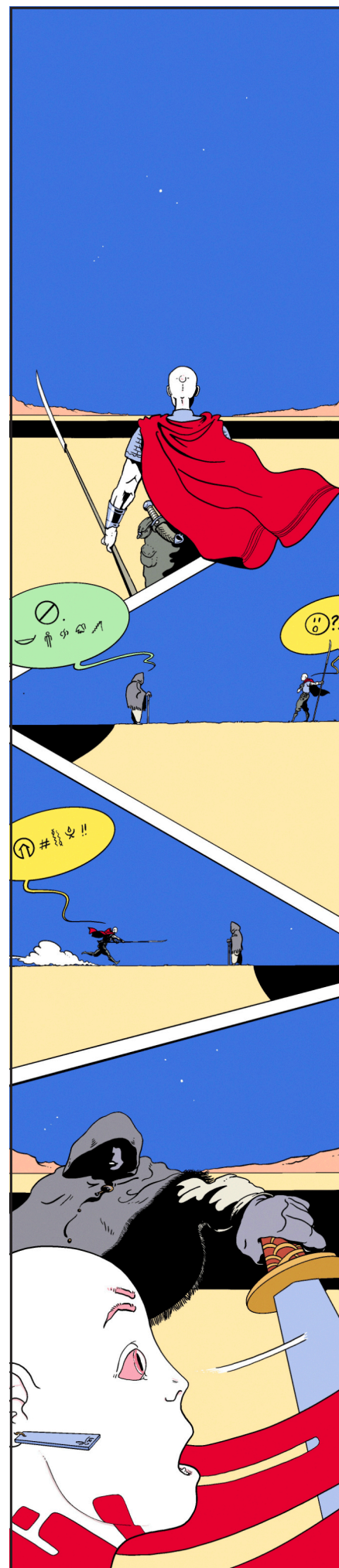
Stakes don’t need to be hard and fast, even a loose idea of the range of possible outcomes is enough. That said, the more concrete the stakes, the better.

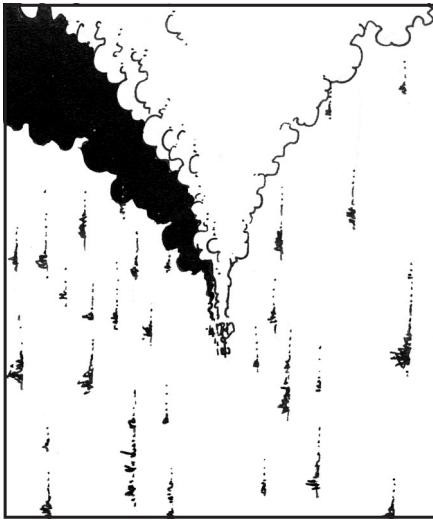
STAKES	WIN	DRAW	LOSE
low	an improvement (get a free beer)	a small improvement (prove competence)	an inconvenience (get tossed out)
high	a success (prove one’s innocence)	a small inconvenience (trials drag on)	problems, wounds (incarceration)
long odds	a memorable success (defeat the giant fiacre)	an expected result (lose to the champion)	situation deteriorates (autogolem breaks down)
life or death	party lives (no total party kill)	injuries, lost resources (dead hero)	party dies (total party kill)
a bit silly	a point proven (become croquet king)	everybody ‘wins’ (applaud croquet king)	face lost, appear foolish (fall in the mud trap)

If the stakes are not very high (or time is short), the TC may propose replacing a conflict with a contest or group test, suggesting results for victory and loss.

## Surprise

A conflict may start with a sudden attack. If the defending party(-ies) are caught by surprise, the attacking character gets an immediate free action outside the normal round structure. If the attacking party coordinated beforehand, each member gets a free action.





# Rounds & Ranges

*"Accurate time records aren't worth much when you're hurtling across the salt flats in a ten golem-power three-wheeler!"*

—Candide Desormais, team *Chat'damante* golem racer on winning the Tristes Pantropiques race.

Each round is sufficiently long for meaningful actions in a conflict. The top cat defines the approximate duration of a round at the beginning of a conflict. As circumstances change, they may adjust the duration.

Turns and actions are abstractions and have no defined duration outside of the round. Turns follow one another to help run conflicts as games.

## Ranges and Zones

The top cat uses the duration of a round to guesstimate ranges and zones. The longer the round, the greater the scope. Ranges work as overlapping zones surrounding every party and/or character in a conflict. Usually, all a conflict needs are three ranges or zones.

**Here** • A zone or range within immediate reach of an acting character. They don't need to move in order to act within this range. Other terms: *melee, adjacent, next to, in the thick of it, at hand, etc.*

**Near** • A middling zone or range. A character needs to spend an action to physically move to a nearby zone. Nearby zones may be comfortably within reach of projectiles and other ranged attacks. Other terms: *close, short range, not far, vicinity, in the area, etc.*

**Far** • A large zone or a long range. A character needs to spend two actions to physically move to a far away zone. Far away zones are hard to reach with projectiles and other ranged attacks. Other terms: *long range, distant, a ways, etc.*



ROUND	SCOPE	HERE	NEAR	FAR
milliseconds	spiritual dilemma, psychic hacking, daemonic possession	the brain	the aura	other spirits
seconds	gun or knife fight, human-scale physical conflict	the mat	the audience	entrance to the arena
minutes	oratorical duel, dance-off, hover golem skirmish in the high pines, vehicle-scale physical conflict	the stage, the ridge	the stadium, the slopes	the parking lot, the plain
quarters	snipers stalking snipers, naval battle, legal fight in court	the building	the neighborhood	across the river
hours	gruelling negotiations, courtly ball, grinding endurance battle	the palace	the capitol district	the leader-bunker
days	public scandal, military investment, wrestling with god	the city	the province	the state
weeks	political campaign, void-scale physical conflict	the fast star	the territorial void	the local cluster
months	corporate legal war	the court	the conglomerate	the local econonet
seasons	political economic war	the nation	the region	the world
years	light-year war	the world	the system	the local cosmos

*Dimensions and time scales are ideas, not instructions*

## Off Stage

Places not immediately visible or accessible to the parties in a conflict are off stage. This can be a hidden room, a fortified town above the plain of battle, or the rest of the realm during a negotiation. A character that goes off stage leaves the conflict. New characters may sometimes join a conflict from off stage.

# Initiative

“Sometimes going first just means you lose faster.”

—Anonymous

Initiative is a **special contest** between parties to determine turn order. At the beginning of every round a different character from each party rolls an agility group test. This initiative test does not have a target number.

Before they roll, the player decides their party’s stance for the round.

**Push** • The player rolls 1d20 for the initiative test. The party aggressively tries to seize the initiative.

**Hold** • The player rolls 2d6 for the initiative test. The party focuses on maintaining their position.

**Pull Back** • The player rolls no dice for the initiative test (their natural roll is effectively zero). They may *withdraw* from the conflict on their turn.

The player hides their chosen initiative dice until it is their turn to roll them.

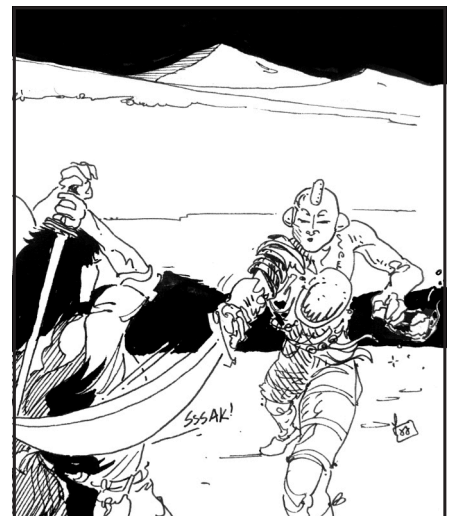
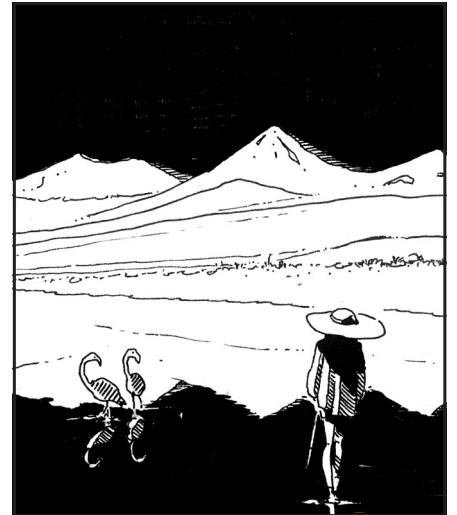
If players turn initiative into a bidding contest, the party that risks the most rolls initiative first and acts first. However, their risk of fumbling increases.

Parties that took no additional risks roll initiative at the same time. The party with the highest initiative result acts first, then the second highest, and so on. If parties are tied for initiative chaos reigns and all the actions between those parties resolve simultaneously.

## Initiative Effects

Natural numbers in initiative tests apply special effects for the round.

- 1 • Fumble. Every member of the party loses an action on their turn.
- 7 • Every member of the party gets one boon [+] to spend this round.
- 13 • Every member of every other party gets one boon [+] to spend against the party that rolled 13 this round.
- 20 • Every member of the party gains an action on their turn.







# Actions

*“Running, hiding, shooting, shielding, spearing, tricking, flanking, provoking, subduing, jumping, singing, driving, spellcasting, talking, and swimming.”*

—Milleregard the Very Golden, *My Many Talents*

**Each character gets two actions per round** during their party’s turn. Initiative, ability and circumstances may increase or decrease the number of actions a character can take in a round.

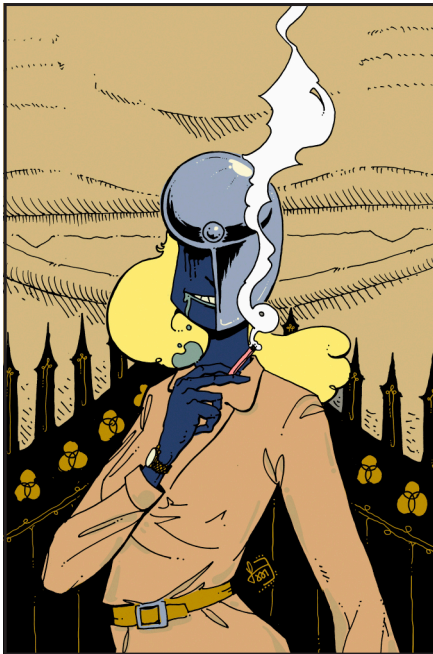
Anything that a character can reasonably accomplish in a round and that makes sense within the context of a conflict is a valid action. The top cat decides precisely how and whether an action can apply.

Attack, defense, movement and assist type actions have predictable effects. Other actions can be more unusual. Withdrawal is a specific type of action that ends a conflict in a defeat or a draw.

## Turn Effects of Action Types

A character can spend all their actions on attacks, defenses, other actions, or any combination of actions.

By default a character balances attack and defence on their turn, taking one attack action and one defence action. Narratively, the character is looking for openings to attack while keeping their guard up. Mechanically, the character tests once to attack and opponents have no boons or banes against them.



ACTIONS THIS TURN	EFFECT
2 defences	[-] to attacks against character (cautious)
2 attacks	character tests to attack twice
2 moves	character moves to a far away zone
2 assists or hindrances	target gains two [+] or [-] on their next test this turn
1 defence	no modifiers to attacks against character
1 attack	character tests to attack once
1 move	character moves to a nearby zone
1 assist or hindrance	target gains a [+] or [-] to their next test this turn
0 defences	[+] to attacks against character (reckless)
0 attacks	character does not test to attack (waiting)
0 moves	character stays in the same zone
0 assists or hindrances	no effect
offer truce, flee, withdraw, or surrender	no other actions this turn, conflict may end



## Attacks

When a character attacks they make a relevant test against their target’s physical (ha), spiritual (ka) or social (ba) defence. This is called an attack test, or simply an attack. If the test succeeds, they inflict damage to their target depending on their equipment, skills, and abilities.

Natural numbers rolled during attack tests apply special effects.

- 1** • Fumbled attack. Target gets a free counter attack..
- 7** • Even if the attack misses, it applies minimum damage.
- 13** • After this attack weapon is out of ammunition or broken (bane to damage rolls).
- 20** • Critical damage. Damage, including all modifiers, is multiplied by 2.
- 20/20** • Damage is multiplied again. Additional consecutive natural 20s multiply damage further. This is open ended.

Not all equipment can be used to deal every kind of damage. Even an unarmed human character can always inflict 1d3 damage of any kind.



## Defences

When a character defends they do not have to do anything specific. They are in a state of readiness to anticipate their opponent's attacks. The more defensive actions (or precautions) a character takes, the harder it is for opponents to attack them until the character's next turn.

**0 defensive actions** • All opponents have a boon to attack the character.

**1 defensive action** • No modifiers.

**2 defensive actions** • All opponents have a bane to attack the character.

**Additional defensive actions** • Each applies another bane to attacks against the character. Additional banes cancel out boons but the opponent never rolls more than 2d20, taking the worse result, from the banes.

## Movement

A character takes an action to move to a nearby zone or two actions to move to a far away zone. They do not take actions to move around within their local zone, even if it can be quite large depending on the scope of the conflict.

## Assist & Hinder

A character can take a reasonable action to help another character or to setup their own next action. Every assist grants a boon [+] within the current turn.

A character can also take a reasonable action to hinder an opponent. This inflicts a bane [-] on an opponent's next turn or blocks them from a course of action. An opponent can spend an action to overcome the hindrance.

While a character may have multiple boons or banes from assists and hindrances, they never roll more than 2d20, taking the better or worse result as required. The main reason to use multiple assist or hindrance actions is to turn a situation in which a target is disadvantaged into one where they are advantaged, or vice versa.

## Combined Actions

Characters can never take a single action that counts as both an attack and a defense. Movements, assists, and hindrances can sometimes reasonably be combined. Examples:

**Move and attack** • Warrior maidens charge a shield wall. Debutante dances up to a rival, showing off his superior grace.

**Attack and assist** • Thief stabs a troll, distracting them from their friend.

**Attack and hinder** • Rock star trips a zombie with their golf club, stopping them from moving.

**Move and hinder** • Wizard drives up in their van, blocking the goblin goons' line of fire against their allies.

## Free Actions

Any character can take a reasonable number of free actions per round. When there is disagreement about what is a reasonable number, the TC decides.

## Reaction

A reaction is an action triggered outside the usual order. A character needs an available action to use a reaction, unless it is described as a free reaction.

# Other Actions

Disarming a bomb, picking a lock, resuscitating a fallen comrade, planting a secret message, inflating a balloon, filling a gas tank, scrawling a warning.

Players can invent an infinite number of other actions for their characters and they do not need to fall neatly into any one of the four basic types. The players should discuss and decide what precise effect a given action has. The TC's role isn't to know the final answer in every situation, but to make a judgement and keep play moving. If an action or mechanic turns out to be game-breaking, unfair, clunky, or boring, it can always be amended or dropped in the future.

## Examples of Possible Actions

**Careless Attack** • Character attacks a target with disregard for their safety. They get [+] on their attack, but their opponent gets a free counterattack.

**Cast Spell** • Character activates an ancient machine. Or casts a spell.

**Charge** • Character rushes a nearby target and attacks. They gain [+] to their attack, but until their next turns attacks against them also have [+].

**Chug A Potion** • Character chugs some liquid courage.

**Control Spell** • Character controls a spell until their next turn. Some spells have complex devices for keeping them running effectively.

**Cower or Hide** • Character hides behind suitable terrain and until its next turn attacks against it have [-].

**Drag Away An 'Ally'** • Character drags an 'ally' away to 'safety'. If the 'ally' is not unconscious, they might struggle, forcing a strength contest.

**Drink the Soul** • Character makes a mental attack to leech an opponent's spirit. Success: they gain [+] on their next test; target loses an action.

**Grab On** • Character makes a test to grab their target. The grabbed target can't move away without dragging the creature along (if it's big enough).

**Intimidating Display** • Character makes a social attack to frighten an opponent into cowering, backing down, or retreating. The opponent gets an aura test to resist.

**Help Hold** • Character rushes in to help hold down a pinned target. It suffers [-] to all relevant tests.

**Hold Down** • Character makes a test to pin down a grabbed target (if it's not too big). The held target can't move or can't attack anyone except the character pinning it.

**Malicious Insinuation** • Character makes a cunning social attack to convince one opponent to stop helping another. The opponent sees through the baseless allegations if they succeed at a thought test.

**Observe** • Character keeps an eye on another character, to make sure it can't sneak away into concealment.

**Protect** • Character protects a target. Until their next turn attacks against the target suffer [-].

**Push Off A Cliff** • Character enters a strength contest with a target. The loser goes over a cliff. On a draw, both go over. If the target has no actions remaining, they cannot push the character off the cliff, even if they win.

**Reload** • Character takes an action to reload.

**Shake It Off** • Character tries to break free by attacking a creature that has grabbed or pinned it.

**Skirmish** • Character hops out of cover, attacks, then back behind (possibly different) cover within the same zone.

**Sneak Away** • A hidden character moves away, using terrain to stay concealed. If unobserved, all attacks against them miss.

**Suppressing Fire** • Character lays down missile fire to impose [-] on their opponents' actions in an area.

**Swing On Chandelier** • Or another similar swashbuckling affair. Character makes a free agility test. Success: they gain [+] until their next turn. Failure: enemies get a free reaction with [+] or character ends up in a humorously compromised position.

**Taunt Viciously** • Character makes a social attack to provoke an opponent to charge or attack carelessly. The opponent gets an aura test to resist.

**Wait For It** • Character gets ready to counterattack if opponents come within range. If that happens, their attack resolves before the opponent's.

# Adjudicating Action Ideas

The runners should try weird tricks. The top cat's task is to encourage creativity by rewarding good ideas with boons and other benefits, while suggesting greater risks for dangerous ideas. Instead of (realistically) reducing odds, the TC (cinematically) raises the stakes. The TC can invent and propose a mini-scenario based on the runners' ideas. It is up to the runners to decide whether to then go through with the action or not.

RUNNER IDEAS	POSSIBLE TOP CAT SUGGESTIONS
A terrible proposal	Hero can try, but first the enemy gets a free action with [+].
A risky gambit	... but the enemy gets a free action or [+] on their turn.
An interesting choice	... but if hero fails, the enemy immediately gets a free action or [+] on their turn.
A great gamble	Hero gets [+] on their test, but if they fail, they lose their next action.
A most excellent plan	Hero gets [+] on their test. If they succeed, an ally is inspired and also gains [+], but if they fail, the dispirited ally suffers [-].

## Example: The Petrifying Pterodactyl

The heroes are facing a pterodactyl whose gaze turns mammals to stone. Unfortunately, all the heroes are baseline humans (no lizard elves). The runners suggest fighting with their eyes shut.

The TC proposes that the heroes can attack with their eyes shut, but they will suffer disadvantage [-] on their attacks and the petrifying pterodactyl will have advantage [+] when it acts against heroes. However, they can expect to be safe from the flying monster's fossilifying vision.

The heroes may still spend hero dice or make sacrifices to adjust their rolls and gain boons, letting them offset the challenge for the time being.

# Ending Conflicts

*"It's over when I say it's over."*

—Rhinestein Oxmann, middle manager, Cult of the Fruit of Knowledge.

Conflicts are rarely about obliterating the opposition. Smart parties try to achieve goals with a minimum of resources lost. Since opposing parties often have different goals, even a draw may be a satisfactory result.

Conflicts end in one of three ways:

**Choice** • One or both parties decide to stop fighting.

**Exhaustion** • Both parties run out of resources to keep fighting.

**Destruction** • One party is destroyed.

The actions that end a conflict are the truce offer, flight, withdrawal, and surrender. The runners can decide to try and end a conflict at any time. When deciding the actions of the heroes' opponents, the top cat relies on narrative common sense and dice as oracles (pXX).

## Offer Truce

If both parties hold, the side that wins the initiative can propose a truce. If the other party accepts, the conflict ends in a draw.

When a party offers a truce, they make a charisma or thought group test to convince their opponents to accept. The TC sets the difficulty based on how the parties did in the conflict and how many resources they have. Parties can sweeten the deal by offering concessions to gain a boon [+] on their test.

RELATIVE POWER OF PARTIES	TARGET
Opponents obviously losing or badly outmatched.	trivial (3)
Suffered significant losses, high stakes in case of defeat.	easy (7)
Suffered losses, victory looks difficult.	average (11)
Situation is messy, outcome is still a coin toss.	hard (15)
Have decent chance of victory, haven't suffered many losses.	very hard (19)

## Withdraw

A party that has pulled back during initiative may withdraw in an orderly fashion with a group action. This ends the conflict.

**Both parties pulled back** • Conflict ends in a draw.

**One party pulled back, other held** • Withdrawing party is defeated.

**One party pulled back, other pushed** • Withdrawing party is defeated. Each member of the pushing party gets a free action.

A party that pushed or held, and won the initiative, may demand their opponents withdraw. They make a relevant group test, as with a truce offer, though the TC may make the test more difficult. Offering a face-saving way out of the conflict may give the demanding party [+] on their test.

## Exhaustion

If both parties hold or pull back thrice in a row, the conflict ends in a draw.

## Surrender

A party can always surrender. The winning party decides whether to accept. The surrendering party is defeated.

A party that wins the initiative, can also demand a surrender. The TC can make the test much more difficult than for a truce offer.

## Run Away

If a character is not facing an opponent or party alone, they can run away and leave their allies in the lurch. If they are alone and run away, each of the opponents they are facing gets a free action against them.

If all the characters in a party run away, the conflict ends and the fleeing party is defeated.

## Mopping Up at the Bitter End

When the outcome is certain, but the losing party won't (or can't) give up, the TC can suggest the victorious party mops up. If the other players agree, one of them rolls an attack against the mean enemy defence as a group action test when it is their turn. The degree of success determines how many more actions the defeated party managed to take before succumbing.

**Critical success** • No more actions. Swift and total victory.

**Success** • One more action.

**Failure** • Two more actions.

**Critical failure** • Three more actions.

# Defeat, Draw, Victory

As soon as a conflict ends, the top cat narrates the outcome depending on the initially described or implied stakes. If the heroes fought a dragon to steal its treasure, victory brings them that treasure. If they fought to exonerate a tyrant in the court of public opinion, victory washes sin and scandal away (at least where the eyes of the tyrant can see the masses talking nervously).

Further, how the party performed affects the xp players earn from the conflict, and directly how they will perform in future conflicts.

**Defeat** • Roll xp with [-]. Additionally, they gain the burden of defeat.

**Draw** • Roll xp normally.

**Victory** • Roll xp with [+]. Additionally, they gain the glory of victory.

Both the burden of defeat and the glory of victory occupy an available slot. Players may accrue multiple burdens. Players may also invent different burdens to fit the specific stakes of the conflicts they were involved in.

## Burden of Defeat

[#burden](#) [#mental](#)

*Shaken, but driven by desperation.*

The desperation of defeat sticks to the hero like a foul miasma. When the hero acquires the burden of defeat, they immediately gain one temporary hero die (this may exceed their normal maximum number of hero dice). So long as they bear the burden of defeat, they suffer [-] to one roll every turn in conflict, or in every contest, unless they spend 1 life.

**Removal** • Victory in conflict (automatic) or 1 week's rest.

## Glory of Victory

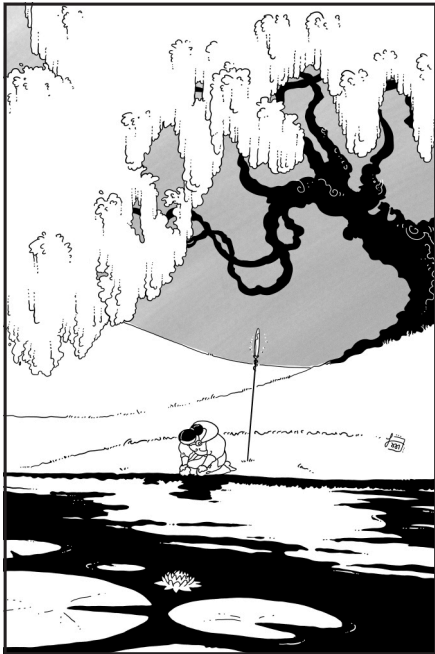
[#burden](#) [#mental](#)

*Hubris ever awaits.*

Victory blinds heroes. So long as they bear the glory of victory, they may gain [+] to one roll every turn in conflict, or in every contest, if they spend 1 life. At the same time their natural fumble range increases by 1.

**Removal** • Defeat in conflict (automatic) or 1 week's rest.





# Damage

“Sometimes creative destruction is just destruction.”

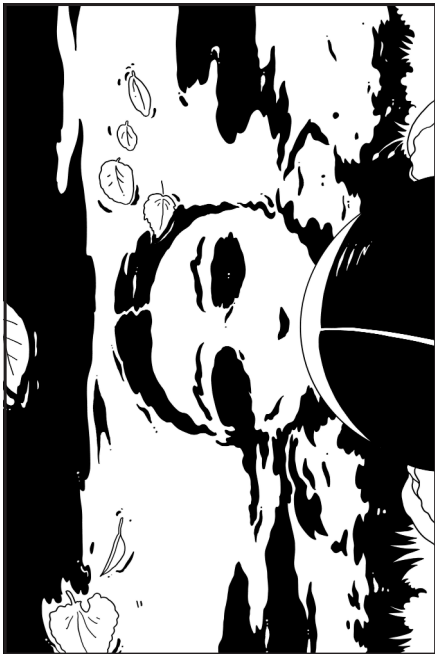
—Sebered, Last Necromancer of the Self-Disciplined States.

Damage is abstract and entails the reduction of any character attributes, anything on a character record, not just physical injuries. Characters suffer damage when they fail tests, when they fumble, when misfortune strikes, when they are struck by swords, when they are skewered by cruel quips, when they are afflicted by fresh curses.

Life is usually the first resource damage reduces. It is very abstract and measures narrative viability. Characters spend it to cast spells, power abilities, and absorb common attacks. Special attacks may target other attributes: stats, inventory slots, skill and trait slots, hero dice, or even inflict burdens directly.

Most equipment, abilities, and spells specify how much and what kind of damage they deal, but the TC should be ready to improvise as required.

DAMAGE DICE	SIMILAR VALUES	EXAMPLES OF COMMON ATTACKS DEALING LIFE DAMAGE (AND SPECIAL ATTACK EXAMPLES)
1	na	very weak creatures, annoyances (most special attacks, poisons, wounds, fears)
1d3	1-2	fists, common gossips, sharp glares (strong special attacks, magic curses, terrors)
1d6	1d4, 3-4	swords, knives, cutting jabs, allegations, rumours, curses (the strongest special attacks, crippling existential doubts)
1d10	1d8, 1d12, 2d6, 5-7	halberds, elegant witticisms, magical pain dolls (damage too high for special attacks)
2d10	2d8, 1d20, 2d12, 9-14	incredible rifles, crushing revelations, mental blasts
3d10	1d6*5, 15-20	epic magical blasters, ruthless setups, soul rippers
3d20	1d6*10, 25-35	lethal traps, automated defensive golems, ancient dooms
1d100	1d10*10, 45-55	things heroes were not meant to tangle with



## Attributes at Zero

No character attribute can ever be less than zero. When a character suffers damage to an attribute that is at zero, they acquire a burden of hurt instead. When a character suffers damage that would reduce an attribute below zero, it is reduced to zero and they acquire a burden of hurt.

Characters can also acquire burdens directly from other sources in play.

## Burdens

Each burden occupies an inventory slot. If the character has no available inventory slots, it occupies a trait or skill slot instead. If the character has no available trait or skill slots, the burden overwrites an existing trait or skill. Players can move burdens between slots on their hero record between scenes.

Burdens can represent any negative effect impacting a hero. The TC can propose any burden that makes sense in a situation, though the players can always choose to follow the standard progression of hurt instead. Unless otherwise specified, each burden requires a week's rest to remove.

STANDARD BURDENS OF HURT	EFFECT
Grumpy	[-] when social niceties are required.
Shaken	[-] in all situations.
Crippled	Speed halved. 2 actions to move 1 zone. Additional [-] in relevant tests.
Wheezing	Current and maximum life halved.
Unconscious	Character cannot take any actions until revived.
Out	Character exits play.



# Hakaba

The totality of every character is divided into a trinity of body (ha—the physical), soul (ka—the mental), and self (ba—the social). Narratively, the soul provides the motive fire of consciousness, the self provides unique direction, and the body provides the vehicle.

This trinity does not map directly to a character's stats, but it does correlate to the three types of attack and defence, and particularly the kinds of burdens characters gain when they take unbuffered damage to an attribute (i.e. if they suffer life damage when they are at 0 life).

## Burdens of the Body (Ha)

Physical damage can impair a character's vehicle, even destroy it, but this is not necessarily the end of that character.

HA BURDENS	EFFECT
Beaten	[-] to physical and most social tests.
Broken	[-] to all physical tests, some actions impossible. Requires medical aid to remove.
Maimed	[-] to relevant physical tests, some actions impossible, limb missing. Requires regeneriatric magic to remove.
Dead	[-] to tests that require a living body, some actions impossible. Requires postmortality intervention to function normally. Requires reviviatric magic to remove.
Destroyed	[-] to tests that require a physical form, some actions impossible. Requires temporary ka-ba vehicle to function normally. Requires reincarnatric magic to remove.

## Burdens of the Spirit (Ka)

Mental damage can disconnect a character from the motive fire of existence, leaving them a spiritless shell, an automaton, or lich.

KA BURDENS	EFFECT
Dispirited	[-] to most mental and social tests.
Ground down	[-] to all mental tests and initiative tests.
Burned out	Current and maximum life halved. Requires 2d4* weeks off-stage to remove.
Extinguished	[-] to tests that require autonomous volition. Requires external instruction to function normally. Requires psychopompous magic to remove.
Removed	[-] to tests that require a spirit, some actions impossible. Requires refuelling with soul juice to function normally. Requires psychic neogenesis or a saturnine moth's dream to remove.

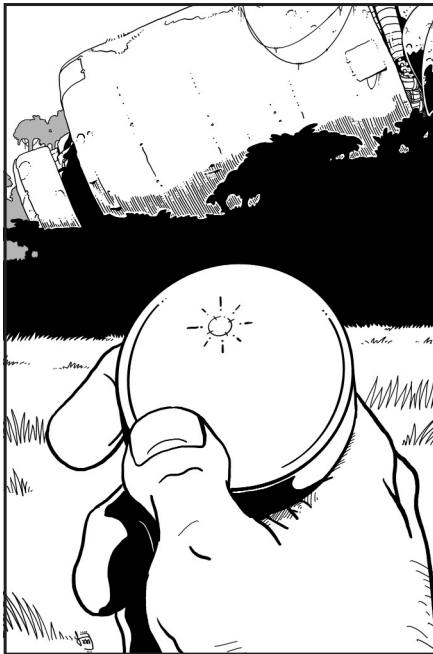
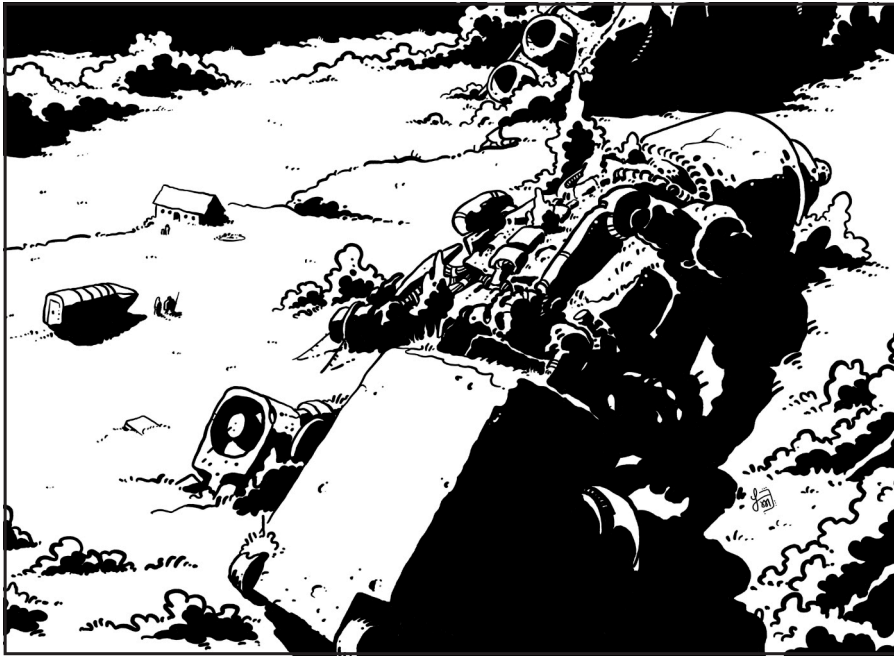
## Burdens of the Self (Ba)

Social damage can sever a character from the circle of their society. This may make become strange, dehumanized, even monstrous.

BA BURDENS	EFFECT
Mocked	[-] to most social tests, slapstick humour exempt.
Reviled	[-] to all positive social and mental tests. Requires judicious generosity to remove.
Ostracized	Suffers double social damage in their community. Requires significant quest or completion of sentence to remove.
Dehumanized	[-] to tests that require personhood. Requires restorative legal magic to remove.
Inhuman	[-] to social tests and tests that require humanity, [+] to ha & ka damage. Requires stolen human essences to function normally. Requires personality reprogramming magic to remove.

## Intolerable Burdens & Character Exit

Players, especially the TC, can invent additional burdens to fit the narrative. A player may decide that their character's burdens are intolerable and have that character exit play (pXX).



# Recovery

*“Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker.”*

—Dead *philosophe*, plagued by health problems for most of his life.

Characters, damaged and burdened by their adventures and debaucheries, recover as weeks pass in the game.

1. Every week, a character restores one attribute (usually life or a stat) to its maximum value, or removes one burden.
2. A character who is cared for by someone suitably skilled, restores one more attribute or removes one more burden each week.
3. A character resting in a suitable location, restores one more attribute or removes one more burden each week.

For example, a character who has lost life, strength, and endurance; and gained two burdens of the body, requires five weeks to fully recover on their own, but only two weeks in an expensive Porcelain Prince clinic.

Some burdens specify other requirements for removal and recovery.

## Recovering Faster

The players may decide to play a faster game, with characters recovering one attribute per day. As with other rules, trying a modification for one session is a good way to see if a different play style fits the group better.

## Recovering Between Sessions

When players start a new session, especially if some time has passed in the real world, it can be frustrating to pick up a damaged, burdened hero. Should they enjoy a boost, they have two options:

1. If the session is picking up after a cliff-hanger scene, characters restore one attribute or remove one burden at the start of a session. Perhaps the continuity crew flubbed the heroes' injuries between shots or accidentally left a few cups of healing potion.
2. If the session picks up the narrative from a safe location an ill-defined time later, the characters restore all their attributes and remove one burden each at the start of a session. Especially if some time has passed outside of play, the players may appreciate the simplicity of this approach.



# Exit

*"I'll be back."*

—Famous robot philosopher.

When a character has acquired burdens, their player may decide that the character exits play. For every burden the character bears when they retire, the player recovers 10% of their invested xp.

There are three situations where a character always exits the game regardless:

**Out of slots** • When a character acquires a burden and has no available inventory, skill, or trait slots, they exit play at the end of the scene.

**Tenth burden** • After gaining a 10th burden, they exit at scene's end.

**Eleventh burden** • When a character acquires an eleventh burden, they immediately exit in a narratively appropriate blaze of glory. The character gains [ + ][ + ][ + ] to all their rolls, then dies once the scene ends or their goal is achieved. The player then recovers 110% of their invested xp. This is the origin of the phrase "to give 110%."

## Replacement Heroes

If a player's hero or other main character exits play, they should immediately promote an available sidekick, pet, or extra to take the role of protagonist. These characters may be less fleshed out than heroes. This is ok. Particularly during a conflict or other tense scene, speed is better than accuracy. In a pinch, the new protagonist needs:

1. A life total. If they don't have one, they can just copy a random hero's total.
2. A defence score. Again, they can copy a random hero's score if required. When they need to split defences into ha, ka, and ba they can adjust them randomly by adding 1d6 for one and subtracting 1d6 for another.
3. A sum modifier for when the new hero knows what they are doing. They can use three plus a random hero's pro score for the time being.
4. One scene-relevant skill or background. They can also copy a relevant skill from one of the other heroes.
5. Three suitable pieces of equipment. They can copy gear from other heroes.
6. A memorable moniker. Something as simple as "the new ensign in a red shirt" is perfectly adequate.

If the player decides to keep the new character, they can flesh them out over time, rolling for stats, skills, and traits, investing experience and turning them into a fully detailed hero during the session or between sessions.

## No Available Characters

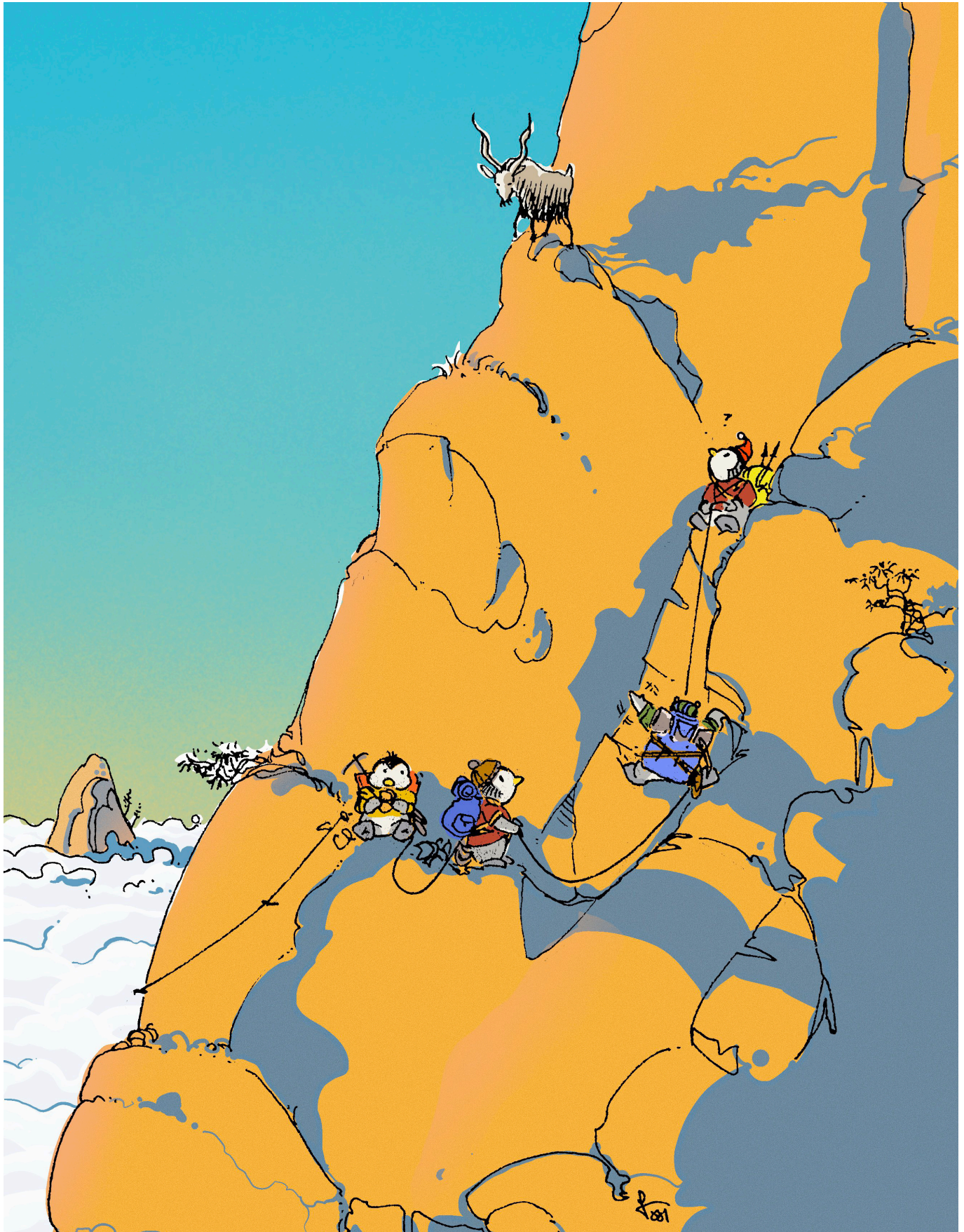
There are few things worse than ending up at roleplaying session without a character and with nothing to do. There is never an excuse for the top cat or the other players to spend time waiting for an appropriate time to introduce a new character—the one exception is the middle of an ongoing conflict. If the total party is to be killed, then the total party killed.

The player generates a temp hero (see the replacement heroes above), and the players explain how the new hero was:

1. ... there all along. Just nobody noticed. The magic of the retcon.
2. ... sent by an ally or contact to help.
3. ... an opponent who switched sides.
4. ... a paltry bystander inspired by the former hero's sacrifice.
5. ... appeared out of a strange time, space, or dimension in a flash of magic.
6. ... uplifted from a cockroach in a reverse Samsa manoeuvre.

Obviously, the players may invent other explanations.





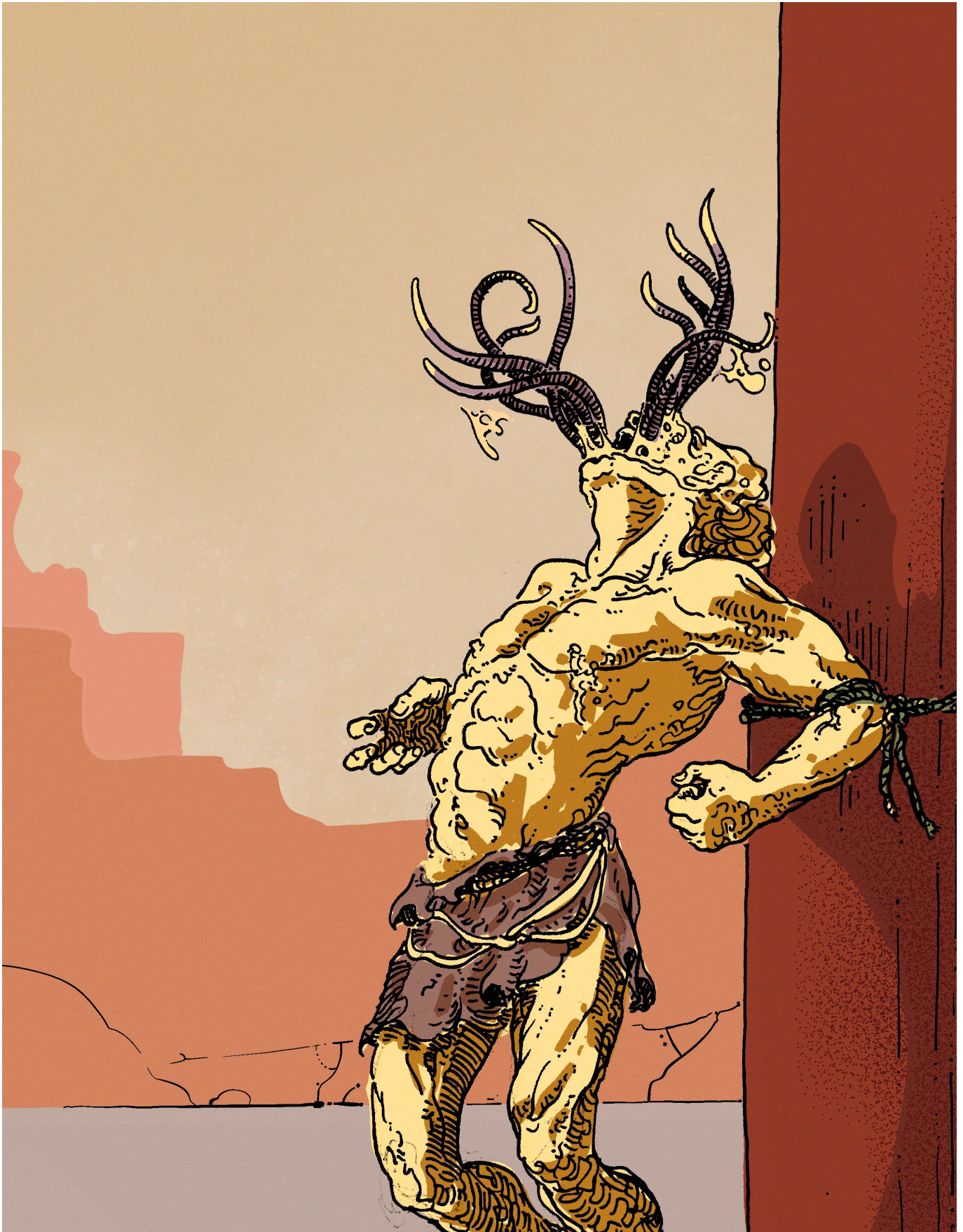
# CREATING SIDEKICKS & PETS





# Other Characters

ddd



# CHANGING CHARACTERS

*“But soon the world  
had its evil way  
my heart was blinded  
love went astray  
I’m going through changes  
I’m going through changes.”*

—Black Sabbath, Changes (1972)

Over time, characters change. Not necessarily more powerful, but certainly different. Though the arc of heroic progress might pretend to bend upward, there are setbacks and unforeseen disruptions.

This chapter covers:

**Experience** • How players earn currency to change their characters.

**Investing Xp** • Advancement and how levels work. Players invest xp to make heroes more powerful, pets fluffier, sidekicks uncannier.

**Mutation & Corruption** • Characters are changed, sometimes for better, often for worse, as they dabble with dangerous magics, awaken terrifying forgotten powers, or accidentally drink experimental mutagenic potions.

**Burdens** • When characters are hurt, they may be permanently scarred by their experiences.

**Retirement** • Finally when a character has taken enough of a battering at the dice of fate, they may retire with a final credits montage.



# Experience

*“Would the world forget these heroes? Yes. There would be local histories. Then folk tales. Then deeds swallowed by the legends that survive the test of time, by the myths invented to explain the vast, uncaring cosmos.*

*All their superhuman deeds would be swept away, just so much storytelling on the careless winds of time.”*

—Zarvan, Aide Mayor of Plish, *After the Mountain Fell* (UR 24,503)

As a session starts, the players should know the kind of game they want to play and what in-game achievements and meta-game behaviours will be rewarded with experience. The sources of experience form an incentive structure for play and change how it unfolds. The amounts of experience players earn do not vary much with their heroes' power (or level). Lower-level heroes are restricted by the limit on how often they can invest experience; higher level heroes by how quickly they can earn experience.

Players can choose to speed up or slow down advancement by adjusting experience earned.

## Earning Xp

Just as there is no one right way to play, there is no single way to earn or assign experience. Players may change up sources of xp from session to session, depending on what kind of game they want to play that day. For a horror adventure, experience might be gained by sheer survival. A power metal heroic adventure might assign it for valorous displays, rousing speeches, guitar solos, and killing monsters. An old school tomb-robbing module might be best served with xp for gold. Individual adventure modules can include their own specific victory conditions and experience sources. A social session might even run without xp or with flat xp for participation.

So long as the sources are clear upfront, everything is fine.

When xp are won for an achievement, for example, discovering a new location in the wilderness, that amount is earned by each participating player. Even a player who participates in a scene indirectly by assisting the top cat by running one of the extras should roll for experience earned. When the amount of xp earned is random, each player rolls for themselves to determine precisely how much they earn.

**Minimal achievement** • Hero does something interesting. A cool move, a glorious deed, a humorous slip up, or a funny fumble.

Runner earns 1d6 x 5 xp (5–30 xp).

**Common achievement** • Hero survives a conflict, discovers a new location or creature, or completes a rat-hunting quest. 1d6 x 10 xp (10–60 xp).

**Rare achievement** • Hero carouses magnificently, survives an epic conflict, or completes a memorable quest. 1d6 x 100 xp (100–600 xp).

**Unique achievement** • Hero completes a legendary quest, altering the flow of history and transforming the game. 1d6 x 1000 xp (1k–6k xp).

Players also earn xp automatically by participating.

**Runner attends session** • Earns 500 xp at session's end.

**Player also helps prepare or run session** • Earns 100 xp at session's end.

**Top cat runs session** • Earns 500 xp at session's end. Double amount if all the other players agree the session was enjoyable.

## More Possible Sources of Xp

1. High roller. Luck snowballs. Top cat rations rolls. 20 xp for every natural 20; 100xp for every natural 100.
2. All cash earned, looted, or stolen. Encourages heists and murderhobo shenanigans—1 xp per 1 cash.
3. All works of art recovered and brought to a museum. The more rare, elaborate, and challenging to transport, the more xp. 1d6 x 20 xp per inventory slot.
4. All cash profligately wasted carousing. A pulp adventure vibe. 1 xp for every 1 cash.
5. All enemies killed. Slaughterquest. 10 xp per enemy's level.
6. Monsters hunted. Murder quests. 100 xp per target's level with proof.
7. Enemies defeated. Trickery rewarded. 10 xp per enemy's level.
8. Trophies collected. Big game hunting. 100 xp per trophy target's level.
9. Battles survived. Cowardice pays. 1d6 x 20 xp for every battle. 1d6 x 5 xp every time the hero is injured.
10. New creatures observed and studied. Biology and naturalism. 100 xp per target's level for observations brought back (minimum 100 xp).
11. New locations visited and explored. Tourism. Natural geography. 1d6\* x 20 xp per location.
12. New spells and anomalies found or activated. Archaeology. The pushing of red buttons. 100 xp per minimum power of spell.
13. Quests completed. Story mode. Top cat pre-seeds sandbox with quests and xp values. Each runner prepares a personal quest. Major quests are worth 4,000 xp, side quests 400, mini quests 40.
14. Civilians saved. Valorous mode. All civilians saved: 1000 xp. Most civilians saved: 200 xp. Some civilians saved: 100 xp. No civilians saved: zero.
15. Loyal lackeys gained. Feudal lord mode. 100 xp per level of henchperson.
16. Locations and creatures illustrated. Artist setting. 100 xp per creature or location illustrated.
17. The episodic tales of the party written and recounted. Literary. 100 xp per vignette. 500 xp if whole session recounted.
18. Drinks prepared for the group—500 xp.
19. Helping run the game. Encouraging pro-social behaviour—250 xp.
20. Food prepared for the group. Play as a social dining experience—500 xp.

## Personal Quests

Heroes may also have personal quests or goals for which they alone can earn experience. Examples might be a hero avenging their parent's death or finding a way to magically regrow their face after a magical accident. The TC should work with all the runners to make sure these sources are fair. A player should not earn more experience simply for being more vocal than others.

The runners may also set themselves group goals or quests, with the TC again having final say on how much experience specific achievements might be worth. These might be a quest to rebuild a community, circumnavigate a planetoid, or overthrow the Grey Lords of Deadtime.

## Experience As Reward For Exploration and Interaction

When the top cat is running the game as a sandbox, they should distribute sources of experience unevenly around the world. This is easiest with generic sources, like xp for landmarks, artworks, or treasures.

A simple rule of thumb to use is Pareto's 80/20 principle. 80% of the achievements are relatively simple and account for about 20% of the total available experience. These might be poorly defended rooms in a dungeon, gullible extras to convince to a cause, or easy to find and explore natural sights. The remaining 20% of achievements hold 80% of the available experience. These might be secret chambers protected by traps and monsters, demanding lords whose support would change the course of a war, or breathtaking wonders made inaccessible by gruelling terrain, weather, and other obstacles.

Each sandbox session, the top cat may prepare around 200–400 xp per player in easy to reach areas and 800–1600 xp in the challenging ones.



# Storing Xp

Players store them on the hero they are playing that session—their active hero. Players without active heroes note their xp elsewhere until they have an active hero again. Players invest this experience to advance heroes, sidekicks and pets, or to improve gear, spells, or other items.

A hero cannot store more than 9,999 xp for later investment.

# Playing Without Xp

Xp provide an incentive currency in sandbox play. Activities that net xp at a table will tend to become the goals of the party. Particularly for games that only run for a few sessions, or games with a strong overarching goal, xp can become irrelevant or downright annoying.

If the players decide to remove experience, they may roll two advancements per session. Once for their hero, another time for another character or gear.

# Investing Xp

Players can invest experience when their active hero rests in a safe location for a full week. They can invest in as many different characters and items as the hero has reasonable access to that week, but only once per target. Players can also invest xp in other players' characters and gear.

An exception is when a hero exits play with uninvested experience: their player can immediately invest the entire available amount in another character. If they have no other hero, they can declare this character their new hero.

When players invest xp in a hero, pet, sidekick or item, they roll on the relevant advancement table—this roll is also called an advancement. Advancement becomes progressively more expensive and carries some risk.

TOTAL XP INVESTED	XP TO ADVANCE	SUBJECTS & OBJECTS
0–999 xp	50 xp	Common heroes and creatures. Low power.
1,000–9,999 xp	500 xp	Pulp heroes and fantastic creatures. Middling power.
10,000–99,999 xp	5,000 xp	Epic heroes and legendary creatures. High power.
100,000 xp	na	Xp bars hold five digits and there is no more advancement.

## General Advancement

When results indicate multiple options (e.g. stats, skills, traits, defences), random choice is the preferred route forward. Duplicate results are acceptable. End result may be unbalanced. This is a feature.

D20	SIDEKICK / PET	VEHICLE / STEED	WEAPON / ATTACK	GEAR / DEFENCE	SPELL
1	Loses 1 attribute.				
2	Gains 1 skill. Loses 1d4 life.				
3	Gains 1 defence. Loses 1 life.				
4	Gains 1 life.				
5	Gains 1 skill.				
6	Gains 1 life.				
7	Gains 1 trait.				
8	Gains 1 life.				
9	Gains 1 life.				
10	Gains 1 level.				
11	Gains 1 defence.				
12	Gains 2 life.				
13	Gains 1 trait & 1 burden.				
14	Gains 2 life.				
15	Gains 3 life.				
16	Gains 4 life.				
17	Gains 1 sum.				
18	Improves 1 attack 1 step.				
19	Gains 1 sum.				
20	Gains 1 level.				

## Hero Advancement

The rules for heroes are a little more complex, as usual. A hero can only receive each advancement once (except when they roll a natural 7). When a player rolls a duplicate advancement, they choose another result instead. Runners tally advancement rolls on their hero sheet. Suggestions for advancement events are detailed further on the next few pages.

D20	COMMON HEROES, 0–999 XP (50 XP TO ADVANCE)	PULP HEROES, 1,000–9,999 XP (500 XP TO ADVANCE)	EPIC HEROES, 10,000–99,999 XP (500 XP TO ADVANCE)
1	☐ Dead end. Loses 1 trait or skill.	☐ Aversion. Cannot improve 1 skill.	☐ Nemesis. Powerful threat to ally.
2	☐ Gains trait or skill. Loses 3 life.	☐ Dark truths. Gains 1 skill. Loses 3 life.	☐ Pain. Gains 1 skill & 2 burdens. Loses 4 life.
3	☐ Sign or omen. Gains 1 hero die.	☐ Courage over fear. Gains 1 hero die.	☐ Doubt. Gains 1 hero die & 1 burden.
4	☐ Camaraderie or bond. Gains 3 life.	☐ Uplifting realization. Gains 3 life.	☐ Friend in need. Gains 2 life.
5	☐ Ancestral memories. Gains 1 trait.	☐ Dreams of tragedy. Gains 1 trait.	☐ Ghost. Premonition. Gains 1 trait.
6	☐ Fortunate stars. Gains 4 life.	☐ Breath of life. Gains 6 life.	☐ Spirit creature. Gains 6 life or 1 pet.
7	☐ Roll again, ignore duplicates.	☐ Roll again, ignore duplicates.	☐ Roll again, ignore duplicates.
8	☐ Education. Gains 1 skill.	☐ Tribulation. Gains 1 skill and 1 burden.	☐ Loss of friend or family. Gains 1 skill.
9	☐ Community recognition. Gains 1 level.	☐ Notoriety. Gains 1 level and 1 enemy.	☐ Epic task. Gains 1 level.
10	☐ Chance meeting. Gains 1 trait & 1 hero die.	☐ Lost memories. Gains 1 trait & 1 hero die.	☐ Missed chance. Gains 1 trait & 1 hero die.
11	☐ Old light. Gains 1 pro.	☐ Broken prophecy. Gains 1 pro.	☐ Bout of suffering. Gains 2 burdens & 1 pro.
12	☐ Confidence. Gains 4 life.	☐ Fame. Gains 4 life.	☐ New daily routine. Gains 4 life.
13	☐ Grit. Suffers misfortune. Gains 1 stat.	☐ Personal loss. Gains 1 stat.	☐ Gains a treasure or 1 stat.
14	☐ Survival. Gains 3 life.	☐ Déjà vu. Gains 3 life.	☐ Dream of law. Gains 3 life.
15	☐ New powers. Gains 1 trait & 1 life.	☐ Daemonic visitation. Gains 1 trait & 1 life.	☐ Temptation. Gains 1 artifact or 1 trait.
16	☐ Diligence. Gains 1 skill & 2 life.	☐ Learning clicks. Gains 1 skill & 2 life.	☐ Retires content or gains 1 skill & 2 life.
17	☐ Luck. Gains 1 hero die.	☐ Facing mortality. Gains 1 hero die.	☐ Dire message. Gains 1 hero die or 1 stat.
18	☐ Respected. Gains 1 level.	☐ Inspiring. Gains 1 level.	☐ Demanding fans. Gains 1 level.
19	☐ Cultured. Gains 1 stat & 1 life	☐ Perks of power. Gains 1 stat & 1 life.	☐ Radiant blessing. Gains 1 stat & 1 life.
20	☐ Archetypal guide. Chooses 1 trait or skill.	☐ Mystic mentor. Chooses 1 trait or skill.	☐ Protégé. Chooses 1 sidekick or wealth.

*After a hero acquires the 20<sup>th</sup> advancement in a column they gain 1 level and receive rewards and responsibilities in a relevant community. Their advancement continues in the next column.*

# Heroic Advancement Events

Advancement events are story seeds that players develop together to figure out future challenges and goals for their heroes. Many require collaboration between a hero's runner and the top cat. They take choice and control out of a player's hands and throw it to the dice of fate. As with all such tools, the runner should modify and adjust results they find unappetizing.

Indeed, players should consider all the advancement events imagination fuel for inventing their own steps on their heroes' journeys. When an advancement suggests a new skill or trait, they can accept the random new attribute, or take it as an opportunity to invent something new and fitting for their hero. Every new element invented is more of the game world owned by the players.

## Common Hero Events [d20]

*"That special mix of ambition and desperation, longing and regret. That unique experience of loss, that particular need to prove themselves, to recover stability and security, to build a better world. But it's not just that.*

*There were signs from early on. Patterns. Proof of their competence. Exceptional ability. An unusual calling.*

*Yes. They are unique. Just like all the other skeletons gently baking in the Transplutonian Waste."*

—Gurta of the Nodding Sisters, *Oral History of the Etching* (UR 15,643)

### 1. Despair

A dead end. No progress. Worse, disillusionment drives the hero to abandon an old pursuit, losing an existing skill or trait.

### 2. Learning

Hero learns a new skill or ability, but their health suffers as they study mouldering artefacts and implants, rather than enjoying the fresh air. Gains 1 skill or trait and loses 3 life.

### 3. Portent

Hero receives a sign they are on the right path. Gains 1 hero die.

### 4. Growth

Takes solace in friendship and camaraderie. A bond is forged. Gains 3 life.

### 5. Awakenings

Forgotten ancestral abilities awaken. Gains 1 trait.

### 6. Kindly Stars

In the light of a welcoming star, the creative daemons smile. Gains 4 life.

### 7. Strange Luck

Fortune smiles [d6]:

- 1-3 • Rolls on the next event table.
- 4-5 • Rolls again on this tier.
- 6 • Gains 1 skill.

*Note:* the above rolls do not cross off advancements and ignore the duplicates rule.

### 8. Education

Dreams are in reach for those who apply themselves, whisper the implant-sellers. Gains 1 skill.

### 9. Society

Community acknowledges their competence. Hero gains 1 level.

*Also:* every several weeks [d6]:

- 1-3 • A tedious but necessary task occupies the hero.
- 4-5 • A chance to trade their skilled work for a useful, uncommon item arises.
- 6 • The community surprises them with a valuable gift.

### 10. Noticed

A chance encounter with a notable personage helps the hero unlock their potential. Gains 1 trait and 1 hero die.

### 11. Proficiency

By the light of the old builders, they become better in every way. Gains 1 pro.

### 12. Confidence

The warm glow of success strengthens the hero's anchor to this mortal world. Gains 4 life.

### 13. Grit

Misfortunes suffered make the hero stronger. Gains 1 stat & 1 burden. If the hero has no traits, they gain one.

### 14. Survival

The weeks and months of trials have taught the hero much in the way of not dying. Gains 3 life.

### 15. New Powers

With another dawn seen, another trial survived, they become more. Gains 1 trait and 1 life.

### 16. Diligence

Study brings not only its own rewards. Gains 1 skill and 2 life.

### 17. Luck

Without luck none survive. The longer one survives, the luckier they must be. Gains 1 hero die.

### 18. Respected

Other professionals acknowledge that the hero is no rabble. Hero gains 1 level.

Also, a role model or leader gifts the hero a [d6]:

1. Trendy new spell.
2. Sharp-looking clothes or armor.
3. Fine steed.
4. Princely sum: €200 + 100 per hero's level.
5. Masterful weapon.
6. Magical item from long ago.

### 19. Cultured

The hero's efforts and good luck have made them better. Gains 1 stat & 1 life.

### 20. Guidance

Hero **finds a guide or guru** to teach them how to become an archetypal hero. The guide sets the hero three tasks [d6]:

1. A week of backbreaking labour helping the guide.
2. Expensive investments in the guru's less-than-savoury habits equal to half of the hero's wealth.
3. A week of lonely exile in a remote place fetching or delivering strange half-worthless items, culminating in a dangerous struggle with a foe or daemon.
4. An unusual ritual alteration of the hero's appearance
5. The traditional casting aside of a beloved possession or prior bond
6. 1d4\* weeks spent crafting an artefact to impress the guide with the hero's dedication. They then sell or destroy the artefact.

After three tasks are completed, the guru inducts the hero into their new archetype with a week-long ritual and wellness package. The exact details are up to the player, but perhaps some kind of certificate is involved.

After certification, the hero adopts their new archetype and title. Additionally, the hero gains 1 skill and acquires a new weapon, spell, armour, steed, or piece of near-magical gear of their choice.

or

#### No masters! No gurus!

The hero refuses to be pigeon-holed and will make their own path to glory.

They complete one personal task taking 1d4\* weeks. The precise task is up to the players. The hero's runner suggests an attribute (skill, trait, stat) they want. The other players then suggest quests, subject to the TC's soft veto or complication, and the runner picks the one they prefer.

The hero then gains the attribute of the runner's choice.

### Events Complete

After all twenty advancements are complete, the hero earns a week of holiday and gains 1 level.

People in their community and their avowed calling know of them. They are capable of far greater feats than the average human. Warriors are as wily and tough the best captains of the undying legions, wizards make reality bend to their whim like the cinnabar scholars of the air-hopping order, adventurers recall the tales of the fabled seven delvers who restored the five great scientific traditions to the kneeling ancestors of today's great republics.

The hero also gains [d6]:

1. A humble residence courtesy of their community.
2. An offer of initiation into a shadowy regional cabal.
3. The approval of local mercantile interests and reduced prices.
4. Renown that opens doors and buys free drinks and meals.
5. An eager sidekick (L1, fawning) willing to overlook even the most glaring character flaws.
6. An ancient magitech artifact of some power and utility, painted to make it look even more awesome.

## **Pulp Hero Events [d20]**

*“Will the world forget these heroes? Yes. There will be local histories. Then folk tales. Then their deeds will be swallowed by the legends that survive the test of time, by the myths invented to explain the vast, uncaring cosmos.”*

*“All their superhuman deeds will be swept away, just so much storytelling on the careless winds of time.”*

—Nodda of the Brooding Brothers, *Oral History of the Etching* (UR 13,453)

### **1. Abandonment**

What a waste. The hero makes no progress and even develops aversion to an entire field. They refuse to improve one of their skills in the future.

### **2. Dark Truths**

When the hero learns a new skill, a cruel revelation troubles them. Gains 1 skill & loses 3 life. Also gains 1 burden.

### **3. Bravery**

In the face of fear the hero prevailed. Gains 1 hero die.

### **4. Friendship**

An acquaintance turns out to be a friend. Gains 3 life.

### **5. Ill Omens**

Dreams of a tragic future awaken new powers. Gains 1 trait & 1 burden.

### **6. Strange Creature**

In the face of a beast dawns understanding, in the breast of a hero dawns new life. Gains 6 life or a pet gains the ability to speak.

### **7. Luck, Again**

Fortunes smile [d6]:

- 1–3 • Rolls on the next event table.
- 4–5 • Rolls again on this tier.
- 6 • Gains 1 skill.

*Note:* the above rolls do not cross off advancements and ignore the duplicates rule.

### **8. Trials and Tests**

Tribulations teach new skills. Gains 1 skill & 1 burden.

### **9. Notoriety**

With mighty deeds comes notoriety. Hero gains 1 level.

Also, every several weeks [d6]:

- 1 • A malicious or unfortunate event inconveniences the hero.
- 2–3 • An annoying or frustrating opportunity arises.
- 4–6 • An innocuous coincidence reflects their notoriety.

### **10. In Search of Lost Time**

An aroma awakens a memory of lost days. Hero gains 1 trait & 1 hero die.

### **11. Broken Prophecy**

Taking reality by the throat, shrugging off the bonds of sooth, the hero rises. Gains 1 pro.

### **12. Famous Confidence**

Buoyed by fame and the memory of past success, the hero clings on more tenaciously. Gains 4 life.

### **13. Personal Loss**

Hero loses a treasured friend or possession, spurring them to impose their will on the world. Gains 1 stat.

### **14. Déjà vu**

The essence of the hero captures the journeys of the world. Is this prophecy? Gains 3 life.

### **15. Daemonic Visitation**

It was a strange dream, a visitor, a half-buried memory of the future. Gain 1 trait & 1 life.

### **16. Learning Clicks**

The old books, the teachings half-forgotten, they finally make sense. With understanding comes joy. Gains 1 skill & 2 life.



## 17. Facing Mortality

Around a corner that should not be there, beyond a senseless gate, through a mirror of imagination, the hero faces their own mortality and lives. They must make each day count. Gains 1 hero die.

## 18. Inspiring

Their great deeds have inspired commoners and aristocrats alike. Hero gains acceptance and 1 level.

Also, a representative of the community, an opposition figure, a personage in power, or a revolutionary gives hero [d6]:

1. A fine place to work.
2. A handsome place to stay
3. A very competent sidekick
4. Estates or holdings that generate a comfortable rent.
5. A fancy title that opens doors and impresses people
6. Actual behind the scenes influence and obligations, including possible induction into a secret society.

## 19. Perks of Power

Training and study are easier when one is a little privileged. Gains 1 stat point & 1 life.

## 20. Mystic Mentor

Hero discovers a mentor or mystic willing to teach them how to become a true warrior or a true wizard (player's choice).

They set three tasks. The tasks may include [d6]:

1. A week of humiliating public rituals.
2. Pointless expenses equal to half of the hero's wealth.
3. A week of hardship in a remote place.
4. An unusual change to the hero's appearance
5. The ritual destruction of a prized possession
6. Saving or destroying someone or something for the mentor figure, no questions asked.

After the three tasks are completed, the hero undertakes an obscure week-long ritual. The details are up to the player.

After induction, the hero gains a rank of either the True Warrior or the True Wizard trait. These change the hero's life total and magic cost. Additionally, the hero learns a new praxa or veda skill, respectively.

or

### This mentor is a fraud!

The hero will make their own path.

They complete one personal task taking 1d6\* weeks. The precise task is up to the players. The hero's runner suggests an attribute (skill, trait, stat) they want. The other players then suggest quests, subject to the TC's soft veto or complication, and the runner picks the one they prefer.

The hero then gains the attribute of the runner's choice.

## Events Complete

After all twenty advancements are complete, the hero earns a month of holiday and gains 1 level.

People know the hero now. Upstanding heroes are admired. Villains are feared. Penny dreadfuls and operas are written embroidering their exploits. The gossip vidys make 'thoughtful' bite-sized productions about their private lives.

The hero also receives [d6]:

1. A lucrative position at a local commercial or financial institution. Strings attached.
2. A position of expertise at a technical or military organization.
3. A position of power within the local regime or opposition.
4. Celebrity status with adoring fans and nosy paparazzi.
5. Discrete but thorough access to community resources via a private patronage network.
6. Ownership of a ridiculous white elephant project, maybe a derelict voidliner or haunted glass palace.

## Legendary Hero Events [d20]

*"A proud elephant destroyed his village. The villagers fled in fear and tremor.*

*A hero strolled up from their bath in the lake, reciting the scriptures of fearlessness. When the villagers saw that hero walking towards the elephant they yelled, "Do not go near him! He is mad! Wild!"*

*The hero took no heed and walked straight up to that mad elephant and offered their hand. When the elephant saw the hero approach, he immediately lost all anger and lay down peacefully."*

—Paraphrased from *The Glories of the Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter 16, translated by Kāshināth Trimbak Telang (1882).

### 1. Nemesis

The hero's travails were in vain but attracted the attention of a powerful entity. Destruction threatens their [d6]:  
(1) settlement, (2) organization, (3) house, (4) treasure, (5) friends, or (6) posterity.

### 2. Pain

The hollowness of ambition troubles the hero. Gains 1 skill & loses 4 life. Also gains 2 burdens.

### 3. Doubt

A daemon of doubt wrestles the hero for days on end. It is a hard test, but the hero finally prevails. Gains 1 hero die & 1 burden.

### 4. Friend in Need

A call comes. If the hero spends a week helping, they gain 2 life. Otherwise, the hero does not advance this time and xp are refunded.

### 5. Ghost

A disembodied ghost appears, announcing a dark and tragic future. The hero glimpses [d6]:

1. Their death.
2. The death of all their dreams
3. The fall of a great empire
4. The wages of sin
5. How they outlive all their friends
6. History rendering them irrelevant.

Hero then gains 1 trait.

### 6. Spirit Creature

A spirit animal emerges from the bush and offers itself to the hero as a sacrifice. If they kill it, they gain 6 life. If they keep it, they gain a spirit pet.

### 7. Chaos' Gift

Chaos bows to the hero. Hero may choose a result from any advancement table or roll again on this one. The second roll does not cross off advancements and ignores the duplicates rule.

### 8. Loss

Hero painfully loses a [d6]:  
(1) family member, (2) home, (3) friend, (4) pet, (5) treasure, or (6) sidekick or mentor.

After, the hero gains 1 skill.

### 9. Duty

An epic task beckons. The community approaches the hero, asking them to [d6]:

1. Judge in a complex case.
2. Negotiate a painful truce.
3. Rediscover important truth.
4. Retrieve a lost treasure.
5. Hunt down a dangerous monster.
6. Redeem a fallen paragon.

Once the task is complete, the hero's fame grows, and they gain 1 level.

### 10. Missed Opportunity

A letter, mislaid, finally arrives. The letter is too late, the opportunity lost. The hero must erect a suitable memorial; they then gain 1 trait & 1 hero die.

### 11. Struggle

Hero is racked by [d6]: (1) illness, (2) indecision, (3) indigestion, (4) anxiety, (5) paranoia, or (6) melancholy.

Then gains 2 burdens and 1 pro.

## 12. New Habit

Discovering meaning in a small, novel daily ritual, the hero's determination to live life fully increases. Gains 4 life.

## 13. Despondency

The meaning of a recent victory rings hollow. If the hero rejects their reward or gives away treasure earned, they gain 1 stat.

## 14. Law's Message

The essence of law's arrow is unveiled to the hero in a dream. Whether they accept it or not, they gain 3 life.

## 15. Temptation

In a strange dream, an ancient daemon or deity tempts the hero with great power. They either learn where a great artefact lies and how to reach it, or they gain 1 trait as they spurn the angel of temptation.

## 16. A Way Out

In happy contentment, the hero considers retirement. The hero may either acquire an unexpected inheritance and retire or gain 1 skill and 2 life.

## 17. Menace

A haggard messenger appears, claiming to hail from a [d6]:

1. Lost future
2. Forgotten past
3. Far kingdom
4. Downtrodden minority
5. Noble friend
6. Parallel world

After delivering the message, they fade away. If the hero accepts the message, they gain 1 hero die, but tragedy soon strikes a nearby settlement. If the hero rejects their message, they gain 1 stat, and nothing else seems to occur.

## 18. Adulation

The hero's adoring fans demand the hero [d6]:

1. Harshly punishes a criminal.
2. Undertakes a pilgrimage.
3. Donates to help the community in need.

4. Sacrifices their most cherished to appease a local deity.
5. Puts on great, expensive feast.
6. Marries into the local administrative nobility.

If the hero accepts, they gain 1 level. If the hero declines, they do not advance this time, and the invested xp are refunded.

After, a tribune of the people, an ambitious commander, a usurper, a wealthy merchant, a hereditary priest, or a famous celebrity provides the hero with a [d6]:

1. Medal.
2. Large gilded letter of merit.
3. Palace & title in remote province.
4. Prestigious but powerless position involving lots of ribbon-cutting.
5. Pleasure dome and an unlimited supply of intoxicants.
6. Double-edged weapon of great power and a stern warning to stay out of local politics from now on.

## 19. Nature's Blessing

A magic [d6]: (1) stone, (2) tree, (3) lake, (4) waterfall, (5) mountain, or (6) cave summons the hero. When they arrive, a radiant spirit blesses them. Gains 1 stat and 1 life.

## 20. Protégé

Hero gains 1 trait. Then a young and inept protégé approaches the hero and begs to be taught. They are [d6]:

1. Very brave but foolish.
2. Smart but cowardly.
3. Educated but naive.
4. Beautiful but clumsy.
5. Alien but loving.
6. Exceptionally gifted in all ways, but with a heart of darkness.

If the hero accepts the protégé, they gain a loyal sidekick (L3, apprentice). If they send them on their way, their business blossoms, their wealth grows, and they enjoy counting their coin at home, alone, with only a butler for company.

Players are encouraged to invent tasks and quests for the protégé.

When a protégé goes off on a quest, the player rolls 2d6:

- (2) • the protégé disappears (for now?),
- (3-4) • humiliated, they return in failure,
- (5-6) • they fail but learn a lesson,
- (7) • they either barely succeed or learn something new,
- (8-9) • they succeed, but learn nothing,
- (10-11) • they succeed & learn a lesson,
- (12) • their fame grows, and perhaps envy is kindled in the hero's bosom.

## Events Complete

After all twenty advancements are complete, the hero earns a season's of holiday and gains 1 level.

Everyone thinks they know the hero, for they are legend. Their stories are invented and multiplied. Their lives now belong to their communities; unless they flee or choose hermitage. The hero retires to a life of [d6]:

1. Luxury and decadence.
2. Service to their community.
3. Endless accumulation of wealth.
4. Ambitious social and political ascendancy.
5. Forbidden studies into the occult.
6. Carefree travel under an assumed identity.

The legendary hero ceases to be the focus of play, and the runner may promote another character to the status of hero. That said, they can still use their semi-retired legend to influence the world, to offer wealth and connections to other characters.

To continue playing with the legendary hero, a bit of improvisation is required. The numbers on the hero's sheet should stop increasing, as they are already at the upper edge of the power curve the dice can handle easily. However, they may continue to acquire individual traits, hero dice, items, and other artefacts.

# Mutation

Exposure to dangerous magic, radiation ghosts, mutagenic blights, source corruption, biomancers, vomes, or other weird leftovers of the Long Long Ago can produce mutations or corruptions. Mutations are arranged in three lists:

**Deleterious mutations** • Almost entirely negative and monstrous, they may eventually provide some unexpected benefits (pXX).

**Cosmetic mutations** • Very visible, possibly horrific, but not actively harmful to the character (pXX).

**Beneficial mutations** • Primarily positive, though there may be drawbacks (pXX).

## Corruption or Mutation?

In-game, there is no difference between corruption and mutation. Both describe strange forces modifying a character's original body, soul, and personality. Corruption has a pseudo-sacral note to it, while mutation feels more clinical. One reason to prefer the term mutation over corruption is that it sounds odd to talk about 'cosmetic corruption' or 'beneficial corruption'. Yet the term 'mutation' is also inaccurate, since it suggests the characters undergo physical changes only, when their personalities and spirits might also change.

With no simple answer, it's best to accept the ambiguity and play along.

## Random Mutation

When a hero is exposed to corruption they roll on the table below. A suitable 'luck' skill or ability may apply, subject to circumstances and TC discretion. Every mutation through random exposure is likely to have deleterious effects. Positive mutations are hard to plan and require actual biomantic skills.

D20	MUTATION THROUGH RANDOM EXPOSURE
1-3	It's visibly bad. Character suffers a deleterious and a cosmetic mutation.
4-10	It's just plain bad. They suffer a deleterious mutation.
11-12	Ups and downs. They gain a deleterious and a beneficial mutation.
13	Chaos. They gain three mutations, one of each kind.
14-16	Visible but not bad. A cosmetic mutation.
17-19	A cosmetic and a beneficial mutation.
20	The biomagical lottery favors the hero! They gain a beneficial mutation.

A player doesn't have to accept mutations. Maybe they simply don't want strange, twisted heroes. Players should figure out other options together. For example, a hero struck by corruption could instead choose to gain the **Incorruptible** ability, meaning that they get sick and require a week's bed rest and medical attention rather than suffering bodily corruption. Note that this still permanently takes up one of their ability slots.

Most mutations have **ranks**. These can occur by chance (if a player rolls the same mutation twice or thrice) or choice (the player decides to deepen their hero's mutation when they gain corruption again).

# Mutation Effects

Not every effect is specified in the mutation lists to save space. Two in particular are worth keeping in mind:

**Mutations are a burden** • Every mutation or mutation rank takes up space on the hero sheet; usually a trait or inventory slot.

**Mutations are often a disadvantage** • Many mutations bring circumstantial social and physical disadvantages. This can be subjective and depends on the TC's rulings.

## Visible Mutations & Social Stigma

A corrupted hero faces prejudice and stigma in most social situations. Initially, when a hero has one or two such mutations, they might suffer [-] when negotiating with a merchant, convincing a princess-abbess to finance their expedition, or hunting a ticket to a ball. With more mutations they will be shunned by polite society, become convenient scape goats for unexplained crimes, and often chased out of communities for the smallest infractions. Bandages, masks, and voluminous robes will be useful for hiding.

On the other hand, such heroes will often be at an advantage [+] when trying to scare or intimidate baseline humans. In certain outcast mage-blighted communities the social disadvantages may be nullified or even reversed.

## Deleterious Mutations & Ill Health

Deleterious mutations **always** have negative consequences. Whenever a hero acquires a deleterious mutation, they reduce a relevant stat by one.

Further, they face problems depending on their mutation. A hero without teeth has trouble eating and talking. Modified arms make many motor tasks (including combat) difficult. Transformed legs can disadvantage movement.

## Common Sense Side Effects

The list of mutations doesn't take into account all possible side effects. Common sense applies when heroes face unusual circumstances and edge cases. The TC applies boons [+] or banes [-] case by case.

For example, a hero covered in fur will handle cold temperatures better while another covered in scales would lose less water in dry environments.



# Deleterious Mutations [d20]

“Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt.”

— Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung* (1915)

The dark corruptions of the void poison the source and can affect the ha and ka and ba of a character. Whenever a hero acquires a deleterious mutation they reduce a relevant stat by one.

1. Another Mind
2. Astral Eyes
3. Blue God's Sign
4. Eater's Curse
5. Existential Dysfunction
6. Fingers of the Other Side
7. The Fur Feral
8. Hostile Heaven's Armour
9. Idle One's Claws
10. Ineffable Patterns of Being
11. A New Face
12. Playset Corpus
13. Protean Infinity
14. Radiation's Skin
15. Sky-Brought Curse
16. Song Wormed
17. The Third Hand
18. Ultimate Chimerism
19. Waking Bones' Lament
20. Waterdrinker's Raiment

## 1. Another Mind

*The seed of truth grows within.*

**R1** • Hard, cyst-like nodule develops on the (roll d4): (1) throat, (2) stomach, (3) lumbar spine, (4) upper back.

**R2** • The nodule grows larger and bonier, a secondary brain begins to develop within. Reflexes are accelerated while the hero becomes vulnerable to critical hits. Clothes no longer fit.

**R3** • The secondary brain grows larger and faster. The hero's perception and analytical abilities increase. The disfigurement is more pronounced.

**R4** • The secondary brain achieves a semblance of independent thought and develops unusual mental abilities, such as (roll d4): (1) pyrokinesis, (2) telekinesis, (3) electrokinesis, or (4) tele-empathetic manipulation. Sometimes it takes over the hero's body.

## 2. Astral Eyes

*The world you is a veil hiding the deeper beauty of the fields of ka.*

**R1** • Eyes turn (roll d4): (1) milky, (2) pitch black, (3) translucent, or (4) like amber orbs. Vision is impaired.

**R2** • Eyes evaporate out of their sockets. Hero is blind.

**R3** • A heavy, misty gas leaks out of the hero's sockets. They perceive auras with new organs growing where their eyes once rolled in fear and terror.

**R4** • Faceted crystalline growths spread to the edges of the empty sockets, like queer jewellery. Hero can directly perceive the ka of living creatures.

## 3. Blue God's Sign

*From rot comes purification.*

**R1** • The filth of chaos oozes from the hero's pores. They become resilient to disease, but the smell is pestilential.

**R2** • Fresh orifices open up on the skin and ooze a blood-like serum. Wounds do not fully heal and release a similar fluid.

**R3** • Skin becomes a cratered, heaving, suppurating mess covered in wriggling symbiotes that resemble grave worms. Nose, ears, eyelids, and other thin cutaneous areas may rot away.

**R4** • A whiteish substance with the consistency of clotted yoghurt continually drips from the symbiotes. This milk of the Blue God has strong analgesic and numbing properties. The hero becomes entirely resistant to diseases and poisons.

## 4. Eater's Curse

*Its hunger shall consume the cosmos.*

**R1** • Teeth fall out. Chewing is difficult.

**R2** • Needle-sharp fangs, translucent like those of a deep-sea fish, grow profusely from the softened gums. Chewing is

impossible.

**R3** • Fangs turn hard and black, mouth grows unnaturally wide, jaw develops hinges. Hero gains a bite attack (1d4).

**R4** • Entire head unfolds into biting maw. Bite attack (1d8).

## 5. Existential Dysfunction

*Beyond reality, other ways.*

**R1** • A barely perceptible darkness cloaks the hero, like diaphanous wreaths of pure nothingness. They become sensitive to bright lights.

**R2** • The dark between stars now obviously wreathes the hero. They walk in shadow even on the brightest of days. Bright radiation or sanctified memory waters cause physical pain.

**R3** • The void seeps into the hero, making them colourless and darkly-shaded. Smoke curls within their eyes and even in darkest night a faint ur-hue lets them find their way.

**R4** • The hero is no longer quite there, appearing as somehow translucent and absent. They have a harder time interacting with the physical world and carrying heavy loads. At the same time, the world also has a harder time affecting them.

## 6. Fingers of the Other Side

*Reality will conform to revelation.*

**R1** • Vestigial fingers or toes protrude from the flesh on the hero's (roll d4): (1) flanks, (2) arms, (3) legs, or (4) back.

**R2** • The digits elongate and become as strong as those on the hero's hands.

**R3** • The digits grow even longer, more powerful, with more joints, like a cross between fingers and sinewy spider legs.

**R4** • The digits are so many and so powerful they can unfold like a fan and easily trap or catch anything trying to pass by.

## 7. The Fur Feral

*The wild will break free.*

**R1** • The body grows heavy, beset by chronic fatigue. Hairs become thorn-like, nails thicken and curl.

**R2** • Follicles grow oversized, and masses of keratinous fibres

replace normal hair, covering the body in a spongy layer. Movement becomes clumsy, but blows are cushioned (+1 ha defence).

**R3** • Prolific, heavy ropes of keratin grow from the body constantly (1 stone's worth per day). Appetite increases. Unless the ropes are cut regularly, they quickly overwhelm the hero's ability to move.

**R4** • The keratin growth diversifies, covering the unrecognizable hero in swift-growing (roll d4): (1) shiny scales, (2) sharp spines, (3) thick fur, or (4) luxurious feathers.

## 8. Hostile Heaven's Armour

*In the heavens, there is only war.*

**R1** • Strange bones erupt from the skin. Clothes fit ill.

**R2** • Bones grow into jutting spikes, blades, and ridges. Wearing armour becomes next to impossible. Attackers may be injured (1d4 damage).

**R3** • Elaborate spines, hooks, and plates cover the hero, defending them from attack (+2 ha defence) and increasing their threat (1d6 natural damage).

**R4** • The bony structures develop into a terrifying suit of biological armour (+5 ha defence).

## 9. Idle One's Claws

*The predator does not work, it takes.*

**R1** • Random hand withers and weakens. Using tools with that hand becomes difficult.

**R2** • Hand locks into a deformed claw. Using tools is impossible.

**R3** • Bones and gristle flow and reform into a trefoil ripping, cutting claw array. Hero gains an unarmed attack (1d6).

**R4** • The claws bleed void stuff into this near world. The merest scratch from them causes (roll d4): (1) paralysis, (2) acute formication, (3) hyperalgesia, or (4) muscle spasms.

## 10. Ineffable Patterns of Being

*ERROR. Reality compile fail. There is no abort, there is only retry.*

**R1** • Intelligence is reduced. Hero's twitching mind cannot avoid alien things lurking in the corners of reality.

**R2** • Personality becomes alien. Hero no longer feels some human emotions while acquiring other stranger ones.

**R3** • Mind becomes temporally scattered. Hero gains mild precognition, avoiding immediate threats with unnatural speed and precision. At the same time, they can no longer focus on the here and now.

**R4** • Hero's *ba* or personality is smeared out completely, replaced by something alien. Hero becomes immune to all mental attacks and acquires an ineffable goal, perhaps to (roll d4): (1) create odd patterns at energy interstices, (2) collect words and memories from key individuals, (3) paint alien murals on symbolic objects, or (4) sing chants in the ruins of elder time.

## 11. A New Face

*Hypocrisy stripped reveals a new visage.*

**R1** • An additional eye and teeth develop on the (roll d4): (1) hand or arm, (2) leg or foot, (3) back or shoulder, or (4) chest or groin. They are non-functional. If removed, they grow back.

**R2** • The eye becomes functional. Additional buds form. Cartilage and gums form around the teeth.

**R3** • A second eye joins the first. Nose-bud forms. A functional mouth forms around the teeth. The hero can ingest sustenance and speak with the second mouth.

**R4** • A complete face forms. Its distorted features can part to reveal a (roll d4): (1) venomous bite, (2) fearsome gaze, (3) blood-sucking fangs, (4) voice like an angelic choir.

## 12. Playset Corpus

*The body is a delicate playground.*

**R1** • The hero's joints become grotesquely hypermobile. Movement is slow and deliberate.

**R2** • Limbs strangely flexible. Additional joints appear. Though

more agile, the hero is weaker. Clothes fit awkwardly. They can rotate their head like an owl.

**R3** • Shoulder girdle and hips can rotate freely, each vertebra can dislocate, each rib can waggle.

**R4** • Hero can rearrange their bone structure almost at will. Bones travel within their flesh, creating alien forms reminiscent of the *vatula-vyakula* of the Restless Second Creation.

## 13. Protean Infinity

*Fixity of form was a mistake.*

**R1** • Bones become brittle and prone to breaking. Hero becomes more vulnerable to physical damage.

**R2** • Bones soften, while fluid organs develop and strengthen to provide stability.

**R3** • Bones dissolve entirely. Only sinew and cartilage support the now alien musculature. Staying vaguely bipedal is an effort. The face collapses and smears. Enclosing armour helps with mobility.

**R4** • Hero becomes a protean thing of strange organelles and fluid body plan.

## 14. Radiation's Skin

*The fires of the celestial truths were not made to reside within the skin of man.*

**R1** • Skin becomes flaky, pale, and colourless. It is usually cold to the touch.

**R2** • Suppurating boils weep around the edges of chitinous growths. Hero gains natural leathery armour (+1 *ha* defence).

**R3** • Skin continually rots and sloughs off in translucent, malodorous sheets. Escape bonds and restrictions more easily.

**R4** • Skin is entirely replaced with a ghostly radiant aura that leaves faint burns and bruises on organic materials. The aura-skin gives off a greenish light, strong enough to read by if one squints.

## 15. Sky-Brought Curse

*They sailed on wings among the galaxies.*

**R1** • Vestigial wings or flagellae bulge and flail on the hero's back.

**R2** • The primitive wings erupt in

a tangle of membranes, struts, and tines. The hero can slow their fall or boost their jump.

**R3** • The wings look like nothing this-worldly, but they let the hero glide convincingly. The hero's entire body structure adapts to support the odd structures. Falls no longer kill.

**R4** • The massive powered wings drain bone and gristle and flesh from the rest of the hero, leaving them stick-thin but capable of flight.

## 16. Song Wormed

*There are songs in the lines of creation.*

**R1** • Ears wither away to nubs. Hearing is impaired.

**R2** • Strange organs spread across the hero's head from the ruined nubs of their ears. Hearing is very impaired. Hero gains the ability to detect (roll d4): (1) magnetic fields, (2) electric currents, (3) radio waves, or (4) magitechnic emanations.

**R3** • Lacy, antennae-like horns erupt from the hero's head, letting them understand the strange radiations they could previously only detect.

## 17. Sign of the Third Hand

*New hands reach new truths.*

**R1** • A vestigial (roll d4): (1) tail, (2) arm, (3) tentacle, or (4) arthropod limb grows on the body. It dangles uselessly. If cut off, it grows back.

**R2** • Limb grows stronger. Capable of picking up light objects. Clothes no longer fit.

**R3** • The new appendage grows larger and stronger than the original limbs. The whole hero can lift themselves by their third 'arm'. Additional vestigial limb buds form.

**R4** • Another appendage, just as powerful, bursts forth. Limb buds stud the body.

## 18. Ultimate Chimerism

*No beast shall dominate another beast in the chimerical time.*

**R1** • Feet become deformed and oddly turned. Walking is impaired.

**R2** • Legs change form and angle,

becoming bestial. Wearing shoes becomes impossible.

**R3** • Legs and feet clearly resemble (roll d4): (1) the hoofed limbs of an ungulate, (2) the paws of a predator, (3) the talon-tipped feet of a bird, (4) nothing so much as the many-jointed limbs of an endoskeletal insect.

**R4** • The hero pupates, and in a grotesque transformation, their abdomen, hips, and lower limbs are duplicated. With four legs, their movement is faster or more sure, but they are less manoeuvrable. Chairs and tight spaces become uncomfortable.

## 19. Waking Bones' Lament

*There is no life eternal but death.*

**R1** • Hero becomes bony and raw. Skin is like parchment, digestion slows and weakens.

**R2** • Only sinew and gristle remain beneath paper skin. Joints click and rattle. The skeletal hero can only digest blended soups.

**R3** • The hero's organs atrophy, leaving a mummified undead abomination. They can only digest raw blood purée.

**R4** • The hero's bones absorb their flesh, leaving a sparkling skeleton that looks like (roll d4): (1) jade, (2) bronze, (3) ebony, or (4) porcelain. They no longer eat, directly leeching nearby creatures' life force to stay alive instead (1 Life per day).

## 20. Waterdrinker's Raiment

*From void sea come, to void sea return.*

**R1** • Vestigial gills and cutaneous gas bladders form on the neck and abdomen of the hero. They can hold their breath quite a bit longer than before.

**R2** • An array of functional gills and gas-exchange organs turns the hero into an amphibian.

**R3** • Webbing increases the hero's swimming speed.

**R4** • Glowing biochemical factories pockmark the body and let them breathe strange gases and liquids. A bucket of water provides an hour of oxygen.

# Cosmetic Mutations [d20]

The deep void's vibrations make their victim appear unearthly, even when they bestow no unusual powers.

Characters may hide their transfiguration, covering void eyes with glasses or concealing a horned skull with a large hat. Successful camouflage eliminates prejudice in most social situations but takes up space on the hero's sheet. Common sense side effects still apply.

Most cosmetic mutations have random tables of variations instead of ranks. The player chooses whether a character who acquires the same mutation twice ends up with a combination of traits or just the newer result.

1. Anatomical Devolution
2. Cornutation
3. Cranial Polymorphism
4. Dermal Variegation
5. Digital Hypermanipulation
6. Fantastic Auriculation
7. Follicular Transformation
8. Gravity Adaptation
9. Haemomodulation
10. Labial Translation
11. Lucent Postmaterialism
12. Nasal Modification
13. Ocular Permutation
14. Oral Transfiguration
15. Orbital Differentiation
16. Paracommunication
17. Qualitative Revocalization
18. Refined Therianthropy
19. Repigmentation
20. Sexual Metaselection

## 1. Anatomical Devolution [d6]

*Gaze upon your ancestors.*

1. Facial features devolve 500,000 generations-worth.
2. Features devolve 50,000 generations.
3. Jaws enlarge to accommodate a diet of raw flesh and fibrous vegetables.
4. Body becomes bulky and robust.
5. It becomes gracile and adapted for climbing or brachiation.
6. A furry, prehensile tail returns.

## 2. Cornutation [d6]

*Horn-like structures develop.*

1. Bony plates cover the head like a helmet.
2. Small conical horns.
3. Curving caprid horns.
4. Spiral horns, like on an impala.
5. Delicately ramified antlers.
6. Elaborate palmate antlers.

## 3. Cranial Polymorphism [d6]

*Phrenology is now useless.*

1. Skull develops flaring sagittal crest.
2. Develops shelf-like brow ridges.
3. It becomes perfectly spherical.
4. It becomes boxy and angular.
5. It becomes exquisitely elongated.
6. Becomes delicately articulated.

## 4. Dermal Variegation [d6]

*Skin patterns tell celestial tales.*

1. Repeating monochrome patterns cover the skin.
2. Monochrome pigmentation that changes to match luminosity of objects close to the skin.
3. Striped or spotted duo-tone pigmentation.
4. Gently shifting patterns that move without rhythm.
5. Delicate three-tone patterns that look almost like writing.
6. Hero can minutely control the shifting patterns on their skin, creating three-tone skin art.

## 5. Digital Hypermanipulation [d6]

*Fingers and toes specialize further.*

1. Digits become short and stubby, like small hammers or mallets.
2. They grow broader and robust; the tendons adapt to let the hero grip with no muscular effort.
3. Longer and more flexible, perfect for musical instruments.
4. Split into delicate multi-tool-like assemblages of chitin and bone.
5. Nails become tiny, fixed claws.
6. Nails turn into retractable claws.



## **6. Fantastic Auriculation [d6]**

*Ears like in a fantasy novel.*

1. Ears become perfectly rounded, like whorled snail shells.
2. Flat membranes, like a lizard.
3. Pointed ears.
4. Mobile ears, like a fox or hyena.
5. Floppy ears, like a bunny or basset hound.
6. Elaborate frond-like or branching structures, like the antennae of a silkworm moth.

## **7. Follicular Transformation [d6]**

*Astonishing changes to the hair.*

1. All their follicles vanish. They become entirely hairless.
2. Follicles go into overdrive; hair grows at twenty times normal speed.
3. Facial hair grows long and incredibly impressive. Massive bushy eyebrows, full beard and moustache.
4. Head hair turns into a massive mane, like a lion's.
5. All hair grows stronger. Fine fur covers the entire body.
6. True fur-ball. The entire body is covered in thick fur with a downy, insulating undercoat.

## **8. Gravity Adaptation [d6]**

*The body adjusts to alien gravities.*

1. Body becomes massive and boulder-shaped, suited to heavy gravities.
2. Becomes partially quadrupedal.
3. Becomes squat and stocky.
4. Becomes tall and slender.
5. Very tall and stick-like.
6. Delicate, gliding-adapted.

## **9. Haemomodulation [d6]**

*Blood codes their post-humanity.*

1. It becomes pitch black.
2. Nanomachinated grey.
3. Haemocyanitic green.
4. Vitriolic blue.
5. Translucent like liquid infinity.
6. Glowing golden ichor.

## **10. Labial Translation [d6]**

*Fancy words for the lips.*

1. Lips disappear entirely.
2. Lips become scaly and hard.
3. Exuberant labial fronds or ridges.
4. Heavy cheek pouches develop.
5. Sensitive tentacles, antennae, or whiskers adorn the sides.
6. Mouthparts turn into a muscular extensible tube.

## **11. Lucent Postmaterialism [d6]**

*Light is the destination of all flesh.*

1. Skin becomes smooth and waxy.
2. Skin becomes translucent.
3. Flesh becomes translucent.
4. Organs become translucent.
5. Bones become translucent.
6. Neural network glitters with the light of the thousand once-settled suns of the Higher Way.

## **12. Nasal Modification [d6]**

*That nose.*

1. Nose disappears entirely—only mouth-breathing from now on.
2. It recedes into muscular slits.
3. Becomes tiny and sculpted.
4. Grows large and bulbous.
5. Becomes canine or feline
6. Grows into a prehensile proboscis.

## **13. Ocular Permutation [d6]**

*The eyes are the windows of the ka.*

1. Iris becomes a new, vivid colour.
2. Iris and sclera both change colour radically.
3. Size and colour of iris change. The pupil becomes cat- or goat-like.
4. Eyeball changes size, colour, and shape, becoming lizard- or cuttlefish-like. Nictating membrane forms.
5. Entire structure of eyes changes, becoming insectile or arachnid
6. Eyes become an alien; all metallic crystal and flickering light.

#### **14. Oral Transfiguration [d6]**

*Mouths for strange meals.*

1. Mouth replaced by a mastication-orifice on the stomach.
2. Becomes a puckered hole with a needle-like tongue.
3. Narrows to a slit concealing an insectile siphoning apparatus.
4. Jaw and lips reduce to a cartoonishly gracile rosebud.
5. Widens, teeth multiply, producing a cheshire grin.
6. Extends into a vulpine muzzle.

#### **15. Orbital Differentiation [d6]**

*Eyes and eye-sockets alike change.*

1. Eyes and sockets disappear, replaced by photo-receptive pits dotted across the face.
2. Eyes leave sockets and become free-floating orbs.
3. Reduce to a single optical organ.
4. Eyes enveloped in muscular sheaths capable of independent tracking, like a chameleon's.
5. Eyes shrink and multiply across the face.
6. Eyes grow incredibly large and acute. The better to see with.

#### **16. Paracommunication [d6]**

*Develop a signalling panoply.*

1. Skin becomes cuttlefish-like, changing colour with the flickering of thought and emotion.
2. Ornate display plumage to attract attention and signal fitness.
3. Bright red inflatable throat sac for conveying dominance and putting out deep bass croaks.
4. Hypermobility ears to indicate nuances of emotion.
5. Augmented musk glands share emotions through pheromones.
6. Light-emitting organelles in the eyes. They really do flash now.

#### **17. Qualitative Revocalization [d6]**

*The breath manifests the ba.*

1. Voice turns into a harsh, clattering rasp.
2. It becomes metallic and syncopated.
3. It becomes polyphonic.
4. It carries inhuman notes.
5. It becomes a cascade of colours.
6. It becomes a flutter of sensations.

#### **18. Refined Therianthropy [d6]**

*Embrace their inner animals.*

**R1** • Hero gains animal features.

1. Piscine features, unblinking eyes.
2. An amphibian cast, wide eyes and glistening skin.
3. Reptilian look, with scales and sharper teeth.
4. Curiously avian, beaked.
5. Rather bovine, with wet eyes.
6. Impishly feline, whiskered, with a slightly sulfurous scent.

**R2** • Their features are in a horrific uncanny valley between human and CGI monster.

**R3** • They have an animal head.

#### **19. Repigmentation [d6]**

*Skin and hair colour change.*

1. Hair becomes semi-transparent, skin turns translucent, revealing veins and tendons beneath.
2. Hair and skin become creepily monochrome. Perfectly white, pitch black, or 50% grey.
3. Rock, earth, or plant hues.
4. Skin becomes vivid yellow or red. Hair turns a complementary colour.
5. Skin becomes cool blue or green. Hair turns a contrasting colour.
6. Blazing colours. Neon or phosphorescent.

#### **20. Sexual Metaselection [d6]**

*Hypertrophy to signal fitness.*

1. Cysts simulate a six-pack.
2. Benign pectoral tumours expand the creature's chest.
3. Metabolic mutation makes adipogenesis impossible, ensuring that sought-after starved waif look.
4. Gluteal hypertrophy.
5. Novel adipose structures add contour to facial features.
6. Muscular water retention increases to signal fitness.



# Beneficial Mutations [d20]

Rarely the cosmic lottery, the chaos of creation, smiles upon their victim. The fates bestow unearned power; the gods fail to punish and harm.

Beneficial mutations are unusual as the hero is not left visibly marked. Some break the normal limitations on stats and other attributes, but the maximum modifier for heroes' d20 rolls remains +13.

1. Action Mimicry
2. Agility of the Arbitrary Autarch
3. Avatar Infection
4. Cosmic Channeling
5. Deep Skill Augmentation
6. Endurance of Ecstasy
7. Extraordinary Precognition
8. Lifebound Gift
9. Magic Mule
10. Metabolic Hyperdrive
11. Oldtech Immunity Ghost
12. Optidrone Upgrade
13. Plastic Bone Structures
14. Predatory Assimilator
15. Psionic Eruption
16. Secret Weapon
17. Sensory Expansion
18. Strength of the Solitary Sun
19. Thoughtful as Thoth Trueseer
20. Transhuman Reflexes

## 1. Action Mimicry

*Uplifted monkey see, uplifted monkey do.*

**R1** • Hero always gains [+] to tests when copying an action they have seen successfully performed (e.g., after seeing somebody climb the wall of the Red Tower, they gain [+] on their test).

**R2** • Hero can repeat their actions flawlessly. If they have already succeeded at a task, they can duplicate it precisely (unless circumstances change).

**R3** • Hero gains [+] to copying other creatures' behaviours and mannerisms.

## 2. Agility of the Arbitrary Autarch

*As daemons follow no earth-bound command, neither should we.*

**R1** • +1 agility and maximum agility increased to 6.

**R2** • +1 agility, max to 7.

**R3** • +2 agility *or* hero gains an additional action.

## 3. Avatar Infection

*They have been chosen by fate to bear witness to creation.*

**R1** • When the hero's body is killed or otherwise shut down, it secretes an ichor cocoon and reassembles at a rate of 1 life per day. Reassembly is complete when the hero is at full life. Each reassembly reduces endurance by 1. This may accidentally duplicate the hero if their ka-ba was otherwise engaged or preserved at the time.

**R2** • When the hero's body is killed or otherwise shut down, the hero's ka-ba is instantly translated into a nearby phylactery-analogue (a stone, nut, or jewel). Over a few minutes, it exudes an ectoplasmic body, which recomposes into the hero at a rate of 1 life per day. As an ectoplasmic body, the hero may barely interact with the physical world. Recomposition completes at full life. Each recomposition reduces endurance by 1.

**R3** • When the hero's body is killed or shut down, it immediately breaks down into a luminous body radiating peace and freedom. Over a few days, it solidifies into a physical body. Each solidification increases one stat by 1 and reduces another stat by 1. It imposes an additional 'burden of witnessing' on the hero. This burden cannot be removed normally. After bearing seven such burdens, the hero is jaded and has no further desire to adventure.

#### 4. Cosmic Channeling

*All magic. From the same void.*

**R1** • When the hero sees a spell cast, they may make a moderate aura test to see if they grab an echo of the spell in their ego-matrix (inventory). They can cast each echo once. The spell price must still be paid.

**R2** • Spell echo prices are halved.

**R3** • It is now an easy test to capture spell echoes.

#### 5. Deep Skill Augmentation

*A protein machine ghost infects the hero's brain, feeding them memories and skills from someone long dead.*

**R1** • Hero gains [+] to all tests with one of their skills.

**R2** • Hero gains [+] with a second skill. One mental stat increases by 1, another stat decreases by 1.

**R3** • Rewiring is completed. The hero becomes tetrachromatic, seeing a wider spectrum of colours. They gain +1 charisma. The ghost of a dead personality becomes a lodger in their brain.

#### 6. Endurance of Ecstasy

*Through the joy of existence shared, all sufferings are easier.*

**R1** • +1 endurance and maximum endurance increased to 6.

**R2** • +1 endurance, max to 7.

**R3** • +2 endurance or hero gains two bonus slots for burdens.

#### 7. Extraordinary Precognition

*Feel the pain of the future.*

**R1** • Hero can glimpse the future. It hurts. Spend 1 life to gain [+] on any test to avoid damage.

**R2** • Subconscious packing. The hero can bundle up an undefined item no larger than one stone. At an opportune moment, it turns out to be mundane but useful.

**R3** • Dooms were always written. When disaster befalls the hero and their companions, the hero can spend 7 life and one prized possession. All along, they were not there. They had even warned their companions, but they chose not to listen. The hero makes their escape, aware that there was truly nothing they could do to save anybody but themselves.

#### 8. Lifebound Gift

*The hero's being is bound more tightly to the given world. Their life force burns brighter.*

**R1** • Hero gains +1 life for every current and future level.

**R2** • +1 more life per level.

**R3** • Hero gains a second, mystical heart, which holds 2 life for every current and future level. The hero can only use these life points to pay spell prices or as gifts to other living creatures.

#### 9. Magic Mule

*Such broad shoulders, such strong back.*

**R1** • The hero can carry twice as much as a normal human: two sacks without encumbrance, plus one cumbersome sack total. The additional sack can only hold physical objects.

**R2** • The hero can carry two additional cumbersome sacks.

**R3** • The hero can carry five additional cumbersome sacks for a total of ten. That's about a ton.

#### 10. Metabolic Hyperdrive

*The difference under the skin.*

**R1** • The hero derives sustenance from anything organic, and their stomach is immune to organic poisons. Unfortunately, alcohol barely works on them anymore.

**R2** • Hero can slow down or accelerate their metabolism, either hibernating without food for months or spending 1 life to gain an additional action.

**R3** • Abmortality engines in the hero's body keep their genetic source code in perfect condition and breakdown all toxins and drugs that might interfere with their functioning. The hero can also shutdown, going into a week-long debugging mode, which purges all harmful viruses and organisms from their body.



### 11. Oldtech Immunity Ghost

*The hero gains a semi-sentient distributed immune system.*

- R1** • [+] to all tests against diseases, poisons, radiations, or other environmental effects.  
**R2** • Their resistance turns to complete immunity, and they gain resistance to a second effect.  
**R3** • Their second resistance also becomes immunity, and their immune system becomes a fully sentient hive-symbiote (L3, caustic) that communicates via direct brain link. The symbiote can perform molecular-level analyses of substances. It also has an acerbic sense of humour.

### 12. Optidrone Upgrade

*Eyes like the star gods.*

- R1** • Hero's eyes become as sharp as those of a hawk.  
**R2** • Hero's eyes gain the ability to see into the ultraviolet and infrared spectra.  
**R3** • Hero gains the ability to remove their eyes and use them as remote drones. Each eye can survive for up to a day outside of its socket. It costs the hero 1 life and 1 hour to grow a new eye. They can grow as many eyes at a time as they have sockets.

### 13. Plastic Bone Structures

*Flexibility at all costs.*

- R1** • The hero can slowly adjust their bones' shape and size, squeezing through small spaces, growing taller or shorter, or mimicking other people's faces.  
**R2** • The hero's bones heal and set in hours. They might expand their bones into a crash cage, launch off a cliff, then reknit themselves. This would hurt.  
**R3** • The hero adjusts their bones so swiftly that they gain [+] in physical conflict when relevant.

### 14. Predatory Assimilator

*Almost a ghoul.*

- R1** • The hero heals by eating biomatter close to their basic body pattern. Recover 1 life for every stone of flesh consumed (an adult humanoid averages 10 stone). For humans: chimps and lemurs are good, pigs less so. In a healing-frenzy, they can ingest a stone of flesh per action.  
**R2** • Recover 2 life for every stone or 1 stat for 5 stones.  
**R3** • Recover 4 life for every stone or 1 stat for 2 stones. Remove 1 burden by consuming 10 stones and vomiting them out again (this does not restore life or stats).

### 15. Psionic Eruption.

*Inhuman mental abilities. Fear awakens in baseliners' hearts.*

- R1** • Hero acquires a spell as an innate trait. When using this spell, their magic cost is always 1.  
**R2** • Gains 2nd spell as a trait.  
**R3** • Hero gains +2 ka defence.

### 16. Secret Weapon [d6]

*They were the weapon all along.*

**R1** • Hidden weapons in the hero's body.

1. Claws are hidden in the hero's fingers (1d4).
2. Blades in their arms (1d6).
3. Venomous fangs (1d3, poison).
4. Blades in their feet (1d6).
5. God blaster in the belly (3d6).
6. Third set of barbed, void-hooked limbs in shoulder blades (1d8).

- R2** • Damage increased 1 step.  
**R3** • Damage increased 1 more step and +1 ha defence.

### 17. Sensory Expansion [d6]

*Eerie new senses.*

1. Vibration senses to 'read' space through solid or liquid matter.
2. Echolocation to navigate by sound.
3. Electro-detection to hear electromagnetic fields.
4. Radiosense to 'taste' radioactivity.
5. Lifesense to feel nearby lifeforms.
6. Void-reception to detect magic and corruption by their horripilation.

## **18. Strength of the Solitary Sun**

*As though powered by the nuclear furnaces of the cosmos itself.*

**R1** • +1 strength and maximum strength increased to 6.

**R2** • +1 strength, max to 7.

**R3** • +2 strength or max to 9.

## **19. Thoughtful as Thoth Trueseer**

*With progressive insight, human constraints and fears fade away.*

**R1** • +1 thought and maximum thought increased to 6.

**R2** • +1 thought, max to 7.

**R3** • +2 thought or hero becomes immune to enchantments and other mind-control technologies.

## **20. Transhuman Reflexes**

*Neural rewiring and fast-twitch nodes lifted from the dark sky supersoldier programs.*

**R1** • Hero gains [+] on initiative tests and always gets one (more) action during any surprise round.

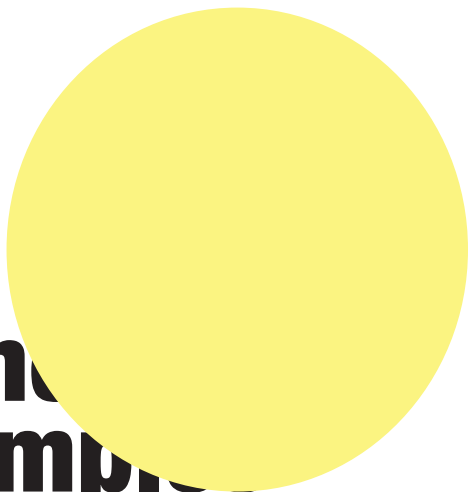
**R2** • [+] whenever hero tests to dodge or otherwise avoid incoming danger.

**R3** • Hero gains an additional action or mild precognition (+2 to all defences).



# Game Examples

• Examples.



**PLACEHO**



# **OLDER**



# RUNNING THE GAME

**PLACEHOLDER**

**Top Cat**

# Using the Six Stats

## Strength

The active physical stat. It does what it says on the tin. Lifting bars, bending gates, whacking heads, carrying mehirs.

## Endurance

The passive physical stat. It represents how much pain and strain a hero can take. Marathons, freezing temperatures, disease.

## Agility

The dynamic physical stat. It's about applying the hero's body with precision and speed to dodge oncoming death hamsters and throw void bombs with razor precision.

## Charisma

The active mental stat. The name goes back to classical Greek khárisma, denoting divine fortune and favor. The gods and reason hate the charismatic, so charisma also serves as a luck stat. When a hero tries to persuade through their arguments by force of personality, this is what they use.

When a player asks if their hero can find a war pig, greased lightning mobile, god of doom, or simply the latest edition of Burly Barbarians at the newsmonger's, that's also a charisma test. Further, nine times out of ten, random effects or mindless creatures will target the least charismatic hero first (actually, this rule is optional).

## Aura

The passive mental stat. It indicates how much punishment the hero's soul, spirit, or psyche can take when faced by horror and stress. It correlates almost completely with endurance.

It is explicitly not wisdom. It does not show good judgement or shrewd insight. Those are character traits that players decide for their hero, much like they decide on the colour of the hero's hair or shoes, without affecting mechanics in any way.

## Thought

The dynamic mental stat, correlated with how quickly the hero can process and manipulate information. Its naming is also a shout out to the Egyptian god Thoth.

### **Example Boons [+] [d20]**

1. Terrain advantage.
2. Helpful props (chandelier, trees, statue, stage).
3. Assistance from another character.
4. Blessings from strange AI gods.
5. Superior alien weaponry.
6. Magic and enchantments.
7. Surprised or unaware opponents.
8. Cover of darkness or invisibility.
9. Convincing evidence.
10. Teamwork or flanking.
11. Cunning plans.
12. Lots and lots of cash.
13. Cover or fortifications.
14. Mutation or bio-augmentation.
15. Fancy titles and social standing.
16. Significantly greater ability.
17. Incredible mastery of a specific skill.
18. Cheating and foul play.
19. Magical potions and meals.
20. Good luck.

### **Example Banes [-] [d20]**

1. Hindering terrain.
2. Obstacles (rubble, tables, chairs).
3. Obstruction by another character.
4. Curses from ultracosmic spirits.
5. Inferior barbarian tools.
6. Enchantments and magic.
7. Keen, watchful, ready opponents.
8. Bright spotlights and neon paint.
9. Isolation and vulnerability.
10. Laughably falsified evidence.
11. Stupid plans.
12. Poverty.
13. Exposed ground or restrictions.
14. Corruption or bio-degradation.
15. Dirty jobs and no social standing.
16. Significantly inferior ability.
17. Incredible clumsiness.
18. Naiveté and deluded honesty.
19. Illness, poison, or fatigue.
20. Bad luck.



# Dice as Oracles

Sometimes a player simply doesn't know an answer. What is the in-game weather like? How would their hero react in a given situation? What is a sidekick's favourite colour? Dice can be every player's best friend when they have to quickly invent something or making a decision.

They are particularly useful for the top cat, who has to determine who heroes encounter, how extras behave, the morale of opponents, and much more. The TC isn't bound by the results of an oracle die, but they provide an important way out of the player's preconceptions. Random dice expand the scope of possibilities and give the imaginary world an agency all its own.

Many published adventures, modules, and supplements include random tables. Other times the TC will create their own to fit their session. Finally, random tables can be improvised on the spot by simply asking [themselves] a question, rolling the dice, and interpreting the result.

## Example Oracles

Seacat follows two consistent axioms when it comes to dice as oracles:

1. Low results are bad, high results are good.
2. Extreme results always explode to create unpredictable long-tail risk.

To consult the dice, the player (usually the TC) follows two steps:

1. They decide on a suitable question. For example, "Do the heroes find a suitable ghost battery for their wormskiff in the Cathedral market?"
2. A player rolls the oracle dice to answer the question and a new fact exists in the shared imaginary world.

When the TC uses dice as oracles, they should explain what is happening and assign as many rolls as possible to the other players to keep everyone engaged.

### Even Odds

When the player has no way of estimating the odds, or they are in a hurry, even odds work well. The size of the die the TC proposes adjusts the tail risk.

OUTCOME	D2 (COIN)	D6	D12	D20
Just the worst	1/1/1 (6.3%)	1/1/1 (0.4%)	1/1/1 (0.06%)	1/1/1 (0.01%)
Catastrophe	1/1 (12.5%)	1/1 (2.3%)	1/1 (0.6%)	1/1 (0.24%)
Fail	1 (25%)	1-3 (47.2%)	1-6 (49.3%)	1-10 (49.75%)
Succeed	2 (25%)	4-6 (47.2%)	7-12 (49.3%)	11-20 (49.75%)
Amazing success	2/2 (12.5%)	6/6 (2.3%)	12/12 (0.6%)	20/20 (0.24%)
Truly the best	2/2/2 (6.3%)	6/6/6 (0.4%)	12/12/12 (0.06%)	20/20/20 (0.01%)

*The percentages don't add up to 100% because of rounding and because the odds for exploding dice are only tabulated for two steps.*

Players will be tempted to use multiple dice (eg. 2d6, 2d10, or 3d6) to create a more 'normal' distribution of results. They should beware. Yes, the more dice are added, the more results will cluster around the mean, but this is not necessarily good.

Most scenes (or sessions or campaigns) don't last long enough for dice to actually simulate reality to any extent. Yes, multiple dice might make play more 'realistic' in that a more competent character will almost always win, but the dice will not be rolled often enough for this to be fun or interesting.

## Adjusted Targets

The TC may eyeball a situation and decide that the odds do not fit the circumstances. They have four main levers to modify the oracle:

1. Apply [+] or [-] to the roll. Very simple and fast, but also shifts the odds of dice exploding.
2. Modify the target for success. Quite simple (e.g. roll over 15 on a d20). Does not change the odds of dice exploding.
3. Allow heroes to apply relevant modifiers (stats, skills, or both). More complicated, because of the addition. Usually shifts odds significantly in heroes' favour. Does not change the odds of dice exploding. This may simply turn an oracle into a test.
4. Allow heroes to apply hero dice to modify natural rolls. More complicated, because of the additional roll and addition or subtraction. Radically shifts the odds of success and vastly changes the odds of dice exploding.

The players may openly discuss the odds of a die roll, but the TC makes the final judgement call.

In the Cathedral market example, the TC might have responded to the question with, "Ok, there's a good chance the heroes find a ghost battery, but it's likely to be shoddy. So roll d6, succeed on 3 or more, but roll with one bane [-]." A runner then rolls 3 and 6. The bane discards the 6, so the dice don't explode. The 3 is the bare minimum and the heroes find a shoddy ghost battery.

## Skewed Outcomes

The TC can improvise a series of common, uncommon, and rare results. To maintain the seacat axiom that low results are always bad, it helps to have one table for bad omens and another for good omens.

BAD OMENS	D6	D20	GOOD OMENS	D6	D20
Catastrophe	1/1 (2.3%)	1 (5%)	Unexpected disaster	1/1 (2.3%)	1 (5%)
Rare threat	1 (13.9%)	2-3 (10%)	Common annoyance	1-3 (48.2%)	2-11 (50%)
Uncommon danger	2-3 (33.3%)	4-9 (30%)	Uncommon boon	4-5 (33.3%)	12-17 (30%)
Common trouble	4-6 (48.2%)	10-19 (50%)	Rare fortune	6 (13.9%)	18-19 (10%)
False alarm	6/6 (2.3%)	20 (5%)	Exquisite luck	6/6 (2.3%)	20 (5%)

The two tables have the same odds, but flipped. The TC can easily use other dice and distributions to give different outcomes.

## Fleshing Out Oracles

The question a player asks of the oracle dice can have multiple answers. Ready-made examples include encounter and treasure tables. If the TC has trouble coming up with a precise outcome while improvising, they can pass the result to the other players, then use a twist on their idea as the final outcome.

For example, the TC might ask, "You're facing uncommon weather as you sail into the Black Lagoon, but might mind is blanking. What kind of weather is it?"

The wizard's runner responds, "Maybe an electrical storm?"

The thief's "Yeah, and waves of light from the dire wormskiff's passage!"

The fighter's "A hard rain's gonna fall."

The TC concludes, "Great. Your hair rises on end in the electromagnetic radiation given off by the glittering hard light hail from the passage of the wormskiff *Silence is Golden*. It certainly breached here."

**MAKING  
THE WORLD**

# A Unique World

*“First it was Chaos, and next broad-bosomed Earth.”*

—Hesiod, *Theogony* (116: The Cosmogony), translated by J. Banks

Players experience the game world through their characters. The game world becomes their own unique, shared artifact through play and invention. This section presents guides and tables for invention and shared creation.

**Inventing Items** • The spells, gear, burdens, and other items they use to interact with the world.





# Inventing Abilities

*"It's a flying pig! With a flame thrower!"*

—last message from Ulurartu, porphyry city of a hundred trades.

Abilities are thematically both narrower and weirder than skills. A catch-all category for things ordinary could never do no matter how much they studied or practiced. Luck, mutation, strange magics, and alien gods might bestow abilities. They change how a hero interacts with the rules and don't require tests, sacrifices, ammunition or other equipment. Common types include:

**Direct augmentations** • Increased stats, the ability to go without food.

**Situational modifiers or actions** • Increased damage when cornered, a boon to tests with cold iron items.

**Special resources** • Additional memory inventory for spells or a summonable extra.

**Special effects** • Visible auras, unarmed attacks that restore life.

When a hero rolls or chooses the same ability multiple times they gain ranks. Ranks may provide additional effects or items.

## Making a New Ability

When players invent a new ability, they should ask:

1. Does it have a one-line poetic description and memorable title?
2. Can its effect be described in one or two sentences?
3. Is it completely overpowered?
4. Does it make the game boring for heroes without the same ability?

If the answers are yes and yes, no and no, it's probably a good ability.

For example, 'Detector of Evil' isn't a very good ability. It makes a hero the ultimate arbiter of morality. This removes choices from the other players. Something like 'Desire Detective' would be more interesting.

'Gill Implants' is a bit basic, but fine. A water-breathing hero expands the group's reach, but can lead to solo adventures. If the top cat is comfortable assigning extras to the other players, this can become more interesting.

'Biomechanical Intestinal Upgrades' is kind of cool. Maybe it lets the hero digest any organic matter. This reduces their dependence on food supplies, but makes for mildly humorous situations ("Hansel eats what? Again?").

### Anatomy of an Ability

#### **Death Hunger —colourful and impressive**

#demon —so the character becomes demonic? Alright.

*They had become a death cult. Death awakened the blood demon within.*  
—poetic description gives a thematic idea of how it manifests in play. It tantalizes with world-building ideas and gives hooks for roleplay.

**R1** • Hero gains a mark for each opponent taken out of the fight (or killed) in a physical conflict. Each mark gives them a cumulative +1 to attacks until the conflict ends. —this is a bit fiddly, but players who want a combat monster might relish this kind of ability.

**R2** • Also gains a cumulative +1 damage for every mark —for the hero who doubles down on this ability.

# Inventing Magics

*...h, penitent, and discover the magic of life everlasting!"*

—Laërta Parglotta, Mistress of the Rebirtharium.

...given world is enchanted. Awash in energies. Alive  
...Gushing with Vir. Threaded with radiations and  
...wave-particle machines. Woven into the very  
...lation of reality.

... deep and old. Layers upon layers of  
...ion, reality alteration, and mad distortion coat  
... There are wheels and processes churning  
... the ordinary and everyday. Where does the line  
... and religion lie?

...at powers waiting to be plucked free by a careless fool  
...ard. But what are they? How do they work? Humans  
...ent explanations. Time passes. The theories are forgotten but  
...the promises remain.

Those half forgotten powers promise so much. To overcome life and death, to ascend to the heavens like the prophets of old, to reawaken the glittering sky cities, to journey beyond the veil of night into the lands of Everlight and Neverfade.

So many promises. So many fools. So much pain, corruption, mutation, change, and death in their wakes.



**PLACE**

**EHOLDER**





# THE META GAME

**PLACEHOLD**

# Nine Core Ideas

## 1. Players: Top Cats and Runners

One player is mainly responsible for preparing the game, they're the top cat or TC. Like a bass player they set the rhythm of play. The other players run heroes and sidekicks. They're called runners. When seacat refers to players, it always means all the players: TC and runners.

## 2. Co-Creation

The players co-create the game world through play. The top cat moves play forward and wields a soft veto to maintain a measure of consistency, but they are not the only player with a say in how the fantasy world works.

## 3. Players Earn Experience, Not Characters

Players choose into which heroes, sidekicks, pets or equipment they invest their xp. Players can have a stable of characters and diverse fantasy assets. When a character is defeated or training, their player runs another character.

## 4. There Is No Balance

Heroes do not encounter linear progression or balanced encounters. The vast world does not conform to the heroes' powers and abilities.

## 5. Heroes Are Different

The runners' heroes use different, more involved rules than do their sidekicks and pets, or the extras run by the top cat. The TC doesn't have as much time to put into preparing each extra as a runner has for their personal hero.

## 6. Inventory Matters

The heroes have a strictly limited personal inventory. The gear they carry is a crucial resource and affects what they can do in a conflict or scene.

## 7. Everything Is a Resource

Every attribute on a hero sheet is a resource which may change, deplete or increase through play. This includes stats, skills, and abilities.

## 8. D20 Roll Over Core Mechanic

Players roll polyhedral dice. They use a d20 + a sum of modifiers to test their heroes against challenges. Tests succeed when a player rolls over the target number. The number a die rolls is its natural or naked roll. Modifiers (stats, skills) may apply. Boons or advantages [+] and banes or disadvantages [-] may apply. High rolls are almost always better. Rolling a maximum result (a natural 20) is always a good thing, a natural 1 is always a bad thing.

The top cat verbally describes a challenge's difficulty and secretly assigns a target number between 3 (very easy) and 19 (very hard). Challenges may have binary or multiple possible outcomes. The runners may ask what target number they need to beat and the top cat should tell them.

## 9. Hard Limits for Heroes

The maximum level a hero can ever reach is 9. The maximum sum (stat + skill) they ever add to any d20 roll is +13. The highest target number a hero can ever possess or set is 19—this includes defense.

# Three Counterpoints

## 1. Rules Break

Monsters and obstacles set by the top cat can break all the the hero rules and limits. Specific abilities and variants supersede all core rules. The players together can decide to change any rules.

## 2. Roleplaytime

The players are a group of friends—or people who might want to become friends—gathered together to have a good time. That they are also playing social games of unexpected heroes in strange imaginary worlds is incidental. Breaking immersion to tell a joke or put a meal on the table is fine.

The players should act like friends: with respect and kindness towards one another. If a player acts inappropriately that is not something game rules can fix. The players should pause play and address the issue honestly and directly.

## 3. Incomplete as a Feature

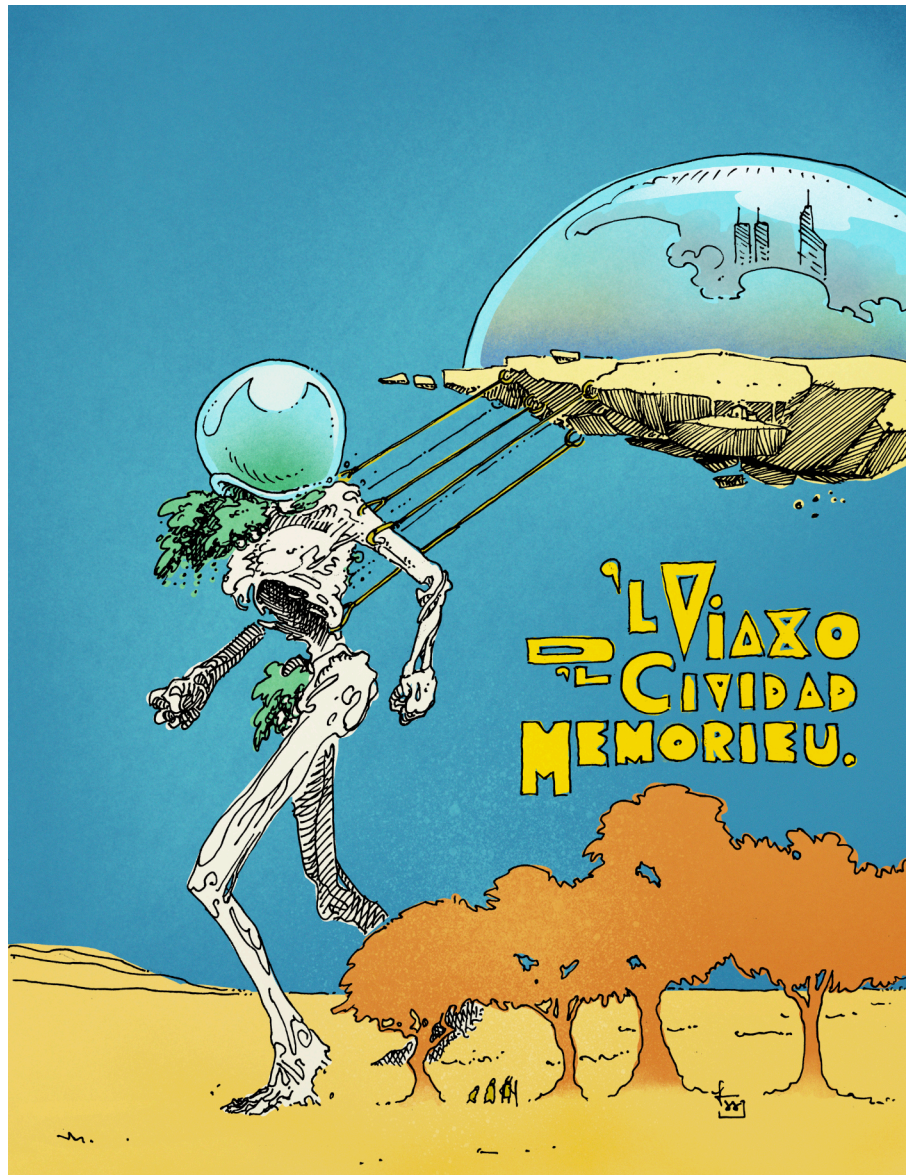
No set of rules and mechanics and random tables and games can cover all the possibilities of roleplaytime. Nor should they even try. During play the players will come across situations not covered by the game rules. Rather than shy away, they are encouraged to improvise and adapt. To take existing mechanics and bend and break them until they fit.

The players will, in the course of play, realize that some parts of the game aren't useful or are even hindering their fun. They should throw them away.

Finally, players will invent or find bits and pieces of other games they want to try. They should try them. Their games and rules will naturally evolve from session to session. This is fine. There is no way to break roleplaying games.

Every player in a roleplaying session becomes a game designer, and that is part of the fun: expanding, changing, creating their own games and worlds.





# Top Cat, Not Game Master

The top cat is explicitly presented as a type of player role, not some kind of “master” outside the group of friends playing at the table.

The term “top cat” is self-consciously playful to break down the bombast of terms like “dungeon master” or “game master” or “judge.” Not only are those titles pretentious, they are misleading. The top cat isn’t an official outside of the game, like in football, or a director in control of the narrative, like in the theatre. Maybe they are the host of the playing group. Maybe they referee and apply the game rules. None of this makes the player running a roleplaying game session the “master” of that session.

One unfortunate consequence of the search for mastery is that many “game masters” try to invest far more time and effort than other players, not least to justify calling themselves “masters.” This is often counterproductive: it can turn a fun playtime activity into a chore and it builds unnecessary barriers between playing a hero and running a session.

The “top cat” role is akin to that of a bass player in a band. It sets the beat for the session, but doesn’t demand hours of prep and embraces the fact that a session is coolest when everyone plays and shines together.



The absence of “mastery” also makes space for imperfection and improvisation. Rules will be forgotten. Scenes will go off the rails. Exciting conflicts will fall flat. Names for villains will turn out to be embarrassing jokes when spoken out loud. Deeply plotted multi-session story arcs will be subverted with jokes about bodily functions. Players will miss sessions. The top cat will forget details between sessions.

None of it means that the top cat or the players are doing anything wrong, or that they are failing at roleplaying. All this is perfectly fine and acceptable. This is play time, not work. They can dust the story off and play more.

The shared goal of all the players is to have a fun session. Memorable characters and interesting scenes are a bonus. Perfect continuity between sessions is impossible. Accurate record keeping will always fail before the onslaught of entropy and time. And that’s all ok.

The top cat sets the stage for the playtime, prepares the sandbox, lays out the narrative hooks and themes, then runs the games and arbitrates the interactions of the heroes with the world through a mix of common sense, rules, and rulings.

The runner cats take control of the protagonists: heroes, sidekicks, and sometimes even extras. They play their various characters and use them to explore the world, overcome challenges, win against the odds or die, and in the process discover their stories through blind luck (dice) and fate (decisions).

A table of players can switch around who is the top cat from session to session. Or even during a game, maybe from scene to scene. The cat doesn’t have to complete an immense, epic arc for it to be a proper roleplaying experience. A one-shot or five good scenes in a row can be enough. It is even possible to play a session with multiple boss cats or just a single runner cat. It’s not as common, but just as legitimate.

All the players, all the cats together, are responsible for making a roleplaying session fun. But they’re also all together responsible for making a roleplaying session work: for organizing the time of play, for preparing food and drinks, for taking notes, building up the world and possibly turning a series of sessions into a full, interconnected campaign.

## **No Non-Player Characters**

If all the players are players, top cat and runner cats both, then it makes no sense to split the characters into those that belong to players and those that do not. The characters are instead split according to how prominent they are within the session and how mechanically detailed they are.

While the heroes, the main protagonists of play, remain in the runners’ hands throughout, the sidekicks and extras can shift around among players as the scenes require. For example, if a single hero goes to reconnoitre a town, the top cat may well assign extras like guards, townspeople, and the jeering mob to other players who would otherwise have little to do during the scene.

# The Metagame is the Game

There is a common idea that “metagaming”—bringing the mundane social reality of friends getting together to roleplay, tell jokes, eat food, drink drinks, and have a good time into the fictional narrative (or “diegesis” for some who love rare words)—reduces the quality of roleplaying by breaking “the immersion.” Seacat explicitly rejects the idea that this is possible and suggests the players can embrace the metagame *as* gaming to improve their roleplaytimes. The following tables could help.

## Special Top Cat Titles

The players can assign their top cat a special title and power each session. Each power gives a different meta-game effect to liven up the session and, sometimes, encourage friendlier roleplay.

1. **Catspaw** • If there is an actual cat in the house, it is now the top cat’s nominal boss. They can use its name as part of their title.
2. **Cat Lady or Lord** • Gift other players 50 \* level xp for lasagna or a tin of tuna.
3. **Game Golem** • Once per session they can move a random location on the game map due to a reality glitch.
4. **Dog Duke** • Can grant 1d4 re-rolls to players who bring food, snacks, and music to the game session.
5. **Caître D’** • Can give a player 100 \* level xp if they help clean up the kitchen and table after the game session.
6. **Dyeus Katter** • Can have a hero’s mildly annoying ancestor ghost appear to give advice or present the moral lesson of the session.
7. **Sky Cat** • They can invoke epic atmospheric effects in-game at any time, from rain to lightning. And nobody may groan at the cliché.
8. **Trve Bassist** • Can give a player 1d6 \* 10 xp every time they choose an apt background song. They can veto annoying songs, of course.
9. **Hazeraiser** • Can open one travel portal for heroes per session. May demand sacrifices to use the portal at will.
10. **Prismatic Lady** • Randomly recolours in-game locations. It becomes (roll d6): (1) monochrome, (2) desaturated, (3) all cool hues, (4) warm hues, (5) bright, harmonious colours, (6) a brutal riot of neon and day-glo.
11. **Hero Herder** • Draws a great big (abandoned?) railroad linking prepped quantum locations on the big map in the middle of the table (there is one, right?). The heroes don’t have to ride the rails.
12. **Nine Lives** • Nine times during the session, they can bestow an extra life point on a character without a gat token.

# Hats For the Cats

*“Give them non-quantitative bonuses, depending on type of headgear”*

—Galactic Nomad

In a very real sense roleplaytime is a bit like carnival. The players get together and use the rituals of dice and rules to give one another permission to goof off and be silly. To emphasize this the players can decide to institute a magic hats rule at their table: wearing a hat at a session grants a one time special ability that session.

1. **Improvised Hat From Paper and Tape**•Player chooses a different hat ability and uses it once. Their next test is with disadvantage.
2. **Generic Hat**•Player gets bonus xp. Efforts are encouraged.
3. **Bike Helmet**•Negates damage.
4. **Top Hat**•Player can stage a coup and seize the role of top cat (requires thumbs up from more than half of the table, including the revolutionary).
5. **Cowboy Hat**•Automatically wins initiative or a fast draw.
6. **Baseball Cap**•Blends into a crowd.
7. **Chef's Hat**•Creates a potion from monster parts that perfectly replicates one of its abilities.
8. **Boater Hat**•Avoids drowning or heat exhaustion.
9. **Pasta Strainer as a Hat**•Breaks a rule or magically makes a teacup appear in orbit around the world.
10. **Wizard Hat**•Casts 1 spell of a power lower than the hero's level for free.
11. **Sombrero**•Can get a week's rest in a single afternoon.
12. **Beret**•Can use bread as a simple weapon (1d6 damage).
13. **Firefighter's Helmet**•Immune to fire.
14. **Lucha Mask**•Mistaken for someone of player's choice.
15. **Astronaut Helmet**•Does not suffocate.
16. **Penguin Hat**•None of the player's characters can die or be exposed to gore. They are all surrounded by a PG-13 field.
17. **Tinfoil Hat**•One wrong assumption turns out to actually be correct.
18. **Toupée**•Advantage to social tests in calm conditions. Disadvantage when there is wind or rain or moisture or after any kind of exertion.
19. **Big Hair Wig**•Sets any die to eleven.
20. **Cat-in-the-Hat Hat**•Player wins the game. Then maybe rolls an extra d20 once per session, adding the result to another roll.

Players are encouraged to come up with their own little list of rituals, rules, and props. Heroes might get theme songs their players use once per session to get a bonus. Players could use costume jewelry to gain a boon in social encounters or a fake moustache when they play a character going undercover. A small bonus will not break the game, but it will encourage people to loosen up and relax, which is one of the things that is best about roleplaying.

# Twenty Session Tasks

Players perform multiple tasks during a roleplaytime session. Traditionally many systems bundle them together with the roles of top cat and runner. The top cat is often tasked with much more work than the other players, which can lead to exhaustion, burnout, and failed roleplaying groups. It's also a big reason why many players avoid running sessions. By unpacking the tasks and talking about them it might be easier to divide the labor fairly.

## **1. Organizing a session**

Finding a time and place for the group to meet. This can be any player, but it's good to make sure somebody is responsible for making the call.

## **2. Hosting a session**

Often roleplaying takes place at somebody's home. This can be any player, but it's important to realize that as the host, they are also have a social role beyond just play. Thus, while the host has an obligation to make the group feel welcome, the other players have a responsibility to be good guests and not abuse the host's hospitality. If playing outside of a home, say at a cafe, the player organizing the session takes on some of the social role of a host. Playing online, somebody will usually be responsible for setting up the digital tools used to play and track events in the game.

## **3. Taking care of food and drinks:**

Roleplaying is a social event that often involves eating and drinking. Whether there will be food and drinks at the table is a group decision, but it's worth respecting the host player's preferences. Some groups make every player responsible for their own food, others do potlucks, yet others prepare communal meals like the traditional frozen pizza of adventuring.

The players should decide who will bring what, who (if anyone) will handle preparation during the sessions (e.g. who's handling the frozen pizzas and making sure they don't burn in the oven, who's making sure the glasses don't run dry), and it's absolutely a good idea to collect food money up front so nobody's left holding the tab. Online this task tends to disappear.

## **4. Cleaning up after a session**

Especially if there is food involved, there will be crockery and cutlery to clean up. All the players should pitch in to help the host clean up after a session. Ideally, the players won't leave until the venue is as clean as they found it.

## **5. Generating characters**

New heroes and sidekicks regularly come into play. There should be one player who knows the rules for making new characters well enough that they can help others. It is helpful if this is not the top cat, letting them focus on keeping the session rolling along.

## **6. Introducing new players to game rules**

When a new player joins the group, it helps if there is another player who is not the top cat who can guide them through the rules.

## **7. Roleplaying the heroes**

This is the primary task of the runners. The top cat should absolutely not roleplay the runners' heroes or make their decisions for them.

## **8. Roleplaying the antagonists**

This is a primary top cat task, since obstacles to the heroes' desires is where stories are born.

## **9. Roleplaying the extras and sidekicks**

Any player can take over the extras in a scene. Usually, a runner will roleplay their hero's sidekicks, but they can also assign them to other players.

Likewise, the TC can assign an extra along with a one or two-line description to a player not directly involved in a scene. The top cat can call for tests to determine the extra's reactions, but leave the rest to the other player. Sharing out extras keeps all the players playing and makes outcomes unexpected. Who knows, maybe the player will suddenly turn the stat-less invented-on-the-spot shopkeeper into a beloved recurring character?

## **10. Preparing hooks, plots, and modules for a session**

This is almost always the top cat's task. Ideally it should be fun, not a chore. As a rule of thumb, the preparation should not take more time than running the session itself, and ideally less. The more the TC listens to the other players during a session and riffs off their ideas, the more dynamic it will be.

## **11. Making up lore, names, and backstories**

A large part of the fun of roleplaying is invention and imagination. Any player can and should do this. Traditionally, this task falls almost entirely on the top cat (or on pre-written tomes), however it's a good idea to share it out among all the players, which is why the game uses group action tokens.

Additionally, the top cat can declare runners to be the experts on their heroes' cultures, lives, and previous experiences. For example, the runner of a dwarven hero takes the center stage when it comes to describing dwarven breadstick duelling customs.

When the top cat takes this approach, they should wield a soft veto to maintain some consistency in the shared world and to keep it roughly balanced, so that one player's ideas don't steamroll everybody else's. The whole group should also be relaxed about fitting all the bits together.

## **12. Running the environment, sandbox, and adventure module**

This is another primary top cat task. Keeping the imaginary world ticking over; setting the stage for the heroes.

## **13. Running antagonists in combat**

This task usually falls to the top cat, but they could outsource it to a player whose characters aren't present, or even a secondary top cat player.



#### **14. Refereeing conflicts and combat between heroes and antagonists**

This is a primary top cat task, but insofar as it deals with rules, another impartial player whose characters are not involved, could also handle this task.

#### **15. Keeping track of the heroes' resources**

This is a task for each runner individually when it comes to their own heroes, but one player might serve as a quartermaster and handle the resources of the whole group, for example their caravans or possessions.

#### **16. Rules arbitration**

This task usually falls to the top cat, but it is easy to outsource to any player so long as they are fair and impartial.

#### **17. Referencing existing books and lore**

Another task that usually falls to the top cat, but could be assigned to anyone.

#### **18. Keeping a campaign journal**

Yet again, a task that often falls to the top cat, but can go to any player. A group can even decide to skip it altogether, and the sessions will still be fun. Ideally, the player taking on this task will enjoy writing.

#### **19. Drawing characters, scenes, and maps**

This is a task that really helps bring the game alive and every group should encourage as many players as possible to participate. The hero sheet has a large portrait area to encourage drawing. In practice, many groups will usually have one or two players who really enjoy the craft aspect of play. That's excellent. Having a session art journal is a fun activity in itself.

#### **20. Staying on the same page**

This isn't really a task, but a useful reminder for every player. A group meets to play together and it's important for all the players to read the room, make sure nobody is getting uncomfortable, and that everyone is enthusiastically on-board with a course of action. Splitting the party could be fun, but it might leave a lot of players pretty bored. Introducing a terrifying spidercat character might have been a good idea, if two of the players weren't arachnophobic.

# Runner Session Titles

The players can all take on special titles and powers each session. Why leave that fun just to the top cat? Each title covers some tasks along with some meta-game effects. Runners can choose a different title each session.

1. **Time Maker** • Task: organizes the session. Power: once per real-time hour gives another player an extra action to spend on one of their characters.
2. **Lady or Lord of Hosts** • Task: hosts the session. Power: once per session discovers a safe location for the characters or introduces a host of extras in the distance. The host does not need to be friendly.
3. **Chef of Gods** • Task: provides food for the session. Power: once per session discovers a delectable meal that restores one character's health or life total. They also gain 50 \* level xp.
4. **Senior Hygiene Technomancer** • Task: oversees cleanup. Power: once per session removes poison or curse from a character.
5. **Maker of Heroes** • Task: helps players make characters. Power: once per real-time hour grants another player a boon [+].
6. **Gatebreaker** • Task: explains rules to new players. Power: once per session adjusts a rule just this once.
7. **Villain's Secret Friend** • Task: beefs up the antagonists. Power: once per session gives an antagonist a boon on all tests in exchange for doubled xp from that scene. If the boon is not given, the top cat gains two boons to use in one scene of their choice next session, doubling xp from *that* scene.
8. **Inventor of Names** • Task: invents names for locations, items and extras. Power: once per session discovers the true name of an antagonist, granting a boon to a few harmful spells.
9. **Loemaker** • Task: lore about places and things. Power: once per session sneaks a useful feature into the environment.
10. **Quartermaster** • Task: tracks party resources. Power: once per session discovers a useful mundane item in the stores.
11. **Keeper of References** • Task: tracks in-game lore. Power: once per session changes one item of lore to benefit the party.
12. **The Journalist** • Task: keeps campaign journal. Power: once per session may forget to record an event, "inadvertently" helping the party.
13. **Catkin Cartographer** • Task: keeps the party's maps. Power: once per session discovers a shortcut or secret route.
14. **Adventure Artist** • Task: illustrates the party's adventures and encounters. Power: once per session spots a weakness or vulnerability on a creature or object.

# Uses of Experience

As a session starts the players should have some idea of the kind of game they want to play and what in-game achievements and meta-game behaviors will be rewarded with experience. The sources of experience form an incentive structure for play and changes how play unfolds.

The amounts of experience players can earn do not vary much with the power (or level) of their heroes. Lower level heroes are restricted in how swiftly they can advance by the limitation on how often they can invest experience, higher level heroes by high quickly they can earn experience.

Players can choose to speed up or slow down advancement by adjusting experience earned.

## More Sources of Xp

There is no one right way to play and no single way to assign experience. Players can even change up sources of experience from session to session depending on what kind of game they want to play that day. For a horror adventure, experience might be gained by sheer survival, a power metal heroic adventure might assign it for displays of valor, rousing speeches or guitar solos, and killing monsters, while an old school tomb-robbing module might be best suited by experience for gold. Individual adventure modules can include their own specific victory conditions and experience sources.

So long as players are on board with what their heroes are getting into during a given session, everything is fine.

When xp are won for an achievement, for example discovering a new location in the wilderness, that amount is earned by each participating player. Even a player who participates in a scene indirectly by assisting the top cat by running one of the extras should roll for experience earned.

### Possible Achievements

1. High roller. Luck snowballs. Top cat rations rolls. Player earns 20 xp for every natural 20 rolled, natural 100s earn 100 xp each.
2. All cash earned, looted, or stolen. Encourages heists and murderhobo shennanigans. Earn 1 xp for every 1 cash.
3. All works of art recovered and brought to a museum. The more rare, elaborate, and difficult to transport, the more xp.  $1d6 \times 20$  xp per slot.
4. All cash profligately wasted carousing. A pulp adventure vibe. 1 xp for every 1 cash.
5. All enemies killed. Slaughterquest. 10 xp per enemy's level.
6. Monsters hunted. Murder quests. 100 xp per target's level with proof.
7. Enemies defeated. Trickery rewarded. 10 xp per enemy's level.
8. Trophies collected. Big game hunting. 100 xp per target's level for trophy.
9. Encounters survived. Cowardice pays.  $1d6 \times 5$  xp every time the hero is injured.  $1d6 \times 20$  xp for every encounter survived.
10. New creatures observed and studied. Biology and naturalism. 100 xp per target's level for observations brought back (minimum 100 xp).
11. New locations visited and explored. Tourism. Natural geography.  $1d6^* \times 20$  xp per location.

12. New spells and anomalies found or activated. Archaeology. The pushing of red buttons. 100 xp per minimum power of spell.
13. Quests completed. Story mode. Top cat pre-seeds sandbox with quests and xp values. Each runner prepares a personal quest. Major quest is worth 4000 xp. Sub quests are worth 400 xp. Mini quests 40 xp.
14. Civilians saved. Valorous hero mode. All civilians saved: 1000 xp. Most civilians saved: 200 xp. Some civilians saved: 100 xp. No civilians saved. Well. Zero.
15. Loyal lackeys gained. Feudal lord mode. 100 xp per level of lackey.
16. Locations and creatures illustrated. Artist setting. 100 xp per creature or location illustrated.
17. The episodic and colourful tales of the party written and recounted. Writerly encouragement. 100 xp per vignette written up. 500 xp if whole session written up.
18. Drinks prepared for the group. 500 xp. If multiple players prepare together, rewards are split.
19. Helping run the game. Encouraging pro-social behaviour. 100–500 xp.
20. Food prepared for the group. Play as social dining experience. 500 xp. If multiple players prepare together, rewards are split.

### **Personal Quests**

Players may also have personal quests or goals for which they alone can earn experience. Examples might be a hero avenging their parent's death or finding a way to magically regrow their face after a magical accident. The cat should work with all the runners to make sure these sources are fair. A player should not earn more experience simply for being more vocal than others.

The runners may also set themselves group goals or quests, with the cat again having final say in how much experience certain achievements might be worth. These might be a quest to rebuild a community, circumnavigate a planetoid, or overthrow the Grey Lords of Deadtime.

### **Experience As Reward For Exploration and Interaction**

When the cat is running the game as a sandbox they should distribute sources of experience unevenly around the world. This is easiest with generic sources, like xp for landmarks, artworks, or treasures.

A simple rule of thumb to use is pareto's 80/20 principle. 80% of the achievements are relatively simple and account for about 20% of the total available experience. These might be poorly defended rooms in a dungeon, gullible extras to convince to a cause, or easy to find and explore natural sights. The remaining 20% of achievements hold 80% of the available experience. These might be secret chambers protected by traps and monsters, demanding lords whose support would change the course of a war, or breathtaking wonders made inaccessible by grueling terrain, weather, and other obstacles.

Each sandbox session the top cat can prepare around 200–400 xp per player in easy to reach areas and 800–1600 xp in the difficult areas.





# APPENDICES



# Inspirations

*“The best games happen in a vacuum.”*

—Voidpilot Schtiff, *The Ken of Motorgolem Maintenance*

Game design does not happen in a vacuum. A variety of games, books, music, comics, novels, and more inform every creative step.

- Ben Hur (1959)** • Few movies do epic better. The chariot race is spectacular.
- Black Hack** • A cool OSR game. The source of risk dice in previous iterations.
- Dungeons & Dragons** • The game that started it all.
- GLOG** • The Goblin Laws of Gaming, originally birthed by the creative genius of Arnold Kemp at the Goblin Punch blog.
- Holy Mountain (1973)** • Jodorowsky’s existentially thrilling movie.
- Hugo Pratt** • A comic book artist whose quickest sketches sing and dance.
- In the Year 2525 (Exordium & Terminus)** • Zager and Evans’ 1969 incredible deep time one hit wonder.
- Last and First Men (1930)** • Deep future history by Olaf Stapledon.
- Macchiato Monsters** • A fantastic and fun OSR game. A lesson in sharpened prose.
- The Master & Margarita (1973)** • Mikhail Afanasyevich Bulgakov’s satirical dark comedy brings out the devil in the bureaucratic state.
- Microlite** • An elegant mid ‘00s distillation of d20 into its essentials.
- Microscope** • An rpg that brings the worlds above and below together.
- Mike Mignola** • One of the best chiaroscuro comic book artists around. A master in the art of shadows.
- Moebius aka. Jean Giraud** • A superlative comic book artist. Inspiring in so many ways.
- Mothership** • A bluecollar spacetrucking rpg of superlative visual design and terrifying tension.
- Paranoia** • The rpg of Friend Computer. Like Logan’s Run for games.
- Whitehack** • A wonderfully elegant d20 game. The source of the contest bidding. An inspiration of minimalist writing layout.
- Zardoz (1974)** • A wonderfully weird 1970s piece of sci-fi by John Boorman that captures the experimental weirdness of the times.

# Glossary

“There is a house in UVG they call the Rising Cat.”

—Steppelands folk song, author unknown.

- Active Hero** • A runner’s main hero in a given session or scene.
- Archetype** • See hero type.
- Advancement** • A roll on a relevant advancement table. The effect of investing xp in a character
- Attribute** • The things describing a character in play. Proficiency, stats, skills, abilities, inventory, life, hurt, hero dice. Attributes cannot go below 0.
- Ba** • The mind or personality, provides a unique direction to consciousness. Used in social conflicts.
- Bane [-]** • Situational penalty to a roll. Player rolls additional die, takes worse result. Also disadvantage. A character may accrue multiple banes.
- Boon [+]** • Situational bonus to a roll. The player rolls an additional die and takes the result they prefer. Also advantage. A character may accrue multiple boons.
- Campaign** • Series of inter-connected meetings of players, featuring a similar cast of heroes. Similar to a show’s season.
- Cash** • An abstract coin representing a labourer’s day wages.
- Character** • Imaginary person or thing run by a player at a session.
- Conflict** • A fight between heroes (aka. Protagonists) and antagonists. Runners roll dice for the protagonists, the cat for the antagonists. There are three main kinds of conflict: spiritual (ka), social (ba), and physical (ha).
- Contest** • A competition between characters to see who achieves a goal first or best.
- Critical** • A natural 20 rolled on a d20 during a test. Always succeeds and has some additional positive effect. Also crit.
- Critical damage** • In conflicts criticals multiply damage dealt. The critical damage multiplier steps are  $x2 > x3 > x4$ , etc.
- Critical range** • The range of natural rolls that inflict a critical. The critical range steps are  $20 > 19-20 > 18-20$ , etc.
- Cumbersome sack** • Additional inventory sack, which causes encumbrance. Can be dropped if a conflict breaks out.
- D20, d12, d10, d8, d6, d4** • The polyhedral dice with different numbers of faces.
- Dice notation** • 2d6 is two six-sided dice rolled and added together. 3d8 is the sum of three eight-sided dice. D100 is two ten sided dice with one representing the tens, the other the digits. A roll of ‘00’ is treated as 100.
- Defence** • A character’s target number in a conflict. Usually  $10 +$  a stat + an equipment bonus.
- Encumbered** • An overburdened character suffers [-] to all tests.
- Expert** • Two or more ranks in a skill. Good enough to teach a skill. Applies double proficiency to relevant tests.
- Exploding dice** • Dice marked with an asterisk, e.g., 1d6\*. In this example, every time a player rolls a natural 6, they roll an extra 1d6\* and add the results. Exploding die rolls are open-ended.
- Extra** • Sketched out background character.
- Fumble** • A natural 1 on a d20 rolled during a test. Always fails and has some additional negative effect.
- Fumble range** • The range of natural rolls that result in a fumble. The fumble range steps are  $1 > 1-2 > 1-3$ , etc.
- Hero type** • A bundle of attribute and advancement tables. Also archetype, skin, or class.
- Immunity** • A character that is immune to a type of attack takes no damage from them.
- Inventory** • What a character carries. Including gear, weapons, armor, tools, spells, burdens, fears, woes, and treasure. Carried equipment greatly impacts a character’s abilities. Most humans can carry one sack unencumbered and two sacks encumbered.
- Gat token** • Physical object to help players take turns performing group actions or co-creating the game world.
- Ha** • The body, the vehicle of the soul (ka) and mind (ba). Used in physical conflicts.
- Hero, protagonist** • Excessive. A primary character.
- Hero dice (hd)** • D6s that modify a hero’s natural rolls and provide some other benefits.
- Hurt** • Serious injuries. Cumulative

Place  
holder

penalties that accrue as life, stats and other resources run out. Also fatigue or death spiral.

**Ka** • The soul, the motive fire of consciousness and being. Used in spiritual conflicts.

**Level (L)** • A creature's relative power.

**Life** • A character's plot armor and vital force all in one. Once upon a time called hit points.

**Magic, fantascience** • Anything sufficiently advanced to be indistinguishable from magic.

**Magic cost** • Attribute between 1 and 5 that multiplies a spell's power to determine the spell price a character pays to cast a spell. The only attribute that is better the lower it is.

**Mental stat** • Charisma, aura, or thought.

**Natural result** • The number on a rolled die before any modifiers. E.G. A natural 20. Also naked roll.

**Player** • Sentient creature partaking in a roleplaytime session.

**Power, spell power (P)** • A number between 1 and 42 that approximates the power of a spell's manifestation.

**Praxa** • Psychophysical battle techniques honed over millennia. From Ancient Greek for practice.

**Pro, proficiency** • A modifier between +2 and +5 used by skilled and expert heroes.

**Rank (R)** • Measure of the power of a skill, ability, mutation, or other game attribute. Higher ranks grant bonuses or additional features.

**Relevant stat or skill** • Stat or skill that the players judge to apply in a given context. The top cat has a final (soft) veto on whether a stat or skill applies.

**Resistance** • A character that is resistant to a type of attack takes only half damage from them.

**Roll** • Rolling any polyhedral die.

**Round** • During a conflict, a sufficient amount of time for every character to take their turn.

**Runner** • Player running protagonists (heroes and sidekicks).

**Sack** • 10 stones. Roughly what a human can carry unencumbered.

**Scene, encounter** • Basic unit of roleplay when and where the characters interact with the shared imaginary objects.

**Session** • One meeting of all or some of the players at their table to play. Similar to a show's episode.

**Sidekick** • Secondary character or

pet with simplified attributes.

**Sidu** • A pan-cultural agglomeration of custom and behavior that cuts across the living and dead cultures of the Vastlands. Sidu comes from Old English for custom or habit.

**Skill** • Trained attribute of a character. A profession. First rank (skilled) applies proficiency to relevant tests, second rank (expert) doubles this.

**Skilled** • One rank in a skill. Good enough to make a living with a skill. Applies proficiency to relevant tests.

**Soap** • 25 cash. Small item in a pocket. An insignificant item in a hero's inventory.

**Spell** • Recipe for altering reality. A type of gear, it takes up inventory.

**Spell price** • How much life a character must pay to cast a given spell of a given spell power.

**Stats, S.E.A.C.A.T.** • The six game stats represent natural aptitude and modify most natural rolls. Human hero stats range from +0 to +5.

**Stone** • 10 soaps. A significant item in a character's inventory..

**Sum** • Total modifier (stat + skill) applied to a d20 test. Can never be larger than +13.

**Table** • The physical or virtual space where the players meet.

**Target** • A number between 3 and 19 set by the top cat to represent the difficulty of a test.

**Test** • A d20 roll to overcome a target number to determine whether a character's desired course of action succeeds. Modified by a character's stat and skill (or sum).

**Top cat, TC, cat** • The player running the game session and antagonists. Also referee, ref.

**Trait** • Inherent attribute of a character that lets them perform in unusual ways.

**Turn** • Part of round, time unit when a character takes their actions.

**Unusual dice** • Polyhedral dice that players may have trouble finding, such as a d30. A dice rolling app or online random generator helps.

**Veda** • A secret compilation of lore, ritual, study and science. From Slovenian or Sanskrit for knowledge or science.

**Xp, experience** • Points or metagame currency a player collects through play and invests in their characters and game objects. Xp represent characters' successes and experiences.

# Tags

“Look upon my works ye mighty and compare.”

—Rushime, ancient monarch cursed to immortality and irrelevance.

Tags categorize skills, abilities, and effects. They also help with searching through the book.

## Item Tags

Item tags can be conditional. E.g., the red scimitar might be #precise against blue creatures.

**#burden** • a penalty ‘object’ that occupies an available slot until it is appropriately removed. For example, a cursed sword might be a burden that cannot be removed.

**#clumsy** • [-] to attack rolls.

**#mental** • a mental object significant enough to occupy an inventory slot. E.g., a memorized map, an implanted spell formula, or an oppressive madness.

**#precise** • [+] to attack rolls.

**#reach** • Wielder can use an action to counterattack against an attacker. The counterattack is resolved before the attack. Negates other #reach tags.

## Magic Tags

**#anchor** • The spell creates a physical anchor which the hero stores in their inventory to keep the spell active and controlled. Destroying or losing the anchor ends the spell (or worse).

**#attack** • The spell is cast as an attack action. A hero uses their relevant magical skill to test against their foe’s applicable defence and affect them. Some spells may also target other attributes.

**#core** • Basic spell gained automatically when a hero learns a magical skill (*veda*). Some spell albums contain multiple core spells. In that case a hero must choose one for their free starter.

**#dangerous** • The spell forces a test to avoid magical corruption every time it is cast. Applying this tag to more spells is an easy way for the players to restrict certain kinds of magic within a setting.

**#focus** • The spell requires focus to stay active. A hero must spend an action every round, or the spell ends.

A hero can always cast a spell at double its usual power to imbue it with their vital essence, keeping it active without focus. This can make a spell dangerous and require a test against magical corruption.

**#imbue** • A spell that is kept active as long a hero imbues it with their vital essence (life or stat points). The imbued points are reserved, reducing the hero’s maximum life or stat total, and cannot be recovered until the spell ends.

**#item** • When a hero creates a magic item, they use the spell to lock their life force (life or stat points) within a physical object. They can only recover the locked attributes when the magic item is disenchanting or destroyed. This is similar to the imbue tag, except a hero cannot end the spell at will. Simple examples of magic items are magic swords, rings, and wicker fetishes.

**#regular** • A spell that uses only the standard magic rules.

## Skill Tags

**#adventure** • Skill has practical utility in the struggle of mortal against uncaring natural worlds.

**#background** • Skill represents the development of a mortal as a part of a functional community.

**#combat** • Also called a *praxa*, this skill represents a combination of psychophysical battle techniques honed over millennia. *Praxa* comes from Ancient Greek for practice.

**#magic** • Also called a *veda*, this skill represents a difficult or secret compilation of lore, ritual, study and science. *Veda* comes from Slovenian or Sanskrit for knowledge or science.

**#social** • Also called a *sidu*, this skill represents a pan-cultural agglomeration of custom and behavior that cuts across the living and dead cultures of the Vastlands. *Sidu* comes from Old English for custom or habit.

## Trait Tags

**#biomachine** • Artificial abilities for

created organisms.

**#brains** • Thoughtful application of superior intellectual capabilities for the furtherance of personally acceptable outcomes.

**#fantascience** • Magic and science by another name.

**#fortune** • Luck and the manipulation of the underlying fabric of probability. Also money.

**#power** • The will to strength. The unyielding oak. The crushing boulder. The alacrity of the born warrior.



**FIN**

